

Why Does Israel Destroy Hospitals?

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Hospitals are prime strategic targets of Israel's military campaign in Gaza. The Nasser hospital in Rafah is the only major one still standing, along with a handful of smaller ones. All the rest have been destroyed, along with many of the patients and medical staff. Many have been slaughtered, while the helpless have been left to die, like the premature babies in their incubators, simply abandoned to the inevitable.

Doctors and other personnel have been taken captive for an unknown length of time. Even the Nasser hospital is no longer functioning, having been taken over by Israeli soldiers, and all its patients and medical staff expelled. Its existence as a structure is a mere technicality. It is no longer a hospital, and it wouldn't be the first to be exploded into yet another pile of rubble.

These attacks are not random, nor are the ones against bakeries, schools, and infrastructure, including water, sewage and electricity. Although more than half of all the buildings in Gaza are now rubble or unusable, the ratio for hospitals is much higher. Why?

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claims that his objective is to destroy Hamas, but he is in fact destroying everything but Hamas.

He knows perfectly well that Hamas is not using the hospitals, nor any of the other places laid waste by the Israeli military, armed with inexhaustible US munitions. To the extent that he even bothers to use Hamas as an excuse, few believe him anymore.

If he wants to find Hamas, he knows where they are: deep underground, in hundreds of miles of their armored and fortified hi-tech tunnels.

The 10,000 tons of bombs dropped on Gaza thus far have not even been aimed at Hamas or the tunnels. Israel is casualty averse, and they know that fighting Hamas leads to casualties that will hurt Netanyahu's popularity, already in the cellar. This is why their target has been the entire population of Gaza. Massive killing of Palestinian civilians, more than 2/3 of them women and children, make it look like he is accomplishing something.

This helps to explain the hospitals. If there is no place to treat the wounded and the sick, more Palestinians die. If your real target is the entire Palestinian population, this is an effective way to do it.

Destroying hospitals has a multiplier effect upon the death toll. Furthermore, it is mainly the hospitals that compile the statistics of Palestinian dead and wounded for the Gaza Ministry of Health. If there are no hospitals, more people will die anonymously, reducing the evidence of genocide.

The multiplier effect of hospitals on the death toll also works for water, sewage, shelter, fuel, and of course food. The removal of such facilities and provisions causes deaths that tend not to be included as war dead. If Netanyahu's objective is to decrease – or entirely eliminate – the inhabitants of Gaza, these are much more effective ways to do it. Granted, Zyklon-B might be even more effective, but there are limits to what even Netanyahu might be willing to use.

This is not speculation. Netanyahu and most of his government have publicly [declared their intentions](#). Quotes and videos of their genocidal purpose have been used by South Africa's attorneys to win an injunction from the International Court of Justice. Netanyahu is running out of options. Hamas presented its ceasefire/peace proposal, which (as predicted) is unacceptable to Israel, because it fails to advance Israel's plans for either territorial expansion or ethnic cleansing, or both.

Israel is losing the combat war in Gaza, thanks to the brilliant Hamas strategy of 1) making itself impervious to air bombardment, 2) an ability to manufacture its own weapons locally, designed specifically for Israeli systems, and 3) impeccable training of fighters capable of acting in small units, with intimate knowledge of both their enemy and Israeli weapons systems, as well as their own. Israel is not prepared to take significant casualties among its own population, and apparently its 5000-6000 mercenaries are not prepared to go on suicide missions.

That leads, once again, to genocide as the only strategy. That's why Netanyahu is planning to up his game by destroying Rafah city, the tiny pen into which he has herded most of the population, swelling its numbers some 400%, most of them in tents or under tarpaulins providing flimsy protection from the rain and cold.

An Israeli attack will probably yield a lot more casualties per day than heretofore, to which Netanyahu can point with pride among his dwindling followers.

But the US can't appear to condone such actions, so its humanitarian-minded president has asked his Israeli counterpart to provide an evacuation plan for the civilians. Netanyahu has agreed, and when asked where they can go, he points to newly bombed out expanses in what used to be the neighboring city of Khan Younis. Now his friend, Genocide Joe, can rest easy. ICJ? No problem. Israel still has time to submit its progress report to the Court on ending its "plausibly genocidal" actions.

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Featured image: Dr Suleiman Qaoud surveys the damage at the Rantisi Specialist Hospital, part of the Nasser Medical Complex in Gaza City, following Israeli missile attacks on November 6, 2023 [Abdelhakim Abu Riash/Al Jazeera]

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