Israel detains director of key north Gaza hospital as World Health Organization condemns raids
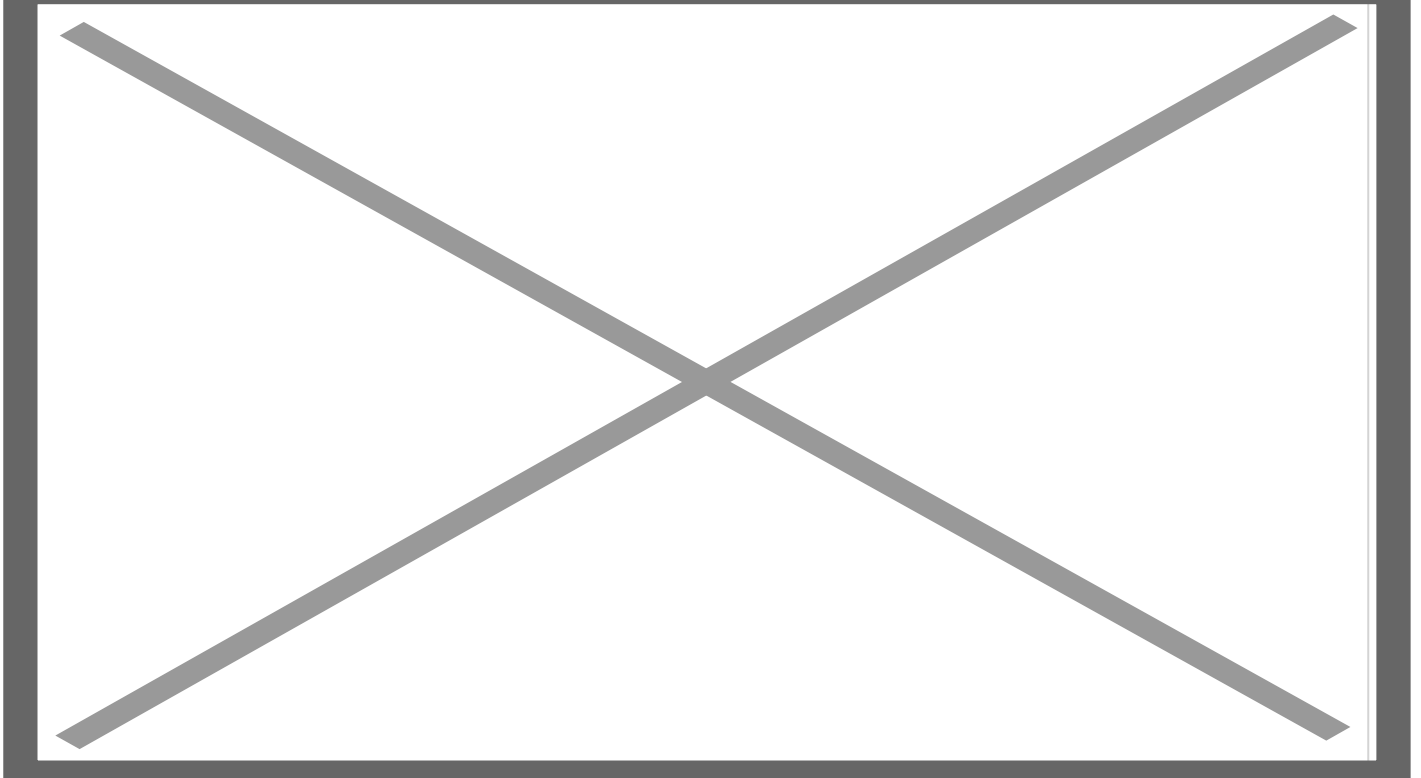

People and medics assist a wounded Palestinian child at Kamal Adwan hospital
Israeli forces storm Kamal Adwan Hospital, putting the last remaining medical facility in northern Gaza out of service.

Geneva, December 30 (RHC)-- Israel's army has detained the director of one of the last functioning hospitals in northern Gaza, as the World Health Organization said Israeli assaults on medical facilities are a "death sentence" for thousands of Palestinians.

An Israeli military assault on the Kamal Adwan Hospital on Friday put the last major health facility in northern Gaza out of service, the WHO said.

"Initial reports indicate that some key departments were severely burned and destroyed during the raid," the WHO said in a statement on X on Friday evening.

The Israeli military said in a statement that it had launched a raid on the Kamal Adwan Hospital as it "serves as a Hamas terrorist stronghold", but failed to provide any evidence for this claim. Hamas said it "categorically" denied the allegation.

Gaza health officials said on Saturday that Israeli forces had detained the director of the hospital. "The occupation forces have taken dozens of the medical staff from Kamal Adwan Hospital to a detention centre for interrogation, including the director, Hussam Abu Safia," the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza said in a statement.

The ministry had earlier quoted Abu Safia as saying the military had "set on fire all surgery departments of the hospital" and that there were "a large number of injuries" among the medical team.

As of Friday morning, the hospital housed about 350 people, including 75 patients and 180 medical staff. The WHO said 25 patients in critical condition, including those on ventilators, reportedly remain with 60 health workers in the hospital.

The patients in moderate to severe condition were forced to evacuate to the destroyed and non-functional Indonesian Hospital, the United Nations health agency said, adding it was "deeply concerned for their safety".

The WHO reiterated its call for a ceasefire.

"This raid on Kamal Adwan Hospital comes after escalating restrictions on access for WHO and partners, and repeated attacks on or near the facility since early October," the agency said.

"Such hostilities and the raids are undoing all our efforts and support to keep the facility minimal[ly] functional. The systematic dismantling of the health system in Gaza is a death sentence for tens of thousands of Palestinians in need of healthcare.

"This horror must end and healthcare must be protected."

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