

Israeli army denies telling WHO to empty aid warehouse in southern Gaza

December 5, 2023

Online Desk: The Israeli army on Tuesday denied telling the World Health Organization to empty an aid warehouse in southern Gaza within 24 hours before ground operations in the area render it unusable.

“The truth is that we didn’t ask you to evacuate the warehouses and we also made it clear (and in writing) to the relevant #UN representatives,” the Israeli defence ministry body responsible for Palestinian civilian affairs, COGAT said on X, formerly Twitter.

“From a #UN official we would expect, at least, to be more accurate,” it added.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus wrote on X on Monday: “Today, WHO received notification from the Israel Defense Forces that we should remove our supplies from our medical warehouse in southern Gaza within 24 hours, as ground operations will put it beyond use”.

“We appeal to Israel to withdraw the order, and take every possible measure to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and humanitarian facilities,” he wrote.

Hamas militants from Gaza launched an unprecedented attack on southern Israel on October 7, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 240 hostages, according to Israeli officials.

In response, Israel vowed to destroy Hamas and has conducted a relentless air, artillery and naval bombardment alongside a ground offensive, killing around 15,900 people, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza.

Israel’s army on Monday sent dozens of tanks into southern Gaza as part of expanded action against Hamas, as communications were cut across the besieged territory.

The number of operational hospitals in Gaza has dropped from 36 to 18 in less than 60 days, according to the WHO, with three providing only basic first aid and others offering partial services.

Twelve hospitals still remain operational in the southern part of the Gaza Strip, according to the WHO.

At a press conference earlier on Monday, the WHO regional director for the eastern Mediterranean, Ahmed al-Mandhari, said the intensification of military ground operations in southern Gaza risked depriving thousands of people of health care.

“We saw what happened in the north of Gaza. This cannot serve as a model for the south,” he said.