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Occupied Palestinian Territory: Palestinian human rights defender and paediatrician Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya faces imminent risk to life in arbitrary detention

On 6 July 2026, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has issued a report stating that the detention of **Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya** was arbitrary. The report concluded that his detention violates multiple provisions of international human rights law, and called for his immediate release, as well as compensation and reparations. On 5 July 2026, his lawyer warned that Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya's health has deteriorated to a critical level and that his life is in imminent danger.

[Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya](#) is a Palestinian human rights defender, paediatrician and former director of Kamal Adwan Hospital which by November 2024, was one of the last barely functioning hospitals in northern Gaza with only two remaining doctors. Since the start of Israel's genocide in Gaza, the human rights defender has refused to evacuate the hospital as ordered by the Israeli military forces, for fear of abandoning his patients. On 25 October 2024, the Israeli military brutally stormed the hospital, bombed its buildings, detained many patients and all hospital staff, and killed Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya's son as a consequence of his refusal to leave the hospital. His son was targeted by a drone while he was sheltering at the hospital with his family. On 27 December 2024, Israeli forces raided Kamal Adwan Hospital and arrested Dr. Abu Safiya while he was carrying out his medical duties. He has been [detained](#) with no charges or trial under Israel's Unlawful Combatants Law ever since. On 16 June 2026, Israel's Supreme Court rejected Dr. Abu Safiya's appeal, ordering his imprisonment at least until October 2026. Since 3 June 2026, he has reportedly been held in prolonged solitary confinement and denied adequate medical care.

On 6 July 2026, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention released a [report](#) with the conclusion that Dr. Abu Safiya's detention was arbitrary and that it violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Working Group called for his immediate release and stated that his case may indicate a widespread or systematic practice of arbitrary detention.

On 5 July 2026, Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya's lawyer, Mr. Nasser Odeh, warned that his client's health was deteriorating to a critical level and that his life was consequently in imminent danger. The lawyer was finally able to visit Dr. Abu Safiya on 2 July 2026, after repeated requests had been denied. [According](#) to Mr Nasser Odeh, Dr. Abu Safiya was brought to the meeting handcuffed and shackled, with clear difficulty walking and moving. He bore visible bruises and signs of torture and appeared extremely weak. Mr. Odeh reported that his client had sustained serious injuries to his head and face after being subjected to systematic daily beatings, leaving him with [severe breathing difficulties](#). He further stated that, following Dr. Abu Safiya's transfer to the Rakevet detention facility in Ramla, he has faced brutal physical and psychological abuse on a daily basis.

During the visit, Dr. Abu Safiya reportedly told his lawyer that he feared it would be the last time they would meet, stating that the Israeli authorities intended to deliberately harm him. Mr. Nasser Odeh expressed grave concern that the treatment inflicted on his client suggested a deliberate intention to cause his death while in detention. Following the visit, Mr. Odeh requested another urgent meeting and called for Dr. Abu Safiya's transfer from Rakevet prison, which he described as a "human slaughterhouse", as well as an immediate

access to specialised medical care. The Israeli authorities reportedly rejected the visit request and have not responded to the demand for urgent medical treatment or release.

Mr. Odeh further reported that the repeated transfers of Dr. Abu Safiya between detention facilities are part of a systematic pattern of torture and punishment intended to psychologically break detainees and create the appearance of legal due process. Shortly after the legal petition questioning the nature of his detention was filed, Dr. Abu Safiya was reportedly placed in solitary confinement and deprived of his most basic rights, including access to medical care and legal counsel. Following a court hearing on 10 June 2026, he was allegedly assaulted by five prison guards using their fists, batons and metal rods, returning later to his cell without receiving any medical care.

The lawyer also expressed serious concerns regarding the lack of effective judicial protection, stating that repeated legal petitions have failed to provide any meaningful remedy and that the Israeli judicial system has effectively legitimised the continued arbitrary detention and ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees, including medical professionals.

Front Line Defenders believes that the arbitrary detention, torture, prolonged solitary confinement, denial of adequate medical care and apparent reprisals against Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya are directly linked to his peaceful and legitimate work as a physician and human rights defender documenting attacks on Gaza's healthcare system and defending the right to health. Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned that the continued torture and denial of medical care place his life at immediate risk.

Front Line Defenders urges the Israeli authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya;
2. Pending his release, immediately end his solitary confinement, protect him from torture and all other forms of ill-treatment, ensure he receives urgent specialised medical care, and guarantee regular access to his lawyer, family and independent medical professionals;
3. Grant immediate and unrestricted access to independent international monitoring bodies, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, to visit Dr. Abu Safiya and all Palestinian detainees;
4. Conduct a prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigation into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment against Dr. Abu Safiya, ensure those responsible are held accountable, and provide him with effective remedies in accordance with international law;
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders, medical professionals and humanitarian workers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are able to carry out their legitimate work free from reprisals, arbitrary detention, torture, intimidation or any other restrictions contrary to international human rights law.

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