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PRCS Statement on the Arrest of Awni Khattab and Medical Teams

The PRCS is seriously worried about the fate of Awni Khattab, Head of Khan Younis Medical Center in Gaza, who was arrested by the Israeli Occupation forces together with the head of Al-Shifa hospital and two other medical staff during the WHO led evacuation of the wounded and sick from Al-Shifa hospital. The members of the medical team were taken at the checkpoint which separates north and south Gaza on 22nd of November, 2023. The Israeli Occupation Forces refuse to provide any information about the whereabouts or the fate of the detainees despite the repeated calls by the WHO and the UN.

The PRCS demands the immediate release of Awni Khattab along with the rest of the detained medical team members and holds the Israeli Occupation Forces responsible for their safety. The PRCS also condemns the arrest and detention of healthcare workers and reminds the international community of the protections provided for medical personnel under international humanitarian law through the Geneva Conventions, their Additional Protocols, and international customary law.

The PRCS asserts that medical teams should not be targeted and that the performance of their humanitarian duties should be facilitated and protected. Denying protected civilians of access to humanitarian assistance and targeting medical personnel are blatant breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

The PRCS reiterates its calls on the international community to ensure the release and protection of the medical teams, especially in light of the challenging circumstances they are facing during the performance of their life-saving mission in the Gaza Strip.