

Israel targets hospitals as the Al-Quds medical facility in Gaza runs out of fuel

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Gaza City, November 9 (RHC)-- Al-Quds Hospital in Gaza City has shut down “most operations” after running out of fuel and withstanding daily Israeli bombardments around the medical complex since Sunday. The hospital, located in the Tal al-Hawa neighbourhood and run by the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS), said it was forced to stop most services “to ration fuel use and ensure a minimum level of services in the coming days”.

It has turned off its main generator and is now operating only a smaller generator to provide essential services and two hours of electricity a day to patients and 14,000 internally displaced people who are sheltering there. Its surgical ward and oxygen generation plant have been closed.

PRCS spokeswoman Nebal Farsakh told Al Jazeera: "We're talking about shelling about 15 metres [16 yards] from the hospital building. Most of the buildings around [the] hospital have been almost completely destroyed. The bombings are getting closer and closer to the hospital, and we fear a direct hit to the hospital."

Most of the roads that lead to Al-Quds Hospital have been closed, forcing medics in ambulances to take a single, rugged, unpaved route to reach the injured. "We have about 500 patients inside the hospital. We have 15 patients in the ICU. They are wounded and on respirators. We have newborns in incubators. We have 14,000 displaced people, the majority of whom are women and children," Farsakh said.

The PRCS "has run out of options", it said, adding that it has been repeatedly warning for two weeks that "fuel supplies would run out if Israeli occupation forces continue to refuse to allow fuel to enter the Gaza Strip".

Israel imposed a total siege on Gaza two days after the war began on October 7, tightening the existing blockade that has been in place since 2007 and severely curtailing the entry of aid, food, water, electricity and fuel.

According to Gaza's Ministry of Health, 18 hospitals have been put out of service since the war began, either because they ran out of fuel or due to bombardments.

Bashar Murad, emergency medical services director at the PRCS, who works at Al-Quds Hospital, described the situation at the facility "as the most catastrophic" in the organisation's history. "On Sunday, Israeli air strikes bombed the entrance of our hospital, resulting in the killing of four people at the entrance and the injury of 35 people, 12 of whom were inside the hospital," Murad said.

He added that half of its ambulances are out of service while its central storage area has been hit and partially destroyed. "We lost all medications and equipment in the storage worth around \$5 million," said Murad, whose family has fled to Khan Younis.

"I stayed in Gaza [City] as I cannot leave work under these circumstances."

Israel has been shelling near several hospitals in the past few days, killing and injuring patients and displaced people and further curtailing the provision of services. Earlier on Wednesday, a mosque was hit near the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis in southern Gaza, where many displaced Palestinians had moved after heeding Israel's calls to evacuate the north.

"Just 100 metres [110 yards] away from the [Nasser] Hospital, a mosque – the largest mosque in the area – was completely destroyed in an air strike," Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud reported from Khan Younis.

"What's troubling about this air strike is it's in the middle of a busy road – a main road leading to the side gate of the hospital and also a busy market with so many people out there shopping for daily essentials," he explained.

"There's also a bakery next to the mosque where hundreds of people at least were waiting for bread," he said. The number of casualties wasn't immediately known.

The Israeli military has accused the Palestinian group Hamas of using hospitals in their military campaign against Israel. "Hamas places forces and weapons inside, under and around schools, mosques, homes and UN facilities," Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari told reporters on Sunday. "Among the worst of Hamas war crimes is the use of hospitals to hide their terror infrastructure." Hamas has repeatedly

rejected the charge.

The chairman of the Qatari Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, Mohammed al-Emadi, said Israel's allegation was a "blatant attempt to justify the occupation's targeting of civilian facilities, including hospitals, schools, gatherings of population and shelters of displaced people".

A recent Al Jazeera investigation has found that there are no grounds to support Israel's contention that a Hamas tunnel is under the Qatari-funded Sheikh Hamad Hospital in northern Gaza.

Hospitals and ambulances have been hit several times. The World Health Organization said at least 39 health facilities, including 22 hospitals, have been damaged since the war began. Gaza's Health Ministry said 193 health workers have been killed since the start of the war while 45 ambulances have been destroyed.

At least 10,569 Palestinians, including 4,324 children, have been killed in the Gaza Strip since the conflict erupted while entire neighbourhoods have been reduced to rubble. About 1.5 million people are now internally displaced in Gaza, according to the United Nations.

More than 1,400 people, mostly civilians, were killed in an attack by Hamas on southern Israel on October 7, which started the latest Gaza war.

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