

Israeli forces raid Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital after days of deadly air strikes

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Bodies of Palestinians killed in an Israeli air strike are brought to the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Gaza [File: Fadi Alwhidi/Anadolu via Getty Images]

Gaza City, December 13 (RHC)-- Israeli forces have raided the Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza, after besieging and shelling it for several days, sources and the Palestinian Ministry of Health said. Ashraf al-Qudra, a ministry spokesman, said Israeli troops were rounding up men and boys in the courtyard of the hospital in Beit Lahiya, including medical staff, on Tuesday.

"We fear their arrest and the arrest of the medical teams or their killing," he said, calling for international intervention. "We call on the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the International Committee of the Red Cross to act immediately to save the lives of those in the hospital."

Inside, there are patients, medical staff and thousands of civilians who have taken refuge after being forced to flee their homes.

Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud, reporting from southern Gaza on Tuesday, said the raid was taking place "under heavy gunfire and artillery shelling." "Tanks pushed deeper at the gates and the entire facility is under heavy bombardment," he said. "Loudspeakers are being used to call anyone aged above 15 to come out of the building with their hands in the air." He added that Israeli forces who raided the facility also asked security guards protecting the hospital to hand over their weapons.

Kamal Adwan is the only remaining health facility within the northern part of Gaza, our correspondent said. "Over the last few days, it came under heavy bombardment and air strikes and tank shelling destroying the vast majority of its facilities, and all the major roads leading to it."

The United Nations humanitarian agency OCHA said two mothers were killed when the maternity department of Kamal Adwan was hit on Monday.

"The hospital remains surrounded by Israeli troops and tanks," OCHA said, adding that the hospital was currently accommodating 65 patients, including 12 children in the intensive care unit and six newborns in incubators.

"About 3,000 internally displaced persons remain trapped in the facility and are awaiting evacuation with extreme shortages of water, food and power reported," it added.

The situation in Kamal Adwan is catastrophic, Leo Cans, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) head of mission for Palestine, told Al Jazeera. "We are outraged by what's going on," he said, adding that medics in Gaza were operating in conditions comparable to World War I.

"We are operating on the floor. Children are arriving with very bad injuries, and [surgeons] have to do multiple operations but there are no more beds," he said.

Israeli troops have previously raided and evacuated other medical facilities in Gaza, including the Indonesian Hospital and al-Shifa, the territory's largest hospital.

The World Health Organization (WHO) says only 11 out of 36 of Gaza's hospitals remain partially functional and pleaded for them to remain intact. "We cannot afford to lose any healthcare facilities or hospitals," Rik Peeperkorn, WHO representative for the occupied Palestinian territories, told a UN press briefing by videolink from Gaza. "We hope, we plea that this will not happen."

The assault on the Kamal Adwan Hospital came as Israel's military continued to bombard the southern Gaza Strip, including Rafah on the Egyptian border, where thousands of Palestinians expelled from northern Gaza face dire shortages of food, water, medicine, fuel and shelter.

Fatma Soliman Al-Malihy, who was displaced along with her family from northern Gaza, told reporters: "There is no food or water to drink. The house is destroyed. There is nothing. There is no money. Please stop the war on us, for God's sake. We are innocent people. We have nothing. We own nothing. We are unarmed people, for God's sake. Look at us. Muslims, foreigners, the U.S. itself, stop the war, for God's sake. We are destroyed. Where would we go? You moved us from the north to Rafah. We

don't know where to go. We don't sleep. My God, we can't sleep. We are depressed. We are scared, dead scared about our sons and children. We have children with disabilities, paralyzed ones. Where would we go?"

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