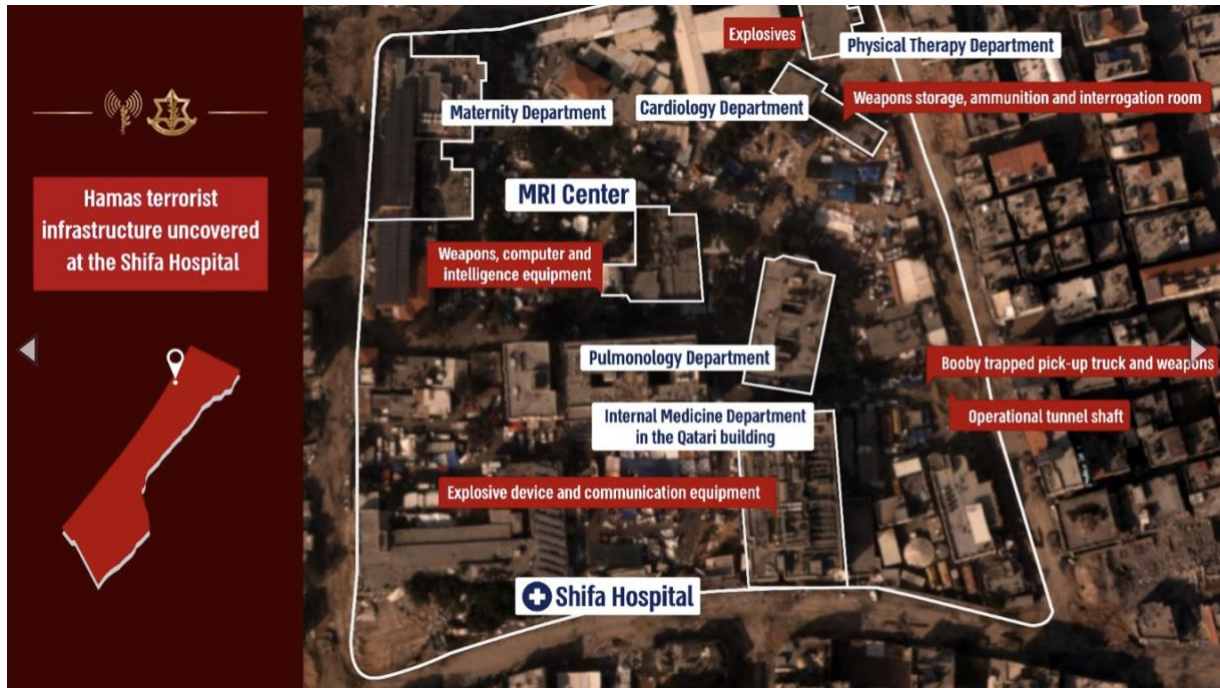# Fast Facts: Israel's second anti-terror raid at Shifa Hospital

Published: April 2, 2024

Terrorist infrastructure and weapons caches discovered at Shifa Hospital (Image: IDF)

Key points

- Hamas was actively using Shifa Hospital to conduct terrorism activities
- The IDF evacuated thousands of Shifa Hospital patients to alternative medical facilities nearby prior to its fight against Hamas
- No civilians died during the two-week battle
- The IDF eliminated 200 terrorists and arrested a further 913 terror suspects
- There were more Hamas terrorists than patients and medical staff at Shifa Hospital
- During the battle, Hamas terrorists fired guns from inside the hospital's emergency room and maternity ward, threw explosive devices from the burn ward, and lobbied mortars *into* the hospital

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- Hamas terrorists also fired mortars at IDF soldiers outside Shifa Hospital, causing extensive damage to the building
- On social media, Hamas claimed different things depending on what language it used. In Arabic, it glorified the gun battle against the IDF, but in English, it denied it even had guns

Contents

Summary

Hamas terrorists and the IDF engaged in a two-week battle in and around Shifa Hospital in Gaza, between March 18 and April 1, 2024. [Hamas terrorists were using the hospital as a base](#) to commit terrorism activities – a [violation of international law and a war crime](#). Before the IDF's raid began, it evacuated hospital patients and medical staff to other nearby medical clinics, with no injuries reported. During the two-week battle, Hamas terrorists fired guns, mortars and explosive devices from within the hospital, and even fired mortars into the hospital. By the end of the battle, 200 terrorists were eliminated and 913 terror suspects were arrested; three IDF soliders were also killed. During an interrogation with a terror suspect, they straightforwardly admitted that Hamas used hospitals and schools for years as terror bases.

Read more: [The tragic history of Gaza's al-Shifa Hospital](#)

Time period: March 18 to April 1, 2024

Video stills showing terrorists taking a hostage from Israel into Shifa Hospital on October 7, 2023 (Image: IDF)

Beginning on March 18, the IDF and other security agencies raided the Shifa Hospital compound in Gaza City for the second time in the war – the first time was back in November – based on intelligence that Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists had regrouped and massed themselves in and around the compound.
During the two-week raid, the IDF evacuated patients to alternative medical facilities nearby.

The IDF said in a statement,

> To our knowledge, no hospitalized individuals or medical staff were harmed in the operation, which was precise and worked to distinguish between terrorists and civilians.

> Our directive was to prioritize capturing terrorists alive, due to their significant knowledge and military intelligence extracted during their investigations. Therefore, we urged them to surrender on the first days of the operation.

Read more: Hamas is using hospitals to commit "acts harmful to the enemy"

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Strategic and tactical achievements

The IDF withdrew its forces from Shifa Hospital on April 1, ending the two-week raid.

[According to Ynet's Yoav Zitun](#), the IDF's final figures for the raid included:

- The elimination of 200 terrorists
- The arrest of 913 terror suspects, of which 500 were conclusively linked to Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad
- Three IDF soldiers were killed and eight wounded

It was also revealed that more intelligence on the hostages was obtained as a result of the raid, including never-seen-before video footage and information received from questioning terror suspects.

However, the IDF Spokesperson Daniel Hagari [said in a briefing on April 1](#):

> Hamas ruined and destroyed the Shifa Hospital after using it as a military headquarters – there are more terrorists in the hospital than patients or medical staff. There were only about 300 patients, doctors, and medical staff.

Both Ynet and [Ha'aretz](#) cite military sources that a total of 6,200 Palestinians were sheltering in the hospital compound at the outset of the raid and reported that the IDF called for all non-involved citizens to leave the compound over several days at the start of the operation and soldiers gave food and water to women and children and allowed them to leave the area.

Militarily, the operation seems to have been a great success, severely damaging Hamas' and PIJ's military capabilities in northern Gaza at a modest cost in IDF soldiers. The raid does not appear to have cost the lives of patients or staff in the hospital, who were all evacuated elsewhere, or civilians sheltering there, who were encouraged to leave early on. However, the two weeks of intense fighting has left the hospital compound severely damaged and requiring extensive repair work.

Background

During a recorded phone call between the IDF's Head of the Coordination and Liaison Administration (CLA) for Gaza and Dr. Youssef Abu Rish, Gaza's Deputy Minister of Health dated March 15 [and published on X (formerly Twitter) on March 18](#), the IDF apparently warned that the IDF was aware of the terrorists returning to use hospitals as

bases of operations, and reminded Dr. Rish of the dangers of this while also at the same time offering the IDF's help to the hospitals in every humanitarian capacity. Here's the transcript of the clip from that call that was made public:

> Head of Gaza CLA: According to what we said in the past, we see that there are terror operatives inside hospitals and that this is continuing. We have warned of these activities in the past and see that the Hamas terror organisation is continuing its military activity inside hospitals and that there are terror operatives in the heart of hospitals. I have told you before and I will tell you again, we are willing to provide any humanitarian aid needed, be it gas, food supplies, medical supplies and medicine to help with the operation of the hospitals – just as we have done in the past. We are prepared. Our request is a simple request: an immediate end to all of the terrorist activity in the hospitals like we saw in the hospital in Khan Yunis. That is our request and as we discussed, send me... and we will see how we can help.

> Dr. Youssef Abu Rish: We have received your message and I promise you we are on the same page. Hospitals need to be places that provide services, and no one should harm the patients or the provision of the medical services inside these hospitals.

Yet by March 27, the IDF and other security agencies said they had arrested over 500 terrorists in the Shifa Hospital operation, including: Bakr Ahmed Bakr Qanita, Head of Hamas' Security and Protection Department; Radwan Younes Kamal Tafesh, Head of a Department in the PIJ's Manufacturing Unit; and Hashem Muhammad Hasan Albatash, PIJ's Deputy Head of Finance.

Earlier, on March 21, the IDF announced the arrest, apparently in the hospital, of three top figures in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad: Muhammad Jundia, Commander of the Shejaiya Battalion of the Islamic Jihad and the Deputy Commander of the terrorist organisation's Northern Brigade; Samir Ziad Abd Abu Odeh, Commander of the Al-Shati sector in the rocket unit of the Islamic Jihad; and Ahmad Samara, responsible for tunnels and underground terror infrastructure of the Islamic Jihad in the Northern Gaza Strip.

At the beginning of the operation, the IDF announced the elimination of Faiq Mabhoub, head of the Operations Directorate of Hamas' Internal Security, who had based himself at Shifa Hospital.

IDF Spokesman Daniel Hagari issued specific briefings on the Shifa Hospital operation on March 18, March 21, and March 24. In the latter, Hagari made shocking revelations that terrorists had ramped up their attacks from within and around the hospital, barricading and embedding themselves among doctors and patients and lobbing mortars into the hospital.

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Hagari said:

> Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists are barricading themselves inside Shifa hospital wards.
>
> Hamas is destroying Shifa Hospital.
>
> Hamas is firing from inside the Shifa Emergency Room and Maternity Ward and throwing explosive devices from the Shifa Burn Ward.
>
> Terrorists hiding around the hospital fired mortars at our forces, causing extensive damage to the hospital buildings.
>
> I repeat: Hamas is firing mortars at the Shifa Hospital.
>
> Hamas is destroying the Shifa Hospital.

Read more: [Fact Sheet: Gaza's hospitals and ambulances – and Hamas' exploitation of them](#)

Evidence from captured terrorists

The tunnel built underneath Shifa Hospital by terrorists (Image: IDF)

In a [briefing on March 26](#), Hagari announced the IDF was releasing video footage from some of the interrogations. The detainees seemed relaxed and completely candid with

their own roles and the way Hamas and PIJ had been using hospitals for many years as terror bases – a grave war crime.

The following is a transcript of excerpts from [the interrogation of PIJ rocket-builder Nabeel Rajab Abed Shteiwi](#):

Interrogator: What is your name?

Detainee: Nabeel Rajab Abed Shteiwi

Interrogator: Nabeel Rajab Abed Shteiwi?

Detainee: Correct.

Interrogator: What is your role? Where are you? Who are you with?

Detainee: Jihad. The Islamic Jihad.

Interrogator: Why are you here?

Detainee: Why are we here? They brought us from Shifa.

Interrogator: From Shifa? From the Hospital?

Detainee: Shifa Hospital.

Interrogator: How long did you stay there?

Detainee: How long? Almost three months.

Interrogator: What is your role in the Islamic Jihad?

Detainee: In missiles.

Interrogator: In missiles? What does that mean? What do you do with the missiles?

Detainee: Produce missiles.

Interrogator: How long have you been doing this?

Detainee: Since around the year 2012.

Interrogator: Now tell me, you're in Shifa, who were the people that were not civilians?

Detainee: Operatives from Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. So, Shifa or schools and places like that, are our shelter.

Interrogator: Now I want you to tell me, you are in the Islamic Jihad. I know where they caught people from the Islamic Jihad inside the Shifa Hospital. Where were the headquarters of the Islamic Jihad in Shifa?

Detainee: Surely you know.

Interrogator: Tell me.

Detainee: Hamas and Islamic Jihad operatives do not have a specific headquarters. They are in all the buildings, scattered in the buildings I know. Hamas operatives, the Specialist Building for example, in the Specialist Building there is a large presence of Hamas operatives. This doesn't mean that they are not in the other buildings. You might see someone who doesn't look like a nurse but is dressed in nurse clothes and walking around.

Interrogator: Have you seen this with your own eyes?

Detainee: Yes.

Around the same time, the IDF's department for the facilitation of aid for Palestinians, COGAT, published another blockbuster clip [from an interrogation of a Hamas commander](#):

Interrogator: How many people were in Shifa from Hamas?

Hamas commander: There are several types of Hamas. There is a government, etc.

Interrogator: I am referring to the Hamas operatives.

Hamas commander: Between 600 to 1,000 operatives.

Interrogator: Are there certain places that belong to Hamas?

Hamas commander: There are certain areas that belong to the medical residency area. They call it the medical residency area, and the space, an area where there was a group and there were also weapons… Hamas uses the Management Building and the

Specialist Building and the Maternity Ward in the department below. I told the officer… in the end, the civilians, the sick, the injured are affected by this.

In his March 28 briefing, Spokesman Hagari reported on the elimination of senior Hamas operative Ra'ad Thabet: "Thabet served as the Head of the Supply and Manpower Unit of the Hamas Military Wing. He previously served as the Head of Hamas's Production Unit."

Other noteworthy social media posts on the IDF feed during the ongoing raid include (in chronological order, from oldest to newest, with the post date on Israel time):

- A short video of terror fund cash disbursements that were found in a safe on the Shifa Hospital grounds (March 18)
- A two-minute briefing at the edge of the Shifa Hospital compound by IDF Spokesman Hagari (March 20).
- Video of humanitarian aid the IDF was delivering to Shifa Hospital in the midst of the battle (March 24).
- Two different examples of evidence of weapons found in the hospital, including in the maternity ward, as well as a one-minute briefing on the finds (March 25).
- A timely 75-second summary of the Shifa Hospital battle by Tammy Shur from the IDF Spokesperson's office (March 25).
- A video about how Hamas terrorists barricaded themselves in Shifa Hospital's maternity ward and how the IDF responded [April 1].

Read more: Myths and reality regarding Gaza's hospitals

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Other related sources and readings

Shifa Hospital following the battle between Hamas terrorists and the IDF (Image: Wikimedia)

Seth Frantzman, an adjunct fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, has emerged as a top analyst on the raid:

- On March 26, Frantzman analysed the question for the Jerusalem Post, "How did the IDF let 500 Hamas terrorists return to Shifa Hospital?"
- On March 31, also in the Jerusalem Post, Frantzman wrote about what the Shifa Hospital raid tells us about the mafia-like fashion that Hamas operates, and how the IDF is more effectively combatting the terror group.
- On April 1, Frantzman published a concluding analysis of the raid for the FDD's Long War Journal

Tal Schneider, Political Correspondent for the *Times of Israel* and the Israeli website Zman, was interviewed by Bev O'Connor on ABC's "The World" on April 1 and explained the reason why the hospital emerged in such devastated condition.

Schneider told O'Connor:

> [Shifa] hospital was serving as a huge terror base. Twice, by the way. In recent weeks, all of the terrorists that ran away from other areas just gathered there... the photos are

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unbelievable... they were they were in the halls of the hospitals... Before the operation began two weeks ago... the IDF evacuated all of the people who were hospitalised there. But other than that, there were, you know, severe fighting going inside the halls of this hospital. The terrorists did not have a place to run... because, as you know, there were tunnels built under the hospital. They were taken out in the first phase back in December. So right now, the terrorists could not run to the underground. And they fought for two weeks. And now the hospital is in a very bad situation. I don't think it can serve the community anymore.

Finally, writing at the website *The Algemeiner*, Jack Elbaum showed how Hamas reported its fighting with the IDF at Shifa Hospital on social media [differently depending on the language](#). In Arabic, they glorified the gun battles. In English, they denied the presence of gunmen at the hospital and depicted it as a cruel attack on a civilian target.

Conclusion

When Hamas thought that it was safe to regroup at Shifa Hospital and re-establish its control over northern Gaza, the IDF operation took the terror organisation by surprise. The IDF operation successfully protected Palestinian civilians and was a remarkable success in humanitarian protection during urban conflict. Its destruction of the Hamas command in these circumstances provides a model that will be studied in the military colleges of Israel's allies around the world.

Read more: [The latest IDF raid on the Kamal Adwan Hospital debunks absurd UN report](#)