



A WHO/OCHA team visited al Aqsa hospital in Deir al Balah after an attack on 21 July 2014 killed one patient and three companions and injured 16. All patients were evacuated and the 100-bed hospital is no longer functioning. 24 July 2014 - WHO is greatly concerned about the human suffering and deterioration of living conditions in Gaza as a result of the ongoing conflict. Access to health care is being seriously undermined.

Every day, more hospitals, clinics and ambulances are damaged, destroyed or rendered unable to function, further constraining the ability of the health system to care for the increasing numbers of civilian casualties. As of 22 July, reports indicate that 3993 people have been injured, most of them women and children, and 622 people killed.

Four hospitals, twelve clinics, ten ambulances, a specialized centre for the disabled, and two water desalinization centres have been damaged.

Al Aqsa hospital is the latest of four hospitals in the Gaza Strip which have been damaged since 7 July. The hospital has come under direct fire, resulting in deaths and casualties with severe damage to the surgical ward, the intensive care unit and life-saving equipment. This 100-bed government hospital served as the main hospital for the people living in central Gaza.

The coping capacity of health professionals is completely overstretched, and they are working under extreme and insecure conditions. Ambulance workers and ambulances have come under fire on numerous occasions and there is real concern that patients are unable to reach health care centres. With the intensification of this conflict, WHO is alarmed by the potential of the health system to collapse.

The supply of electricity is reduced to half of optimum needs, which threatens the water supply and sewage treatment, and raises serious public health risks. The more than 100 000 displaced persons in UNRWA shelters and estimated further 50 000 displaced persons in the community require immediate relief.

WHO calls for the creation of a humanitarian corridor for the evacuation of the injured, as well as for the supply of life-saving medicines. The humanitarian corridor should extend to protect the safe passage of patients to access crossing points and exit outside the Gaza Strip for medical care. Likewise, the transport of essential aid should be facilitated at crossing points between the Gaza Strip and Israel and neighbouring countries.

Even during armed conflict, states are obligated under international humanitarian law to ensure that people are able to reach medical care in safety. Hospital facilities are neutral places which must be respected and protected by all parties.

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