

FALSE
NARRATIVE

Conclusive evidence has determined that Israel was behind the October 2023 Gaza hospital blast

The False Narrative

An Israeli airstrike, not an errant Palestinian rocket, is clearly to blame for the Oct. 17, 2023, blast at the Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza that caused hundreds of civilian fatalities and injuries.

The Facts

Although as of mid-November 2023, there was no absolutely dispositive evidence establishing who was responsible for the Oct. 17, 2023, blast at the Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza, mounting evidence — including reports from the U.S. intelligence community, independent experts, and visual investigations by multiple news outlets — contradicts definitive claims that Israel was responsible.

The hospital blast quickly became a heated point of contention with supporters of Israel and Palestinians blaming the other side. Soon after the blast, anti-Israel demonstrations erupted across the Middle East, including in Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Egypt, and Tunisia.

However, in an Oct. 18, 2023, statement, U.S. National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said that a U.S. government assessment “based on analysis of overhead imagery, intercepts and open source information” found that “Israel is not responsible for the explosion at the hospital in Gaza.” On Oct. 24, 2023, U.S. intelligence officials, citing video footage and geolocation techniques, stated that they had “high confidence” that Israel was not responsible for the blast.

Democratic and Republican leaders of the House and Senate intelligence committees issued statements saying that they had reviewed the U.S. intelligence assessment and were “confident” that the blast was not the result of Israeli military action.

Canada, France, and the U.K., came to the same conclusion. For example, Canadian Minister of National Defense Bill Blair said in an Oct. 21, 2023, statement: “Analysis conducted independently by the Canadian Forces Intelligence Command indicates with a high degree of confidence that Israel did not strike the hospital on October 17, 2023. The more likely scenario is that the strike was caused by an errant rocket fired from Gaza.”

Moreover, visual investigations by The Wall Street Journal, CNN, and The Associated Press all concluded that the blast was more likely to have been caused by a malfunctioning rocket launched from Gaza than by an Israeli airstrike. “A video analysis by the Wall Street Journal using security cameras and live feeds inside Israel and Gaza shows how a failed rocket caused the deadly explosion at Al-Ahli Arab Hospital,” The Wall Street Journal reported on Oct. 21, 2023.

Meanwhile, the Washington Post stated that its own visual investigation, coupled with analysis by experts, “provides circumstantial evidence that could bolster the contention by Israel and the U.S. government that a stray rocket launched by a Palestinian armed group was responsible for the Oct. 17 explosion.”

Reports from The BBC and The New York Times also noted that the crater from the hospital blast was not consistent with damage caused by Israeli bombs, which typically weigh 2,000 pounds. “The damage is too light to be from a 2,000-pound bomb,” Julian Barnes, an intelligence reporter at The New York Times, wrote in an article about the blast.

At the same time, The New York Times has raised questions about some of the evidence that has been cited as pointing away from Israel’s culpability. The Times wrote in an Oct. 24, 2023, report that Al Jazeera footage that was cited by U.S. and Israeli officials actually shows a missile detonating about two miles from the hospital, and so could not be responsible for the blast.

“The Times’s finding does not answer what actually did cause the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital blast, or who is responsible,” the Times article stated. “The contention by Israeli and American intelligence agencies that a failed Palestinian rocket launch is to blame remains plausible. But the Times analysis does cast doubt on one of the most publicized pieces of evidence that Israeli officials have used to make their case and complicates the straightforward narrative they have put forth.”

CNN, which published its own reporting about the Al Jazeera footage on Nov. 2, 2023, stated that the Times report about the Al Jazeera footage does not invalidate CNN’s conclusion that the source of the blast was likely an errant rocket. “While the new analysis adds to the evolving picture of what happened, it does not alter CNN’s earlier findings that the blast was likely caused by a malfunctioning rocket, not an Israeli airstrike,” CNN reported.

Nonetheless, Hamas and the governments of several Middle Eastern countries, notably Iran, have unequivocally blamed Israel for the hospital blast. However, they have yet to produce any evidence proving Israel’s culpability.

How the False Narrative Emerged

Within a few hours of the blast, many credible news outlets prominently cited the Hamas-run Palestinian Health Ministry's claims that Israel had attacked the hospital, giving readers the impression that the claim was uncontested. "Hundreds feared dead or injured in Israeli air strike on hospital in Gaza, Palestinian officials say," the BBC reported on X (formerly Twitter) and in a phone alert.

For its part, the New York Times posted on X: "Update: At least 500 people were killed by an Israeli airstrike at a Gaza hospital, the Palestinian Health Ministry said."

Many of these outlets soon walked back their initial coverage and added context. On Oct. 23, 2023 — six days after the blast — the Times published a rare editor's note apologizing for its early coverage that implied Israel was responsible.

"The Times's initial accounts attributed the claim of Israeli responsibility to Palestinian officials, and noted that the Israeli military said it was investigating the blast," the note stated. "However, the early versions of the coverage — and the prominence it received in a headline, news alert and social media channels — relied too heavily on claims by Hamas, and did not make clear that those claims could not immediately be verified. The report left readers with an incorrect impression about what was known and how credible the account was."

Early live television coverage of the blast was also misleading. Jon Donnison, a BBC correspondent reporting on the Israel-Hamas war, stated on air: "It's hard to see what else this could be really, given the size of the explosion, other than an Israeli airstrike or several airstrikes." The BBC later issued a correction, stating, "We accept that even in this fast-moving situation it was wrong to speculate in this way...."

Where the False Narrative Spread

While Western news outlets typically corrected their coverage of the hospital blast after evidence mounted contradicting the claim that Israel was

responsible, state-run media in Iran, Russia and across the Middle East continued to blame Israel for the attack.

For example, an Oct. 18, 2023, headline from Iranian state-run PressTV said, “Israel bombs Gaza hospital, killing at least 500.” An Oct. 20, 2023, article from Nour News, a site connected to Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, said, “Israel is trying to erase its footprints from the crime of attacking the Baptist hospital.” It added, “America, the media and propaganda empire of the US, and other partners and allies of the Zionist regime have come to this regime’s aid, but the traces of blood left on Tel Aviv's hands have not been whitewashed.”

Articles in Kremlin-controlled media quoted Iranian media reports that blamed Israel and the U.S. for the strike. An Oct. 18, 2023, article from Russian state-run TASS cited Iran’s state-run Tasnim News Agency, claiming that “The US military masterminded the attack on a civilian facility in the Gaza Strip to prevent a potential Israeli ground offensive against the enclave.” Another Oct.18, 2023, article by InfoBrics.org, a site Western intelligence agencies report is controlled by Russian intelligence, stated, “Israel expectedly accused the Palestinians of having carried out the attack, but the evidence suggests that Tel Aviv is to blame.”

Media in other countries in the region also blamed Israel, including Syrian state-run Syrian Arab News Agency, Iraqi state-run Iraqi News Agency, and Lebanese state-run National News Agency. Notably, Qatari state-funded Al Jazeera has also unequivocally advanced the Hamas claims blaming Israel.

For example, Al Jazeera Arabic headlines in October 2023 included: “The Baptist massacre... Israel turns Gaza hospitals into cemeteries;” “By bombing Baptist Hospital, Israel commits the largest massacre in Gaza;” “The Baptist Hospital in Gaza... was founded by the church, and Israel committed the largest massacre there;” “Watch...the moment the Baptist Hospital in Gaza was targeted by an Israeli raid;” and “Body parts and blood everywhere. Doctors describe the night

of terror after Israel bombed Baptist Hospital.” The English-language version of Al Jazeera also ran articles claiming Israel was to blame, but in some cases included Israel’s denial.

The narrative that Israel was responsible for the blast also spread across social media. For example, one Oct. 17, 2023, post on X included a clip of BBC’s Donnison and stated: “BBC journalist says the attack on The Al-Ahli National Baptist Hospital in Gaza HAD TO BE DONE by Israel.” The post garnered over 43,000 likes and over 2.4 million views as of Nov. 8, 2023.

Another Oct. 17, 2023, X post stated “Wow. Masses of protesters surge through the streets of Lebanon, en route to the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, in response to Israel’s bombing of Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza.” The post, which was liked more than 5,200 times as of Nov. 8, 2023, came from the verified account @sahouraxo, a self-described “Independent Lebanese geopolitical commentator.”

Correction: A previous version of this Misinformation Fingerprint overstated the findings of visual investigations by Le Monde, Bellingcat, and The Washington Post. While those investigations pointed away from Israel as responsible for the hospital blast, they did not reach firm conclusions as to who was responsible. References to Le Monde and Bellingcat have been removed, and The Washington Post’s findings have been described in more detail. NewsGuard apologizes for the error.

Editor’s Note: This Misinformation Fingerprint was updated on Nov. 16 to add a correction.

Written by: [Valerie Pavilonis](#)

Edited by: [McKenzie Sadeghi](#), [Eric Efron](#)

Examples of this False Narrative ⓘ

- <https://infobrics.org/post/39627/>

“ On October 17, a massive attack was launched against Al Ahli Arab, a Christian hospital in Gaza, killing hundreds of civilians, including children, women and elderly people. Israel expectedly accused the Palestinians of having carried out the attack, but the evidence suggests that Tel Aviv is to blame. There are even reports that the...

 12.5 / 100 [infobrics.org \(en_US\)](https://infobrics.org/en_US)

VIEW ARCHIVED

▶ State-Controlled Source

- <https://lesmoutonsrebelle.com/video-comparant-le-bruit-de-la-bombe-j-dam-de-fabrication-us-et-celle-ayant-frappe-lhopital-baptiste-de-gaza/>

“Au lendemain du bombardement israélien terrifiant contre l’hôpital baptiste de Gaza, les autorités d’occupation s’attellent à se dérober à la responsabilité de son crime, au moment où les condamnations internationales se multiplient.”

 0 / 100 [lesmoutonsrebelle.com \(en_ALL\)](https://lesmoutonsrebelle.com/en_ALL)

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://sputnikglobe.com/20231017/over-500-people-killed-from-israeli-strike-on-hospital-in-gaza-strip---reports-1114268312.html>

“Over 500 People Killed From Israeli Strike on Hospital in Gaza Strip”

 27.5 / 100 [sputniknews.com \(en_US\)](https://sputniknews.com/en_US)

VIEW ARCHIVED

▶ State-Controlled Source

- <https://www.aljazeera.net/videos/2023/10/18/بِقِصْفِهَا-مَسْتَشْفَى-الْمَعْدَانِي-إِسْرَائِيل/18>

”بِقِصْفِهَا مَسْتَشْفَى الْمَعْدَانِي.. إِسْرَائِيل تَرْتَكِبُ أَكْبَرَ مَجْزَرَةٍ فِي غَزَّة“
”

 52 / 100 [aljazeera.com \(en_US\)](https://www.aljazeera.com/en_US)

VIEW ARCHIVED

▶ State-Controlled Source

- <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2023/10/17/photos-outrage-spreads-across-middle-east-after-attack-on-gaza-hospital#:~:text=Thousands%20of%20protesters%20took%20to,al%20Arabi%20Hospital%20in%20Gaza.>

“Thousands of protesters took to the streets across the Middle East and North Africa on Tuesday to show their outrage in the aftermath of a deadly Israeli air attack on the Al-Ahli al-Arabi Hospital in Gaza.”

► State-Controlled Source

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://en.mehrnews.com/news/207257/World-rages-against-Israeli-barbaric-attack-on-Gaza-hospital>

“World rages against Israeli barbaric attack on Gaza hospital”

 5/100 en.mehrnews.com (en_US)

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://lesmoutonsrebelle.com/genocide-israel-vient-de-bombarder-un-hopital-a-gaza-et-tuer-plus-de-800-personnes/>

“Israeli warplanes bombed Al-Ahli Al-Arabi hospital in central Gaza, killing more than 500 people. Other Gazans are trapped under the rubble!”

 0/100 lesmoutonsrebelle.com (en_ALL)

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://ifpnews.com/at-least-500-killed-israeli-raid-gaza-hospital-health-ministry/>

“At least 500 killed in Israeli raid on Gaza hospital”

 52/100 ifpnews.com (en_US)

VIEW ARCHIVED

► State-Controlled Source

- https://tass.com/world/1693057?utm_source=google.com&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.com&utm_referrer=google.com

“US masterminded attack on Gaza hospital, Iranian news agency says”

 15/100 tass.com (en_US)

VIEW ARCHIVED

► State-Controlled Source

- <https://en.irna.ir/news/85262046/Iran-strongly-condemns-Zionist-regime-s-attack-on-Gaza-hospital>

“Iran strongly condemns Zionist regime's attack on Gaza hospital”

 7.5/100 en.irna.ir (en_US)

VIEW ARCHIVED

► State-Controlled Source

- <https://sana.sy/?p=1983049>

“The Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants condemned the heinous war crime committed by the Israeli occupation by bombing the hospital Al-Ahly Baptist Church in Gaza, which claimed hundreds of martyrs and wounded”

 7.5 / 100 sana.sy (en_US)

VIEW ARCHIVED

► State-Controlled Source

- <https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2023/10/23/713247/Palestine-Israel-airstrikes-near-hospitals-Gaza-Strip-war>

“This file photo shows an injured person being taken to Shifa Hospital after hundreds of Palestinians were killed in an Israeli airstrike on al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City, the Gaza Strip, on October 17, 2023.”

 7.5 / 100 [presstv.ir](https://www.presstv.ir) (en_GB)

VIEW ARCHIVED

► State-Controlled Source

- <https://english.aawsat.com/features/4614651-why-everyone-avoiding-probe-gaza-hospital-massacre>

“Israel is making extraordinary efforts to absolve itself of direct responsibility for this particular massacre.”

 39.5 / 100 english.aawsat.com (en_US)

VIEW ARCHIVED

► State-Controlled Source

- <https://ina.iq/eng/29269-iraq-strongly-condemns-the-zionist-entitys-bombing-of-a-hospital-in-gaza.html>

“Iraq strongly condemns the Zionist entity's bombing of a hospital in Gaza”

► State-Controlled Source

- <https://lesmoutonsrebelles.com/israel-vient-de-bombarder-leglise-orthodoxe-grecque-de-gaza-faisant-des-dizaines-de-civils-tues-et-blesses/>

““The church is located not far from al-Ahli hospital where an Israeli missile killed 471 people on Tuesday evening.””

- <https://twitter.com/CensoredMen/status/1714407697271976187>

“BBC journalist says the attack on The Al-Ahli National Baptist Hospital in Gaza HAD TO BE DONE by Israel.”

- <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2023/10/18/2973613/over-1000-civilians-killed-in-israel-attack-on-gaza-hospital>

“Israeli airstrikes on The Al-Ahli Hospital, previously known as Al-Mamadani, has resulted in death of over 1000 civilians”

► State-Controlled Source

- <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-palestine-war-gaza-army-bombs-hospital-killing>

“The Israeli army bombed a hospital in Gaza City packed with wounded Palestinians and others seeking shelter, killing at least 500 people in what could be the worst atrocity in the conflict so far.

...

[expand](#)

- <https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2023/10/17/712917/Palestine-Israel-Gaza-Al-Ahli-Baptist-Hospita->

“Israel bombs Gaza hospital, killing at least 500”

► State-Controlled Source

- <https://www.rt.com/news/585484-israel-hospital-gaza-evidence/>

“Video and audio analysis suggest that a missile from Israel, and not a Palestinian rocket, hit the al-Ahli facility”

 20 / 100 [rt.com \(en_US\)](https://rt.com/en_US)

VIEW ARCHIVED

▶ State-Controlled Source

- <https://twitter.com/sahouraxo/status/1714403691644547464>

“Wow. Masses of protesters surge through the streets of Lebanon, en route to the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, in response to Israel’s bombing of Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza”

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/490258/At-least-500-Palestinians-martyred-in-Israeli-air-strike-on-hospital>

“500 Palestinians martyred in Israeli air strike on hospital in Gaza”

 7.5 / 100 [tehrantimes.com \(en_US\)](https://tehrantimes.com/en_US)

VIEW ARCHIVED

▶ State-Controlled Source

- <https://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/en/politics/648249/safieddine-shelling-of-gaza-baptist-hospital-a-pre>

“Head of Hezbollah's Executive Council, Sayyed Hashem Safieddine, on Wednesday said that "the Zionist enemy has been established on massacres and the undeterred killing of innocent people.”

▶ State-Controlled Source

Reliable Sources

<https://twitter.com/nytimes/status/1714353899040358550?s=20>

<https://www.politico.com/news/2023/10/23/gaza-hospital-new-york-times-00122986>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/23/pageoneplus/editors-note-gaza-hospital-coverage.html>

https://www.bbc.co.uk/helpandfeedback/corrections_clarifications

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/bbc-reporter-wrong-israel-gaza-hospital-blast-1235623601/>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/10/gaza-hospital-explosion-misinformation-reporting/675719/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/22/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-hospital-evidence.html>

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/02/middleeast/al-jazeera-video-gaza-hospital-blast-intl/index.html>

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/21/middleeast/cnn-investigates-forensic-analysis-gaza-hospital-blast/index.html>

<https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-hamas-war-hospital-rocket-gaza-e0fa550faa4678f024797b72132452e3>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2023/10/26/gaza-hospital-blast-evidence-israel-hamas/>

<https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2023/10/18/identifying-possible-crater-from-gaza-hospital-blast/>

https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/10/19/gaza-hospital-what-detailed-image-analysis-reveals-about-deadly-al-ahli-arab-hospital-blast_6189013_4.html

<https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/israel-tries-to-back-up-claims-it-didnt-attack-gaza-hospital-a8cc3405>

<https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20231020-gaza-hospital-blast-was-caused-by-misfired-rocket-says-european-military-source>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/23/gaza-hospital-blast-caused-by-militants-rocket-uk-intelligence-sunak-israel-palestine>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/10/statement-from-the-minister-of-national-defence-regarding-the-explosion-at-al-ahli-arab-hospital-on-october-17-2023.html>

https://twitter.com/NSC_Spox/status/1714654402118832440

<https://intelligence.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=1240>

<https://twitter.com/MarkWarner/status/1714724709151940753>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/03/briefing/gaza-hospital-explosion.html>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67216929>

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/18/middleeast/gaza-hospital-blast-middle-east-protests-intl-hnk/index.html#:~:text=Gaza%20hospital%20explosion%20sparks%20anger%20and%20protests%20in%20Arab%20countries,-By%20Kathleen%20Magramo&text=Anti%2DIsrael%20protests%20flared%20across,a%20hospital%20in%20Gaza%20City.>

Risk of Harm ⓘ

Highest

Categories ⓘ

[Russia state-sponsored disinformation](#)
[State-Sponsored Disinformation](#)
[Iran state-sponsored disinformation](#)
[Israel-Hamas War](#)
[Violence and Conflict](#)
[Armed Conflict and War](#)
[Civil Unrest](#)

Subject Tags ⁱ

[Al-Ahli Hospital](#)
[Israel Defense Forces](#)

Search Terms ⁱ

("Al-Ahli Hospital" OR "Baptist Hospital") AND Israel AND blast AND "Israeli occupation forces"

("Al-Ahli Hospital" OR "Baptist Hospital") AND "Zionist regime"

"استهداف المستشفى المعمداني في غزة بغارة إسرائيلية"

Keywords and #'s ⁱ

israeli strike al-ahli hospital

Myth Locations ⁱ

Palestinian Territories
Israel

Myth Spread Locations ⁱ

United States
Lebanon
Iraq
Syria
Yemen
Iran
United Kingdom
Russia

First Appeared ⁱ

October 17, 2023

Associated Labels ⁱ

[aljazeera.com \(en_US\)](#)
[english.aawsat.com \(en_US\)](#)
[en.irna.ir \(en_US\)](#)
[en.mehrnews.com \(en_US\)](#)
[ifpnews.com \(en_US\)](#)
[infobrics.org \(en_US\)](#)
[rt.com \(en_US\)](#)

sana.sy (en_US)
sputniknews.com (en_US)
tasnimnews.com (en_US)
tass.com (en_US)
tehrantimes.com (en_US)
middleeasteye.net (en_GB)
presstv.ir (en_GB)
lesmoutonsrebelles.com (en_ALL)

© 2023 NewsGuard Technologies, Inc.

CONFIDENTIAL AND PROPRIETARY