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WNET NEW YORK

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## press information

AS INTERNAL BATTLES FRACTURE THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES, *WIDE ANGLE* CAPTURES A RAW VIEW OF LIFE AND DEATH INSIDE A HOSPITAL IN THE GAZA STRIP

*Gaza E.R.* Premieres Tuesday, August 14 At 9 P.M. As *WIDE ANGLE* Continues Its Sixth Season On PBS

In July 2006, seven months after the militant movement Hamas's landslide election victories, the largest hospital in the Gaza Strip became a battlefield. In a gripping portrait of the troubled Palestinian landscape, *WIDE ANGLE* follows doctors, nurses and staff at Shifa Hospital as they struggle in the face of turf wars among Hamas, Fatah, and powerful families with competing agendas, while grappling with the increasingly desperate conditions brought on by the western boycott of Hamas.

*Gaza E.R.* premieres Tuesday, August 14 at 9 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings) as part of *WIDE ANGLE*'s sixth season.

"Shifa Hospital symbolizes the Gaza strip," says Palestinian Interior Minister Said Sayam in the film. "When we look at its face we can judge whether there is order or chaos."

As *WIDE ANGLE*'s cameras follow daily life around the hospital, the chaos is palpable. Dr. Jomaa al-Saqqa, responsible for the overflowing wards filled by victims of factional violence, is helpless against the armed gunmen and various "security forces" who roam the hallways seeking to protect their own injured comrades. Gunfire frequently breaks out among warring Palestinian families, sending doctors and hospital staff running for cover. At one point, the hospital is trapped in the middle of a prolonged gunfight between the Doghmosh and Hasanin families –



the same Doghmosh family who recently made international headlines for holding BBC reporter Alan Johnston hostage for 114 days.

Dr. Saqqa and his colleagues have grown accustomed to a unique set of occupational hazards, intensified by a severe Western boycott. In response to Hamas's victory, the international community cut off more than \$1 billion in aid, and Israel not only closed Gaza's borders but also restricted trade, making food, fuel and medicine more expensive and increasingly scarce

Six months into the boycott, disappearing salaries are a daily reality for 160,000 government workers, including many of the staff at Shifa. To support his seven children, nurse Ahmed el Moghrbe is forced to drive a taxi during his days off. Yet despite having to make massive sacrifices, Ahmed still celebrates Hamas's election as democracy's overdue arrival in Gaza. "At the end of the day they [the international community] will have to deal with this government," declares el-Moghrbe. The arrival at Shifa of a visiting European Union delegation raises hopes for emergency aid – but in the end they only bring fuel for the generators. "We don't have salaries, and no electricity, no water supply, no security...not enough drugs, not enough food, not enough fuel," laments Dr. al-Saqqa.

We also meet 12-year-old Mahmoud, who supports his family by selling tea to the patients and staff at Shifa. Even before the embargoes, unemployment in Gaza was at 30% and Mahmoud's father hasn't worked for three years. "Times are hard," he despairs. "I can't stop my boy from going out to work if he's keeping his brothers alive." Even Mahmoud's simple tea operation has been hit by recent events – the sealed borders have raised the price of tea and sugar, cutting into his profit margin. And despite his efforts to avoid the intermittent shoot-outs, he often finds himself in harm's way. "Sometimes I get to pick up the martyrs' body parts," Mahmoud declares, "Once I got so scared, I dropped them."

Today, divisions among Palestinians are as pronounced as ever, and the region recently split into a Hamas-controlled enclave in Gaza and a Fatah-dominated West Bank. As the

Palestinians enter their 40th year of Israeli occupation, **WIDE ANGLE** takes stock of the uncertain future of the Middle East peace process and the unfulfilled hopes for a unified Palestinian state.

After the film, **WIDE ANGLE** anchor Daljit Dhaliwal will conduct an interview with Dr. Shibley Telhami, Anwar Sadat Professor of Peace and Development at the University of Maryland, about recent events in Palestinian politics and the international community's attempts to negotiate peace.

For additional information and photography, visit **thirteen.org/pressroom/wideangle** or **pbs.org/pressroom**.

Major funding for **WIDE ANGLE** is provided by PBS, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Bernard and Irene Schwartz, Mutual of America Life Insurance Company, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Foundation, The Jacob Burns Foundation, Ford Foundation, Josh and Judy Weston, Rosalind P. Walter, and The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation.

**WIDE ANGLE** is a production of Thirteen/WNET New York for PBS. Stephen Segaller is executive producer. Pamela Hogan is series producer. Andy Halper is senior producer.

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Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, *NOW With David Brancaccio*, and *Cyberchase* - as well as the work of Bill Moyers - to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as The Ethnic Heritage Specials, The Thirteen Walking Tours, *New York Voices*, and *Reel New York*. Thirteen extends the impact of its television productions through educational and community outreach projects - including the Celebration of Teaching and Learning - as well as Web sites and other digital media platforms. More information can be found at: [www.thirteen.org](http://www.thirteen.org).

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