

500 dead as Israel bombs Al Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza

Alex Lantier
18 October 2023

Five hundred people were killed and many more injured when the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) bombed the Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City on Tuesday. Protests erupted internationally against this war crime, committed as US President Joe Biden and the leaders of the other NATO imperialist powers reaffirmed their full support for Israel's genocidal assault on the Palestinians in Gaza.

The bombing of the hospital took place under conditions where Israel's blockade of the densely populated and impoverished enclave, widely described as an open-air prison, has cut off all water, fuel and food supplies. It followed an IDF evacuation order demanding that some 1.1 million Palestinians flee Gaza City and northern Gaza and move to the south.

Shortly before the hospital was bombed, Israeli forces bombed a UN school at the nearby al-Maghazi refugee camp, killing six people and wounding dozens more. UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) official Tamara al-Rifai said there was "direct Israeli fire" on the school. She called the attack "utterly shocking," adding, "We clearly identify all of our buildings and we share the GPS coordinates with all of the parties [fighting in the war]. That camp hosted 4,000 displaced people."

The bombing of the school was followed by a massive explosion at the Al Ahli Arab hospital, where hundreds wounded in Israel's air assault had been joined by thousands seeking refuge from the murderous attacks at what they believed would be a relatively safe location. The hundreds killed in the hospital bombing included refugees sleeping on the ground outside the facility, according to reports by health workers at the scene.

Doctor Ghassan Abu Sittah said: "We were operating in the hospital, there was a strong explosion, and the ceiling fell on the operating room. This is a massacre."

An emergency first responder who witnessed the bombing told the Anadolu Agency: "They were sleeping only under trees, no rooms, no shelters. They were

bombed with rockets. There were no wounded, all of them were killed. We could not count the martyrs, they were torn to pieces. ... At a minimum, 30 to 40 percent of them were children."

He added, "The genocide must be stopped. For the leaders of the world, you must stop this massacre of Gaza."

The Doctors Without Borders (MSF) international medical charity denounced the Israeli bombing on Twitter/X, writing:

We are horrified by the recent Israeli bombing of Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, which was treating patients and hosting displaced Gazans. Hundreds of people have reportedly been killed ... It is absolutely unacceptable.

Palestinian Health Ministry officials confirmed the number of fatalities at over 500, but added that more victims were buried under the rubble. They said the overall number of deaths in the Israeli bombing of Gaza, since the uprising against the Israeli blockade of Gaza began on October 6-7, had reached 3,000, with over 12,500 wounded. These figures are already higher than those registered during the 53-day Israeli war on Gaza in 2014.

Israeli officials cynically tried to deny their responsibility for the massacre, claiming that the hospital was hit by rockets intended for Israel that were launched by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group, but which misfired. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said "barbaric terrorists in Gaza" were responsible for "attacking" the hospital, adding, "Whoever brutally murdered our children is also murdering their children."

Israeli Ambassador to the United States Michael Herzog

posted a video on Twitter purporting to show rockets launched from Gaza falling back onto Gazan territory, claiming it showed the Al Ahli Arab Hospital attack. This lie fell apart when it emerged that the time stamps on the video, around 8 p.m., were nearly three-quarters of an hour later than the time the bombing occurred.

Islamic Jihad issued a statement denying responsibility for the attack, declaring:

The Zionist enemy is trying hard to evade its responsibility for the brutal massacre he committed by bombing the Baptist Arab National Hospital in Gaza through his usual fabrication of lies and through pointing the finger of blame at the Islamic Jihad movement in Palestine.

The Netanyahu government and its NATO backers carried out this horrific massacre. It flows from the entire genocidal strategy of the IDF and the Netanyahu government, fully supported by Washington and its European imperialist allies.

A central part of the Israeli government's strategy of genocide and ethnic cleansing—as it orders over one million Gazans to leave their homes while denying them access to water, food and fuel—has been to block access to medical care. Israeli and NATO officials have defended the illegal blockade of Gaza, even though the cut-off of energy will lead to mass deaths of premature babies in incubators, dialysis patients and intensive care patients, whose treatment depends on a steady supply of electricity.

Yesterday, of Gaza's 23 hospitals, 20 were offering only "partial services" because their fuel and energy reserves were "almost totally depleted," the UNRWA reported. Earlier this week, World Health Organization (WHO) officials confirmed that in Gaza, 111 health facilities have been attacked, 12 health care workers killed, and 60 ambulances bombed.

On Tuesday, protests erupted around the world against this latest, horrific crime against humanity targeting the people of Gaza. In the United States, protesters gathered once again outside the White House and others marched in New York City and Las Vegas. More demonstrations are expected on Wednesday and the following days.

In Canada, thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters marched to protest the hospital bombing outside the US consulate in Montreal.

Protests spread across the Middle East and North

Africa. On the West Bank, Palestinian protesters marched in Ramallah, shouting, "The people want the fall of the president," referring to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who functions as a stooge of Israel and the US. The demonstrators were quickly dispersed by riot police firing tear gas.

Protests were also reported in the West Bank Cities of Nablus and Jenin.

Thousands of protesters marched outside Israeli consulates in Turkey and Amman, Jordan. In Amman, demonstrators clashed with riot police as they tried to breach the perimeter of the US facility.

In Lebanon, protesters marched outside the US and French embassies in Beirut, and protests erupted in Palestinian refugee camps in Sidon and Tyre. The Shiite Islamist militia Hezbollah, which traded more intense artillery fire with IDF forces in northern Israel, has called a "day of rage" protest for Wednesday.

In Tunis, protesters defied a state ban on protests to march outside the French embassy, shouting: "The French and Americans are allies of the Zionists," and "No American embassy on Tunisian soil."

In Iran, protesters marched outside the French and British embassies in Tehran, shouting slogans such as "Death to France, England, America and the Zionists." There were also protests in Isfahan and Qom.

In Baghdad, thousands of protesters marched on the Green Zone, the area of the Iraqi capital set up by US occupation forces in 2003, though security forces blocked them from marching on the US embassy.

The uprising of the Palestinian people against the illegal Israeli blockade of Gaza is part of a growing international movement in the working class against imperialism and Zionism. The critical question in halting the genocidal war and crimes against humanity committed against the people of Gaza is the unification of these struggles in a common movement against imperialist war and capitalism, and for socialism.



To contact the WSWP and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wswp.org/contact