

*Palestinian surgeon recounts
ordeal following Israel's use of
white phosphorus, incendiary
bombs in Gaza*



Cairo, November 28 (RHC)-- A British-Palestinian surgeon has recounted harrowing healthcare-related ordeals the Palestinian civilians went through during Israel's onslaught on the besieged Gaza Strip, which was initiated after Palestinian resistance groups launched Operation al-Aqsa Storm against the occupying entity, the largest retaliatory attack in decades.

Professor Ghassan Abu Sitta, who traveled with Doctors Without Borders via Egypt to Gaza on 9 October to work in the besieged territory's hospitals as a surgeon, said in a press conference in London on Monday that he had seen evidence of war crimes, including the use of white phosphorus on civilians.

Sitta, who worked in both al-Shifa and al-Ahli hospitals in Gaza, said fragmentary missiles were used by the Israeli occupation army to attack Gaza, causing unique injury patterns and amputations.

At the burns unit in al-Shifa Hospital, he said, some 40 to 45 percent of the wounded were children and the primary target of the Israeli bombing was residential homes. Stressing that incendiary bombs were

used against Palestinian civilians, Sitta said he treated 100 patients with 40% of their body surface area burnt but no other injuries.

"Phosphorus burns burn through to the inner core of the body and only stop when they have no exposure to oxygen," he added. "So the patient would be puckered with burns that bore right into the ribs, the bones."

The British-Palestinian surgeon said he "increasingly" saw white phosphorous burn wounds while he worked in the besieged Gaza Strip. "When the land invasion happened, we started getting patients increasingly from the north with white phosphorous burns," Sitta told reporters. "Once you've seen them you know what they are. The flesh of these patients turns to Swiss cheese, with black burns from phosphorous pellets."

Sitta underlined that a 15-year-old boy was "showered" with pellets of white phosphorous while running away which left his back with chemical burns.

Speaking at the press conference, the surgeon said the Israeli military "deliberately" targeted civilians in schools, hospitals and places of worship. "Patients reported the wiping out of entire families and have described them as massacres," he said, adding that there were between 700 and 900 children with amputations by day five of their visit to Gaza.

Sitta said he had witnessed Palestinian casualties shot by snipers in Gaza and that necessity had forced them to conduct several surgeries without anesthesia, including one on a nine-year-old girl. At a hospital in Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza, Sitta also said he witnessed a phone call by the Israeli army to the director of the hospital, who was informed that unless he evacuated within two hours, the hospital would be targeted.

"One of the most horrific scenes I witnessed was when, after an air raid, the dead and the wounded were brought in, members of the staff would be running frantically in the emergency department, looking at the faces of the wounded and the dead to see whether their relatives had been among the dead and the wounded," he said. "In many cases their children had been among the dead and the wounded."

Sitta also said there was a "huge explosion" in another day and "the ceiling in the operating room fell on top of us, luckily I wasn't injured." He added: "The ambulances were on fire, some of the cars were on fire, and the forecourt, which had been lit by fire, was full of bodies and parts of bodies."

The British-Palestinian surgeon said 160 doctors and nurses lost their lives during the occupation's aggression on the Gaza Strip. Israel waged the war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas conducted Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the occupying entity in retaliation for its intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people.

Since the start of the aggression, the Tel Aviv regime has killed nearly 15,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and left vast swathes of the coastal enclave in ruins.

It has also imposed a "complete siege" on the territory, cutting off fuel, electricity, food and water to the more than two million Palestinians living there.

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