Protect Health Workers, Health Care in Israel/Gaza War

November 2023

The [Frontline Health Workers Coalition](#) Steering Committee is deeply concerned by the war in Israel and Gaza and its detrimental effects on health and care workers, the health of women and children, and global health security.

[According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#), as of November 19 more than 11,000 Palestinians have died and 27,000 have been injured; more than 1,200 Israelis have died and 5,400 have been injured; and at least 239 people have been taken hostage. In Gaza, at least 135 health facilities have been attacked and 55 ambulances have been damaged; 25 hospitals and 52 health centers have been shut down due to physical damage and lack of fuel. At least 201 health workers have been killed.

On November 3, [the World Health Organization](#) (WHO) stressed that 67% of all casualties in Gaza have been women and children. "The bombardments, damaged or non-functioning health facilities, massive levels of displacement, collapsing water and electricity supplies as well as restricted access to food and medicines, are severely disrupting maternal, newborn, and child health services. There are an estimated 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza… 15% of them are likely to experience pregnancy or birth-related complications and need additional medical care."

On November 12, [regional directors of UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO called for urgent international action to end the ongoing attacks on hospitals in Gaza](#). The group emphasized that attacks on medical facilities and civilians are a violation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law and Conventions, and that the still functioning health facilities are "under massive strain and can only provide very limited emergency services, lifesaving surgery, and intensive care services. Shortages of water, food, and fuel are also threatening the wellbeing of thousands of displaced people, including women and children, who are sheltering in hospitals and their surrounds."

As [a coalition that has been urging greater US and international support for health workers](#) for more than a decade to save lives and foster a healthier, safer, and more prosperous world, we find the dangerous working conditions for health workers in Gaza deeply troubling and unacceptable. Health workers, facilities, and transport must receive protection. Lack of access to protected health workers and health services–along with the lack of fuel, electricity, water and sanitation, and communication–will increase morbidity, mortality, and the risk of outbreaks.

We urge the United States Government and UN Member States to use all influence to protect health workers, patients, and civilians, and ensure adequate essential medical supplies and humanitarian staff are allowed into Gaza, and access to basic services and commodities–especially fuel, electricity, and water–is restored. We remind all parties to the conflict of their obligation to abide by international humanitarian law and respect access to health services and protect health workers and places they provide care, patients, and civilians.