

Statement

My name is **Mohammad Abou-Arab**; I am a Norwegian citizen, MD and working as consultant in anesthesia at Oslo university hospital. As a volunteer medical doctor, I arrived to Gaza on the 13th of July 2014 through the Rafah checkpoint, after a 2 day delay by the Egyptian side. I was twice denied entry despite earlier arranged permission prior to this.

Israel launched Operation “Protective Edge” on 8 July 2014. During this operation the Gaza Strip was under intensive bombardment from the air, land and sea, severely affecting the civilian population.

During my stay in Gaza, I worked at Al-Shifa hospital, the largest hospital in the Gaza strip. I worked for about 16 days at both the emergency and operating departments. My duties included the assessment and treatment of incoming injured and wounded patients from different areas throughout Gaza.

I was involved in the treatment of many patients, the vast majority of which were children, women, and the elderly. I was personally involved in the management of many of these patients including severely injured children. I was also involved in managing severely injured health care workers that were injured while carrying out their duties to help civilians. I witness many violations of international law conducted by the Israeli Army.

In many instances during my management of colleagues, I was informed that there were medical teams and aid workers who were shot at by soldiers despite having clearly portraying they are health care workers. In many instances I was told by the teams themselves that they were shot at to prevent them from reaching critical areas where it was known there would be civilian casualties. This left many without access to life-saving support and when eventually these teams were able to get access, found tens of civilians’ dead, many of which could have been saved.

There were instances where the medical teams were shot at when they attempted to assist families by removing the bodies of their dead loved ones.

This was clearly illustrated in Beit Hanoon, Khuzaa and Sajaija. Civilians were held as human shields, though there are videos of this throughout the net, health care teams conveyed this information directly to me. Ambulances and health workers were also denied access to save injured civilians, leaving many only meters away from help by these teams, causing a delay in reaching these injured people leading to their deaths.

We remember the bombing of Al- Wafa hospital, Beit Hanoon hospital and Mohammad al-Dura hospital, which resulted in the death of an infant. But the deadliest attack on a health facility was the shelling of al Aqsa hospital in Deir al Balah on July 21. The hospital became under direct tank fire, and four people died instantly and six died later from injuries. 70—including patients, their companions,

and hospital staff—were wounded. The surgical ward, the intensive care unit, and life-saving equipment were severely damaged during this attack. **According to WHO “This incident is yet another illustration of the dangers faced by health-care personnel, patients, ambulances, and hospitals in Gaza”.**

Another illustration of war crimes and violation of international law concerning protecting medical workers in war time is the events seen with ambulance worker: **Mohammad Abu Jumiza** who became partially deaf after suffering head injuries during an attack that took place while he was transferring injured people in his ambulance in Khan Younis on 24th July. While he was driving his ambulance several missiles hit him, causing injury to him and severely others who were near the ambulance as well.

Ambulance worker **Mohammad Al-Abdallah** was killed on 25th July. He was in Qarara to help an injured person when he was shot in the hip and chest with gunfire and bled to death. Mohammad was travelling in a visibly marked ambulance and was wearing his medical uniform. Colleagues who approached him to help him were shot at to prevent them from helping him.

A’ed Mustafa Bur’i, another ambulance worker, was burned to death on 25 July in Beit Hanoon after a shell hit the clearly marked vehicle he was travelling in. **Jawad Budier**, 50 years old, a paramedic who was with **A’ed Al-Bor’i** was injured in the attack.

According to supervisor of ambulance services, **Dr. Bashar Murad** in Gaza, by the end of July, at least 35 health workers had been injured and 17 health vehicles had been left out of service.

The Israeli army has repeatedly bombed and targeted not only health workers in hospitals and ambulances, but also other aid workers from charity medical facilities and NGOs health buildings, such as **Palestine Mabarat** - a shelter home for people with developmental disabilities in Beit Lahiya. This home was shot by Israeli missile and totally destroyed; two health workers were injured and two patients have been killed during this attack.

Workers in the Civil Defense have been under attack in several occasions as well. I was involved in treating one of the firefighters brought into Al Shifa hospital from Sajaia area. He was trying to extinguish fire in a house block which was bombed by Israeli bombardment. The fire engine was hit by a shell and 2 of the firefighters injured.

I believe, instead of targeting medical workers and facilities in violation of international law, Israeli forces must protect medics and patients, and ensure that people wounded can safely reach medical facilities in Gaza and, when necessary, outside the Strip. However, Israeli forces deliberately prevented evacuation and

saving the injured. This behavior from IDF suggests that Israeli defense plans of attacks were to lead health care situation to a total collapse in order to increase the possibility of spreading disease and epidemics. **Dr. Richard Brennan**, Director of WHO's Department of Emergency Risk Management and Humanitarian Response said: "Assaults on health workers and facilities seriously affect access to health care, depriving patients of treatment and interrupting measures to prevent and control contagious diseases."

As a result of these crimes, 23 medical workers have lost their lives, 11 UNRWA employees and more than 70 doctors, nurses, paramedics and more than 33 other aid workers were injured, some of these will never be able to carry out their duties of helping people and saving lives ever again.

As UN human rights Chief **Navi Pillay** suggested, Israel is guilty of war crimes, she also condemned war crimes against health workers and health facilities in Gaza and asked for further investigation of these crimes. Already, two prominent international human rights groups - Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International - have called for full investigations into possible war crimes committed by Israel during its 51 days-long assault, especially on the health sector. In my opinion, targeting civilians, health care facilities, ambulances, medical workers, infrastructures, and punishing civilians is clear evidence of war crimes, and should equally be defined as genocide crimes.