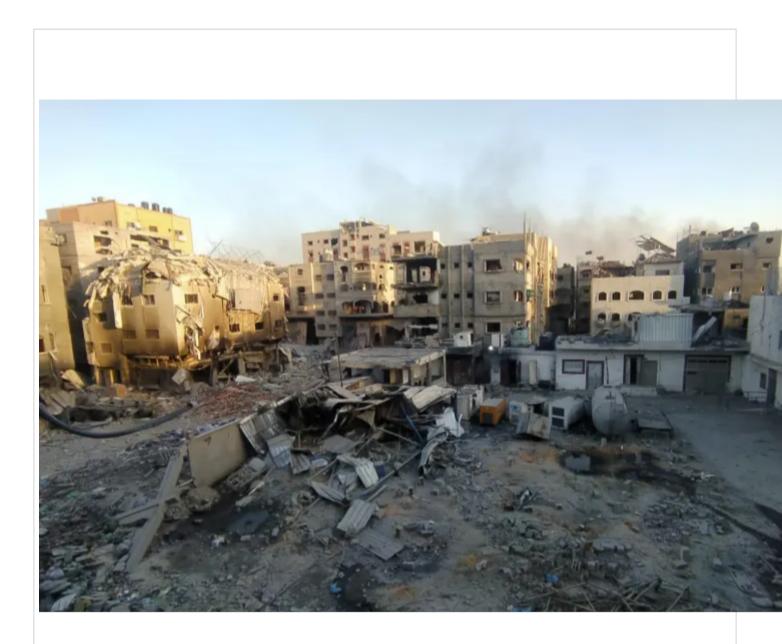# Israeli soldiers burn Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital and force hundreds to leave

Gaza's Health Ministry said the Israeli army ordered 350 people to leave Kamal Adwan Hospital for a nearby school sheltering displaced families [Khalil Ramzi Alkahlut/Anadolu Agency] Health officials say they have lost contact with staff at the northern Gaza hospital after Israel forced 350 people out.

Beit Lahya, December 28 (RHC)-- Israeli soldiers have stormed Kamal Adwan Hospital, the last remaining medical facility in the northern Gaza Strip, torching large sections and ordering hundreds of people to leave.

Gaza's Ministry of Health said on Friday that contact had been lost with staff inside the hospital in Beit Lahiya, which has been under siege and heavy pressure from Israeli forces for weeks.

"The occupation forces are inside the hospital now and they are burning it," Munir al-Bursh, the director of the ministry, said in a statement. The Israeli army issued a statement confirming it launched a raid on the Kamal Adwan Hospital, claiming without evidence that the medical facility "serves as a Hamas terrorist stronghold in northern Gaza".

Israeli forces have throughout their assault on Gaza routinely besieged and attacked medical facilities – housing both patients and displaced families – under similar pretexts.

Youssef Abu el-Rish, Gaza's deputy health minister, said Israeli forces had set fire to the surgical department, laboratory and a storehouse in the hospital.

The fire has been spreading to the rest of the medical complex, according to a separate statement by the enclave's Health Ministry. It said Kamal Adwan is "suffering from a stifling siege, as the operating and surgery departments, laboratory, maintenance, ambulance units and warehouses have been completely burned."

"The fire has now begun to spread to all buildings," the statement added. It also said, "the [Israeli] occupation army is forcibly transferring patients and the injured under the threat of weapons and gun barrels to the Indonesian Hospital, which lacks medical supplies, water, medicines, and even electricity and generators."

Like the Indonesian and al-Awda hospitals, Kamal Adwan has been repeatedly attacked by Israeli forces, especially after they launched a renewed ground offensive in the area more than two months ago. The north, where a famine is looming, has been under total siege and cut off from the rest of the Strip since then.

Al-Bursh said the Israeli army had ordered 350 people to leave Kamal Adwan for a nearby school sheltering displaced families. This included 75 patients, their companions, and 185 medical staff.

Footage circulating on local media showed smoke rising from the area of Kamal Adwan Hospital. Much of the area around the northern towns of Jabalia, Beit Hanoon and Beit Lahiya has been cleared of people and systematically razed, prompting speculation that Israel intends to keep the area as a closed buffer zone.

Al Jazeera's Tareq Abu Azzoum, reporting from central Gaza's Deir el-Balah, said there has been a scarcity of information coming out of Kamal Adwan on Friday, but witnesses who were in the facility said they faced inspections from Israeli soldiers.

Witnesses also "confirmed that the Israeli military had conducted field executions in [the hospital's] vicinity", Abu Azzoum said, adding that the fate of the hospital's director is unknown.

Kamal Adwan has been seeing a "gradual escalation" and "deliberate attacks" by the Israeli army, our correspondent said, adding that the forced evacuations and fires have dealt a "devastating blow to the already fragile northern Gaza's healthcare system".

On Thursday, health officials said five medical staff, including a paediatrician, were killed by Israeli fire at Kamal Adwan.

In a statement, Hamas blamed Israel and the United States for the fate of the hospital's occupants. "The [Israeli] occupation government is committing crimes in Gaza, relying on American cover and some Western capitals that are partners in the ongoing genocide," it said on Telegram.

Spokesperson for the UN's World Health Organization Margaret Harris expressed concern over the situation. "We are witnessing the targeting of civilians and the health system in Gaza," Harris told Al Jazeera. "What Gaza's hospitals are exposed to is horrific, and what we are witnessing represents a punishment for the population."

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