

UNAIIS Field Office
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Investigation into the killing of two nurses inside El Wafa Medical Rehabilitation Hospital – Preliminary Findings

At approximately 2345 hours on Wednesday 5 February the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) entered a private apartment building¹ inhabited by some 40 civilians by demolishing a stone wall and the main entrance door. An Apache helicopter participated in the attack. Troops entered the building and took position on the third floor of the building, approximately 40 metres across from El Wafa Medical Rehabilitation Hospital².

At approximately 0015 hours on Thursday 6 February, in the East male ward of the second floor of El Wafa Hospital, room number 214, two staff nurses were killed. Abd Al-Kareem Lobbad (21) and Omar Hassan (21) were shot dead by a single bullet fired from 37-43 metres away by an IDF soldier at the third floor of above mentioned apartment building which entered through the Plexiglas window of room 214.

Omar Hassan was tending to a patient in room 214 by the window when he was shot in the chest. The same bullet then exiting Omar Hassan's body strayed into the chest of Abd Al-Kareem Lobbad, who was standing 1,5 – 2 metres behind Omar Hassan. Both victims were dragged out of the room and into the hallway, leaving heavy traces of blood on the floor, whereby the doctors who were on the evening shift attempted to resuscitate both victims as they arranged for ambulances to transfer them to Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. Omar Hassan died immediately and Abd Al-Kareem Lobbad died on the way to Shifa hospital.

At the time of the shooting, it was dark outside. Room 214 was brightly lit as hospital wards normally are, and the two staff nurses were wearing white hospital coats while tending to the three patients in the room.

From the location on the east end of the building 40 metres from where the IDF soldiers took action and shot at the hospital, there is a clear, big sign in Arabic and English just above the window of room 214 stating the this building is a hospital. There is also a lit up smaller sign. There is also a sizeable flag, stating that this building is a hospital. There are lamps all around the hospital, lighting up the building and the signs. The lamps were all turned on at the time of the incident.

The Red Crescent Society informed the administration of the hospital to evacuate the hospital in order to keep the number of casualties low. The staff refused to evacuate. The number of staff in the evening are much fewer than during day time and staff from outside who wanted to assist were prevented by the IDF due to their military operation and road blocks in the area.

¹ 31°29.924 N, 034°29.239 E

² 31°29.939 N, 034°29.225 E

The IDF surrounded the hospital until 0330 hours at which points they withdrew. Before the withdrawal, the IDF shot and wounded an unarmed 70 year old security guard in the garden of a building across the road from El Wafa Hospital, Manse El-Mabhough, who is in critical condition receiving treatment in the intensive care unit of Shifa Hospital.

At the time of the shooting, there were no gunfights in the area, no mortar fire or other hostilities. No arrests were made in the apartment building occupied by the soldiers or in the area. **The preliminary findings of our investigation is very disturbing, as the IDF operation seems to have targeted the hospital as such.** The operation was swift and concentrated. The two killed nurses had to our knowledge no previous security record with the Israeli authorities.

Further investigation is currently taking place into the incident, securing physical evidence and eyewitness reports.

Ann Kristin Brunborg
Field Director
UNAI Middle East