

Anglican hospital in Gaza cares for wounded during fighting between Israel and Hamas

by [David Paulsen](#) in the [June 30, 2021](#) issue



A mother holds her child outside Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, which is run by the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem in Gaza. (Photo courtesy of the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem)

In May, tensions over the evictions of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem boiled over into 11 days of fighting between Israel and Hamas. Before agreeing to a May 21 cease fire, Hamas fired rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israeli cities, while Israel launched air strikes that leveled buildings in Gaza. Those attacks, along with clashes in Jerusalem between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police, reportedly left at least

260 Palestinians and 12 Israelis dead and hundreds more injured.

One constant before, during, and after the turmoil has been the ministry of Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, run by the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem in Gaza. The hospital saw a surge in patients while also sustaining minor damage during the Israeli air strikes.

“Our ministry is a ministry of healing and love and reconciliation,” said Archbishop Hosam Naoum. His diocese operates Al Ahli Arab as a charity hospital, catering to impoverished families in Gaza, many of them Palestinian refugees. Gaza’s public hospitals treated most of the patients who were injured during the Israeli air strikes, Naoum said, and Al Ahli Arab Hospital’s 65 beds filled quickly with patients who had been diverted there for nonemergency treatment.

Naoum expressed gratitude for the support his diocese has received from across the Anglican Communion. “That’s the greater sense of the body of Christ,” he said.

The hospital wasn’t hit directly in May’s air strikes, but one explosion was close enough to shatter windows at the hospital. No one was hurt, Naoum said.

The hospital has about 120 full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees. Naoum said one effect of the flare-up of violence was that many of those employees camped at the hospital, some bringing their families, because the attacks made travel between their homes and the hospital difficult.

The fighting also disrupted Gaza’s power grid, and money raised by the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem was used to buy fuel for generators so it could remain open during outages. The hospital also was able to purchase medical supplies and increase its free community clinic from one to four days a week.

“We are grateful for your prayers and generosity,” Suhaila Tarazi, Al Ahli Arab’s director, said in an email to donors. “Though the situation in Gaza is horrifying and grim, we at Ahli are confident that through your support we will replace despair with hope, mourning with comfort, humiliation with dignity, and injury with healing.”

Michael Curry, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, offered support for the people of the Holy Land on behalf of his denomination.

“We find ourselves full of sorrow and sadness,” Curry said on May 13. “We find ourselves grieving over the loss of life, destruction of homes, and the fear that lives

in the hearts of tens of thousands of innocent people. We join all people of faith to offer up prayers for healing, wholeness, restoration, and reconciliation.”

Naoum said his Anglican diocese is uniquely positioned to be a force for reconciliation in the area, partly because of ministries like Al Ahli Arab Hospital.

“We are known for being bridge builders . . . bringing people closer together in these difficult times,” he said. —Episcopal News Service