

# Israel storms northern Gaza's last hospital as remaining residents forced south

Sunday 29 December 2024, by [Ahmed Ahmed](#) (Date first published: 27 December 2024).

**The attack on Kamal Adwan marks the culmination of a three-month campaign of ethnic cleansing and destruction in the northern city of Beit Lahiya.**

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*Palestinians evacuate from northern Gaza amid Israel's siege, December 4, 2024. (Omar El-Qattaa)*

In the morning hours of Dec. 27, Israeli army forces stormed the Kamal Adwan Hospital compound in Beit Lahiya, culminating a nearly week-long siege of the last functioning hospital in northern Gaza.

Soldiers forcibly moved patients out of Kamal Adwan to the Indonesian Hospital further south in the city, which had itself been [subjected to an evacuation order](#) by the military several days earlier.

“Surgical departments, laboratory, maintenance, and emergency units have been completely burned, and the fire is now spreading,” a statement released by the hospital staff read, warning that patients are “at risk of dying at any moment.” Hospital Director Dr. Hossam Abu Safiya told Palestinian media that he received a “clear and direct warning” from the army that he would be arrested.

In a statement, the Israeli army claimed it was operating inside the hospital “following prior intelligence about the presence of militants, terrorist infrastructure, and terrorist activity at the site,” and was “allowing patients and staff at the hospital to evacuate the area in an orderly manner.”

On Thursday, an Israeli airstrike on a building in the vicinity of Kamal Adwan reportedly killed 50 people. Among them were five hospital staffers, according to [Dr. Abu Safiya](#), who spoke with +972 on two occasions this week.

“We need the world to understand that this hospital is being deliberately targeted. The people here are not just patients — they are victims of a systematic attempt to destroy our capacity to save lives,” he told +972 on Dec. 23.

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**“We call on the international community to intervene quickly and open humanitarian corridors to bring in aid and protect the healthcare system, the workers, and the patients.”**

The assault on medical facilities in Beit Lahiya is the latest escalation in [Israel's brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing in northern Gaza](#), which over the last three months forcibly displaced the vast majority of Palestinians living in the area.

One of them, 68-year-old Bader Al-Hout, witnessed the destruction of her neighborhood in Beit Lahiya firsthand. Until late October, she and her family remained in their home near Kamal Adwan Hospital. But after the home was damaged by an Israeli airstrike, they went to stay with relatives in another part of the city.

"We survived on canned food and flour that we had stored. My grandchildren cried from hunger, but we had nothing left to give them," Al-Hout told +972. "Many of our neighbors were killed trying to bring clean water from the empty houses or the hospital. We had no choice but to drink salty water."

In the early stage of the siege, Israeli forces targeted Jabalia refugee camp, turning Gaza's most densely populated area into a "[ghost town](#)." But as +972 reported in late November, it subsequently shifted its attention to [Beit Lahiya](#), killing hundreds of the city's residents — and displacing [thousands more](#) — through air strikes on large residential buildings, remote-controlled quadcopter and tank fire, and by [preventing the entry](#) of virtually any humanitarian aid.

Before the start of the Israeli offensive in early October, 400,000 Palestinians were trapped in northern Gaza. Today, according to Mahmoud Basal, spokesman for the Palestinian Civil Defense in Gaza, only about 20,000 remain. UNRWA's [latest data](#) estimates an even lower figure, between 10,000 and 15,000.

At the start of Israel's operation, it was the homes of Al-Hout's neighbors that were first targeted — the Amin and Al-Amri families. On Oct. 29, Al-Hout recalled, "the [father] of the Amin family, his pregnant wife, and their 2-year-old daughter were killed. In the Alamri family home, 27 people were inside [when it was struck]; most were killed, and others were severely injured.

"The shrapnel and debris from the bombing hit our building and destroyed my son's apartment," she added. "He worked for 12 years to build it."

*Destroyed buildings in Beit Lahiya, in the northern Gaza Strip. November 28, 2024. (Oren Cohen/Flash90)*

After relocating to their relatives' home, Al-Hout and her family refused to evacuate to Gaza City for several weeks. She had heard from relatives who had evacuated that Israeli troops detained young men, even those with no ties to any of the Palestinian political factions, and feared that the same fate awaited her husband and sons.

But when the home where they sheltered was also bombed, during the night of Dec. 21, Al-Hout realized that it was too dangerous to stay. "The sounds of the [robot explosions](#) and airstrikes were deafening, unlike anything we've heard before. The windows and doors shattered from the nearby explosions. We thought it might be our last night alive," she recounted. "My 5-year-old granddaughter, Lina, cried, asking me, 'Why are they bombing and killing us like this?'"

The next morning, she and 17 of her relatives left Beit Lahiya southward to Gaza City, not knowing

where they would even spend the first night. As they embarked, they learned that one of their neighbors was killed that morning while also trying to escape.

“Dead bodies were lying in the streets of Beit Lahiya,” Al-Hout told +972, describing the start of their journey. “I can’t walk long distances, but if I stopped, I would be dead.”

At a military checkpoint along the way, Israeli soldiers stopped the family. “They took my four sons and my sick husband,” Al-Hout recalled. Hoping they would be released on the spot, she wanted to wait for them, but the soldiers ordered her to leave with the other women. Eventually, her husband and oldest son were freed, but at the time of publishing, the fate of her younger two sons remains unknown.

As they reached the center of Gaza City, Al-Hout and her family found themselves at Yarmouk Stadium, where hundreds of displaced Palestinians from the north are living in makeshift tents. Amid the severe overcrowding, the family has not managed to find a tent, or even a spot to pitch one.

*Tents housing displaced Palestinians, at Yarmouk Stadium in Gaza City, November 24, 2024. (Omar El-Qattaa)*

As she awaited news from her husband and sons, Al-Hout reflected on what led her family to this moment. “[Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu] claims he is here for a specific purpose, but he is here only to destroy,” she said. “But he is not solely to blame — America is responsible, as it has given him the green light.”

“I’m an elderly woman — please, explain to me: What did we do to America to deserve the destruction of our country, our lands, and our homes?”

### **‘If I break down, my family will break down too’**

Like Al-Hout, 47-year-old Nada Hammam fled her home in Beit Lahiya towards Gaza City on Dec. 22. “Doomsday,” is how she described the experience.

For two months, the mother of seven endured the horrors taking place in northern Gaza, desperately hoping for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli forces. But the situation only worsened with each passing day.

The health of her 71-year-old father, suffering from high blood pressure and diabetes, deteriorated rapidly as he ran out of his medication. Hammam’s own cartilage medicine that she takes for her back problems had also run out.

On Dec. 8, things took a tragic turn. Hammam was kneading bread in her home when a neighbor rushed in to inform them that Hussain, her brother, was hit by an Israeli airstrike while trying to find food. “We collapsed,” she recounted.

Hammam, the eldest of her siblings, did not call an ambulance; she heard there were none at the [Kamal Adwan Hospital](#) anyway. “I asked my brothers to stay with our father while I walked a long way to bring my injured brother [back to the house] under fire,” she told +972. “I carried him in a wheelchair as quadcopters shot around us.”

By the time they reached home, Hussain succumbed to his wounds. The family buried him on the ground floor of their building.

Despite the devastating loss and ongoing Israeli bombardment, Hammam and her family desperately wanted to remain in their home in Beit Lahiya. But like Al-Hout and countless others, she soon realized that the risks of doing so were far too high.

*Palestinians evacuate from northern Gaza amid Israel's siege, November 24, 2024. (Omar El-Qattaa)*

"On the morning of Dec. 21, the bombings reached our neighborhood," Hammam told +972. Because of the thick cloud of debris and shrapnel, they had no view of what was unfolding outside their window. But they could hear the blasts getting closer and closer, and the screams of neighbors pleading for help. "Four young sisters from a nearby house were killed in an Israeli airstrike while trying to bring water from the roof," she recalled.

Hammam said the bombardment intensified during the night. "We stayed awake from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., frozen in terror, unable to even go to the bathroom. We were just waiting for the moment the fire would stop."

The next day, the family decided to evacuate to Gaza City. As they opened the door to leave, they found three dead bodies lying in the street. "We couldn't even bury them," Hammam said, her voice heavy with grief.

As they made their way south through the devastated Beit Lahiya, Hammam's husband, her four sons, and her 71-year-old father were detained at a military checkpoint. The Israeli soldiers forced her to keep moving with the other women. Like that of Al-Hout's two sons, their situation is still unknown.

After an arduous five-hour journey, Hammam and her relatives finally reached Gaza City, finding shelter in a makeshift tent on the sidewalk of Al-Wihda Street in the city's center. "I'm so exhausted," she told +972. "I try to hide my tears, because if I break down, my family will break down too."

## **Systematic assault on medical facilities**

On Dec. 24, Israeli troops surrounded Beit Lahiya's Indonesian Hospital, then one of the last three medical facilities in northern Gaza. According to Gaza's Health Ministry, they forced the evacuation of some [65 medical staff and patients](#) — many of whom subsequently made the miles-long journey to a hospital in Gaza City on foot.

Over the past several days, Israeli tanks and bulldozers, accompanied by heavy gunfire, have also encircled the Kamal Adwan hospital, situated further to the north, in what Palestinian health officials [described](#) as an "unprecedented" attack. There have also been reports of Israeli troops [detonating booby-trapped robots](#) outside the hospital, before the army began to forcibly evacuate the facility in the early morning hours on Friday.

According to hospital director Dr. Hossam Abu Safiya, Among those killed in the attack near the hospital on Thursday evening were Dr. Ahmad Samour, a pediatrician; Esraa Abu Zaidah, a lab technician; Abdul Majid Abu Al-Eish and Maher Al-Ajrami, paramedics; and Fares Al-Houdali, a maintenance technician.

On Dec. 23, Dr. Abu Safiya told +972 that the hospital had come under direct fire. "The bullets have penetrated critical areas, including our intensive care unit, the maternity department, and the surgery department. Drones have dropped bombs on the roof and courtyard, and we've nearly lost our oxygen supply due to fuel shortages and fires." The gunfire also reached one of the hospital's

main generators, which caught fire, further threatening the facility's ability to operate.

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[A post shared by Eye On Palestine \(@eye.on.palestine\)](#)

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By Thursday, Dec. 26, the situation worsened significantly, Dr. Abu Safiya said. "Unfortunately, last night was worse than the night before. The nature of the explosive devices was alarming; it is clear that the amount of explosives used was significantly larger this time."

"The shrapnel from these blasts penetrated the building and struck one of the patients' rooms, injuring Nurse Hassan Al-Dabous. He suffers a severe head injury, with his skull shattered and fractures to his face and jaw. He is currently in intensive care, and his condition is very serious."

"Kamal Adwan lacks the resources to adequately handle such severe cases," he added. "We are making efforts to transfer patients to other hospitals."

The last explosion occurred around 4:30 a.m., according to Dr. Abu Safiya. "It was so powerful that it destroyed nearly everything inside the hospital—doors, windows, internal barriers, and glass—rendering the intensive care department almost non-functional," he told +972. "Just a short while ago, a staff member was injured by shrapnel from an explosive dropped by a quadcopter."

Ahead of the evacuation order on Friday, the hospital housed "75 wounded individuals, along with their companions, and 180 medical personnel, bringing the total number of people in the hospital to around 350," Dr. Abu Safiya said.

"The international community must act now to stop this assault. The people in our care are at risk of being displaced, or worse, as our ability to treat them dwindles by the hour."

In its response to queries for this article, an Israeli army spokesperson claimed the army's operations in northern Gaza target "terrorist objectives following efforts by Hamas to rebuild its operational capabilities in the area," and denied carrying out strikes on civilians or civilian sites.

It dismissed allegations of placing explosives near Kamal Adwan Hospital as "Hamas propaganda," and justified detaining "individuals suspected of involvement in terrorist activities" in combat zones, saying those found uninvolved would be released. It further stated that any claims of misconduct would be reviewed by its internal investigation mechanism.

**Ahmed Ahmed**

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**P.S.**

• +972 Magazine. December 27, 202:

<https://www.972mag.com/israel-storms-northern-gazas-last-hospital/>

- Ahmed Ahmed is a pseudonym for a journalist from Gaza City who asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal.

- Ahmed Ahmed's article on +972 Magazine:  
<https://www.972mag.com/writer/ahmed-ahmed/>

Our team has been devastated by the horrific events of this latest war. The world is reeling from Israel's unprecedented onslaught on Gaza, inflicting mass devastation and death upon besieged Palestinians, as well as the atrocious attack and kidnappings by Hamas in Israel on October 7. Our hearts are with all the people and communities facing this violence.

We are in an extraordinarily dangerous era in Israel-Palestine. The bloodshed has reached extreme levels of brutality and threatens to engulf the entire region. Emboldened settlers in the West Bank, backed by the army, are seizing the opportunity to intensify their attacks on Palestinians. The most far-right government in Israel's history is ramping up its policing of dissent, using the cover of war to silence Palestinian citizens and left-wing Jews who object to its policies.

This escalation has a very clear context, one that +972 has spent the past 14 years covering: Israeli society's growing racism and militarism, entrenched occupation and apartheid, and a normalized siege on Gaza.

We are well positioned to cover this perilous moment – but we need your help to do it. This terrible period will challenge the humanity of all of those working for a better future in this land. Palestinians and Israelis are already organizing and strategizing to put up the fight of their lives.

Can we count on your [support](#)? +972 Magazine is a leading media voice of this movement, a desperately needed platform where Palestinian and Israeli journalists, activists, and thinkers can report on and analyze what is happening, guided by humanism, equality, and justice. Join us.

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