



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

FIFTY-SEVENTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
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Health conditions of, and assistance to, the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine

At the request of the Government of Israel, the Director-General has the honour to transmit to the Fifty-seventh World Health Assembly the attached report by the Ministry of Health of Israel.

ANNEX

**The Report of the Israeli Ministry of Health
to the Fifty-seventh World Health Assembly
May 2004**

On the topic:

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ISRAELI MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND
THE PALESTINIAN HEALTH AUTHORITY
2003-2004**

PALESTINIAN INDEPENDENT ADMINISTRATION OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SYSTEMS

1. The Palestinian Health Authority has been fully responsible for the management of the health and medical systems in the Palestinian autonomous territories since the transfer of authorities and responsibilities from the Israeli civil administrative authorities to the Palestinian authorities in 1994. The health systems in Gaza and Jericho were transferred to the Palestinians on 18 May 1994, while the health system in the West Bank was transferred on 1 December 1994.

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN COOPERATION UNTIL THE OUTBREAK OF PALESTINIAN ORGANIZED TERRORISM ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2000

2. Together with handing over responsibility for the health systems to the Palestinian Authority, joint Israeli-Palestinian committees were formed to establish a framework for cooperation between the two sides, to discuss professional issues, to exchange information, data and views on various health and medical matters and to coordinate common policies.

3. The mandate of the six joint committees was to deal with the following areas:

- (1) public health and epidemiology
- (2) environmental health
- (3) food quality control
- (4) pharmacology and pharmaceuticals
- (5) medical care in Israeli hospitals for Palestinian patients
- (6) training programmes and postgraduate studies for Palestinians in Israeli academic medical centres.

4. Senior Israeli and Palestinian physicians and experts in the relevant health fields were appointed as members of the joint committees. These professionals successfully cooperated as friends and colleagues, producing outcomes fruitful to both parties.

5. Near the end of 1997, the Palestinian Minister of Health made an arbitrary political decision to suspend the function of two committees: those dealing with medical care in Israel and with training programmes and postgraduate studies in Israel. Despite the halt of the committee meetings, medical care continued to be provided to Palestinians in Israeli hospitals as it was previously and Palestinian physicians continued their residency programmes or other professional activities in Israeli academic centres.

THE OUTBREAK OF PALESTINIAN ORGANIZED TERRORISM ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2000 AND THE POLITICAL DECISION OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY TO CUT OFF OFFICIAL RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL IN THE FIELDS OF HEALTH AND MEDICINE

6. On 29 September 2000, the Palestinian organized terrorism called the “Al Aksa intifada” began. Concomitantly with this outbreak, the attitude of the Palestinian Authority changed drastically. Regrettably, the Palestinian leadership decided to draw health and medical issues into the arena of political confrontation. The Palestinian Minister of Health made an arbitrary political decision to suspend the meetings and activities of the four remaining joint committees. Following this edict, the committees in the fields of public health and epidemiology, environmental health, food quality control and pharmacology and pharmaceuticals ceased to operate. In April 2002, when the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) found that the Palestinian Red Crescent ambulances were being used to carry terrorists and weapons, the Palestinian Red Crescent officials decided to stop the cooperation with Magen David Adom (MDA), the Israeli emergency medical services association.

7. Israel’s humanitarian attitude remained the same. Israel continued and still continues to provide Palestinian patients with hospitalization services and ambulatory medical care at Israeli hospitals, to provide emergency medical assistance by the MDA to whoever requires it, to provide public health laboratory services to the Palestinian Health Authority, to provide training programmes and postgraduate studies for physicians and other health professionals and to enable transit to the Palestinian territories of medicines and medical equipment donated by European and Arab countries.

THE SUFFERING OF THE INNOCENT ISRAELI CIVILIAN POPULATION AS A RESULT OF BRUTAL PALESTINIAN TERRORISM

8. Terrorists, members of the Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Fatah organizations and even the Palestinian police and security forces, became occupied with planning brutal murders, developing laboratories to produce explosives and car bombs and brainwashing young boys and girls before sending them as live bombs to explode among Israeli civilians: infants, children, teenagers, adults, women and the aged. Small children and boys of primary-school age are cruelly used as suicide bombers by evil-hearted Palestinian terrorists.

9. About a thousand Israeli civilians have been assassinated and tens of thousands wounded during the recent intifada. Israeli hospitals have been and are still overloaded with injured civilians of all range of ages. Every day, around the clock, the hospitals in Israel have to be constantly ready for disaster.

SECURITY INSPECTIONS OF PALESTINIAN AMBULANCES AND VEHICLES AT IDF CHECK-POINTS AND INCREASED SECURITY MEASURES AT ISRAELI HOSPITALS RESULTING FROM PALESTINIAN TERROR

10. Soldiers at IDF check-points must carry out thorough security searches of Palestinian patients, pregnant women who prefer to give birth in Israel, and medical teams. Such searches may cause a delay in their transfer. Such thorough searches are the result of past cases of the misuse of ambulances to smuggle terrorists or weapons or the disguising of terrorists as male or female patients.

11. As a result of warnings that terror attacks at the entrance of Israeli hospitals are being planned and that they will be carried out by Palestinian ambulances or stolen Israeli ambulances, Israeli hospitals have had to increase their caution whenever a Palestinian ambulance or suspicious Israeli ambulance nears an emergency room. Stringent security checks must be conducted before an ambulance is permitted to approach the emergency room area and before its patient, escorts and medical team are permitted to enter the emergency room.

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN COOPERATION IN THE FIELDS OF HEALTH AND MEDICINE DURING THE RECENT YEAR: APRIL 2003-APRIL 2004

12. (1) **Provision of medical care in Israeli hospitals to Palestinian patients.** About 20 000 patients from the West Bank and Gaza have been treated in Israeli hospitals. Around 5000 of them were hospitalized and about 15 000 referred for ambulatory services including day-care treatment, radiotherapy, consultations at outpatient clinics, sophisticated diagnostic and investigatory procedures and laboratory tests. In spite of the fact that the Palestinian Authority has stopped payments to Israeli hospitals, the Israeli medical centres continue to admit Palestinian patients without any delay or restriction.

(2) **Provision of emergency medical assistance to Palestinians by the MDA, the Israeli association for emergency medical services.**

(3) **Provision of public health laboratory services to the Palestinian Health Authority.** Public health laboratories of the Israeli Ministry of Health are still helping the Palestinian Health Authority with laboratory tests for poliomyelitis and other viral diseases.

(4) **Enabling transit of donated medicines and medical equipment from abroad to the Palestinian territories.**

(5) **Provision of training programmes and postgraduate studies to Palestinian physicians and other health professionals in Israeli medical institutions.** Forty Palestinians have been involved during the recent year in various training programmes in Israel: 13 physicians participated in long-term training programmes, some of them towards a full residency and the others towards a diploma certificate; 12 physicians participated in short-term training programmes; 6 physicians were involved in different medical activities once or twice weekly; 6 pharmacists and chemists participated in research at the faculty of pharmacy of the University of Jerusalem; 3 registered nurses were trained for a short term in hospital clinical departments.

ISRAEL DESIRES THAT TERRORISM WILL STOP, THAT THE DIALOGUE TOWARDS PEACE WILL RESUME AND THAT A NEW ERA OF FRUITFUL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE ISRAELI MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND THE PALESTINIAN HEALTH AUTHORITY WILL BEGIN

13. Israel is striving towards the cessation of all kinds of terrorism by Palestinians and for the return to the negotiating table in the hope of achieving a peaceful solution.

14. The Israeli Ministry of Health believes that, even before political negotiations towards peace begin, cooperation between the two parties in the fields of health and medicine will resume in some form or manner, and without reservations.

15. The Israeli Ministry of Health calls on the Palestinian Health Authority to appeal to their political leadership for official approval to resume the work of the joint committees in the fields of health and medicine for the benefit of both peoples.

16. The Israeli Ministry of Health strongly believes that cooperation in the above fields builds a significant and stable bridge to peace.

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