

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights says Tel Aviv is systematically targeting health care system in Gaza



United Nations, January 5 (RHC)-- Israel's deliberate targeting of medical facilities in Gaza prompted the UN Security Council to hold an emergency meeting over the weekend, during which UN officials pleaded for the protection of the hospitals.

At the meeting, UN human rights chief Volker Turk said Israel has failed to substantiate many of its claims that the facilities were being used by fighters in Gaza, describing the allegations as "often vague and broad" and in some cases "appear to be contradicted by publicly available information".

Turk called for an independent investigation into all Israeli attacks on medical facilities and healthcare workers in Gaza, as well as the alleged misuse of such facilities.

Rik Peepkorn of the WHO urged Israel to immediately rescind its evacuation orders on the Indonesian and al-Awda Hospitals. “They are struggling to stay open. Food, water and fuel are depleting fast,” he said at the UNSC meeting, adding that the hospitals have been without many essential medicines over the last 85 days amid Israel’s renewed assault on northern Gaza.

Peepkorn said the WHO was deeply concerned about the fate of the director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital, Dr Hussam Abu Safia, who was arrested by Israel last week. “We have lost contact with him since and call for his immediate release,” Peepkorn said.

Christina Markus Lassen, Denmark’s ambassador to the UN, noted the WHO’s warning of a “systematic targeting of the healthcare system in Gaza” and urged that the “pattern” be “reversed”.

A recent report from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights found that Israeli forces have conducted more than 136 air raids on some 27 hospitals and 12 medical facilities over the past eight months.

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