

# URGENT ACTION

## DOCTORS, PATIENTS AND HOSPITALS UNDER ATTACK

Throughout Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip, which began on 8 July, and especially since Israeli ground forces entered Gaza on 17 July, ambulances and medical facilities across the Gaza Strip have been attacked. Scores of critically wounded patients will die unless they are urgently transferred to hospitals outside Gaza for specialized treatment.

Amnesty International has collected testimonies and reports from doctors, hospital and ambulance staff, and the heads of ambulance services in the Gaza Strip that medical teams trying to evacuate people injured in Israeli attacks have come under fire on numerous occasions, especially since 17 July. Medical teams are being prevented from reaching scores, possibly hundreds, of injured people in various areas, especially in the Rafah and Khan Younis districts, as well as removing the bodies of those killed. Hospitals and medical facilities have been attacked recently, including the Al-Najjar Hospital in Rafah, and Gaza City's Al-Shifa Hospital received a warning call, presumably from the Israeli military, on 1 August instructing them to evacuate a building housing patients.

Hospitals across the Gaza Strip are suffering from fuel and power shortages (worsened by the Israeli attack on Gaza's only power plant on 29 July), inadequate water supply, and shortages of essential drugs and medical equipment, which are due to Israel's seven-year blockade and were acute before the current hostilities. The Palestinian Ministry of Health has appealed for the urgent transfer of scores of patients to hospitals outside Gaza for life-saving medical treatment that cannot be provided by hospitals in the Gaza Strip.

### Please write immediately in Hebrew or your own language:

- Calling on the Israeli authorities to ensure that medical facilities, ambulances, and medical and emergency workers are protected in the ongoing hostilities, that clear orders are given to Israeli troops reaffirming that all medics and medical facilities must be presumed to have civilian status, and that a criminal investigation is opened into all incidents of Israeli fire on medics or medical facilities;
- Urging them to ensure safe access for ambulances and medical and emergency personnel to all areas of the Gaza Strip to facilitate the transfer of the wounded and dead to hospitals, and to ensure the safe movement of ambulances between hospitals throughout the Gaza Strip;
- Urging them to facilitate the urgent transfer of critically injured and ill patients to hospitals outside the Gaza Strip for life-saving specialized treatment.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 SEPTEMBER 2014 TO:

#### Minister of Defence

Moshe Ya'alon  
Ministry of Defence  
37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryat  
Tel Aviv 61909, Israel  
Fax: +972 3 691 6940  
+972 3 696 2757  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

#### Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu  
Office of the Prime Minister  
3 Kaplan St.  
PO Box 187  
Kiryat Ben-Gurion  
Jerusalem 91950, Israel  
Email: b.netanyahu@pmo.gov.il  
pm\_eng@pmo.gov.il  
**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

#### **And copies to:**

Director General, Ministry of Health  
Professor Arnon Afek  
Ministry of Health  
2 Ben Tabai Street  
Jerusalem 93591, Israel  
Email: mankal@moh.health.gov.il  
Fax: +972 2 565 5966  
**Salutation: Dear Director-General**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since Israel launched Operation “Protective Edge” on 8 July, the Gaza Strip has been under intensive bombardment from the air, land and sea. As of 4 August, more than 1,800 Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip, the majority of them civilians, according to initial UN monitoring, including more than 440 children and more than 230 women. More than 9,400 people have been injured, many of them seriously. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported on 2 August that at least five hospitals and 34 clinics had been forced to shut down due to damage or continuing hostilities in the immediate area. At least 15 medical and emergency staff have been killed in the line of duty, and dozens have been injured. An estimated 485,000 people across the Gaza Strip have been displaced by the fighting, and many of them are taking refuge in hospitals, even though medical facilities have also been targeted, placing further strain on these facilities.

All 1.8 million people in the Gaza Strip are living with minimal supplies of unsafe water; in some areas, water has been cut off for days or weeks by attacks. On 29 July, Israeli forces struck Gaza’s only power plant, knocking it out of commission. This destroyed Gaza’s primary source of electricity, in an attack that is very likely to have constituted a war crime and the collective punishment of Gaza’s entire population. Sanitation services have also been drastically affected by the lack of fuel and electricity and the ongoing attacks. Outbreaks of disease have already been reported in some locations and the UN and World Health Organization (WHO) have warned that the entire Gaza Strip is facing a public health disaster.

Amnesty International is aware of reports that Palestinian armed groups have fired indiscriminate rockets from near hospitals or health facilities, or otherwise used these facilities or areas for military purposes. Amnesty International has not been able to confirm any of these reports. While the use of medical facilities for military purposes is a severe violation of international humanitarian law, hospitals, ambulances and medical facilities are protected and their civilian status must be presumed. Israeli attacks near such facilities – like all other attacks during the hostilities – must comply with all relevant rules of international humanitarian law, including the obligation that attacks must be proportional and the obligation to give effective warning. Hospitals and medical facilities must never be forced to evacuate patients under fire; Amnesty International has received several reports of this happening during the current hostilities.

Palestinian armed groups have fired more than 3,000 indiscriminate rockets towards Israel since the start of hostilities on 8 July, killing three civilians in Israel, injuring others and damaging civilian property. Amnesty International has repeatedly condemned the firing of indiscriminate rockets as a war crime, but this does not absolve Israel of its responsibility to comply with international humanitarian law, including by protecting hospitals, medical facilities, medical and emergency workers, ambulances and patients.

For Amnesty International documents on the current hostilities, see: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/israel-occupied-palestinian-territories>.

Name: Medical staff and patients

Gender m/f: both