

On Targeting of Health Facilities

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Summary

Medical units including hospitals and medical personnel are supposed to have special protections under international humanitarian law. Still, the health sector in Gaza suffered severe damage, destruction and deaths as a result of the widespread Israeli attacks from July 7th to August 26th 2014. 83 health personnel were injured and 21 health personnel died, while at least 16 uniformed ambulances were damaged. Seventeen out of 32 hospitals were damaged and six closed down as a result. Out of 97 primary health centres (PHC) monitored for damage and closures, 45 reported damage and 17 had to be closed. Four were completely destroyed. The primary health care as well as the hospital sector in Gaza was already severely weakened from the preceding 8 years of Israeli siege with limited supplies, renewal and upgrading of facilities and equipment. Very limited supplies of water, energy (electricity, fuel) and financial resources for staff salaries further aggravated the pre-attack health sector situation. The ensuing overwhelming influx of more than 10.000 war casualties combined with further reduction of health care capacity caused by the Israeli targeting or destruction of health facilities, escalated siege and continuous attacks - caused unnecessary suffering and increased number of avoidable deaths among the civilian population.

When the Israeli army launched the military attacks named “Protective Edge” on Gaza 7 July 2014, it was followed by a scale of destruction, devastation and displacement during the next 50 days unprecedented in Gaza since at least the Israeli occupation in 1967. Gaza is so densely populated and urbanized that virtually the whole population was exposed to the Israeli attacks and the clashes following the Israeli ground invasion. From a medical point of view, the human costs of this Israeli man-made disaster was seriously aggravated by the previous deprivation of the whole health sector from the long lasting siege of Gaza, the lack of security for ambulance staff and the extensive destruction and damage done to hospitals and primary health care facilities by the Israeli military forces. All through the war on Gaza there was a real fear among the population that no person or place was safe, as evidenced by Israeli attacks on ambulances, hospitals, residential buildings and schools designated as shelters. Psychosocial distress levels were already high among the population of Gaza from the three previous Israeli military attacks (2006, 2008/09 and 2012), but have worsened significantly as a result of the last onslaught.

Gaza’s health care system already suffered severe and chronic shortages in medicine, medical supplies and equipment prior to the Israeli attack on July 7th due to the extensive Israeli sanctions and siege from 2006-07. The civilian population as well as the health sector were also severely affected by the damage to vital electricity and water infrastructure in Gaza. These shortages were well known prior to the attacks during “Operation Protective Edge”, but were hardly ever paid attention to by ‘the international community’. The extensive energy crisis and lack of financial support for the Ministry of Health impacted the pre-attack situation negatively with staff being unpaid since March 2014 following a period of 8 months with 50 % salaries. Despite all these man-made shortages and constraints, both in-hospital and prehospital staff performed at high level of professionalism and bravery during the 50 days attacks.

The civilian losses from the Israeli bombardment and ground invasion were disastrous and posed an overwhelming task for the Palestinian health care system, in particular the ambulance system and the hospitals. More than 10,000 Palestinians were injured, among them more than 3,000 children. At least 504 Palestinian children are now confirmed killed during the 50 day war. The cumulative death toll among Palestinians is at least 2,152, including 260 women, according to the continued collection of preliminary data by the UNRWA Protection Cluster from various sources.

Seventeen of 32 hospitals were damaged and six closed down as a result. Out of 97 primary health centres (PHC) monitored for damage and closures, 45 reported damage and 17 had to be closed. Four were completely destroyed. One hospital is totally eradicated (Al-Wafa Rehabilitation Hospital). The ensuing reduction in number of operational hospitals and PHCs throughout the conflict exacerbated the pressure on the still functioning facilities, especially when they received large numbers of casualties. Patients therefore had to be discharged prematurely or were deprived of appropriate care for their condition, with potential long-term negative consequences and increased postoperative mortality rates. The overwhelming number of injuries and limited resources also caused an increase in the number of patients referred for treatment outside of Gaza, including cases of multiple trauma and increased risk of complications. The complicated, obstructive referral procedures have led to a large backlog of patient referrals, with 500 patients being processed and waiting as of 28 August 2014.

Health facilities suffered extensive damage during the hostilities. At least 17 of 32 hospitals reported light to extensive damages and six closed. It was estimated that Gaza's hospital bed capacity was reduced with at least 20 % following the Israeli attacks. Three hospitals remain closed while another three reopened with reduced capacity. Al-Wafa hospital, the only rehabilitation hospital in Gaza, which was completely destroyed, reopened rehabilitation services in an alternative location to provide treatment continuity for some patients. Beit Hanoun hospital, which was extensively damaged, partially reopened to emergency patients since this is the sole Ministry of Health hospital serving northern Gaza.

Eight out of 97 primary health centres (PHCs) were completely destroyed, and another 42 sustained damage. As of 28 August, 30 PHCs remain closed due to damage and/or security concerns. People in the PHCs catchment area had to be re-directed to other PHCs, or to hospitals' overcrowded emergency rooms.

The reduction in the number of operational hospitals and PHCs throughout the conflict exacerbated the pressure on the functioning facilities, especially when receiving large numbers of casualties. Consequently, patients had to be discharged prematurely or were deprived of appropriate care for their condition, with potential long-term negative consequences and increased mortality and morbidity. This is likely to be reflected in the caseload of rehabilitation institutions dealing with complex injuries, complications and disabilities. As during the conflict surgical capacity within Gaza's main hospitals was almost fully allocated to the treatment of injuries, the health service providers have to manage now a considerable backlog of elective surgical procedures as well as care for non-communicable diseases in the general population.

Neonatal mortality nearly doubled from seven to 14 per cent at Shifa Hospital according to UN caused by the increased caseload and reduced capacity at new-born health facilities. There was an estimated 4,800 births during the Israeli attacks on Gaza. Most deliveries were attended by skilled

health professionals, but severe transportation and evacuation difficulties for pregnant women in labour due to the security situation have been reported, particularly in East Khan Yunis and Johr Ad-Deek. Even if no reports indicate an increase in miscarriages during crisis compared to the preceding period, the full picture on the repercussions of the attacks on reproductive health remains elusive.

Severe overcrowding of hospitals followed the large numbers of wounded combined with widespread damage and destruction of health care facilities. Many bombed homes were also homes of the injured. Wounded patients ready for discharge from hospital with their families, simply had nowhere to go, and remained in the overcrowded hospitals with their families. The Ministry of Health in Gaza called on UNRWA and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) July 27th to immediately ensure the provision of dedicated and adequately-resourced “Recovery Centres” where displaced patients ready for discharge from Gaza’s hospitals could continue to recuperate from their injuries in a safe and sanitary environment, thus releasing their hospital beds for more urgent cases. Nothing happened.

Case: The al-Aqsa Hospital: At least five Palestinians were killed and 50 wounded when Israeli tanks shelled the hospital in the central Gaza Strip. The hospital's operating theatre and intensive care unit were damaged in the shelling.

Case: The Kuwaiti Maternity Hospital: During intense missile and mortar attacks in Rafah on UNRWA shelters and local families, enormous pressure was put on the smaller, local hospitals like the 20-bed Kuwaiti Maternity Hospital. Lack of security for ambulances and staff prevented evacuation of severely wounded to larger hospitals in northern Gaza, causing overflowed local hospitals with dead and injured. ‘There were 30 bodies lying on the floor of the dental clinic, and children’s bodies stored in ice-cream, flower, and vegetable freezers as the hospital has no morgue facilities.’

- We desperately need blood; we do not have enough for transfusions, said a laboratory technician at Kuwaiti Hospital. - We only have two operating theatres, one for minor surgery. They have to operate on two people at the same time on one operating table, major surgeries. It is impossible to deal with all the wounded.

Kuwaiti Hospital sent many patients on to the slightly bigger Emirati Red Crescent Maternity Hospital nearby, equally unequipped to deal with the types of injuries presenting.

Case: The Al Durra Paediatric Hospital: during Israeli bombing near the small 91-bed children’s hospital in eastern Gaza City on July 24th in the afternoon, the hospital itself was hit and severely damaged. A 2 year old patient in the hospital's ICU died during the attack, about 30 were wounded, among them about 7 hospital staff. I participated in the medical work with wounded patients and staff from Durra hospital who were evacuated to Shifa Hospital around 5PM the same afternoon. I also visited the damaged hospital the next day and could document the widespread damages to the hospital, which was made inoperative.

The Ministry of Health Gaza made numerous calls to the international community over the weeks of attacks and destruction of health facilities for assistance – calls which largely went unanswered. We appealed directly to The Norwegian Government and to The UN Secretary General, urging to secure international protection of Palestinian patients, health institutions and prehospital ambulance resources, but without any success.

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Gaza Strip: Damaged Clinics as of 5 Sept. 2014



OCHA

17 out of 32 hospitals were damaged and six closed down as a result. Out of 97 primary health centers (PHC) monitored for damage and closures, 45 reported damage and 17 were closed. Four are completely destroyed. 16 ambulances were damaged, and 83 health personnel injured, 21 health personnel died.

464 patients were referred to hospitals outside Gaza: Rafah/Egypt: 230, Erez: 234 (West Bank including East Jerusalem: 187, Turkey: 18, Jordan: 29.

Hospital Status

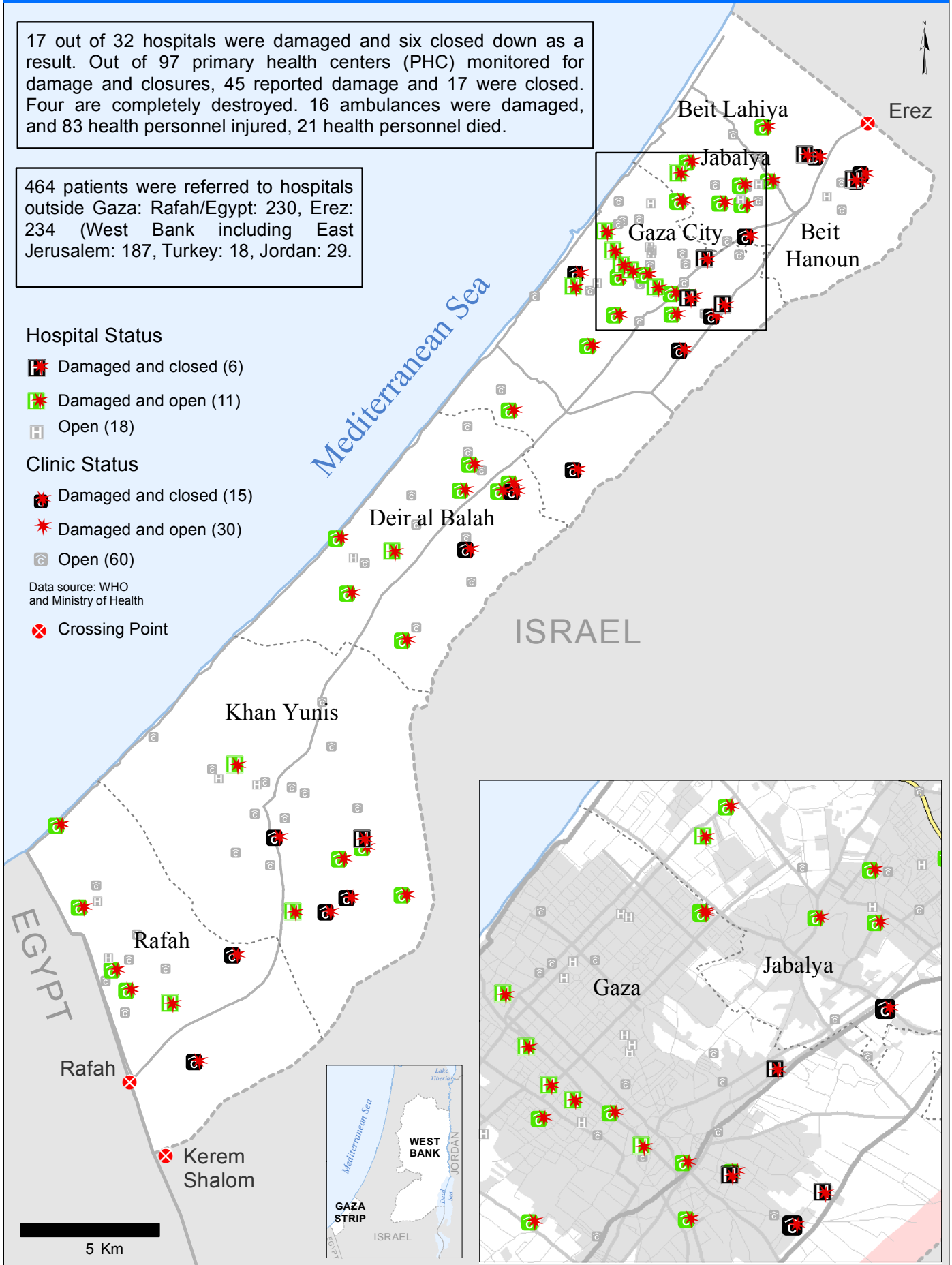
- Damaged and closed (6)
- Damaged and open (11)
- Open (18)

Clinic Status

- Damaged and closed (15)
- Damaged and open (30)
- Open (60)

Data source: WHO and Ministry of Health

- Crossing Point



ANNEX

Table 1. Hospitals in Gaza damaged and closed (July 7, 2014 to August 27, 2014)

	Hospital	Provider	District	Location	Comments on status
1	Kamal Adwan	MOH	North Gaza	North Gaza	Open
2	Beit Hanoun	MOH	North Gaza	Beit Hanoun	Closed (damaged); reopened only emergency room services
3	Psychiatric	MOH	Gaza	Nasser	Open
4	Ophthalmic	MOH	Gaza	Nasser	Open
5	Rantisi Specialised Pediatric	MOH	Gaza	Nasser	Open
6	El Durra Pediatric	MOH	Gaza	Tuffah	Closed (damaged)
7	Al Nasser Pediatric	MOH	Gaza	Nasser	Open
8	Shifa	MOH	Gaza	North Rimal	Open (damaged)
9	Harazeen Maternity	MOH	Gaza	Shajieyah	Open (damaged)
10	Al Aqsa Martyrs	MOH	Middle area	Deir Al Balah	Open (damaged); some services closed
11	Gaza European	MOH	Khan Younis	E. Khan Younis	Open (damaged)
12	Nasser	MOH	Khan Younis	West Khan Younis	Open
13	Al Helal al Emirati Maternity	MOH	Rafah	Tel El Sultan	Open
14	Abu Yousef Najjar	MOH	Rafah	Rafah	Open (damaged)
15	Al Awdeh	NGO	North Gaza	Tel al Zaatar	Open
16	Al Shawa Specialized	NGO	North Gaza	Beit Hanoun	Closed (security)
17	Al Karameh	NGO	North Gaza	Ard a-Shanti	Open (damaged)
18	Al Wafa Medical Rehabilitation	NGO	Gaza	Shajieyah	Closed (destroyed); relocated some services to al Wafa Nursing Home
19	Al Sahaba Medical	NGO	Gaza	Al Daraj	Open
20	Cardiac (Public Aid Society)	NGO	Gaza	Al Samer	Open (damaged)
21	Ophthalmic Specialized (Public Aid Society)	NGO	Gaza	Al Rimal	Open
22	al Ahli Arab	NGO	Gaza	Palestine Sq.	Open (damaged)
23	Al Quds	NGO	Gaza	Tel al Hawa	Open (damaged)
24	General Hospital (Public Aid Society)	NGO	Gaza	Sabra	Open (damaged)
25	Patients' Friends	NGO	Gaza	Gaza	Open (damaged)
26	Kuwaiti Specialized	NGO	Rafah	Rafah	Open
27	Jaffa	NGO	Middle area	Deir Al Balah	Closed (security)
28	Al Amal	NGO	Khan Younis	Amal	Open (damaged)
29	Dar al Salam	NGO	Khan Younis	Al Sater Al Sharqi	Open
30	Balsam	PMMS	North Gaza	north Beit Lahiya	Closed (damaged); relocated some services to Patients' Friends Benevolent Society
31	Algerian Field	PMMS	Khan Younis	Abasan alKabira	Open (damaged); closed 7pm to 8 am
32	Jordanian Field	JMS	Gaza	Tel Al Hawa	Open
	(Shading indicates closed.)				
	PMMS=Palestinian Medical Military Services				
	JMS=Jordanian Military Services				

Source: WHO.

Table 2. Primary Health clinics in Gaza damage from July 7, 2014 to August 28, 2014, by provider (reported as of September 3, 2014)*

No.	Name of PHC	Provider	District	Locality
1	Shuhada Al Sheikh Radwan Clinic	MoH	Gaza	Shaikh Radwan
2	Al Salam Clinic	MoH	Gaza	Sabra
3	Al Surani Clinic	MoH	Gaza	Tofah
4	Al Rahma Clinic	MoH	Gaza	Shija'yia
5	Sabha Medical Center	MoH	Gaza	Shija'yia/ Al Jdaida
6	Shuhada Al Shate' Clinic	MoH	Gaza	Beach Camp
7	Atta Habib Clinic	MoH	Gaza	Shija'yia
8	Hala Al Shawa Clinic	MoH	Gaza	Zaytoon
9	Al Qoba Clinic	MoH	Gaza	Shija'yia
10	Physically Handicapped Clinic	MoH	Gaza	Zaytoon
11	Al Qarara Clinic	MoH	Khan Younis	Qarah
12	Al Fokhari Clinic	MoH	Khan Younis	Fukhari
13	Abassan Al Jadeeda Clinic	MoH	Khan Younis	Abassan Al-Jadida
14	Khuzaa Clinic	MoH	Khan Younis	Khuzaa
15	Al Zanna Clinic	MoH	Khan Younis	Zanna
16	Khaldia Al Aga Clinic	MoH	Khan Younis	Khan Younis city
17	Shuhada Al Nuseirat Clinic	MoH	Mid Zone	Nusairat Camp
18	Juhr Al Deik Clinic	MoH	Mid Zone	Wadi Gaza
19	Al Zawayda Clinic	MoH	Mid Zone	Zawaida
20	Al Bureij New Clinic	MoH	Mid Zone	Buraij Camp
21	Al Bureij Central Clinic	MoH	Mid Zone	Buraij Camp
22	Shuhada Dair Al Balah Clinic	MoH	Mid Zone	Dair El Balah
23	Heker Al jame Clinic	MoH	Mid Zone	Deir El-Balah
24	Al Moghraqa Clinic	MoH	Mid Zone	Moghra'a
25	Al Maghazi Clinic	MoH	Mid Zone	Maghazi
26	Al Msadar Clinic	MoH	Mid Zone	Msadar
27	Wadi Al Salqa Clinic	MoH	Mid Zone	Wadi El- Salqa
28	Al Birka	MoH	Mid Zone	Deir El-Balah
29	Shuhada Jabalia Clinic	MoH	North Gaza	Jabalia city
30	Beit Hanoun Clinic	MoH	North Gaza	Beit Hanoun
31	Abu Shebak Medical Center	MoH	North Gaza	Jabalia city
32	Jamila Al Ashi Clinic	MoH	North Gaza	Twam Area
33	Al Saifa (Al Atatra) clinic	MoH	North Gaza	Al Atatra
34	Shuhada Rafah Center	MoH	Rafah	Rafah City
35	Al Shabora Health Center	MoH	Rafah	Shabora
36	Al Shokah Clinic	MoH	Rafah	Shoka
37	Mawasi Rafah Clinic	MoH	Rafah	Mawasi Rafah
38	Jabalia	UNRWA	North Gaza	Jabalia Camp
39	Beit Hanoun	UNRWA	North Gaza	Beit Hanoun
40	Dair El-Balah	UNRWA	Mid Zone	Deir Al Balah
41	Nusairat	UNRWA	Mid Zone	Nuseirat
42	Maghazi	UNRWA	Mid Zone	Maghazi
43	Buraij	UNRWA	Mid Zone	Buraij
44	Mae'n	UNRWA	Khan Younis	Mae'n
45	Tal Al Sultan + Rafah Clinic	UNRWA	Rafah	Rafah
46	Shouka	UNRWA	Rafah	Rafah
47	El-Nasser	UNRWA	Rafah	El-Nasser
48	Abu T'aima Health Center	PMRS - NGO	Khan Younis	Abasan Jadidia
49	Ezbet Beit Hanoun Health Centre	PMRS - NGO	North Gaza	Izbat Beit Hanoun
50	Chronic Diseases Centre	PMRS - NGO	Gaza	Gaza City
51	Haidar Abdel Shafi Health Centre - G	RCS Gaza- NGO	Gaza	Rimal Area
52	Red Crescent Society - Jabalia	RCS Gaza- NGO	North Gaza	Jabalia Camp
53	Red Crescent Society - Abassan Al-Ka	RCS Gaza- NGO	Khan Younis	Abassan Al-Kabeera
54	Al-Awda Health Centre - Rafah	UHWC - NGO	Rafah	Rafah
55	Al-Quds Health Centre	UHWC - NGO	North Gaza	Beit Hanoun
56	Khalil Al Wazir Health Center	PRCS - NGO	Gaza	Sheikh Ajleen
57	Jabalia Health Center	PRCS - NGO	North Gaza	Jabalia
58	Hijazi Clinic	PMMS	North Gaza	Al Twam

* shading indicates total destruction confirmed by MoH.

Source: WHO.