

Written evidence submitted by Muslim Women's Association of Edinburgh (IPC0085)

Time sensitive urgent request: Diplomatic support to urge Israel to allow WHO to safely evacuate NICU babies and patients from the Kamal Adwan hospital. And to ensure that the remaining staff at Kamal Adwan hospital are not subjected to further attacks - there are 75,000 civilians remaining in north Gaza and it is imperative that Kamal Adwan is enabled to function in order to serve them.

I'm writing to express my ongoing concern about the devastating violence on healthcare facilities, workers and patients in Gaza, but specifically now at the Kamal Adwan hospital. As a fellow healthworker (or concerned citizen), I implore you to encourage Israel to stop attacking the hospital and remove all military personnel and vehicles from the grounds, as well as retract the evacuation order. Hospitals must remain protected under international law and the evacuation order is a direct violation. The UK is a signatory to the Geneva Convention and must do everything in its power to prevent and stop genocide.

Today is the 83rd day of siege on the hospitals of North Gaza. Kamal Adwan Hospital has been ringing the alarm since the beginning of the siege in order to preserve its humanitarian mission.

The hospitals have been denied access to humanitarian aid, food, medicine and safety.

Direct attacks on the hospitals began with no warnings and no civilian protection permitted by the occupation, in the way of normal procedures expected in a combat zone. ICRC and other UN bodies were consistently denied access to intervene. As a result significant harm and loss to civilian life and means of preserving life resulted in these attacks on hospitals.

At no point were there any military targets or activity in the hospitals. They have been constantly telling and showing the world that they are only providing humanitarian medical missions to the remaining 75,000 people in north Gaza. Many of whom are being mercilessly slaughtered in indiscriminate attacks and left to die in the street, as the occupation slowly dismantles our few remaining medical resources.

Despite official COGAT and IDF statements, they have not had any official orders to evacuate our hospitals. They have not been given deconfliction or the required assistance and equipment for safe passage to a place of safety that will preserve civilian life.

These are the official protocols and procedures that must be met at minimum if Israel wishes to meet its International Humanitarian Law obligations.

They currently have nearly 400 civilians inside the hospital, including babies in the neonatal unit, whose lives depend on Oxygen and incubators. They cannot evacuate these patients safely without assistance, equipment and time.

However, as the world saw with the European Gaza Hospital months ago, evacuation orders were given directly to staff by IDF over the phone and no deconfliction or support were given, or adequate time to evacuate safely. As a result patients were shot at as they attempted to flee the hospital. It was only after calls to media and media attention that COGAT issued a clarification after patients and staff were exposed to risk or killed.

Now we are witnessing this pattern repeated once again, but still have time to save the lives of the babies in incubators. They have repeatedly requested assistance, and have openly invited the IDF to see for themselves the internal workings of our hospitals so that they may continue to serve our population without fear of attack and death. These calls were rejected.

Right now the Kamal Adwan hospital is under heavy bombardment and direct targeting of the fuel tanks, which if hit, will cause a large explosion and mass casualties of the civilians inside.

The protection of civilians is paramount and a requirement under international humanitarian law. The UK has a special responsibility - as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, former colonial power in the region, and the world's second-largest arms exporter - including at least half a billion in export licences to Israel over the past decade.

It is thought that around 15% of the value of each of Israel's F-35 combat aircraft is produced in the UK. The aircraft are being heavily used in Israel's bombing campaign on Gaza.

As the minister of state for overseas aid, I am asking you to do whatever you can to facilitate the evacuation of patients and staff from the Kamal Adwan hospital, and encourage Israel to allow WHO to help evacuate.

We also urge you to:

- Support the motion for an immediate and permanent ceasefire - to benefit everyone in Israel and Palestine, facilitate the provision of adequate humanitarian assistance and the release of hostages, and curtail the risk of regional conflict.
- Call for the suspension of all arms export licences to Israel and any other forms of military support with immediate effect.
- Call for the UK to ensure Israel fully implements the International Court of Justice orders.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

31st December 2024