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## **Occupied Palestinian Territory: Israeli Forces detain doctor and human rights defender Hussam Abu Safiya**

On 27 December 2024, the Israeli forces arbitrarily detained human rights defender Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza. This happened after the Israeli army invaded the hospital and ordered the evacuation of all its departments. Since his arrest, the whereabouts of Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya are unknown.

[Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya](#) is a Palestinian paediatrician and the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital, which was one of the last barely functioning hospitals in northern Gaza before it was bombed, burned and evacuated by Israeli forces in late December 2024. This resulted in it being completely out of service, leaving the residents of northern Gaza without a functioning hospital. In October 2024, the Israeli forces ordered Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya to evacuate the hospital. He refused because there were no other functioning hospitals for his patients and because the persons using the hospital as a shelter had no other place to go. From November 2024 until the day of his arrest, the human rights defender was using his Instagram account to document Israeli violations and attacks on Kamal Adwan Hospital. Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya posted daily updates on the situation and appealed to the international community to intervene to stop the genocide. On 28 October the Israeli forces killed his son with a drone strike while he was sheltering at the hospital with his family. Furthermore, the human rights defender himself was injured in November 2024 due to direct bombing of the hospital.

On 27 December 2024, the Israeli forces invaded Kamal Adwan Hospital before setting it on fire, which rendered it completely out of service. They then detained more than 350 people who were at the hospital, including Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, 180 of his medical staff as well as 75 patients and their family members. They were all taken to an unknown location.

According to his family, the whereabouts of Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya are unknown since the day of his arbitrary arrest. On 2 January 2025, Physicians for Human Rights – Israel (PHRI) [submitted a request](#) on behalf of Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya's family to obtain information and facilitate the visit of a lawyer. The Israeli authorities responded that they have no record of his detention or indication of his arrest.

Front Line Defenders condemns the arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance of Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya. It is deeply concerned about his unknown whereabouts in light of the inhumane treatment of detained doctors and human rights defenders from Gaza in Israeli prisons.

Both Dr. Adnan Al-Bursh, head of the orthopaedics department at Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City and Dr. Iyad Al-Rantisi, head of the obstetrics department at Kamal Adwan Hospital, were killed due to torture during their detention in April 2024 and November 2023, respectively.

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The detention of Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya should be understood within the context of Israel's [ongoing, well-documented, genocide in Gaza](#), which has persisted [for nearly 15 months](#). Since the beginning, Israeli forces have been intentionally and directly attacking hospitals and medical facilities. As a result, by [November 2024, only 17 out of 35 hospitals remain operational in Gaza](#).

In addition, doctors have been facing a range of human rights violations by the Israeli forces due to their human rights work in saving people's lives in Gaza. By December 2024, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza, the Israeli forces killed around 1,057 doctors and healthcare workers in Gaza. [The Israeli military's systematic attacks on medical facilities and personnel in Gaza constitute war crimes](#) and grave violations of its duties as an occupying power as stated in international humanitarian law, namely the fourth Geneva Convention 1949, which grants specific protection to civilian hospitals and medical personnel.

#### Front Line Defenders urges the Israeli authorities to:

1. Immediately reveal the whereabouts of Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya;
2. Immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya along with other detained Palestinian healthworkers and human rights defenders;
3. Ensure that Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya's physical and psychological integrity are protected and guaranteed while in prison in accordance with its obligations as an occupying power under international standards, mainly international humanitarian law;
4. Ensure that Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya has access to his family and lawyers;
5. Cease targeting all doctors and human rights defenders in Gaza and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate and peaceful human rights work without fear of reprisals.

#### Front Line Defenders urges the international community to press Israel to :

1. End its atrocities in Gaza, by calling for a ceasefire;
2. Immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya along with other detained Palestinian healthworkers and human rights defenders;
3. Ensure that Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya's physical and psychological integrity are protected and guaranteed while in prison in accordance with its obligations as an occupying power under international standards, mainly international humanitarian law;
4. Cease targeting all doctors and human rights defenders in Gaza and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate and peaceful human rights work without fear of reprisals.

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