

## **We Must Continue with Outrage: Statement on Israel's Assaults on Hospitals and Safe Zones**

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In the past day Israel has attacked the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Mashrou Bait Lahia (North Gaza) with artillery and a ground invasion. This is one of the last three hospitals in northern Gaza. Israel destroyed the hospital's intensive care unit as well as its water and oxygen supply. A number of children and babies were reportedly [killed](#) as a result of the lack of oxygen supply and Israeli soldiers are rounding up doctors and patients in the courtyard. Israel is currently in the process of [destroying what is left of the last three hospitals](#) in northern Gaza as it decimates the remaining population with military attacks, starvation, blocking access to clean water and medical supplies, and forced displacement. Israel instituted a communications blackout over the weekend of October 18, 2024 before ruthlessly slaughtering non-combatants – men, women, and children.

Israel's flouting of international humanitarian law has become so normative that today's attack on the Kamal Adwan Hospital has barely registered in the Western press. The Lemkin Institute can't help but be shocked by the desensitization of Western establishment attitudes towards Israel's crimes over the course of the past year. We are reminded of the explosion [al-Ahli Arabi Baptist Hospital in Gaza](#) just over a year ago, on October 17, 2023 that was [initially attributed to Israel and elicited widespread outrage across the world](#), with many leaders and NGOs ([including the Lemkin Institute](#)) condemning the clear violation of international humanitarian law. Condemnation was so strong that Israel was forced to quickly deny that it attacked the hospital, blaming the [explosion on Islamic Jihad](#).

Although the responsible party for the explosion is unclear and no independent investigation has occurred due to the ongoing genocide (see note below), since the [al-Ahli explosion, Israel has attacked 464 more health facilities. It has killed 727 health care workers and injured 933 more across Palestine and Lebanon](#). Israel was quick to attack the media outlets, NGOs, and government officials around the world who blamed it for the al-ahli Arabi attack, charging them with amplifying Hamas propaganda, but it went on to commit war crime after war crime against safe zones in the twelve months that followed.

We at the Lemkin Institute mourn the loss of Western outrage at obvious war crimes. While the Western establishment could still see war crimes potentially committed by Israel in October 2023, it has lost its clarity of vision amidst a year of fierce propaganda by Israel, the USA, the UK, and Germany (among others), despite the fact that Israel's crimes have only increased in their depth, breadth, and perfidy. In the current delusional world inhabited by the Western media and governments, Israel no longer has to deny its crimes. It can and does celebrate them openly.

We also mourn the deliberate blindness of the Western world to red flags for genocide that existed in Israel-Palestine prior to October 7, 2023, which would have made the genocidal implications of Israel's response to October 7 quite clear. The Lemkin Institute has been criticized for calling the genocide against Palestinians "too soon" in our [Active Genocide Alert](#) from October 13, 2023. But the Lemkin Institute was using its red flag tools alongside other early warning mechanisms to make that call, and we were absolutely correct in our diagnosis of the situation.

The consequence of the West's deliberate blindness, especially the particularly extreme blindness of US President Joseph Biden, has been a year of genocide instead of a year of prevention. A year of impunity has rendered Israel's crimes so normative that its justifications have become canned, if they exist at all, and its [Western allies continue with rote calls for a ceasefire, which Israeli leaders make clear is not on their agenda](#). Such a situation is reminiscent of past Western failures to see and respond adequately to televised genocide, particularly the genocide of Bosnian Muslim by Serbs between 1992 and 1995 that only ended after the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995 spurred the Clinton Administration in the USA to act.

The Lemkin Institute wonders what will be enough for the Western world to act in this case, since it is only the (waning) power of the Western world that is enabling this genocide.

The Lemkin Institute reminds Western nations complicit in this horrendous crime against the Palestinian people that the patterned targeting of health care infrastructure violates one of the most critical principles of international humanitarian law (IHL), which is the recognition of and respect for safe spaces in conflict, such as health care facilities, religious institutions, and schools. The purpose of these laws is to allow both civilians and combatants to seek protection and heal, ensuring that unarmed people – and the heroic workers who seek to protect them – do not become targets. The US, which is funding Israel's atrocities, was itself founded on a recognition of the intolerable nature of the British policy of quartering soldiers in American homes and of the need for safe spaces away from war. Attacking health care facilities constitutes a violation of the very

*ius cogens* upon which international law is founded. It is also possibly a violation of the Basic Laws of Israel.

As we pass the one year anniversary of the start this genocide, of particular concern is the global fatigue in the face of Israel's ongoing attacks and legal violations, which we see in our inability to respond to each and every crime committed by Israel. Organizations like ours are running out of adjectives to describe the daily horror imposed by Israel's genocidal campaign. Condemnations appear useless in the face of inveterate support for Israel by the majority of the Western powers. Widespread complicity across Western institutions – government, private, and multilateral – and their ability to intimidate international institutions has rendered much of our work futile, at least in the immediate term.

As futile as Israel's impunity has left the work of global witnesses, however, we ask that everyone redouble their commitment to speaking out and keep fighting, treating every new violation of the law as we all treated the first ones. If we are to save international law from impotence in the face of Israel's actions, and if we are to salvage the principles upon which IHL is based, we must record, condemn, and publicly mourn each discrete atrocity that makes up the genocidal whole.

People in Europe and the United States who opted to support Israel over the past year should search their consciences and realize the inhumanity and illegality of Israel's conduct, whether or not they agree that this is a genocide. Israel's ongoing impunity has only led to greater and greater suffering and an ever-widening expansion of the conflict, which has no clear end without coordinated international sanction. Israel must be restrained and its behavior clearly rejected with arms embargoes, sanctions, and Security Council condemnation leading to clear measures intended to protect the people of Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and beyond from Israeli attacks.

History will name those who supported genocide, both directly and tacitly. History, too, will remember those who decide to change course as the atrocities mount, and endeavor to do something good.

The time to act was yesterday, but one can still act now.

Note: On November 26, 2023 [Human Rights Watch released its findings](#) that the October 17 explosion at the al-Ahli Arabi Baptist Hospital in Gaza was caused by a misfired rocket similar to ones used by Palestinian militant groups, but cautioned that a full investigation was needed. A 20 October 2023 investigation by Forensic Architecture

blamed the blast on Israel; a subsequent [study](#), published on February 2, 2024, cast further doubt on Israel's claims that a rocket fired from within Gaza caused the blast.