**Hamas uses hospitals and ambulances for military-terrorist purposes**

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Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Pages/Hamas-uses-hospitals-and-ambulances-for-military-terrorist-purposes.aspx>

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[Image: <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2014/Other2014/wafahospital.jpg> Caption: Wafa Hospital - Hamas fires rockets at Israel from here]

One of the fundamental aims of the laws of armed conflict is the protection of hospitals, ambulances, and medics from attack. International law grants this group special protection from attack during active conflict.

In Hamas’ world, hospitals are command centers, ambulances are transport vehicles, and medics are human shields. Hamas’ actions in this regard are flagrant violations of international law. Hamas undermines the essential protections that enable the provision of medical services to those in need during wartime, and threatens the security of all who are carrying out legitimate medical services in dangerous conditions.

Hamas and the other terrorist organizations have frequently made use of hospitals and other medical facilities for various military purposes in order to shield itself from IDF strikes - and to draw international condemnation of Israel if the IDF is forced to respond. They know the IDF does not attack medical facilities, and using a medical facility provides their terrorist operatives located there with a kind of immunity. For the same reason they use ambulances to move terrorist operatives and weapons from place to place in combat zones.

Al-Shifa'a Hospital, located in the western part of Gaza City, is the largest and most important hospital in the Gaza Strip. William Booth wrote in the Washington Post on July 15, 2014, that "At the Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, crowds gathered to throw shoes and eggs at the Palestinian Authority's health minister, who represents the crumbling 'unity government' in the West Bank city of Ramallah. The minister was turned away before he reached the hospital, which has become a de facto headquarters for Hamas leaders, who can be seen in the hallways and offices." Washington Post correspondent Nick Casey Tweeted that Hamas used the Al-Shifa'a Hospital as a "safe place" to meet with the media.

Hamas transformed Wafa Hospital, a civilian building in the Shuja’iya neighborhood of Gaza City, into a command center, rocket-launching site, observation point, sniper’s post, weapons storage facility, cover for tunnel infrastructure, and a general base for attacks against Israel and IDF forces. Hamas repeatedly opened fire from hospital windows and used anti-tank missiles from the premises.

In response to threat that this posed to IDF forces, the IDF repeatedly conveyed warnings to the hospital staff, Palestinian officials, and international aid organizations, including the World Health Organization, requesting that they act in order to stop the hospital from being used for military purposes. On July 23, after confirming that no civilians were present, the IDF attacked the compound and the terrorists within the hospital grounds, in order to remove the threat posed to IDF forces.

**Use of ambulances:** In one instance, during the ground operation, an IDF force identified two Palestinian terrorist operatives using ambulances to move through the Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, July 22, 2014). They were seen getting into the ambulance and driving away; the driver was apparently wearing a white coat. The IDF did not attack the ambulance out of concern for possible civilian passengers.

[Video: <https://youtu.be/7O114V9PdmM>]