

Indonesian medics rally for Gaza to stop the genocide

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Jakarta, November 19 (RHC)-- Indonesian medics have held a communal prayer event in Jakarta to call for a ceasefire and an end to the “genocide” in Gaza where the Indonesia Hospital, located in the north of the war-torn Palestinian enclave, has been forced to cease operations.

The event held in Jakarta and online included staff from Indonesia’s doctors’, midwives’, pharmacists’ and dentists’ associations, and was organised by the Medical Emergency Rescue Committee (MER-C) which helped fund the construction of the Indonesian Hospital in 2011.

“Attacks on hospitals and healthcare workers constitute violations of international law,” they said in the statement.

“A total of 22 hospitals and 49 health centres were forced to stop operating in the Gaza Strip due to Israeli arrogance,” the two groups said, calling on Indonesia’s government to “engage in firm diplomacy on the international stage to pressure Israel to cease its aggression in Gaza”.

Three Indonesian volunteers, Fikri Rofiul Haq, Reza Aldilla Kurniawan and Farid Zanjabil Al Ayubi, are currently based at the Indonesian Hospital in Gaza’s Beit Lahia.

The hospital’s director, Atef al-Kahlout, told Al Jazeera on Thursday that the medical facility was no longer able to “offer any more services ... we cannot offer patients any beds”.

Severe Israeli attacks were reported in the vicinity of the Indonesian Hospital on Friday. Describing the bombing, journalist Hussam Shabbat said from the Indonesian Hospital: “We lived 15 minutes of hell.” Shabbat said that while Israel has bombed the area daily, Friday was the most difficult day since the war began.

Dr Zecky Eko Triwahyudi, an orthopaedics and traumatology doctor at the Jakarta Cempaka Putih Islamic Hospital, who attended the prayer event in the Indonesian capital, said it was “the least he could do” to support the people of Gaza.

“Health facilities, which should not be targeted, have been targeted by Israeli forces for the past month. Without any basis, excuses are made up as justification for attacking hospitals and health workers. All hospitals in the Gaza Strip have become targets,” he said.

Triwahyudi said that a humanitarian response was a matter of urgency as the two largest and best-known trauma hospitals in the Gaza Strip, al-Shifa Hospital and the Indonesian Hospital, “have been paralysed in the last few days”.

The Indonesian Hospital is the main trauma hospital in northern Gaza, and thus offers essential care in that area, while al-Shifa Hospital is located in central Gaza, he said.

While Indonesian health workers have rallied behind the Indonesian Hospital and the plight of Gaza, Indonesia’s government faces a challenging diplomatic situation regarding the war, and the fate of the hospital and its staff, as Jakarta moves closer to the United States – Israel’s staunchest ally.

Indonesia is the world’s most populous Muslim country and has seen large demonstrations in support of Palestinians as well as calls for a boycott of businesses seen as linked to Israel.

During a meeting earlier this week, Indonesian President Joko Widodo pressed US President Joe Biden to do more to end “atrocities” in Gaza and help bring about a ceasefire. The two then agreed to elevate diplomatic relations to a “comprehensive strategic partnership.”

Ahmad Rizky M Umar, an associate lecturer at the University of Queensland, told Al Jazeera that while Indonesia built and facilitates the Indonesian Hospital in Gaza, it is unable to protect it now.

“Indonesia does not have sufficient diplomatic capacity to defend it, especially from attacks by” Israeli forces, he said. “Indonesia’s response could be more robust by convincing other countries to put pressure on Israel. Especially, to encourage a ceasefire and stronger humanitarian response,” he said.

Dr Yogi Prabowo, also an orthopaedic and traumatology doctor at the Jakarta Cempaka Putih Islamic Hospital, said the Indonesian Hospital’s cessation of operations will likely have fatal consequences for Palestinians, particularly after al-Shifa also stopped providing services.

“The Indonesian Hospital was the last breath of medical services in Gaza, but now it has stopped,” Prabowo said.

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