

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

5 March 2025 MDE 18/9062/2025

LEBANON: ISRAELI ATTACKS ON HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS MUST BE INVESTIGATED AS WAR CRIMES

The Israeli military repeatedly attacked healthcare facilities, ambulances, medics and civil defence workers in Lebanon, which are afforded specific protection under international law. Amnesty International investigated four Israeli attacks on healthcare facilities and medical vehicles that killed 19 healthcare workers and wounded 11 more in a one-week period between 3 and 9 October 2024. The attacks should be investigated as war crimes.

The Israeli military repeatedly¹ accused² Hezbollah of using ambulances to transport fighters and weapons, and of using the Islamic Health Association (IHA) as a “cover for terrorist activities.”³ However, Amnesty International did not find evidence the facilities or vehicles that were damaged or destroyed were being used for military purposes at the time of the four attacks.

The Israeli military has not provided sufficient justifications, or specific evidence of military targets being present at strike locations, to account for their repeated attacks on healthcare facilities and medical vehicles in Lebanon, which have weakened a fragile healthcare system and put more lives at risk. Between 8 October 2023 and late November 2024, at least 222 medical and civil defence personnel had been killed and hundreds more wounded in Lebanon, according to the Ministry of Public Health.

The Israeli military attacked medical facilities and personnel tied to the Lebanese government as well as non-governmental health organizations, including those affiliated with political parties. Most attacks struck the IHA, a civilian institution affiliated with Hezbollah that provides medical and emergency services across Lebanon, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Islamic Risala Scout Association. The IHA is the main rescue and emergency service and healthcare provider in Beirut’s southern suburbs and in areas of the south and Bekaa and Hermel, which were repeatedly attacked by Israel.

Deliberate attacks on healthcare facilities and civil defence centres and on their personnel exclusively assigned to medical and humanitarian duties are prohibited. Such attacks should be investigated as war crimes.

The Lebanese government should provide the International Criminal Court the jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute crimes within the Rome Statute committed on Lebanese territory, and work to protect victims’ right to remedy, including by calling on Israel to provide reparation for serious violations of international humanitarian law for which it is responsible.

Amnesty International interviewed 17 people, including the IHA’s head of the Civil Defence unit, as well as the IHA’s public relations manager and employee in charge of the work in the Taybeh area, the director of the Marjeyoun Government Hospital and the head nurse in the hospital’s emergency room, the director of the governmental Lebanese Civil Defence centre in Tyre, the director of public relations and media at the Lebanese Red Cross, two volunteers with the Lebanese Civil Defence in their Dardghaya centre, the Mukhtars (local-level state representatives) of Marjeyoun and Beirut’s Bachoura, and the son of one of the victims of an October 2024 attack. The bodies of those killed in that attack remained inaccessible for retrieval until the ceasefire that began in late November 2024. Researchers also visited the site of the attack on the IHA’s centre in Bachoura, Beirut. Amnesty International also verified 46 photographs and videos from the attacks shared directly with the organization or published in the media and on social media.

Amnesty International wrote to the Israeli military with its findings on 11 November 2024 but had not received a response by the time of publication.

¹ Avichay Adraee, X post, 12 October 2024, <https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1844996442701562184>

² Avichay Adraee, X post, 4 October 2024, <https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1842247843936932131>

³ Avichay Adraee, X post, 19 March 2024, <https://x.com/avichayadraee/status/1770055912335499423?s=61>

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In armed conflicts, the sick and wounded – whether they are civilians or fighters - have the right to be respected, protected, collected and cared for. This is why hospitals, other medical facilities and ambulances are specifically protected under international humanitarian law. Hospitals and medical transports only lose their protection if they are used for acts that are considered “harmful to the enemy,” and even then, can only be targeted after a warning that gives sufficient time for the evacuation of patients and staff goes unheeded. Civilian civil defence organizations, their personnel, buildings, matériel and shelters similarly are protected, unless they are used for acts considered harmful to the enemy.⁴

International humanitarian law also prohibits attacks directed at medical and religious personnel and objects displaying the distinctive emblems of the Geneva Conventions in conformity with international law.

In cases of doubt as to whether medical facilities are being used to commit acts harmful to the enemy, they should be presumed not to be so used. An attack on a medical facility that has lost its protected status must adhere to the rules on precautions, distinction and proportionality and consider carefully the adverse effects that attacking medical facilities has on civilians, the sick and wounded.⁵

Medical personnel exclusively assigned to medical duties must be respected and protected. And it is prohibited to target civilians who are not directly participating in hostilities. Therefore, parties to the conflict are prohibited from directing attacks at civilians who merely are members of, or affiliated with, political entities with an armed component unless, and for such time as, they are directly participating in hostilities. Accordingly, it is prohibited to directly attack medical personnel and those working in civil defence on the basis that they are working for institutions associated with the Hezbollah movement.⁶

States that are responsible for violations of international humanitarian law are required to make full reparations for the loss or injury caused. The UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law enshrine the duty of states to provide effective remedies, including reparation to victims, including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition.⁷

RED CROSS PREVENTED FROM SAFELY RESCUING PARAMEDICS IN TAYBEH/ODAISSEH ATTACK

At around 12:30 pm on 3 October 2024, an Israeli strike hit a Lebanese Red Cross and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) convoy, injuring six paramedics, killing one LAF soldier, and damaging all three ambulances.⁸

When Israel attacked, the convoy was travelling from Taybeh to Odaisseh in south Lebanon to assist eight IHA paramedics. The IHA paramedics had been heading to the town of Odaisseh, about four kilometers from Taybeh, for a rescue operation but were attacked on 2 October 2024 just as they entered the town.

“Three paramedics died on the spot. One survivor called the centre, reported that heavy gunfire targeted his crew, and requested support and rescue,” Mahmoud Karaki, the spokesperson of the IHA’s Civil Defence told Amnesty International. “Another vehicle tried to leave the centre for the rescue, but it was targeted with warning shots and returned to the centre.”⁹

⁴ ICRC, The protection of hospitals during armed conflicts: What the law says, 6 November 2023, <https://icrc.org/en/document/protection-hospitals-during-armed-conflicts-what-law-says>

⁵ ICRC, International Humanitarian Law Databases, Rule 30, Persons and Objects Displaying the Distinctive Emblem, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule30>

⁶ ICRC, International Humanitarian Law Databases, Rule 25, Medical Personnel, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule25>

⁷ UN, General Assembly Resolution 60/147, Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, 16 December 2005, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-and-guidelines-right-remedy-and-reparation>

⁸ Lebanese Army Official, X post, 3 October 2024, <https://x.com/LebarmyOfficial/status/1841790605870948416>

⁹ Interview by voice call with Mahmoud Karaki, IHA Civil Defence spokesperson, 10 October 2024 - 31 January 2025

Mohammad Al-Hussein, whose father Abbas Al-Hussein was among those killed, said his father had just started volunteering with the IHA's Civil Defence during the latest escalation. "On 2 October, he went on his first ambulance trip. First and last ambulance trip," he said.¹⁰

The IHA requested support from the Lebanese Army and Red Cross to rescue the surviving members of the paramedics team. The next day, a convoy comprising three ambulances, supported by two LAF vehicles, was dispatched to the location of the IHA paramedics, after making the necessary calls with UNIFIL to give them notice and secure the route, according to the director of public relations and media at the Lebanese Red Cross, Ayad al-Mounzer. He added that the Red Cross ambulances were clearly identifiable, with the protective emblem featured on all visible surfaces.¹¹

However, before the Red Cross could rescue the IHA paramedics, an Israeli strike hit their convoy, injuring six paramedics, killing one LAF soldier, and damaging all three ambulances.

Amnesty International was not able to investigate the attack on the IHA paramedics, but medics who are not carrying out acts harmful to the enemy or who are civilians not directly participating in hostilities must not be targeted under international humanitarian law, regardless of whether they are affiliated with Hezbollah. Amnesty International found no evidence of Hezbollah military objectives or fighters in or around the area where the Lebanese Red Cross and LAF convoy were attacked. Israel did not provide a justification for the attack.

If Israeli forces attacked medical personnel carrying out a humanitarian rescue operation this would violate the prohibition of directing attacks at civilians and the duty to respect and protect medical personnel and medical transports, as well as the prohibition of directing attacks at persons and objects displaying the distinctive emblems of the Geneva Convention and should be investigated as a war crime.

In October 2024, Karaki said more than 18 IHA centres had been targeted since October 2023. "Dozens of our volunteers are killed while trying to save others. But the new Israeli practice is preventing us from rescuing our own as well as people in need," he told Amnesty International.¹²

CIVIL DEFENCE CENTRE IN BACHOURA NEIGHBOURHOOD ATTACKED

Shortly after midnight on 3 October 2024, an Israeli strike, without prior warning, hit the IHA's civil defence centre, a primary healthcare centre that provides low cost medical services to the local community, located in a residential building in the central Beirut neighbourhood of Bachoura, killing seven IHA paramedics who were sleeping in the centre, and two other individuals who were in or near the building at the time.¹³

A witness said one of those killed was an off-duty LAF soldier, who was visiting his grandmother in the same building. His body was flung into the cemetery across the street due to the force of the explosion.¹⁴

An Amnesty International researcher, visiting the site of the strike on 4 October, observed evidence indicating the strike hit the first floor of the 10-storey building, where the IHA centre was located, with blast damage extending only to the floors above and below. The researcher did not find any indication that military equipment was stored at the centre. And based on the limited damage to the rest of the building, the IHA centre appears to have been the target.

The director of the IHA Civil Defence, Adnan Mokaddem, told Amnesty International that the IHA does not conduct or host military activities. Mokaddem said all the IHA Civil Defence centres are identifiable to the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon, UNIFIL, the ICRC and Israel, with clearly marked signs. Vehicles are also marked with logos on the sides and roof. Staff members also wear high-visibility clothing that clearly identify them as IHA. He explained that his staff consistently complied with the "rule of three Israeli warning strikes" – an unofficial agreement between the warring parties

¹⁰ Interviews by voice call with Mohammed Al-Hussein, son of an IHA volunteer killed in the attack, 18 October 2025 – 13 November 2024 – 3 February 2025

¹¹ Interview in person with Ayad Al-Mounzer, director of Public Relations at the Lebanese Red Cross, 14 November 2024

¹² Interview by voice call with Mahmoud Karaki (previously cited).

¹³ National News Agency, طوارئ الصحة تعلن حصيلة محدثة لشهداء الباشورة: 9 شهداء و14 جريحا, 3 October 2024, <https://nna-leb.gov.lb/ar/justice-law/726762/%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A6-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%86-%D8%AD%D8%B5%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%AB%D8%A9-%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-9-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%AF>

¹⁴ Interview in person with an employee of the Bachoura cemetery, 4 October 2024

that before launching a major attack Israeli forces fire three smaller missiles to warn healthcare providers to leave the area.¹⁵

“We even keep our phones active to allow the Israeli army to hack and listen to our communications. And we respect the rule of three Israeli warning strikes at midnight to stop our operations. We stop our mission, go back to our centres, and resume in the morning,” Mokaddem said.¹⁶

Amnesty International verified six images and 10 videos showing the aftermath of the strike. Six videos and one photo were recorded after midnight, with visible smoke and fire. Four other videos and five photos were taken during daylight, showing the damage to the building, remaining debris and the damage the strike caused to the nearby cemetery.

Three videos recorded from the surrounding buildings show large amounts of smoke coming out of the residential building that hosted the IHA centre and fire on the first floor of the building where the premises were. In one video, rescuers are seen trying to evacuate an injured person from the building, surrounded by rubble that seems to have been caused by the strike.

Images and videos recorded during the daylight hours of 3 October show extensive destruction to the first floor of the building that hosted the IHA centre and large amounts of debris surrounding the area. The footage shows destroyed medical equipment laying scattered and destroyed in the rubble. One video shows the damage caused to the nearby graveyard, with a number of gravestones destroyed.

Amnesty International spoke with the mukhtar of the Bachoura neighbourhood and a nearby resident, who both confirmed that the IHA centre was a well-known and established one that provided high-quality healthcare to themselves and to members of the community.

Mukhtar Bassem Wajih Mneimneh told Amnesty International that neither he nor anyone from his constituency ever witnessed any militarized presence in or around the centre. “I am a kidney dialysis patient, and I need to go to the hospital regularly for treatment. During the Covid lockdown, hospitals were inaccessible. I called the IHA centre, they sent me an ambulance fast with a very professional crew, they took me to their centre, gave me the treatment, then drove me back home. I saw the space. It’s a healthcare centre. A regular one, and a well-equipped one. Nothing suspicious at all,” he added.¹⁷

A resident in the area told Amnesty International that he and his wife used the basic healthcare services provided by the centre during the Covid lockdown and requested their assistance when a man collapsed on the sidewalk facing his shop. “We used to rely on these young men,” he said.¹⁸

Bilal Assaf, the media relations director of the IHA’s Civil Defence wing, told Amnesty International that there were no military targets in the Bachoura centre. “Only career paramedics and volunteers were sleeping there. Anyone can verify their names, most of them have been in the rescue service for 10-15 years. We [the IHA] are the target, and we’re targeted across the South, Beqaa, and Dahieh [southern suburbs of Beirut]. Now, we’re targeted in Beirut too,” he said.¹⁹

Amnesty International reviewed the public profiles of the seven paramedics killed in the attack: Raja Zreik, Mahdi Halbaoui, Wissam Salhab, Ahmad Hayek, Mostapha Al-Moussaoui, Sajed Sherri and Hassan Khansa. After the attack, two images began circulating online of two of the men killed, which some took to indicate the men may have been affiliated with Hezbollah’s military wing, but there were discrepancies in the images, which cast doubt on their veracity.

Amnesty International did not find evidence indicating that the paramedics killed were involved in military activities. Raja Zreik and Mahdi Halbaoui have held managerial positions in the Beirut directorate of the IHA Civil Defence and have been quoted in media publications in 2016 and 2023 on issues related to civil defence services, such as road safety. Hassan Khansa had just graduated from school and received a high distinction for his score in the Lebanese Baccalaureate exams, ranking 41st nationally.

¹⁵ Interviews in person with Adnan Al-Mokaddem, director of Civil Defence at the Islamic Health Association, 12 March 2024 – 28 April 2024

¹⁶ Interviews in person with Adnan Al-Mokaddem (previously cited).

¹⁷ Interview in person with Bassem Wajih Mneimneh, Mukhtar of Bachoura, 4 October 2024

¹⁸ Interview in person with a resident in the Bachoura neighbourhood, 4 October 2024

¹⁹ Interviews in person with Bilal Assaf, director of Public Relations at the Islamic Health Association, 28 April 2024 – 7 June 2024

The Israeli military took responsibility for the strike, which it said was a “targeted” attack and that further details would be released later.²⁰ The Israeli military did not respond to a request from Amnesty International on 11 November 2024 for further information about the intended target of this attack.

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CHILLING MESSAGE SENT TO MARJEYOUN GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL

On the morning of 4 October, Israel conducted an air strike on ambulances parked at the entrance of the Marjeyoun Government Hospital, in the southern town of Marjeyoun. Seven paramedics were killed and five others wounded.

The paramedics killed were Mohammed Jaafar Hreich, Jaafar Daoui, Hussein Soueid, Mohammed Hassan, Abbas Tarraf, Ali Gharib, and Ali Mounzer.

In a public statement, issued following public criticism of several attacks on medics and medical facilities in Lebanon, the Israeli military repeated previous claims, without presenting evidence, that ambulances have been used by Hezbollah to transport fighters and weapons, but made no reference to this attack.²¹ Amnesty International was unable to find any evidence to support this claim.

Dr. Mo'nes Kalakesh, the director of the hospital, Shoshana Mazraani, the head nurse in the emergency department, and Kamel Razzouk, the mukhtar of Jdaydet Marjayoun, all told Amnesty International that, because of the danger of being attacked by Israeli forces, the ambulances had been parked in front of the hospital for two days prior to the attack. Dr. Kalakesh told Amnesty International that for two days prior to this attack the ambulance teams had not been able to do their job and transport injured people and other patients to the hospital.²²

Then the attack came, which forced the hospital to close, depriving hundreds of people in the area, which had suffered heavy Israeli bombardment, of healthcare.

“We considered the strike a message to the hospital. We discussed the issue with Ministry of Health and decided to protect lives by closing the hospital,” Dr Kalakesh told Amnesty International. “In the week before this attack, we were three doctors and seven nurses. We were working under a lot of pressure in the hospital to treat a continuous flow of wounded. The sound of shelling didn't stop.”²³

Shoshana Mazraani said that the ambulances that were targeted on 4 October and their crews had come to the Marjeyoun Governmental Hospital after an Israeli attack on 1 October on the IHA centre in Khiam, a village seven km from the hospital.

“The first ambulances to arrive, a few days before the attack, brought for treatment an entire Syrian family severely wounded in an attack in Khiam. Afterwards, the paramedics had nowhere to go, so they stayed with us in the hospital, thinking that it's a safer zone, because it's a governmental hospital and in Marjeyoun,” she said.²⁴ Marjeyoun has a majority Christian population.

On the morning of 4 October, Mazraani said that she witnessed the attack on the ambulances. “I was sitting outside the emergency door with a nurse and an emergency doctor, chatting after a very violent sleepless night, facing the ambulances. The paramedics were standing around the ambulances, having their breakfast. We saw the strike and the explosion,” she said.²⁵

²⁰ Times of Israel, *At least 6 said killed in central Beirut after IDF announces 'targeted' attack*, 3 October 2024, <https://timesofisrael.com/at-least-6-said-killed-in-central-beirut-after-idf-announces-targeted-attack/>

²¹ Avichay Adraee, X post, 4 October 2024 (previously cited).

²² Interviews by phone call with Dr Mo'nes Kalakesh, director of the Marjeyoun Governmental Hospital, 10 October 2024 – 5 February 2025; Interview by phone call with Kamel Razzouk, Mukhtar of Jdaydet Marjeyoun, 15 October 2024; Interview by phone call with Shoshana Mazraani, head-nurse in the Emergency Room at the Marjeyoun Governmental Hospital, 16 October 2024

²³ Interviews by phone call with Dr Mo'nes Kalakesh (previously cited).

²⁴ Interview by phone call with Shoshana Mazraani (previously cited).

²⁵ Interview by phone call with Shoshana Mazraani (previously cited).

Mazraani confirmed to Amnesty International that there were no military activities at the hospital, “not that day and not before. We did not see anything at all.”²⁶

According to Kamel Razzouk, the closure of the hospital deprived at least 150 families who remained in the region from accessing healthcare. “People who continued to live in Marjayoun feared a health emergency, while other families who include older people or people with chronic diseases had to leave the village, following the closure of the hospital. People who stayed in the region didn’t have options: a very dangerous road separates us from the closest healthcare centre in Hasbaya (at least 15 km away) while the other healthcare centre is located in Nabatiyeh, at a 40-50 km distance. People here hope that they don’t get wounded or sick,” he said.²⁷

Mazraani added, “Those remaining in Marjayoun no longer have access to healthcare. We were the main if not only healthcare providers in the region, and we also had a care centre, which provides medicines for older people and vaccines for children.”²⁸

Both Mazraani and Dr. Kalakesh described the operational difficulties that they were facing in the week prior to the attack, amid heavy Israeli bombardment of the area and Israeli evacuation warnings that forced many residents to leave and made travel across south Lebanon extremely dangerous.²⁹ “After the attack on the Ebl El-Saqi road, transportation became very dangerous. No one was able to reach us from outside and none of us were able to leave,” said Dr. Kalakesh. Despite these difficulties the hospital continued to provide healthcare to patients in the area as well victims of the war – until the attack on 4 October.³⁰

According to the World Health Organization, in the of 24 hours between 2 and 3 October, at least 28 medics were killed in attacks that targeted their crews, ambulance or hospitals/medical centres.³¹ At least four hospitals in south Lebanon announced on 5 October that they were suspending work because of Israeli strikes: the Marjayoun Governmental Hospital, the Bint Jbeil Governmental Hospital, the Mais el Jabal Governmental Hospital, and the Salah Ghandour Hospital.³²

Deliberately attacking ambulances and medics exclusively assigned to medical duties violates international humanitarian law.³³ Such attacks should be investigated as war crimes.

DERDGHAYA CIVIL DEFENCE CENTRE ATTACKED

At around 10 pm on 9 October 2024, an Israeli air strike struck the Lebanese Civil Defence centre, a public emergency, government-run medical service of Lebanon that carries out patient transportation, search, and rescue missions and fire-fighting response, in the town of Derdghaya, in the Tyre governorate of southern Lebanon. Five members of staff were killed in the strike.³⁴

²⁶ Interview by phone call with Shoshana Mazraani (previously cited).

²⁷ Interview by phone call with Kamel Razzouk (previously cited).

²⁸ Interview by phone call with Shoshana Mazraani (previously cited).

²⁹ Interviews by phone call with Dr Mo’nes Kalakesh (previously cited); Interview by phone call with Shoshana Mazraani (previously cited).

³⁰ Interviews by phone call with Dr Mo’nes Kalakesh (previously cited).

³¹ Reuters, *Dozens of health workers killed in Lebanon over past day, WHO says*, 3 October 2024, <https://reuters.com/world/middle-east/who-says-28-health-workers-killed-lebanon-over-24-hours-2024-10-03/>

³² National News Agency, *Four Lebanese hospitals suspend services amid Israeli bombing*, 5 October 2024, <https://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9/727366/four-lebanese-hospitals-suspend-services-amid-isra#>

³³ UN OCHA, *Statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon, Imran Riza, on the attacks against healthcare in Lebanon*, 3 October 2024, <https://unocha.org/publications/report/lebanon/statement-humanitarian-coordinator-lebanon-imran-riza-attacks-against-healthcare-lebanon-3-october-2024>

³⁴ National News Agency, *الدفاع المدني نعى 5 موظفين عمالنيين استشهدوا بغارة إسرائيلية على مركز دردغيا*, 9 October 2024, <https://nna-leb.gov.lb/ar/justice-law/728636/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%86%D8%B9%D9%89-5-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B8%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9>

The civil defence members killed in the strike were the Tyre regional director Abdallah Al-Moussaoui, Hassan Issa, Bassam Al-Moussaoui, Joseph Al-Badaoui, and Ali Najdi.

Amnesty International reviewed satellite imagery and verified 29 images and one video showing five cars buried under rubble in the aftermath of the strike. The numbers 125 – an emergency number for the Lebanon Civil Defence – was visible on one car.

Amnesty International’s research found no evidence of a legitimate military target at the site of the attack.

Civil Defence volunteer Bachir Nakhal said he and a group of friends had raised funds to secure ambulances and medical equipment for two centres in southern Lebanon. Within two to three weeks, they had secured the funds needed, bought the ambulance, and equipped it.

“On Saturday 5 October, I took the ambulance to Saida [Sidon] to find that the whole team came to thank us... you cannot imagine how happy they were with the ambulance. They took the ambulance on Saturday, and on Wednesday they were all killed. The entire centre was gone, all the volunteers and employees were gone, the ambulance was gone. Mohammad Al-Moussaoui’s body was identified, but the rest of the team were in pieces, it was impossible to identify them. The strike was very powerful, they found parts of them in the forests about 200 meters away from the centre.”³⁵

Bachir Nakhal told Amnesty International that before the escalation of the conflict in October 2023, he had spent a significant amount of time in the Derdghaya centre: “The village is Christian.... The Civil Defence members killed in the attack were all State employees. They were experienced, and they all have children. Four of them have three children and the fifth has four children. They all had over 10 years of civil defence experience, received their salaries from the government, under the Ministry of Interior. This attack was not a mistake. It is part of a systematic evacuation forced on residents of these areas by depriving them of basic services, namely healthcare services, so that they are forced to abandon their houses and live in displacement. But not everyone can leave. Those who stay are either older or sick, hence physically unable, or do not have the economic means to leave their houses, and these are the people who need our services the most.”³⁶

Ali Safieddine, the director of the Civil Defence centre in Tyre, told Amnesty International that none of their vehicles have ever been used to transport weapons or fighters. He described how he and others in the Lebanese Civil Defence service have worked for decades in support of the people, under the Ministry of the Interior. “We fight fires, remove debris, transport the wounded and carry the dead, and in most of our missions in South Lebanon, the Lebanese army accompany us to the location of the attack,” he said.³⁷

Safieddine was a longtime colleague of Mohammad Al-Moussaoui, who was killed in the attack. “He’s the regional director and I am the director of Tyre’s centre, we spend 24 hours a day together, he’s a father and a brother and a colleague and a best friend to me,” he said. Safieddine joined the Lebanese Civil Defence in 2000 and Al-Moussaoui started his service in 1996.³⁸

The Mukhtar of Derdaghya Milad Elias Hanna confirmed to Amnesty International that the Civil Defence centre was well established in the village for years: “They used to serve not only the village but also the whole region”. He said that people living in his village used to request support from the Civil Defence crew without concerns: “It’s the Lebanese Civil Defence; they operate under the Lebanese government; and they serve all the Lebanese people.”³⁹

After the 9 October attack, Safieddine told Amnesty International that Derdghaya and the 16 other villages that the centre supported had no access to emergency, rescue and healthcare services.⁴⁰

Safieddine also said that, during the war, his centre in Tyre received a phone call, allegedly from the IDF, threatening to bomb the centre, so they closed the centre and moved their operations to a nearby army barracks in Tyre and then to the municipality building in Tyre. “I know that the Nabatiyeh municipality was attacked. There’s no place safe, I know. But we’re doing our best to protect our lives and continue our mission.” In the 2006 war, the Israeli forces attacked a Civil

³⁵ Interview by voice call with Bachir Nakhal, Civil Defence volunteer, 16 October 2024

³⁶ Interview by voice call with Bachir Nakhal (previously cited).

³⁷ Interview by voice call with Ali Safieddine, director of the Civil Defence centre in Tyre, 18 October 2024 – 3 February 2025

³⁸ Interview by voice call with Ali Safieddine (previously cited).

³⁹ Interview by voice call with Milad Elias Hanna, Mukhtar of Derdghaya, 13 November 2024

⁴⁰ Interview by voice call with Ali Safieddine (previously cited).

Defence centre in Tyre, to which Safieddine had moved his family, for protection. His baby daughter died in that attack, he said.⁴¹

Deliberate attacks on those exclusively assigned to civil defence duties violates international humanitarian law. Such attacks should be investigated as war crimes.

THE WAR'S IMPACT ON THE HEALTH SECTOR IN LEBANON

The conflict between Hezbollah, an armed group in Lebanon, and Israel started on 8 October 2023, when Hezbollah and Palestinian armed groups fired rockets into Israel in support of Palestinians in Gaza. The conflict escalated significantly on 23 September 2024, when the Israeli military launched “Operation Northern Arrows”, striking thousands of sites across Lebanon. On 1 October 2024, Israel launched a ground invasion into southern Lebanon. Between 8 October 2023 and 28 November 2024, when a ceasefire went into effect, more than 4,047 people were killed, including at least 240 children, and at least 16,638 injured in Lebanon, according to Lebanon’s Ministry of Public Health – the vast majority since September 2024.⁴²

Israel repeatedly attacked healthcare workers, healthcare facilities, and medical vehicles. The four attacks Amnesty International investigated hit a Lebanese Red Cross and LAF convoy, an IHA civil defence centre, IHA ambulances parked outside a government hospital, and a Lebanese Civil Defence centre, killing 19 healthcare workers, wounding 11 more, and damaging or destroying multiple ambulances and two medical facilities, in addition to the eight IHA paramedics killed on 2 October.

According to the Lebanese Civil Defence, Lebanese Red Cross, and IHA, Israeli attacks in Lebanon killed many dozens more of their staff and volunteers, and damaged or destroyed dozens of health facilities and medical vehicles they used to provide care in Lebanon. By late November 2024, Israeli attacks had killed 27 medics volunteering or working with the Lebanese Civil Defence and wounded 76, according to the director of the Civil Defence Raymond Khattar, and partially or completely destroyed 32 Lebanese Civil Defence centres and 45 emergency vehicles.⁴³ According to Al-Mounzer, the director of public relations and media for the Lebanese Red Cross, by the time a ceasefire was declared, 18 Red Cross paramedics had been injured in Israeli attacks while on the job since the beginning of the hostilities; 17 in October 2024 alone.⁴⁴ In addition, as of 14 December, 10 Lebanese Red Cross ambulances and four Red Cross centres had been damaged by strikes.

The IHA was particularly affected. In early 2025, the IHA’s Civil Defence spokesperson, Karaki, told Amnesty International that 155 medics working with the IHA had been killed and 43 IHA emergency centres damaged or destroyed during the war.⁴⁵ Rabie Issa, the Civil Defence commissioner for the Islamic Risala Scout Association, the civil defence and rescue services organization affiliated with the Amal Movement, a political party allied with Hezbollah, said 37 of their rescue and emergency workers had been killed and 142 wounded, as well as 121 vehicles and 141 centres damaged or destroyed.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Interview by voice call with Ali Safieddine (previously cited).

⁴² Ministry of Public Health, جريحًا الحصيلة الإجمالية المحدثة للعدوان الإسرائيلي، 16638 و 4047 شهيدًا، 4 December 2024, <https://moph.gov.lb/ar/Media/view/77347/4047-%D8%B4%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8B%D8%A7-%D9%8816638-%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AD%D9%8B%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B5%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%AB%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D9%83%D9%85-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%BA-%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%AF-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%9F>

⁴³ Lebanon 24, خلال الحرب.. كم بلغ عدد شهداء الدفاع المدني؟، 18 November 2024

lebanon24.com/news/lebanon/1280302/%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D9%83%D9%85-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%BA-%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%AF-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%9F

⁴⁴ Interview in person with Ayad Al-Mounzer (previously cited).

⁴⁵ Interview by voice call with Mahmoud Karaki (previously cited).

⁴⁶ Interview by phone call with Rabie Issa, the Civil Defence commissioner at the “Al Risala Scout”, 29 July 2024 – 31 January 2025

The intense bombardment and insecurity forced a growing number of Lebanon's health facilities to shut down, particularly in the south. In December 2024, the Ministry of Health said that, due to Israeli attacks, seven hospitals had been forced to close, three other hospitals to partially close, and 56 primary healthcare centres forced to close, including 33 that were destroyed.⁴⁷ This put the lives of patients in danger and overwhelmed the capacities of still-functioning medical centres.

According to the World Health Organization, as of 21 November 2024, "47% of the attacks on health care – 65 out of 137 – have proven fatal to at least one health worker or patient in Lebanon," making it, at the time, "a higher percentage than in any active conflict today across the globe."⁴⁸

On 27 November 2024, Israel and Lebanon agreed to a 60-day ceasefire deal. It went into effect on 28 November 2024. On 27 January 2025, the ceasefire got extended, reportedly to allow for both parties to implement the ceasefire terms. On 18 February, Israel announced it intended to remain temporarily in a number of positions in Lebanon's territory.⁴⁹

Since the ceasefire was announced, healthcare workers who spoke with Amnesty International said that they were doing the best they could to provide care. For example, the spokesperson of the IHA Civil Defence, Mahmoud Karaki, told Amnesty International that the Bachoura centre had been replaced by a temporary centre in the nearby region of Zouqaq Al-Bilat, and that the IHA hoped to reconstruct and reopen the Bachoura centre.⁵⁰ According to Dr. Kalakesh, the Marjeyoun Government Hospital began to reopen after the ceasefire, too. "We came back to work fast, because of the need to have a hospital functioning in our region."⁵¹

After the ceasefire went into effect in late November, civil defence members were able to return to work at the Tyre centre, which they had left, fearing Israeli attack, but not the Derdghaya centre, which had been attacked and was destroyed. Despite this, in early February, Safieddine told Amnesty International that the civil defence team had "picked up the work right after the ceasefire, in a house the villagers offered to us, on a temporary basis, until we find and move to a new locale." He explained that the son of his friend Mohammad Al-Moussaoui, who had been killed in the attack on the Derdghaya Civil Defence centre, is now directing and managing a team of volunteers from Derdghaya and the surrounding area, as well as a few employees.⁵²

On 3 February 2025, Al-Hussein, whose father was killed in the attack on the IHA paramedics in Odeisseh, told Amnesty International that families had to wait nearly two months, until after the ceasefire, to receive the bodies of their family members. "Al Risala Scouts managed to reach the location of my father's body with [the bodies of] his colleagues in Odeisseh a few days after the ceasefire," he said. "We're planning the funeral, but the situation in the South remains unstable." The family is from a village called Al-Qantara in the Marjeyoun district of the Nabatieh governorate, which as of February 2025, remained subject to the Israeli army's strict movement restrictions.⁵³

In a post ceasefire assessment conducted in the first two weeks of December 2024, UNDP found that Israeli strikes severely damaged basic infrastructure for public services in Lebanon and noted that several municipalities reported "varying levels of damage, reducing their operational capacity." In the health sector, the UNDP survey revealed that Bint Jbeil, the second largest municipality in the Nabatieh governorate in south Lebanon, was the most severely affected, "with almost half of the health facilities damaged and three destroyed."⁵⁴

The Lebanese healthcare sector was already straining due to multiple, ongoing and compounding crises in Lebanon, including a massive economic crisis that spiralled in late 2019, followed by the Beirut Port explosion in 2020, which severely impacted private hospitals in Beirut, all while the country tried to respond to and then recover from the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak. Then came the war.

⁴⁷ Ministry of Public Health, جريحًا الحصيلة الإجمالية المحدثة للعدوان الإسرائيلي، 16638 و 4047 شهيدًا (previously cited).

⁴⁸ WHO, *Lebanon: a conflict particularly destructive to health care*, 22 November 2024, <https://who.int/news/item/22-11-2024-lebanon--a-conflict-particularly-destructive-to-health-care>

⁴⁹ The New York Times, *Israel Says It Will Keep Troops 'Temporarily' in 5 Points in Lebanon*, 17 February 2025, <https://nytimes.com/2025/02/17/world/israel-lebanon-troops-remain.html>

⁵⁰ Interviews by voice call with Mahmoud Karaki (previously cited).

⁵¹ Interviews by phone call with Dr Mo'nes Kalakesh (previously cited).

⁵² Interviews by voice call with Ali Safieddine (previously cited).

⁵³ Interviews by voice call with Mohammed Al-Hussein (previously cited).

⁵⁴ UNDP, *From Crisis to Recovery: Local Authorities Confronting Post-War Realities in Lebanon Rapid Impact Assessment*, 21 January 2025, <https://undp.org/lebanon/publications/crisis-recovery-local-authorities-confronting-post-war-realities-lebanon-rapid-impact-assessment>

Amnesty International has reported on the impact of the economic crisis and other crises on Lebanon's health sector, and made specific recommendations to the government to respect, protect and fulfil people's right to health.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Amnesty International, *Lebanon: Government must ensure medication is available and affordable*, 9 February 2023, <https://amnesty.org/en/documents/mde18/6410/2023/en/>