

OTTAWA , 25 July 2024 - Joint Statement to the Government of Canada on the Healthcare Facility Crisis in Gaza

Following the July 2nd evacuation orders issued by Israeli forces for areas east and south of Khan Younis, the Gaza Ministry of Health was forced to evacuate the European Gaza Hospital. This was followed by the closure of the Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital on July 7th, after the Israeli forces carried out drone strikes in the immediate vicinity. On July 10th Israeli forces told all remaining residents in Gaza City to evacuate to Deir al-Balah and al-Zawaida.

On June 21, hostilities intensified near a displacement camp in al-Mawasi, resulting in the tragic deaths and severe injury of dozens of civilians. These latest hostilities severely disrupted operations at nearby field hospitals, including those operated by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Additionally, a clinic operated by Human Concern International in Rafah is nearly shut down due to ongoing attacks, severely hindering the ability of medical frontline workers to provide necessary care to those in need.

Gaza is a region with a population of more than two million. Its healthcare infrastructure, encompassing hospitals, healthcare facilities, and temporary field hospitals, has all but collapsed. Currently, 34 out of the Strip's 36 healthcare facilities have been shut down or impacted by the conflict.

The ongoing attacks by Israeli forces have jeopardized the health and survival of over 9,000 severely injured individuals who are now at risk of death because there is no functioning healthcare available. Prior to October 2023, there were 36 functioning healthcare facilities in Gaza.

Ongoing targeted attacks on hospitals are increasing the strain on a system that is operating above capacity limits. Nasser Hospital, the only remaining tertiary medical facility, in southern Gaza, that can provide specialized care, is buckling under the added pressures of treating patients from the shuttered European Gaza Hospital and Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital. This will put even more lives at risk. There is no safe healthcare option left for civilians in Gaza. Every hospital has faced attacks and none are fully operational.

We are alarmed by the systematic, deliberate and calculated attack against the health sector in Gaza by the Israeli forces. As a humanitarian aid organization, we are alarmed that the actions of the Israeli Forces are continuing to be unopposed by the international community.

The displaced population in Gaza now relies upon just two remaining temporary field hospitals and clinics operated by international NGOs. Two facilities providing healthcare for a population of more than two million – almost the population of Toronto.

We urgently call upon the Government of Canada to:

1. Formally condemn the Israeli Forces for their repeated attacks on healthcare facilities and personnel in Gaza.
2. Lead international efforts to call for and ensure the protection of medical facilities and guarantee unobstructed access to humanitarian aid.
3. Use its influence in international forums to advocate for the immediate cessation of hostilities and the restoration of peace and security in the region, and the commitment to international humanitarian law.

Canada's commitment to human rights and international humanitarian law must be reflected in decisive actions that protect the most vulnerable. The healthcare crisis in Gaza is not only a direct consequence of conflict, but also a stark reminder of the human suffering that ensues when international law and human rights are disregarded. As Canadians, it is imperative that we do what is right. If it would never be acceptable in a city in Canada – it should not be acceptable in Gaza.

Signatories,

Action For Humanity Canada
Canadian Muslim Healthcare Network
Children of Islamic Nations Canada
Droplets of Mercy Canada
Hands For Charity
Human Concern International
Humanity & Inclusion Canada
Islamic Relief Canada
International Development and Relief Foundation
Justice For All Canada
National Zakat Foundation Canada
Penny Appeal Canada
Plan International Canada
Refugee Girls Worldwide

Quotes from Signatories:

“The escalating crisis in Gaza's healthcare system, exacerbated by the Israeli Occupying Forces' repeated targeting of health facilities, including the forced evacuation of the Human Concern International's Primary Health Centre requires urgent action. We must collectively condemn the targeting of healthcare facilities by the Israeli Occupying Forces. We call upon our government to act decisively, ensuring that the people of Gaza have the healthcare access they desperately need.”

Mahmuda Khan, CEO of Human Concern International

"We are witnessing the collapse of the health system in Gaza. According to the Ministry of Health, more than 75,000 Palestinian, most of them children, have been injured since October 7. They need urgent health care to reduce the risk of permanent or long-term disability. We strongly condemn the attacks on health structures and call on Canada to continue to put pressure on the parties to the conflict to protect patients, aid workers, medical staff and all civilians."

Anne Delorme, Executive Director of Humanity & Inclusion Canada

“After 270 days of relentless attacks and a total blockade that is collectively punishing millions of innocent civilians, Palestinians in Gaza are facing an unprecedented man-made famine, targeted attacks on civilians and humanitarian personnel, and the complete decimation of the healthcare system. Our teams on the ground have shared horror stories about women undergoing unsanitary cesareans in tents without anesthesia. They have told us that there is "no healthcare for anyone" in Gaza. Islamic Relief is calling on the Canadian government to ensure the protection of medical workers and civilians, and to take decisive action to bring about an immediate ceasefire and end the total blockade.”

Usama Khan, CEO, Islamic Relief Canada

“International Humanitarian Law is crystal clear. Civilians, including children, aid workers, medical staff, the sick and the injured, must *never* be targets. Humanitarian aid *must* be allowed to reach any and all who need it. Occupying forces *must* allow people seeking healthcare to do so safely. Instead, these deliberate attacks on healthcare facilities, displacement camps and children are continuing, unhindered. Canada must act now, in the strongest terms possible, to insist on an immediate and permanent ceasefire and for the protection of civilians.”

Dr. Tanjina Mirza, Chief Programs Officer, Plan International Canada

“At IDRF, we recognize the urgency of the healthcare crisis in Gaza. Our commitment to humanitarian efforts compels us to support immediate actions to address this pressing issue. The health and well-being of individuals in Gaza are paramount, and we believe in collective action to alleviate suffering and promote sustainable solutions.”

Mahmood Qasim, CEO of International Development and Relief Foundation

“As Canadians, we must uphold our values of human rights and compassion, ensuring no person or community suffers neglect anywhere in the world. The worsening crisis in Gaza's healthcare system, caused by the repeated targeting of health facilities by Israel demands urgent action. We condemn these attacks on healthcare facilities and displacement camps. We urge our government to act decisively to ensure healthcare access for Gaza's civilians. Civilians, including children, aid workers, and medical staff, must never be targets. Humanitarian aid must reach those in need, and people seeking healthcare must be safe. Canada must insist on an immediate and permanent ceasefire and the protection of civilians.”

Fawad Kalsi, CEO of Penny Appeal Canada

“Children of Islamic Nations, COIN, strongly supports this letter. As Canadians, we must not blindly turn our faces away from this urgent healthcare crisis. Children, women, health care workers, medical staff and medical facilities are being targeted in Gaza. Canada must insist on a permanent and immediate ceasefire to protect the civilians.”

Dure Atiq, CEO of COIN, Canada.

"The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is worsening by the day. We call on the Canadian government to raise a strong voice against the actions of the Israeli Occupying Forces. These actions have led to the mass killings of innocent civilians, and furthermore, destroyed health infrastructure and blocked access to humanitarian aid. Airstrikes and a lack of medical supplies, food, water and fuel continue to contribute to disastrous consequences for the civilian population. We join our fellow Canadian charities in condemning the attacks on healthcare facilities, and support the urgent call for the Canadian government to act decisively on the matter."

Abdelrahman Hosein, CEO of Droplets of Mercy Canada

"It is unconscionable that people, anywhere, would not be safe to receive medical care. We would not accept patients, doctors, nurses and all types of medical professionals and patients to fear being killed and injured whilst in hospital here and we should not accept it in Gaza or anywhere else. Not only is the targeting of medical facilities a clear breach of international law, it is an affront to human decency."

Rania Lawendy, CEO of Action For Humanity