

*Gaza's Nasser Hospital
completely out of service as
Israeli attacks mount*

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Khan Younis, February 18 (RHC)-- Ground and air assaults by the Israeli forces have now rendered Gaza's second-largest hospital nonoperational. The besieged enclave's Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization (WHO) on Sunday said the Nasser Hospital in southern Gaza's Khan Younis is no longer functioning after a weeks-long siege that intensified this week, followed by deadly raids.

"There are only four medical staffers currently caring for patients" inside the hospital, ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qudra told Reuters news agency on Sunday.

In a post on X, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the organisation's team has not been permitted by the Israeli military to enter the hospital since Friday to assess the condition of critical patients

and medical needs, even though they reached the hospital along with partners to deliver fuel.

“There are still about 200 patients in the hospital. At least 20 need to be urgently referred to other hospitals to receive health care; medical referral is every patient’s right,” he said, adding that “the cost of delays will be paid by patients’ lives”.

In the past few days, Israeli soldiers had raided the hospital, where displaced Palestinians were also sheltering. The Health Ministry on Saturday said Israeli forces “arrested a large number of the directors and staff” of the hospital while they were tending to the wounded.

On Friday, the ministry said an aid convoy led by the United Nations was detained for seven hours and prevented from reaching the hospital.

Meanwhile, al-Amal Hospital, the only other major medical facility still operational in Khan Younis, continues to be a target of Israeli attacks. The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) on Sunday said Israeli forces targeted the third floor of the hospital with artillery fire.

The Israeli military has expanded its siege on Khan Younis and its medical facilities as it pushed further south into Rafah on the border with Egypt. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has remained adamant about an imminent ground attack on Rafah, where more than 1.4 million displaced Palestinians have been sheltering, creating a humanitarian crisis.

“In the overnight [air] attacks on Rafah, we’ve seen the horror of displaced Palestinians trying to find shelters in the city where they were ordered to evacuate and told it would be a ‘safe zone’ only to find themselves targeted and killed inside their homes,” Al Jazeera’s Hani Mahmoud, reporting from Rafah, said on Sunday.

“On top of that, there is a lack of available medical staff and a shortage of medical supplies, which literally leaves people lying on the floors of hospitals for hours, waiting for help. Israel has put restrictions on the delivery of aid worsening the shortage.”

The UN, along with the United States and other Israel allies, have said they would not accept an invasion of Rafah but have not discussed what they would do if Israel proceeds with its “total victory” approach.

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