

Israel orders closure of al-Awda Hospital: A lifeline in north Gaza



A Palestinian man shows blood stains on his palm after he carried casualties among people seeking aid supplies from the US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, in Khan Younis, May 29 [Hatem Khaled/Reuters]

Tel Aviv, May 30 (RHC)-- Israel has ordered the closure of al-Awda Hospital in northern Gaza, leaving health officials scrambling to relocate dozens of people who remain at the medical facility, as deadly bombardment and starvation rack the besieged enclave.

At least 70 Palestinians were killed in Israeli attacks since the early hours of Thursday. The Gaza Health Ministry called Israel's push, which forced the hospital out of commission, a "continuation of the violations and crimes" against the medical sector in the territory.

Al-Awda was the last operating hospital in northern Gaza, according to health officials. Shutting down the hospital came amid continued Israeli forced displacement of Palestinians in Gaza, the latest order late on Thursday impacting large numbers of people north and east of Gaza City.

"The Health Ministry calls on all concerned sides to ensure protection for the health system in the Gaza Strip, as guaranteed by international and humanitarian laws," the ministry said in a statement.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said 97 people, including 13 patients, are still at the hospital. The United Nations agency is planning a mission on Friday to transfer the patients to another facility.

"Due to impassable roads, the hospital's medical equipment cannot be relocated," WHO said in a statement. "With Al-Awda's closure, there is no remaining functional hospital in North Gaza — severing a critical lifeline for the people there." WHO pleaded "for the hospital's protection and staff and patients' safety."

Israel has been besieging and bombing hospitals across Gaza, killing more than 1,400 medical workers, as well as patients and the displaced taking shelter, since the beginning of the war, according to local authorities.

'We haven't seen any food or flour in five days'

The closure of al-Awda Hospital comes as the humanitarian crisis becomes more catastrophic by the day in Gaza, with Israel continuing its suffocating blockade on the enclave. An effort, backed by the United States and Israel, to distribute limited food supplies at specific sites run by a shadowy organisation, known as the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, continued to be marred by chaos on Thursday.

"We have come a long distance, around 10km [6.2 miles] to take this box tainted with blood," Palestinian resident Saher Abu Tagoon told Al Jazeera in central Gaza.

"We need this box because there's no food to eat. We haven't seen any food or flour in five days. We went to get food for our children from a very faraway place. I can't even carry this box because I am too tired, and I am too hungry."

Multiple explosions were heard and Israeli gunfire was reported near a distribution centre in central Gaza earlier on Friday.

Reporting from Gaza City, Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud said Palestinians who walked to the newly opened aid site at the Netzarim Corridor in central Gaza were unable to leave due to Israeli military activity in the area.

"Many of the people who showed up at the site are trapped right now and unable to leave the area due to the presence of Israeli tanks and armoured vehicles [and] the ongoing shooting," Mahmoud said.

"They've been sending appeals to the Red Cross to coordinate their departure from the area. It's becoming very risky for them to walk on their own."

Israel has been pushing to bypass and sideline the United Nations from the aid distribution process, a self-serving approach critics say would further weaponise humanitarian assistance in the territory. "The problems are that the insecurity continues, and frankly, they are not making it easy for us to deliver humanitarian goods," Dujarric said.

There are 600 aid trucks on the Gaza side of the Karem Abu Salem crossing (called Kerem Shalom by Israel), but Israel has blocked the world body from retrieving the supplies for the past three days, he added.

Philippe Lazzarini, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), said “starvation is threatening the future of the children” in the Palestinian enclave.

“What’s urgently needed is a political will to allow the UN and partners to provide assistance at scale without hindrance or interruption,” Lazzarini said in a post on X. “Allow us to do our work.”

Amid the dire humanitarian conditions, Israel maintained its relentless bombardment on Thursday, killing at least 70 Palestinians in attacks across Gaza, according to medical sources.

The Palestinian Civil Defense said an Israeli strike on a residential building in Tuffah neighbourhood of Gaza City left approximately 30 people missing under the rubble. “Due to the lack of heavy equipment, it is not possible to recover the missing individuals from under the rubble,” the Civil Defence said in a statement.

“Therefore, we call on the international community and human rights organizations for immediate and urgent intervention to protect civilians and innocent people in the Gaza Strip.”

[SOURCE: PRESS TV and REUTERS]

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/383840-israel-orders-closure-of-al-awda-hospital-a-lifeline-in-north-gaza>



Radio Habana Cuba