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Gaza is 'warzone on steroids' - UK medic

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Emily Johnson & Rachel Russell

BBC News



UK-Med nurse Kate White was deployed to Gaza earlier this year

A nurse who has spent years treating people in warzones around the world has said Gaza has been her toughest challenge yet.

Kate White, 44, from York, a member of Manchester-based charity UK-Med, was deployed to the region earlier this year to help teams working in two hospitals.

Ms White said she had first carried out aid work in Libya in 2011 and had since also worked in Iraq and Syria and had responded to Ebola outbreaks in Africa.

However, Gaza was currently "like a warzone on steroids, in terms of other places I've been to", she said.



Ms White has carried out aid work in Libya, Iraq, Syria and responded to Ebola outbreaks in Africa

Ms White said her latest challenge had involved preparing medics for a cholera outbreak, while being rocked by nearby explosions as the **Israel-Gaza war continued**.

She said: "I've been training medics in terms of responding to outbreaks because sewage is one of the biggest risk factors in disease transmission.

"We've seen in many other warzones that these are the moments where you end up with an emergency within an emergency because you have an outbreak in the middle of war.

"We've seen polio already start to have a resurgence in Gaza, and it's a matter of time before the next disease hits."

Ms White said she had seen an "incredible level of destruction" which had resulted in raw sewage overflowing on the streets.

She said Gaza had "seen destruction and its population being moved from place to place in a way I have never seen before".

"The health system has been completely disrupted to a level that took years in other places." she added.



Ms White said she had seen raw sewage overflowing where people lived in Gaza

With funding from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, UK-Med has treated more than 110,000 people since January.

Many of the medics who staff the UK-Med hospitals in Al Mawasi and Deir El Balah, along the Gaza Strip, have also come from the NHS, with 26 NHS staff having been rotated through Gaza so far.

In July, Foreign Secretary David Lammy announced a further £5.5m for UK-Med to fund its humanitarian assistance and medical treatment in Gaza.

Anneliese Dodds, minister of state for development, said: "In Gaza and elsewhere, aid workers from around the UK are operating in some of the most dangerous places in the world, treating the most vulnerable.

"The UK's official Emergency Medical Team pools medical expertise from across the country to make a real difference in reacting to humanitarian disasters around the globe.

"The government is proud to support their crucial work."

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