

HAMAS'S APPROPRIATION OF HUMANITARIAN INFRASTRUCTURES: THE CASE OF THE SHIFA HOSPITAL IN GAZA CITY (UPDATED 20.11)

KEY POINTS:

BETWEEN 1967-1995 ISRAEL WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHIFA HOSPITAL INTO GAZA'S MAIN MEDICAL CENTRE

SINCE ISRAEL'S EVACUATION OF THE GAZA STRIP IN 2005, HAMAS HAS TRANSFORMED THE ISRAELI-BUILT UNDERGROUND INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE HOSPITAL INTO ONE OF ITS MAIN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

SINCE ENTERING THE HOSPITAL ON 14-15.11, IDF HAS FOUND EVIDENCE OF HAMAS MILITARY ACTIVITY AND HOSTAGE KEEPING THERE. IDF CONTINUES TO TAKE ACTIVE STEPS TO MINIMISE A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS THERE.



- Shifa Hospital in Gaza city is the largest of about twenty hospitals in the Gaza Strip. Built during the British Mandate, it treated Egyptian soldiers in the 1967 War, and was thereafter taken over by the Israeli Military Administration which continually enlarged and developed its sophisticated medical infrastructure. In the 1980s in particular Israeli architects and public contractors expanded its buildings and developed its underground basement.
- Since the 2005 Israeli evacuation of the Gaza Strip, Hamas has transformed the hospital underground floor into one of its key military headquarters. IDF intelligence confirmed that the basements and underground areas include shelters of senior Hamas leaders, pier openings to the highly sophisticated offensive tunnels network, coordination headquarters for the launching of rockets on Israel, and other terrorist infrastructures. The Israel Security Agency (Shabak) and Washington Post similarly warned of these developments in 2009 and 2014 respectively.
- Reuters reported in the first November week that Shifa hospital and its surroundings turned into one of the largest refugee camps in the Gaza strip with thousands of evacuees from North Gaza.
- On 6.11 the IDF denied claims by the Gazan Ministry of Health (controlled by Hamas) that it had bombed Shifa hospital. In the following days, the IDF completed the encirclement of Gaza City (using phosphorescent lighting flares in the vicinity of the hospital). On 11.11 the Gaza Ministry of Health claimed that the hospital is no longer functioning and has run out of electricity and water.
- In the following days the IDF spokesman showed footage confirming Hamas military activity in the hospital (weapons, technological equipment, an operational headquarter, a pier opening to a tunnel), as well as video footage from 7.10 showing at least two Israeli hostages dragged through the hospital. Two other Israeli hostages have so far been found murdered near the hospital and a forensic investigation confirms one of them was murdered within the hospital itself.
- Some international press continue to doubt a major Hamas military presence in the hospital despite the above evidence.
- Israel's attempts to protect the hospital's patients and medical staff during IDF military operations:
 - according to Reuters and Ynet, Israel requested the creation of alternative hospitals in Gaza (ships from Italy, France and Greece as floating hospitals along the coast, field hospitals to be set up by Egypt, European countries and the UN);
 - Opening of humanitarian corridors to allow patients to be transferred from Shifa, Rantisi and Nasser hospitals;
 - IDF keeps providing Shifa with medical equipment and fuel for urgent medical purposes. UNRWA-WHO emergency medical supplies also reach the hospital;

Further Resources

- IDF videos on X (formerly Twitter) on Shifa's Hamas [underground](#) structures.
- [Ynet article](#) "IDF reveals new evidence of Hamas using Gaza hospitals for terror".
- IDF releases hospital [video footage](#) from 7.11 showing Israel hostage.
- WHO Director [reports](#) evacuation of infants from hospital on 19.11.