

Urgent Appeal to Protect Al-Shifa hospital and All Healthcare Facilities

As the Israeli forces continue their military aggression against the Gaza strip, with mounting casualties especially among civilians that need urgent medical care at the medical complex of Al-Shifaa hospital have been occupied by the Israeli forces.

In times of war, the targeting or neglect of healthcare facilities not only violates international humanitarian law but also erodes the fundamental principles that form the backbone of our shared humanity.

Hospitals are havens of healing, where the wounded and sick seek solace and treatment without discrimination. These institutions, staffed by dedicated healthcare professionals, are guided by an ethical duty to provide care to all, irrespective of their affiliations or backgrounds. Recognizing the pivotal role that hospitals play in times of crisis, it is imperative that we collectively affirm and act upon our responsibility to shield them from the ravages of war.

The Geneva Conventions and other international treaties unequivocally outline the protection afforded to medical facilities during armed conflicts. The deliberate targeting of hospitals is a blatant violation of these agreements and represents a reprehensible departure from International law and International humanitarian law.

The protection of hospitals is not a mere recommendation but a binding obligation that transcends political, geographical, and ideological boundaries. It is a commitment to safeguarding the lives of innocent civilians, ensuring access to essential medical care, and preserving the dignity of those caught in the crossfire of conflict.

To fulfill this obligation, we call upon all countries and international organizations to put pressure on Israel to protect hospitals as neutral spaces. The government of Israel should be held accountable for actions that compromise the safety and functionality of healthcare facilities, including converting hospitals and medical facilities for military purposes and targets of military operations, endangering the lives of patients, as well as medical and health staff (these practices include subjecting patients and staff to interrogations while being blindfolded, using explosives to open doors and move through the walls of the facility, taking patients outside of the hospital complex and denying them access to treatment, shelling the coronary artery care unit which also damaged patients rooms). We further urge international organizations including the United Nations, advocacy groups, and the media to raise awareness about the severe consequences of attacking or neglecting hospitals during wartime.

Thus, Palestinian Civil Society calls for:

- 1) An immediate Ceasefire in order to protect life.
- 2) The protection of Al-Shifaa hospital and all medical facilities in the Gaza Strip, including the protection of all patients, staff and civilians that sought refuge in it.
- 3) The provision of essential medical supplies and goods including food, water and lifesaving fuel to maintain the operations of the hospital and all medical facilities.
- 4) Provide a safe access and continued presence of international humanitarian organizations including the World Health Organization, the International Red Cross and the United Nations Refugees and Works Agencies among others, to help deliver essential supplies and provide medical expertise in order treat those in need.
- 5) The Israeli occupation army should immediately vacate the premises of Al-Shifaa hospital and all medical institutions in Gaza and their surrounding areas to protect the neutrality and lifesaving services of these institutions.

In reaffirming our commitment to the protection of hospitals in wartime, we stand united in our pursuit of a more compassionate and just world. Let us join hands to ensure that the places dedicated to healing and saving lives remain inviolable, even in the midst of conflict, and that the rights and well-being of the most vulnerable among us are upheld without compromise.