

I am Esraa Abu Roqua, a radiology specialist from Gaza. I truly loved my job, and had a passion for helping others. I was looking forward to a successful career that I had studied and worked so hard for, not knowing what the future held. When the war broke out, I felt a huge responsibility to step up and care for my people. Gaza's healthcare system became more important than ever before. Overnight, it transformed from a beacon of hope, to a direct target of the violence. Despite the dangers and threats to doctors and patients, I was determined to remain steadfast and hold my post in Nasser hospital, and care for as many people as I possibly could. The situation intensified not just daily, but hourly. We were overwhelmed with the sheer number of injured being brought to us, and our capacity was far exceeded. The hospital was surrounded on all sides, but my colleagues and I pushed on. We did not have enough beds, or medicine. People were dying from every injury and illness imaginable, not from a lack of skill or desire to help, but from being deprived of the most basic equipment and hygiene that constitute human rights. As doctors, who make an oath to do everything in our power to save lives, this broke our spirits. We tried our hearts out. The internet was only accessible from the roof of the hospital, where many people were targeted by snipers and quad-copters. This made it almost impossible to contact our family and friends for both news of their safety, and moral support from inside the hospital. We were struggling to eat or sleep, to fuel our bodies to cope with the tsunami of civilians in need of life saving care. We were being attacked at the hospital for around six traumatic weeks. Finally, when the hospital was besieged and bombed, we were forced to evacuate. There were no more options. On the East Rafah road we were using to reach the South, at Kaf Maraj, myself and a group of colleagues and friends were targeted by a reconnaissance missile. I suffered massive, extensive tissue loss in the buttocks and back, perforation of the intestines, and an open fracture to my forearm. This attack brutalized my body, and I experienced being on the receiving end of the same horrifying injuries that I had previously treated in my patients. The American hospital received me, and performed major surgery. Even in the midst of war, they managed to save my life. I fell into a coma after this surgery, with a dangerously low blood count. Thanks to the heroic doctors, and God, I survived. I remained in intensive care for 4 and a half months, with many operations and anesthesia, and in hospital for a total of 9 months. "