

Israeli tanks surround Gaza's Indonesian Hospital

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An Israeli tank plows through Gaza City [File: Handout via AP]

Gaza City, November 21 (RHC)-- Israeli tanks have surrounded northern Gaza's Indonesian Hospital after artillery fire killed at least 12 Palestinians in the complex, according to the war-torn enclave's Ministry of Health.

Ashraf al-Qudra, Gaza's Health Ministry spokesperson, told Al Jazeera on Monday that "the situation is catastrophic" in the Indonesian Hospital, where hundreds of people remain trapped.

“The Indonesian Hospital staff are insisting they will stay to treat the wounded. There are about 700 people, including medical staff and injured people, inside the hospital,” he said.

The Israeli military, which rarely publicises troop movements, had no immediate comment.

The Palestinian news agency Wafa said the facility in the northeast Gaza town of Beit Lahiya had been hit by artillery fire. Palestinian health officials said there were frantic efforts to evacuate civilians out of harm’s way.

Hospital staff denied there were any armed militants on the premises.

Indonesia’s Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi condemned Israel’s actions and urged Tel Aviv’s partners to “stop its atrocities.” “The attack is a clear violation of international humanitarian laws. All countries, especially those that have close relations with Israel, must use all their influence and capabilities to urge Israel to stop its atrocities,” she said in a statement.

The advance on the facility, set up in 2016 with funding from Indonesian organisations, came a day after the World Health Organization evacuated 31 premature babies from al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. They were among more than 250 critically ill or wounded patients stranded there since Israeli forces entered the compound.

The territory’s largest health facility is being evacuated at gunpoint after being under siege for several days with 7,000 people inside.

The United Nations humanitarian agency OCHA has reported the “collapse of services” at hospitals across northern Gaza following widespread air strikes and the lack of fuel and medical supplies.

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