

## **WHA77 Sees Heated Debate over Gaza Health Amid Ongoing Attacks**

By Peoples Dispatch

05 June 2024

Discussions about health in Palestine intensify at the World Health Assembly as Israel's attacks on Gaza continue

Every year, the World Health Assembly (WHA) discusses health conditions in Palestine, usually leading to a statement urging the World Health Organization (WHO) to continue monitoring and supporting the health system in occupied territories. This year, at WHA77, discussions are even more heated due to ongoing attacks on the Gaza Strip and new materials presented for analysis.

The debate includes a [draft decision](#) submitted by a group of countries led by Algeria. Israel requested an amendment to denounce the military use of health facilities and call for the release of "all hostages held in Gaza," which many saw as an attempt to shift the blame for its attacks on Gaza to Hamas. Typically, Israel struggles to keep Palestinian health off the WHA agenda, often failing due to support for Palestine from Global South countries. However, this amendment passed, attributed to many WHO Member States abstaining or not attending the vote. Of the 194 members, [less than 100](#) cast a vote: 50 voted in favor of the amendment and 44 against it. Countries like Ireland, which had stated support for Palestine in other spaces, abstained from voting on the amendment.

The result caused widespread perplexity. Following Egypt's request to withdraw the decision, the matter was postponed until later phases of WHA77. Delegates are discussing other agenda points related to healthcare in occupied Palestinian territories in addition to this one, with the results of the debates expected during the very last days of the Assembly.

### **Civil society calls for declaration of famine in Gaza**

Meanwhile, more health workers died as a result of Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) attacks. The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) reported on May 30 that two of its paramedics, Haitham Tubasi and Suhail Hasouna, were killed in an IOF attack in Tel Sultan, Rafah, the day before. Israeli planes targeted the ambulance vehicle and soldiers proceeded to shoot people trying to reach the health workers. Haitham Tubasi's and Suhail Hasouna's bodies were afterwards retrieved in pieces, the PRCS [stated](#).

As Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, particularly Rafah, continue, the United Nations reports fluctuating operational statuses of hospitals. Health centers struggle to function amid shortages of fuel, medical supplies, and food. By May 24, UNRWA [reported](#) that its health centers had gone 12 days without supplies, affecting stocks of medicines, including antibiotics for children and vaccines.

Increasing levels of hunger exacerbate concerns about protecting and rebuilding Palestinian health. The UN found that dietary practices in May worsened, with 95% of children aged six to 23 months consuming two or fewer food groups daily. Over 85% of children went without a meal for an entire day before the UN survey.

Malnutrition and disease outbreaks are rising, with temperatures contributing to the spread of diseases and epidemics in Gaza.

A coalition of over 80 Palestinian and 20 international organizations, including the Bisan Center for Research and Development, Addameer, and Al-Haq, urged the UN and the Palestinian Authority to declare Gaza a [famine-stricken](#) area due to famine, environmental pollution, and the spread of diseases. “With rising temperatures, the spread of diseases and epidemics has become a reality among Palestinians,” the coalition stated.

*This article was syndicated from Peoples Dispatch.org (<https://www.peoplesdispatch.org/>) and was originally published on 30 May 2024. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the author, and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article (<https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/2024/05/30-gaza-health-amid-ongoing-attacks> : Peoples Dispatch/).*