

On 18 November 2023, a joint UN humanitarian assessment team, led by WHO, accessed Al-Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza. The team included public health experts, logistics officers, and security

staff from OCHA, UNDSS, UNMAS/UNOPS, UNRWA and WHO. Credit: WHO

18 November 2023 - Earlier today, a joint UN humanitarian assessment team, led by WHO accessed Al-Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza to assess the situation on the ground and conduct a rapid situational analysis, assess medical priorities, and establish logistics options for further missions. The team included public health experts, logistics officers, and security staff from OCHA, UNDSS, UNMAS/UNOPS, UNRWA and WHO.

The mission was deconflicted with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to ensure safe passage along the agreed route. However, this was a high-risk operation in an active conflict zone, with heavy fighting ongoing in close proximity to the hospital.

Earlier in the day, the IDF had issued evacuation orders to the remaining 2,500 internally displaced people who had been seeking refuge on the hospital grounds. \Box They, along with a number of mobile patients and hospital staff, had already vacated the facility by the time of the team's arrival. \Box

Due to time limits associated with the security situation, the team was able to spend only one hour inside the hospital, which they described as a "death zone," and the situation as "desperate." Signs of shelling and gunfire were evident. The team saw a mass grave at the entrance of the hospital and were told more than 80 people were buried there.