Israeli Forces Invade Palestinian Hospitals

By Stephen Lendman
Global Research, October 29, 2015

Region: Middle East & North Africa
Theme: Crimes against Humanity
In-depth Report: PALESTINE

Israel's war on Palestine is a clear example of extrajudicial brutality, trampling on fundamental human rights, attacking defenseless people unaccountably, getting away with mass murder and other atrocities.

Under international law, hospitals are safe zones, protected spaces, off limits for military and police attacks and invasions.

The 19th century Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick (incorporated into the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols) mandates caring for them along with medical personnel and chaplains, without any distinction as to nationality.

Israel systematically breaches all international laws with impunity, operating like America, observing its own rules alone, no matter how lawless.

Hospitals are fair game for assaults and invasions. One or more US warplanes bombing the Doctors Without Borders (MSF) Kunduz, Afghanistan medical facility weeks earlier, turning much of it to rubble, killing and injuring medical staff and patients is Exhibit A.

Heavily armed Israeli soldiers and undercover agents storm Palestinian hospitals often – endangering staff, terrorizing and arresting patients, seizing records for names of others to abduct.

Human rights workers denounce the practice. So does Palestinian Health Minister Dr. Jawad Awwad, explaining "(i)nternational law prohibits attacking hospitals and abducting patients. It also calls for enabling medical crews to act freely and safely, to perform their humanitarian mission."

Jerusalem's Al-Makassed Islamic Charitable Hospital is a frequent target, the latest incursion coming on Wednesday after a Tuesday assault.

Each time, heavily armed soldiers surrounded the hospital, blocking anyone from entering or exiting, then storming the facility – where they don't belong for any reason.

Hospital head Dr. **Rafiq al-Husseini** said staff were ordered to hand over patients' records, including reasons for admittance. Israel wants information on inpatients and other released. Frequent arrests follow, including abducting the sick and wounded from hospital beds, a gross international law violation.

Husseini said "(w)e have no legal responsibility to inform the occupation army and the

police about anything we do in this charitable hospital. Our medical teams are here to help the patients, the wounded, and any person who needs our services."

> "The Israeli military has invaded our hospital two days in a row. Yesterday they even interrogated one of our doctors at a police station in Jabal al-Mokabber in Jerusalem. Today they invaded the hospital again and confiscated a computer that runs our surveillance system."

The facility is a frequent Israeli military target, Husseini explained. Repeated violations constitute a grave breach of international law, he stressed. His call for international community help won't be answered.

He expects continued incursions, along with threats and intimidation of medical staff and patients. Names of emergency care unit doctors and nurses were collected. Expect grueling interrogations to follow.

An earlier October incident involved Israeli undercover agents invading the Nablus area Specialized Arab Hospital. Medical director **Samir al-Khayyat** said they were disguised as Palestinians accompanying a patient.

They kidnapped **Karam al-Masri** from his bed at gunpoint. They disabled most, but not all security cameras. Video footage of their assault was posted online, showing about a dozen agents intruding through various hospital areas, some holding handguns.

Masri was being treated for workplace related injuries. Israel issued a gag order, concealing information about him, preventing any leaking out from being revealed.

Atrocities committed by its security forces continue daily. Palestinian deaths, injuries and arrests keep mounting. Unaccountable brutality is longstanding Israeli practice.

On Wednesday alone, over 70 Palestinians were kidnapped, including university students and children. Since October 1, eight Israelis died so far – only two from stabbing attacks, destroying the myth about knife-wielding Arab assailants, the same phony excuse Israeli authorities give every time as justification for murdering at least 65 Palestinians in cold blood over the past four weeks, more than two daily on average.

Occasional video evidence destroys their claims, revealing willful security force assassinations of unarmed youths, children and women.

The struggle for Palestinian liberation continues, courageous youths in the vanguard, risking death for freedom.

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