

Gaza: 'We Stay Together, or we Leave this World Together'

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From the rehabilitation hospital he heads, Dr. Basman Alashi can see where Gaza ends and Israel begins. If he needed a reminder of just how close the border is, it came early Friday morning, when [Israel fired two "warning" rockets](#) at the El Wafa Hospital, stoking fears that its 14 remaining patients – all elderly and all dependent on round-the-clock professional care to survive – would become the next victims of a bombing campaign that has so-far [killed more than 120 people](#).

I spoke with Dr. Alashi Saturday afternoon, and he told me about one patient whose situation sums up the sense of dread – and determination – at the hospital.



"Her name is Hiba Kalli, and she is 85 years old. Every time a bomb explodes, she's transported back to memories of the many wars she's survived. You can see the panic in her face. When I hold her hand, she won't let go, murmuring 'please don't leave me, please don't leave me.' I am not going to leave my patients. We either stay together, or we leave this world together."

Hoping to dissuade Israel from attacking the facility, international solidarity activists "have planned a shift system to maintain a presence at the hospital," according to one of the activists, American [Joe Catron](#).

Trained in Michigan, Dr. Alashi reminded me that, under international law, Israel is prohibited from targeting facilities like El Wafa. But Friday's "knock on the roof" – a Kafkaesque euphemism for Israeli [munitions landing on inhabited buildings](#) – was followed by a strike later that evening which [blew a hole in the ceiling and shattered windows on the hospital's top floor](#).

Fortunately, that floor was evacuated on Wednesday, and Dr. Alashi sent home all but the most critical patients. Those who remain, like Hiba, include stroke victims who – like all of Gaza's residents – have had no respite from the constant bombs, missiles, and naval shelling, which [by some estimates](#) have fallen, on average, every 5.5 minutes for the past five days.

As the bombing continues, hospitals and other patient care facilities throughout Gaza are bracing for the worst. Even if they are spared direct attack, they are running short on medical supplies, which have been restricted by Israel's longstanding siege of the 25-mile-long strip. Before the latest attacks, [the United Nations estimated](#) that 28 percent of Gaza's

essential medicines “were at zero stock.”

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