

Over 160 Gazan medics held in Israeli jails subjected to torture



London, February 26 (RHC)-- At least 160 healthcare workers from Gaza, including over 20 doctors, are held in Israeli detention centers, where torture and rape are routine, British daily The Guardian reports.

The paper highlighted the dire circumstances faced by healthcare professionals from Gaza currently held in Israeli detention centers, with many individuals unaccounted for after being seized by Israeli forces from hospitals in the course of the war.

According to the Palestinian medical NGO Healthcare Workers Watch (HWW), as of today, 162 medical personnel remain in Israeli custody, including some of Gaza's most senior physicians. Previously, a total of 179 healthcare workers had been detained and later released.

“Israel’s targeting of the healthcare workforce in this manner is having a devastating impact on the provision of healthcare to Palestinians, leading to extensive suffering, countless preventable deaths, and

the effective eradication of entire medical specialties,” stated Muath Alser, director of the HWW.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has confirmed that 297 healthcare workers from Gaza have been detained since the onset of the war, expressing deep concern for their safety, although it does not have up-to-date information on those released or still in detention.

Detailed testimonies collected by The Guardian and the Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) from seven senior doctors reveal the brutal conditions faced by those detained.

These accounts indicate that medical professionals have been forcibly taken from hospitals, ambulances, and checkpoints, illegally transferred across the border to Israeli-run prisons, and subjected to prolonged periods of torture, starvation, and physical abuse before being released without charges.

Moreover, 24 healthcare workers remain missing after being abducted by Israeli forces from hospitals during the war.

Among those detained is Dr. Hussam Abu Safia, director of Kamal Adwan Hospital, who was apprehended in December. A lawyer who visited him reported that Dr. Abu Safia had endured torture and was denied medical treatment while held at Ofer Prison in Ramallah.

Two prominent Palestinian doctors, Dr. Iyad al-Rantisi and Dr. Adnan al-Bursh, have died in Israeli custody, victims of systematic abuse.

Dr. Mohammed Abu Selmia, director of Al-Shifa Hospital, recounted his own harrowing experience of torture during a seven-month imprisonment, detailing the horrific conditions he faced, including beatings with rifle butts, attacks by dogs, and severe deficiencies in food, hygiene, and sanitation.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has called on Israel to immediately release all medical staff held arbitrarily and to “end all practices that amount to enforced disappearances, torture, and other ill-treatment.”

The OHCHR added that the Israeli military's detention of numerous healthcare workers has significantly contributed to the deterioration of Gaza's healthcare system.

The Geneva Conventions mandate the protection of healthcare workers during conflicts, yet the ongoing targeting of these professionals by Israeli forces raises serious concerns about compliance with international humanitarian law.

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