

White House defends Shifa hospital massacre that killed over 400

Andre Damon
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The Israeli army's withdrawal from Shifa Hospital in Gaza on Monday revealed that the complex had been turned into a killing field, with hundreds of bodies of men, women and children showing signs of mass summary execution, torture and mutilation.

The massacre is among the largest in the nearly six-month-long US-Israeli genocide in Gaza, which has so far killed at least 32,000 people.

According to Gaza's government media office, the death toll of Israel's assault on the hospital stands at over 400. In a statement Monday, the Euro-Med Monitor said that the total number killed, missing or injured could number over 1,500, in "one of the largest massacres in Palestinian history."

Images shared widely on social media showed countless decomposed bodies being exhumed from the hospital's courtyards, where they had been buried by Israeli bulldozers. The bodies included women and children, as well as men with their hands zip-tied together.

Eyewitnesses told *Al Jazeera* and other media outlets that hostages were shot while handcuffed or thrown in ditches and buried alive by bulldozers.

The revelations of what could possibly be the largest massacre of the genocide so far prompted widespread popular outrage on social media, with millions of people sharing the documentary evidence.

"The [Israeli] occupation destroyed and burned all buildings inside Al-Shifa Medical Complex. They bulldozed the courtyards, burying dozens of bodies of martyrs in the rubble, turning the place into a mass graveyard," said Ismail Al-Thawabta, director of Gaza's government office. He added, "This is a crime against humanity."

"The medical staff, some of whom were killed, others tortured, others detained, and above all, they have been besieged for two weeks without any medical supplies or even food or water," Raed al-Nims, a spokesperson for

the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, told *Al Jazeera*.

He continued, "According to eyewitness accounts and official reports, many of the civilians were executed. They were killed by the Israeli occupation forces, including medical staff, doctors, and nurses; they were purposefully executed by the Israeli soldiers."

In its initial report on the massacre, based on on-the-ground reports, the Euro-Med Monitor reported that "hundreds of dead bodies, including some burned, and others with their heads and limbs severed, have been discovered both inside Al-Shifa Medical Complex and in the hospital's surrounding area."

The Biden administration, the leading sponsor of the Israeli genocide, defended the massacre, claiming Shifa hospital was a legitimate military target and alleging, without substantiation, that Hamas was using it as a headquarters.

"There were Hamas fighters hiding in Al Shifa Hospital," said State Department spokesman Matthew Miller.

"Do not believe that this attack was on the hospital," Miller added. "The attack was on the Hamas fighters that are hiding inside a hospital."

He added, "I don't know why I don't hear more people calling on Hamas to stop going into hospitals."

White House spokesman Karine Jean-Pierre added, "So look, Hamas should not be operating out of hospitals, we have said that over and over again, and putting civilians at risk."

"They're operating out of hospitals, out of hospitals," she added. "That's what they're doing. They're embedding themselves in the civilian population. This is what they're doing."

The White House responded to the massacre by directly green-lighting Israel's planned assault on Rafah, where over 1 million displaced people are sheltering.

Miller said that the scenario in which "Israel does

nothing about the Hamas fighters that continue to exist in Rafah” is not an “acceptable alternative.”

Jean-Pierre added, “We also know that there are Hamas operatives in Rafah as well. But if they’re going to move forward with military operations, we have to have this conversation. We have to understand how they’re going to move forward.”

According to Euro-Med, Israeli forces cleared the Shifa hospital complex of “all working personnel—particularly medical personnel—either by summary execution or forced displacement or arrest.”

The human rights group said that 22 patients were killed in their hospital beds during the siege, under conditions in which severely ill patients were denied food, water and medical care.

Among the medical workers killed in the attack were two doctors, Yusra Al-Maqadmeh and her son Ahmed Al-Maqadmeh.

In a widely shared tribute, Abu Sitta, a doctor who had previously worked in Gaza, wrote, “A beautiful soul and a great surgeon. We worked together in the Great March of Return and the 2021 war and then this recent war. His dedication was unlike anything I have ever seen. We will never forget.”

He added, “He spent this war going from Shifa hospital to Al Quds Hospital and when he was free he would join me at Al Ahli. Always dedicated, always wanting to learn. He refused to leave the north and kept sending me photos of his surgeries. He leaves behind a wife and baby.”

Earlier this month, Euro-Med reported that Israeli forces were carrying out mass summary executions of detainees. These reports were completely ignored by major media outlets in the United States. But the footage now emerging from Shifa hospital substantiates the allegations that the hospital was turned into a massive killing field by Israeli troops, with the full support of the Biden administration.



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