Press Release

MAP and IRC Emergency Medical Team (EMT) forced to withdraw and cease activities at hospital in Gaza

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Amman, Jordan, January 7, 2024 — As a result of increasing Israeli military activity around the Al Aqsa Hospital, the only functioning hospital in Gaza's Middle Area, Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC)'s Emergency Medical Team (EMT) has been forced to withdraw and cease activities.

The Israeli military has dropped leaflets designating areas surrounding the hospital as a 'red zone.' Given the recent history of attacks on medical staff and facilities in Gaza, the team is unable to return. Many local health workers have also been unable to access the hospital to care for the hundreds of patients that remain due to the conflict.

One of MAP's staff members in Gaza is currently a patient at the hospital, after being injured in an Israeli bombing of the house she was staying in after being displaced from her own home. Several of her close relatives, including three of her sisters, were killed in the strike.

As Israel's military activity spreads in the Middle Area, the hospital's services – particularly the treatment of trauma injuries which our EMT has been supporting – remain vital. **Professor Nick Maynard, a surgeon and clinical lead for the EMT, said:** *"The amount of injuries being brought in over the last few days has been horrific, and with a*

who could be saved if there were enough staff."

Dr James Smith, emergency medical specialist with the EMT, said: *"We fear for the immediate safety of people in the area, the Palestinian staff we've worked alongside, the hundreds of patients in the hospital, and thousands of displaced people in the hospital compound and nearby camps."*

A local emergency physician in the Middle Area told the team: *"I'm really scared because the past few days they're getting closer and closer, and no place is safe anymore. Where should people go if they get injured?!"*

MAP and the IRC are deeply appalled that our EMT has been effectively forced to stop working at a hospital where they have been saving lives. Without access to the life-saving medical care provided at the hospital, many more will die. We remain committed to sustaining the EMT and will provide emergency medical services in Gaza wherever it is safe to do so. As we continue to adjust to the security conditions the team is working to identify alternate locations to provide vital health care as civilians continue to be displaced further south.

Both MAP and the IRC reiterate that hospitals, medical staff and civilians all have protected status under international law. That protection must be strictly upheld, and safe access for humanitarians must be guaranteed across all of Gaza. The dismantling of health services witnessed in the north must not be repeated in the middle and south of Gaza.

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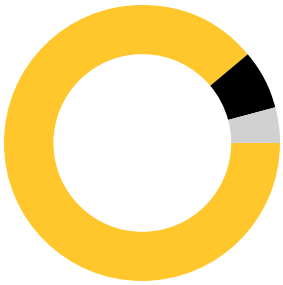
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