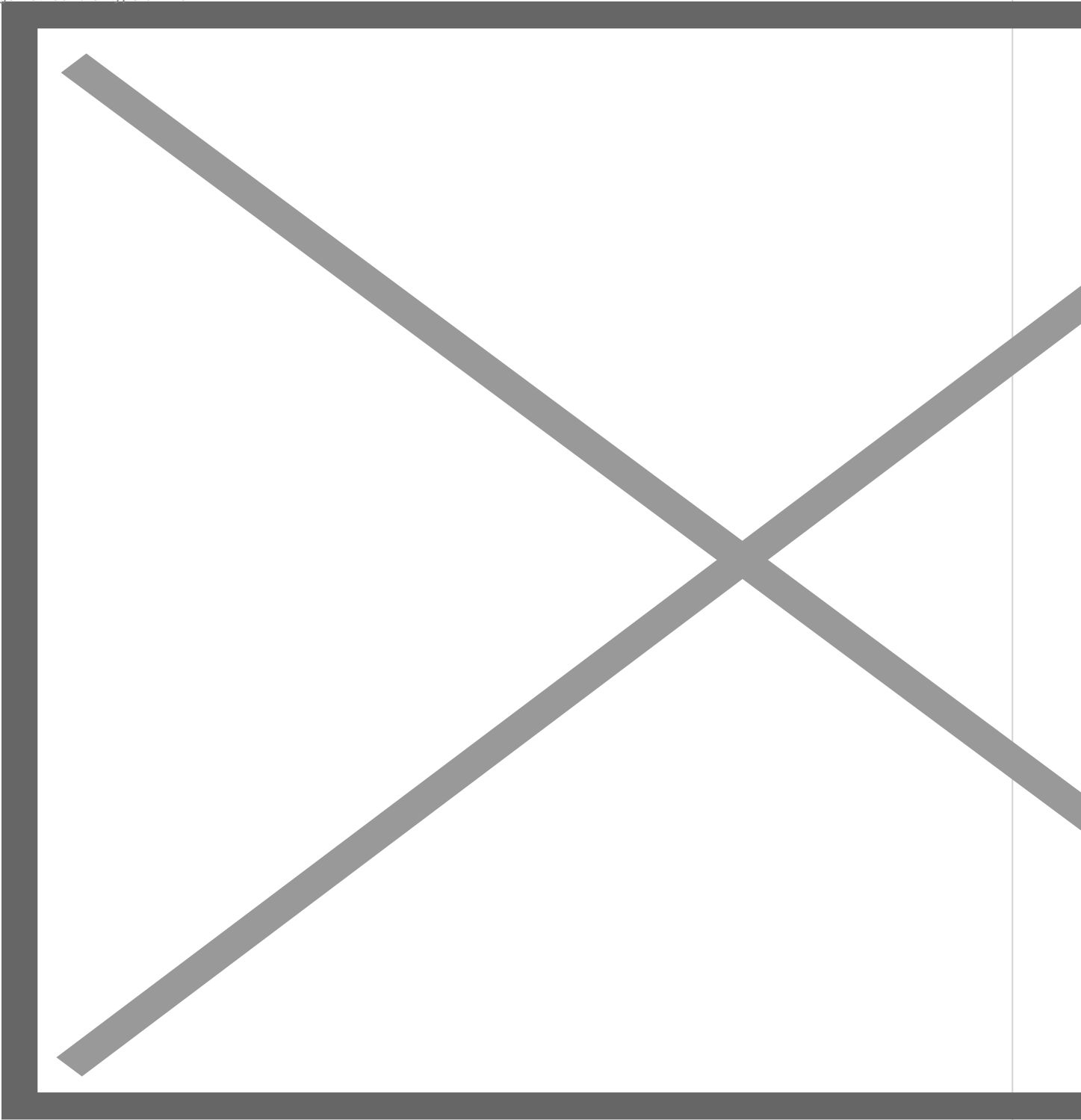


*Israel launches deadly strike on
convoy of ambulances outside
hospital in Gaza*

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Palestinians check the damages after a convoy of ambulances was hit at the entrance of al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City on Friday. (Reuters)

Gaza City, November 3 (RHC)-- An Israeli strike on an ambulance convoy outside Gaza City's largest hospital on Friday killed at least 15 people and injured another 60, the Gaza Health Ministry said. Photos and videos of the aftermath, which were geolocated by The Washington Post, showed scenes of carnage and destruction, with bodies crumpled on the pavement and bystanders rushing to carry the wounded into the hospital grounds.

The strike was one of several attacks on schools and health infrastructure on Friday in Gaza, where Israeli forces have waged a large-scale offensive to destroy Hamas, the Palestinian group that rules the territory. More than 9,000 people have been killed in Gaza since the war started on Oct. 7. Israel launched its campaign in response to a brutal Hamas assault on Israeli communities near the border, killing at least 1,400 people.

The Israeli military confirmed Friday that its aircraft targeted the ambulance convoy, saying in a statement that the vehicles were "being used by a Hamas terrorist cell." "A number of Hamas terrorist operatives were killed in the strike," the Israel Defense Forces said, adding that it provided more detailed information to "intelligence agencies who we work with" -- meaning the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA.

It called the area around al-Shifa Hospital, in the heart of Gaza City, a "battle zone." Israel has repeatedly accused Hamas of using the hospital as a command-and-control center, a charge the group has denied.

The dead and wounded visible in the videos reviewed by The Post included women and children and no weapons or individuals wearing military clothing could be seen. One graphic video, filmed by Gazan content creator Ahmed Hijazee, showed the inside of the ambulance targeted in the strike, including a single female patient lying on a stretcher.

The ambulance appeared to have been one of six in a convoy meant to transport injured patients from al-Shifa Hospital to southern Gaza. The convoy was announced by Gaza's Health Ministry two hours before the strike. In a statement, the ministry said that the ambulances would depart at 4 p.m. local time and would be "carrying a large number of wounded."

It said that it had asked the International Committee of the Red Cross to accompany the ambulances to ensure safe passage, but ended up leaving without it due to an "urgent need."

At 4:11 p.m., a Telegram post by the Palestinian news organization Alkofiya said that the convoy was on the move. At 4:34 p.m., the journalist Muthanna al-Najjar wrote in a post that dozens of people were wounded and killed in the strike outside al-Shifa Hospital.

Both the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and the Gaza Health Ministry said the convoy was targeted twice after setting off.

The Palestinian Red Crescent, which had an ambulance in the convoy, said in a statement that the convoy was targeted at around 4:30 p.m. while the convoy was on Al-Rashid Street. A shell landed nearby, causing damage to the organization's ambulance. The Gaza Health Ministry said the lead vehicle was hit, injuring a driver and a medic, who remains in critical condition.

The rest of the convoy continued toward al-Shifa Hospital. When it arrived, there was another strike which health officials said directly hit a Health Ministry ambulance, significantly damaged a Red Crescent ambulance, and killed and injured dozens of civilians passing by.

The convoy was returning to the hospital gate when it was hit, said Mohamed Abu Selima, the hospital director. The strike hit "in a very crowded place," he said. Tens of thousands of people displaced from their homes in northern Gaza have been sheltering in and around al-Shifa Hospital and were packed into the area at the time, according to witnesses.

“They bombed the door of the hospital!” Bisan Owda, a 25-year-old filmmaker who was at the scene said in a video posted to Instagram. “It’s a massacre. Thousands of people are out,” she said.

In videos and photos geolocated by The Post, at least a dozen dead and wounded people are seen lying on the ground near the hospital entrance around a damaged ambulance.

The Red Crescent ambulance and a parked car nearby both show signs of damage: the ambulance’s front right bumper is torn away, its windshield is cracked, the parked car’s windows are blown out, and both vehicles have had their sides crushed inward and are pocked with small holes.

“Our colleagues were saved by miracle,” the Red Crescent tweeted, releasing footage of a blood-smeared ambulance.

Marc Garlasco, a former chief of “high-value targeting” and battle damage assessment analyst for the Defense Department, said that the fragmentation pattern from the scene indicated the strike was likely conducted with a Spike missile, “Israel’s preferred weapon used to decapitate leadership targets.”

Garlasco, who assessed Spike strikes in Gaza in 2009, said he believed that the Israeli military had transitioned to “dynamic strikes” to hunt down Hamas leaders, as opposed to preplanned strikes on known targets.

When executing such strikes, he said, militaries “don’t do the more detailed and granular checks that might protect civilians, thus increasing the potential for civilian harm and making dynamic strikes far more dangerous to the population.”

Even if Hamas were using the ambulance to commit harmful acts, it wouldn’t make an attack legitimate under the laws of war, said Brian Finucane, senior adviser at the International Crisis Group. He said that customary international humanitarian law still requires a warning before an attack and other efforts to minimize harm to civilians.

“Given the apparent civilian harm caused by the strike adjacent to al-Shifa Hospital, this attack raises serious questions about compliance with the law of war, including but not limited to how the IDF is assessing excessive harm to civilians when striking targets it regards as lawful,” he said.

The head of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said he was “utterly shocked” by the reports of the attacks on ambulances. “We reiterate: patients, health workers, facilities, and ambulances must be protected at all times. Always,” he said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

Later on Friday, the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza said it was still trying to work out the precise death toll from an Israeli strike that devastated a school sheltering displaced families in the area of Jabalya, which has been the scene of heavy bombardment in recent days.

Graphic footage of the aftermath of the strike at the Osama bin Zayed school broadcast on Al-Jazeera showed scattered body parts and blood sprayed up to the ceilings.

Strikes and shelling were also reported near the al-Quds Hospital in Gaza City and Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza.

Videos shared by PRCS and verified by Storyful showed a large cloud of smoke from an apparent strike near al-Quds Hospital in Gaza City’s Tel al-Hawa neighborhood. Other videos posted Friday and geolocated by The Post to the edge of the Indonesian Hospital complex show multiple plumes of smoke rising in the distance. About a quarter mile away, a video shows a crater next to a partially destroyed building as a crowd carries away an injured man.

“The humanitarian situation we have witnessed in the hospitals in the northern part of Gaza is catastrophic and is getting worse,” the International Committee of the Red Cross said in a statement.

“Medical patients have the right to receive adequate medical treatment. Medical transport, facilities and personnel enjoy special protection under international humanitarian law.”

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