

Gaza: Doctors under attack released on Channel 4 following BBC censorship

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On July 2, Channel 4 showed the documentary *Gaza: Doctors Under Attack* at 10pm. Some 300,000 tuned in to view the late showing.

The documentary is a difficult but necessary watch: a thorough, objective, evidence-based exposure of crimes against the Palestinian population—and the conscious targeting of medics and healthcare workers in Gaza. Some 1,500 healthcare workers have been killed by Israeli forces and hundreds more detained, imprisoned and disappeared since October 2023.

“From the first day of the war, Israel attacked the one thing Palestinians needed most: its healthcare system,” says British reporter and narrator Ramita Navai.

Navai said the team had worked for over a year with human rights groups and healthcare workers who had “forensically collected evidence of Israeli war crimes”.

“Our interviews with Palestinian doctors and healthcare workers who have been targeted by Israel, and with Israeli whistleblowers, show that Israel’s targeting of healthcare workers is systematic and deliberate, and part of their effort to ‘destroy’ and ‘flatten Gaza’ and to ethnically cleanse it, as Israeli ministers have themselves been saying.”

The documentary met its mission statement. Footage is shown of one atrocity after another committed against innocent civilians, women and children who have nowhere to run or hide, their bodies strewn across crowded streets, often within a stone’s throw of hospitals which are being bombed and destroyed.

The central part of the film is the collection of stories of individual doctors. There is Dr Khaled Hamouda, discussing the direct attack on his home that killed 10 members of his family and the drone strike that moments later hit the house the survivors escaped to. His wife and young daughter dead, he then took refuge in the grounds of his hospital, which was bombarded

and raided. He was detained along with 70 other doctors and beaten.

And then there is Dr Adnan al-Bursh, who was detained, stripped, interrogated, disappeared and tortured and died in prison. There is a discussion of what has happened to the detained doctors, verified by an anonymous Israeli whistleblower, who confirms there are beatings and torture. There are vivid descriptions of this treatment of Palestinian medics and prisoners by Israeli doctors, who would perform procedures without anaesthetic and inform the prisoners that, “You are a criminal and you have to die.”

The documentary begins with footage filmed last April 2024 of an ambulance called to an emergency, its lights flashing and clearly marked as an ambulance carrying Palestinian Red Crescent medics. The Israel Defence Forces falsely claimed the ambulances did not have their lights on.

A video found on a dead medic’s phone contains the last words: “Forgive me, mum. I swear I only chose this path to help others.” Then there are rounds of endless gunshots. 12 medics are dead and 60 injured. The dead are dumped in a mass grave.

The documentary shows the systematic and orchestrated destruction of the entire hospital and health system of Gaza. First come the direct Israeli strikes. Israel hits al-Shifa, Gaza’s main hospital, claiming there was a Hamas command centre underneath. The filmmakers expose how Israel has repeatedly failed to provide “sufficient evidence” of this and has prevented an independent investigation.

After the strikes come the detentions. When Israeli troops have stormed hospitals, many medics have been seized. We see footage of men stripped to their underwear near a hospital; although it’s not clear who they are, that medics are among them is established by

some of the survivors.

A detainee at Sde Teiman says that he was refused treatment by Israeli doctors. An Israeli doctor, speaking to Navai under anonymity, admits: “I am an accomplice.” The doctor goes on to say that there isn’t even a need to cover up wrongdoing, because Palestinians have been dehumanised in Israeli society.

A West Bank academic, Dr Layth Hanbali of the Institute of Palestine Studies, who has been tracking attacks on healthcare workers, documented 118 deaths of doctors, 65 in their own homes. He explains the strategic significance of targeting medics: “The massive loss of expertise will take years to rebuild. Structures can be built very quickly but healthcare professionals require years to be trained. And that is going to have a massively detrimental effect on the health of the population for years to come.”

There is a pattern of assault which the IDF replicates across Gaza according to the United Nations. Their report in December 2024 describes how:

- Buildings and surroundings are attacked.
- Forces besiege the hospital with ground troops, blocking access and medical supplies.
- The IDF raids the hospital with the assistance of heavy machinery including tanks and bulldozers.
 - It detains medical staff, patients and their companions as well as IDPs (Internally displaced persons, many of whom shelter in hospitals).
 - It forces remaining patients, IDPs and others to leave the hospital.
 - Troops withdrawing from the hospital leave in their wake severe damage to the structure, buildings and equipment inside, effectively preventing the hospital from functioning.

The documentary is perhaps the most powerful yet to be released on the 21-month long genocidal attack by Israel against the Palestinian population. However, it would not have been seen without the last-minute intervention by Channel 4.

The film was first commissioned by the BBC. Initially scheduled to be shown on February 25, it was repeatedly postponed and then on June 20 dropped completely in a blatant act of censorship.

The BBC dropped the film after separate public comments from Basement Films’ Ben De Pear and reporter and *Doctors Under Attack* co-executive producer Ramita Navai at the Sheffield Documentary

Festival, where they discussed Gaza in an interview on Radio 4’s *Today* programme.

In that interview, Navai said that Israel had “become a rogue state that’s committing war crimes and ethnic cleansing and mass murdering Palestinians.” De Pear made reference to journalists being “stymied and silenced.”

By blocking the release of the damning and irrefutable evidence of illegal and genocidal acts as revealed in *Gaza: Doctors Under Attack*, the BBC is complicit in the censorship campaign of the British government, and its support for Israel’s genocide.

The smearing of opponents of the mass murder of Palestinians as “terrorist sympathisers” has reached fever pitch as the Netanyahu regime launches the final phase of its drive to ethnically cleanse Gaza via the expulsion of more than 2 million Palestinians.



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