Israel says WHO ‘colluding’ with Hamas by ignoring ‘terrorist use’ of Gaza hospitals

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-says-who-colluding-with-hamas-by-ignoring-terrorist-use-of-gaza-hospitals/>

Israel on Thursday accused the World Health Organization of collusion with Hamas by ignoring Israeli evidence of the ‘terrorist use’ of hospitals in the Gaza Strip, during a session when the global health body’s chief described conditions in the coastal enclave as ‘hellish.’

Israeli ambassador Meirav Eilon Shahar told the WHO’s executive board that there could not be health care in the Palestinian territory when Hamas ‘embeds itself in hospitals and uses human shields.’

In ‘every single hospital that the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) searched in Gaza, it found evidence of Hamas’ military use,’ she said. ‘These are undeniable facts that WHO chooses to ignore time and time again. This is not incompetence; it is collusion.’

Israel has repeatedly said Hamas is using civilians as human shields, including by locating operations bases under hospitals. Captured Hamas terrorists have [confirmed the claims](https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-interrogation-video-hamas-terrorists-confirm-groups-hideout-under-gaza-hospital/), explaining that Hamas knows Israel will not bomb a medical center.

On X, formerly Twitter, the ambassador insisted there was evidence of Hamas’s ‘terrorist use’ of hospitals.

During the same session on the organization’s work in health emergencies, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who lived through war as a child and whose own children hid in a bunker during bombardments in Ethiopia’s 1998-2000 border war with Eritrea, became emotional describing conditions in Gaza.

‘I’m a true believer because of my own experience that war doesn’t bring solution, except more war, more hatred, more agony, more destruction. So let’s choose peace and resolve this issue politically,’ Tedros told the WHO board.

‘I think all of you have said the two-state solution and so on, and hope this war will end and move into a true solution,’ he said, before breaking down, describing the current situation as ‘beyond words.’

War erupted after Hamas’s brutal October 7 massacres, which saw some 3,000 terrorists burst across the border into Israel from the Gaza Strip by land, air and sea, killing some 1,200 people and seizing over 250 hostages of all ages, mostly civilians.

In response, Israel vowed to destroy Hamas and launched a wide-scale military offensive that the Palestinian territory’s health ministry says has killed at least 25,700 people. The figures issued by the Hamas-run health ministry cannot be independently verified, and are believed to include both civilians and Hamas members killed in Gaza, including as a consequence of the terror groups’ own rocket misfires. The IDF says it has killed over 9,000 operatives in Gaza, in addition to some 1,000 terrorists inside Israel on October 7.

A UN-backed report in December said the whole population of Gaza faced crisis levels of hunger and a growing risk of famine.

Eilon Shahar said Tedros’s comments represented a ‘complete leadership failure.’

‘The statement by the director-general was the embodiment of everything that is wrong with the WHO since October 7th. No mention of the hostages, the rapes, the murder of Israelis, nor the militarization of hospitals and Hamas’ despicable use of human shields,’ the Israeli ambassador said in comments sent to Reuters.

Her comments echoed Israel’s [defense](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-rejects-genocide-claims-at-the-hague-says-south-africas-allegations-baseless/) against South African claims of genocide, heard in the International Court of Justice in The Hague earlier in January, in which Jerusalem detailed Hamas’s all-encompassing use of civilian infrastructure in Gaza for military purposes. The ICJ was set to [rule](https://www.timesofisrael.com/international-court-of-justice-to-rule-in-south-africas-genocide-case-against-israel/) on South Africa’s request for emergency measures against Israel — including an immediate halt to fighting — but not the genocide claims.

**‘Murdered hostages in a tunnel’**

The IDF accuses Hamas of digging tunnels under hospitals and using the medical facilities as command centers, a charge denied by the Islamist terror group.

WHO has previously said it could not confirm the allegations.

Richard Peeperkorn, the WHO representative for Gaza, told reporters on December 21 that ‘we on our missions have not seen anything of this on the ground,’ adding that WHO was ‘not in a position to assert how any hospital is being used.’

‘The role of WHO is to monitor, analyze and report… We are not (an) investigating organization.’

But Eilon Shahar alleged the UN health agency ‘knew hostages were held in hospitals and that terrorists operated within.’

‘Even when presented with concrete evidence of what was happening below ground and above ground … WHO chooses to turn a blind eye, jeopardizing those they are meant to protect.’

Listing hospitals in the Gaza Strip, the ambassador said Hamas forces ‘managed operations’ from the Indonesian Hospital, ‘and the IDF found five murdered hostages in a tunnel dug underneath.’

She said hostages were brought through the front of the Al-Rantisi children’s hospital on October 7 and then held in the basement.

At Kamal Adwan Hospital, ‘80 terrorists surrendered themselves to IDF soldiers, and weapons were found hidden inside incubators,’ she said.

Hamas fired rocket-propelled grenades at Israeli troops from the Al-Quds Hospital, she said, ‘and large quantities of weaponry and ammunition were found within.’

The WHO executive board meets twice a year. It is comprised of 34 countries elected for three-year terms.

It is believed that 132 hostages abducted by Hamas on October 7 remain in Gaza — not all of them alive — after 105 civilians were released from Hamas captivity during a weeklong truce in late November. Four hostages were released prior to that, and one was rescued by troops. The bodies of eight hostages have also been recovered and three hostages were mistakenly killed by the military. The IDF has confirmed the deaths of 28 of those still held by Hamas, citing new intelligence and findings obtained by troops operating in Gaza. One more person is listed as missing since October 7, and their fate is still unknown.

Hamas has also been holding the bodies of fallen IDF soldiers Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin since 2014, as well as two Israeli civilians, Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed, who are both thought to be alive after entering the Strip of their own accord in 2014 and 2015 respectively.