

URGENT ACTION

RELEASE PAEDIATRICIAN AND HOSPITAL DIRECTOR

On 27 December 2024, the Israeli military raided Kamal Adwan hospital in Mashrou' Beit Lahiya and arbitrarily detained its director, Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, along with other medical staff and patients. The raid put the hospital, the last functioning major medical facility in the North Gaza governorate, out of service. For months, Dr Hussam Abu Safiya has been the most prominent voice of Gaza's decimated healthcare sector. Israeli authorities must immediately release him. Pending his release, they must disclose his whereabouts and grant him access to a lawyer and ensure his protection from torture and other ill-treatment, and provide him with adequate healthcare.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Brig. Gen. Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi

Military Advocate General

Israel Defence Forces

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Dear Brig. Gen. Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi,

*I am writing to you to demand the immediate release of **Dr Hussam Abu Safiya**, a paediatrician and the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in the occupied Gaza Strip, who was arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared by Israeli forces on 27 December 2024, along with other hospital staff and patients, following a deadly raid on the hospital, which put it out of service.*

Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, 51, has for months acted as one of the most prominent voices of Gaza's decimated healthcare sector, providing comprehensive and reliable information about the healthcare situation in the North Gaza governorate, particularly since Israeli forces laid a near-total siege to the area since 6 October 2024. He continued to bear witness and treat children despite the killing of his son in October 2024.

Testimonies collected by Amnesty International and other human rights groups reveal a dreadful reality inside Israeli prisons and detention centres, where Palestinian detainees, including health workers, face systematic torture and other ill-treatment and are denied their right to a fair trial and due process, along with access to adequate food and medical care. In light of this, and the ongoing failure of Israeli authorities to grant independent monitors access to detention centres, we are extremely concerned for the life and wellbeing of Dr Hussam Abu Safiya.

By arresting him arbitrarily, refusing to disclose his whereabouts and refusing to grant him access to legal counsel, Israeli forces committed serious violations of international law, including the crime of enforced disappearance.

Therefore, I urge you to secure the release of Dr Hussam Abu Safiya and all other Palestinians, including health workers, forcibly disappeared and arbitrarily detained by Israel. Pending Dr Hussam Abu Safiya's release, I urge you to disclose his whereabouts and ensure his protection from all forms of torture and other ill-treatment, including coercion. Also pending his release, Dr Hussam Abu Safiya must be granted access to legal counsel and adequate medical care while in detention.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 27 December 2024, the Israeli military arbitrarily detained Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, a paediatrician and the director of Kamal Adwan hospital in Mashrou' Beit Lahiya in the North Gaza governorate, along with other hospital staff and patients receiving treatment. The raid, the latest in a series of attacks on healthcare facilities in North Gaza over the past three months, put Kamal Adwan, the last remaining major hospital in the area, out of service. Earlier, in October 2024, Israeli forces raided the hospital and detained medical staff and patients. On 12 December 2023, Israeli forces had raided the same hospital, also arresting staff and patients. While that raid put the hospital out of service, it was thanks to the efforts and dedication of Dr Hussam Abu Safiya and his colleagues that the hospital managed to re-open and resume its work. From January to September 2024, the hospital received the wounded from across North of Wadi Gaza, including Gaza City, who could not seek medical attention elsewhere due to the establishment by the Israeli army of the so-called Netzarim Corridor that has split the Gaza Strip down the middle. Its staff treated those wounded in attacks on starving people queuing for flour and aid, known by Palestinians as the "flour massacres" as well as those wounded in other strikes and shelling. The hospital also received and treated children and infants affected by severe malnutrition and dehydration. Throughout that period, Dr Hussam Abu Safiya and his colleagues provided human rights and humanitarian organizations with reliable information about the health situation. Since October 2024, Israeli forces have been waging a devastating and concentrated offensive on the North Gaza Governorate, placing the whole area under near-total siege, cutting it off from Gaza City, killing and injuring thousands of civilians and forcibly displacing most of the area's remaining inhabitants. During those months and until the 27 December raid, Kamal Adwan hospital was effectively the last lifeline for those who remained in North Gaza governorate, estimated at just 75,000. Dr Hussam Abu Safiya was their voice.

During Israel's military campaign and its ongoing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, Israel has arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared hundreds of Palestinian healthcare workers from Gaza without charges or trial. Health workers have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, held in incommunicado detention or subjected to conditions amounting to enforced disappearance.

Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, like many health workers before him, was detained in the course of caring for his patients and carrying out his medical duties. On 9 January, the Israeli Magistrate's Court in Ashkelon extended his detention without charge, under the Unlawful Combatants Law, until 13 February; and they extended the ban on Dr Hussam Abu Safiya meeting a lawyer until 22 January. They continue to refuse to disclose his whereabouts. Palestinians recently released from Sde Teiman detention centre told the media that they saw Dr Hussam Abu Safiya in the detention centre.

Attacks by Israeli forces have severely impacted health workers and medical facilities and crushed the healthcare system. The UN Human Rights Office documented at least 136 strikes on 27 hospitals and 12 other medical facilities, resulting in significant casualties among doctors, nurses and other civilians. Israel's decimation of the healthcare system in Gaza forms part of its deliberate infliction of conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of Palestinians, as prohibited under the Genocide Convention.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English and Hebrew.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 13 February 2025.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Dr Hussam Abu Safiya (he/him).

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

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Salutation: Your Excellency

Copies to:

- The International Law Division (ILD): ild@idf.il
- The Israeli Minister of Defence, Israel Katz, at: pniot@mod.gov.il