

URGENT ACTION

RESCIND EVACUATION ORDER AGAINST GAZA HOSPITALS

On 13 October, 23 hospitals in the north of the Gaza Strip and Gaza City received forced evacuation orders from the Israeli army. Since then, hospitals continue to receive phone calls from the Israeli army pressuring them to comply. These hospitals provide life-saving treatment for more than 2,000 patients and serve as the sole safe haven for tens of thousands of internally displaced families. Amid the humanitarian catastrophe engulfing the Gaza Strip, these forced evacuation orders are virtually impossible to implement as transferring patients across destroyed areas and without fuel is an unreasonable prospect. If implemented, these “evacuations” will lead to the complete collapse of Gaza’s healthcare system. They will also constitute, in the words of the World Health Organization, a “death sentence” against those with serious wounds or illnesses. The Israeli authorities must rescind these orders and ensure the protection of healthcare facilities as required under international humanitarian law.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Minister of Defence

Mr. Yoav Gallant

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Mr. Yoav Gallant,

*I am writing to urge you to immediately **rescind the forced evacuation orders you issued to hospitals in northern Gaza and in Gaza City** and to ensure unconditional protection of patients, health workers and the tens of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) seeking shelter in these hospitals and their premises.*

The World Health Organization (WHO) has confirmed that 23 hospitals in Northern Gaza and Gaza City have received repeated orders to evacuate. These hospitals currently treat more than 2,000 patients and serve as the only safe haven for tens of thousands of civilians who sought refuge from Israeli air strikes. Forcing these patients to evacuate and relocate to southern Gaza, where health facilities are already on the brink of collapse and beyond maximum capacity, is tantamount to a death sentence, according to the WHO.

Hospitals in northern Gaza and Gaza City are already overloaded with patients and are struggling to deal with the humanitarian crisis caused by Israel’s incessant bombardment and exacerbated by Israeli authorities’ decision to tighten the existing blockade by cutting Gaza off from electricity, fuel, water and medical supplies. These hospitals are treating hundreds of wounded each day, in addition to pregnant women, babies in incubators and severely ill patients, forcing doctors to operate in corridors and tents outside the premises. As the fuel reserves are running out and electricity cuts are more frequent, the lives of thousands of patients are at imminent risk. The exclusion of fuel from the scant and grossly insufficient humanitarian assistance that has recently entered Gaza through Rafah will have devastating consequences for Gaza patients.

Some of these 23 hospitals have already been attacked and sustained damages. While Amnesty International is still investigating the 17 October attack on the al-Ahli Arab Baptist hospital, it has already verified that this very hospital had been deliberately targeted by two Israeli artillery shells on 14 October. And on 22 October, the Israeli army sent a new warning to Al-Quds hospital, run by the Palestinian Red Crescent Society to evacuate and on the same day proceeded to bomb the vicinity of the hospital.

*In light of the imminent danger to the life of tens of thousands of patients, displaced civilians and health workers, I urge you to immediately **rescind the order and ensure that health facilities, health workers, patients, and IDPs are protected against attacks, as required by international humanitarian law.***

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as of 22 October, over 4,650 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza including 1,873 children, and over 14,245 wounded during the ongoing Israeli strikes that began on 7 October 2023. OCHA also estimated that over 1.4 million people have been internally displaced since the outbreak of the recent hostilities.

In the early hours of 13 October, the Israeli army issued an initial announcement ordering more than 1.1 million people living north of Wadi Gaza have to leave for the south within a day. Regardless of the deadline, which even the Israeli army acknowledged was not feasible, this order cannot be considered an effective warning and may amount to the forced displacement of civilians, a violation of international humanitarian law. The subsequent order to hospitals to forcibly evacuate should be seen in the context of these threats of forced displacement.

“Evacuating this hospital is virtually impossible since moving patients from the Intensive Care Unit, moving the incubated newborn babies, the injured who number more than fifty, is just impossible,” a doctor at Al-Quds hospital, one of the 23 hospitals threatened with forced evacuation which is also sheltering over 8,000 IDPs, told Amnesty International.

Israel cannot consider the whole of the Gaza Strip, including its hospitals and civilian infrastructure, a military target. Doctors, nurses, and medical staff in Gaza have been heroically working to save people’s lives, working amid unthinkable horror. Many of them have lost family members, friends and colleagues but are persevering in providing their services while under attack in an awe-inspiring commitment to humanity.

As such, Israeli authorities must respect international humanitarian law, including by immediately rescinding forced evacuation orders against hospitals and allowing the prompt and unconditional supply of humanitarian aid and medical supplies into Gaza. Israeli authorities must also resume the supply of water and fuel into Gaza as an initial step towards ending the collective punishment measures that for the last 16 years they have imposed on the civilian population.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Hebrew, English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 19 December 2023

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.