



UNRWA-WHO medical supply convoy reaches Al-Shifa hospital

Statement by UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini and WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

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UNRWA has facilitated the delivery of WHO's much needed emergency medical supplies and medicines to Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City, north of the Gaza Strip, despite huge risks to our staff and health partners due to the relentless bombardments in Gaza.

This is only the second delivery of lifesaving supplies to the hospital since the escalation of hostilities and the total siege of Gaza began. On 24 October, WHO delivered medical supplies to the hospital amid high insecurity.

While welcome, the quantities we delivered are far from sufficient to respond to the immense needs in the Gaza Strip. The medical conditions at Al-Shifa - the largest hospital in the Gaza Strip and one of the oldest Palestinian health institutions - are disastrous.

There are currently almost two patients for every bed available. The emergency department and wards are overflowing requiring doctors and medical workers to treat wounded and sick patients in the corridors, on the floor, and outdoors. The number of wounded increases by the hour while patients are undergoing immense and unnecessary pain as medicines and anesthetics are running out. In addition, tens of thousands of displaced people have sought shelter in the hospital's parking lots and yards.

Al-Shifa Hospital has traditionally been the most important health facility in Gaza. Its doctors, nurses and other workers have responded heroically to the current desperate situation. But they need more support. The northern areas of Gaza cannot and should not be isolated nor deprived of the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Patients there cannot be denied the health care to which they are entitled and urgently need. Aid should reach the whole of Gaza.

Medical facilities are running out of supplies and fuel. So far, no fuel has been allowed into the Gaza Strip, including to Al-Shifa hospital for over one month now.

UNRWA and WHO renew their urgent call for the delivery of fuel to humanitarian agencies in the Gaza Strip. Without fuel, hospitals and other essential facilities such as desalination plants and bakeries cannot operate, and more people will most certainly die as a result.

The ability of hospitals and medical facilities to operate is paramount especially during conflicts. In line with international humanitarian law, we call for the protection of all medical facilities, personnel, patients and the wounded, for the sustained flow of humanitarian supplies and fuel at scale, and for safe and unimpeded access to deliver the supplies to health facilities wherever they are across the Gaza Strip. We also call for the medical evacuation of critically injured and sick patients.