

Gaza Hospitals Forced Into Turning Off Ventilators to Make Room for ‘Unprecedented’ Number of Wounded

Palestinian officials say the besieged enclave’s healthcare system is ‘collapsing’ under Israel’s near-constant aerial bombardment, as bed space and supplies run out

By [Bel Trew](#)

Global Research, October 13, 2023

[The Independent](#) 12 October 2023

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

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Gaza’s healthcare system is “collapsing” and overflowing hospitals are just “days away” from [completely running out of supplies](#) amid the most ferocious Israeli bombardment ever recorded, [Palestinian](#) officials have warned.

Intensive care units (ICUs) across the tiny enclave are beyond capacity, forcing doctors to switch off life-support machines for patients deemed “hopeless cases”. They are doing this to make way for the “unprecedented” influx of newly wounded, Gaza’s deputy health minister has said.

“In our religion and ethics, we shouldn’t do this, but we have no choice,” Dr Yusuf Abu al-Reesh added.

[Israel](#) imposed a “[total siege](#)” on the tiny enclave after militants belonging to Hamas, the group that controls Gaza, launched a surprise deadly attack on Saturday, killing hundreds of people and taking dozens of people, including Britons, hostage.

Rights groups have warned that the decision to impose a siege on the enclave, which is home to more than 2 million people, constitutes collective punishment and is a violation of international law.

However, Israel’s energy minister, Israel Katz, doubled down on Thursday, saying that nothing would be allowed into Gaza until the hostages were released. The Israeli military,

meanwhile, said it was ramping up its heaviest bombardment of the strip. More than 1,500 Palestinians have been killed in the onslaught, half of them women and children. More than 6,600 have been injured.

The combination is creating a “humanitarian catastrophe”, United Nations officials have warned. As the wounded poured in, Gaza’s health ministry officials said that hospitals, including al-Shifa, the largest in the enclave, had just “days left of supplies”.

Stocks of vital medicines for emergency departments, such as fluids, bandages and surgical instruments, are said to be running out. Water is in such short supply that doctors at al-Shifa have resorted to using an old well.

“We expanded the hospital by 50 per cent, but even that is full, and we are treating people under a tent in the street,” said deputy health minister Dr Abu al-Reesh from the medical complex in the heart of Gaza City, with desperation in his voice. He shared photos of children, drenched in blood, being treated four to a stretcher on the floor.

“There are no places in the ICU. So for the first time, we have to switch off ICU machines for cases which the doctors believe are hopeless, to make space for those who might have a chance of surviving,” he told *The Independent*. “We are collapsing.”

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Featured image: Some of the wounded at al-Shifa hospital (Gaza Health Ministry)

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