



Many of the wounded have been cared for in Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza since early October 2023. Photo from 15 October 2023. Credit: WHO

12 November 2023 — WHO has lost communication with its contacts in Al-Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza. As horrifying reports of the hospital facing repeated attacks continue to emerge, we assume our contacts joined tens of thousands of displaced people who had sought shelter on the hospital grounds and are fleeing the area. There are reports that some people who fled the hospital have been shot at, wounded and even killed.

Over the past 48 hours, Al-Shifa Hospital--which is the largest medical complex in Gaza--has been reportedly attacked multiple times, leaving several people dead and many others injured. The intensive care unit suffered damage from bombardment, while areas of the hospital where displaced people were sheltering have also been damaged. An intubated patient reportedly died when electricity was at one point cut.

The last reports said that the hospital was surrounded by tanks. Staff reported lack of clean water and risk of the last remaining critical functions, including ICUs, ventilators and incubators, soon shutting down due to lack of fuel, putting the lives of patients at immediate risk.

WHO has grave concerns for the safety of the health workers, hundreds of sick and injured patients, including babies on life support and displaced people who remain inside the hospital. The number of inpatients is reportedly almost double its capacity, even after restricting services to lifesaving emergency care.

Patients seeking health care should never be exposed to fear, and health workers who have taken an oath to treat them should never be forced to risk their own lives to provide care.

WHO calls again for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza as the only way to save lives and reduce the horrific levels of suffering. Hospitals, patients, health staff, and persons sheltering in health facilities are protected under the Geneva Conventions and International Humanitarian Law.

WHO also calls for the sustained, orderly, unimpeded and safe medical evacuations of critically injured and sick patients into Egypt through the Rafah Border Crossing.

All hostages should receive appropriate medical care and be released unconditionally.

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