



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

FIFTY-FIFTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
Provisional agenda item 18

A55/INF.DOC./5
10 May 2002

Health conditions of, and assistance to, the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine

At the request of Israel, the Director-General has the honour to transmit to the Fifty-fifth 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-fifth World Health Assembly

May 2002

On the topic:

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ISRAELI MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND
THE PALESTINIAN HEALTH AUTHORITY**

2001-2002

THE ERA OF COOPERATION UNTIL 28 SEPTEMBER 2000

1. The month of September 2000 was still a month of hope for peace between Israel and the Palestinians thanks to the ongoing peace process. In that period the cooperation between physicians and health professionals from both sides was friendly and productive. Four joint Israeli-Palestinian health committees functioned fruitfully. Palestinian physicians were involved in residency and training programmes in Israeli academic hospitals, and Israel continued to provide medical services to Palestinian patients as it did between the years 1994-2000. Palestinian patients admitted to Israeli hospitals averaged about 4500 per year and ambulatory services were provided to an annual average of about 9000 patients.

THE OUTBREAK OF TERRORISM ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2000

2. On 29 September 2000 the attitude of the Palestinian authority changed drastically. On that day, the Palestinian-organized terrorism wave, also known as the “Al Aktza *intifada*”, broke out. Regrettably, the Palestinian leadership decided to drag the health and medicine issues into the arena of political confrontation. The Palestinian leadership brought the operation of the four joint committees (public health and epidemiology, environmental health, food control, medicine and pharmaceuticals) to an end.

3. Despite this, Israel’s humanitarian attitude did not waver. Israel continued to provide various medical services to Palestinian patients. Israeli academic medical centres continued to provide training programmes for Palestinian physicians. Israel facilitated the transfer of donations of medicines and medical equipment to the Palestinian territories. And Magen David Adom (MDA – the Israeli emergency medical services association) continued to provide all necessary assistance – as before.

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN INTERACTION AFTER 29 SEPTEMBER 2000 AND THE RELATIONSHIP IN THE FIELD OF HEALTH

4. The Palestinian leadership could have chosen to continue negotiating with the Israeli Government in search of a political solution. It preferred to wage war against the Israeli civilian population. Terrorists from organizations such as the Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and even members of the Palestinian police and security forces, planned and executed brutal murders. Israeli civilians, from young babies to the elderly, fell victim to suicide bombers, cars loaded with explosives – the gamut of murder methods sick minds could dream up.

5. Around 330 Israeli civilians were murdered and nearly 3500 were wounded during the recent *intifada*. Bus stations, markets, wedding halls, streets, homes – all these and more were targeted by Palestinian terrorists.

6. Israeli hospitals are overloaded with hundreds of injured and have to be in constant readiness to receive victims of terror at a moment’s notice. Israelis are afraid of walking in the streets, avoid sitting in restaurants and cafés, refrain from frequenting public places and are scared to use public transportation.

7. During this horrible period of terror Israeli hospitals continued to provide medical care to Palestinian patients as before. About 600 patients from the West Bank and Gaza were referred to

Israeli hospitals every month, about 200 of them for hospitalization and 400 for ambulatory services, including consultations at out-patient clinics, day care, diagnostic procedures and laboratory tests.

8. The Palestinian Authority stopped payments to Israeli hospitals and its debts accumulated to 50 million NIS (more than 10 million US\$). Notwithstanding this, Israeli hospitals continue to admit Palestinian patients and casualties for treatment without delay and without any restrictions.

9. The MDA and the Palestinian Red Crescent continue to cooperate in the evacuation of the injured and the Israeli trauma units and emergency medicine departments continue to treat Palestinians. However, MDA ambulances, rushing to help victims, were attacked many times. Since the beginning of the *intifada* 71 Israeli ambulances were damaged by terrorists and rioters.

10. Palestinian ambulances are also not immune from abuse. On 26 March 2002 an explosive belt was found in an ambulance going from Nablus to Ramallah. On 12 April 2002 another explosive belt was found in an ambulance going from Ramallah to Jerusalem.

11. Public health laboratories of the Israeli Ministry of Health continue to help the Palestinian Health Authority with laboratory tests for poliomyelitis and other viruses and with the examination of imported food for bacterial contamination.

12. The 10 Palestinian physicians participating in long-term training programmes in the Jerusalem Hadassah Medical Center continue their training.

13. The Israeli Ministry of Health and relevant authorities facilitate the admission of medicines, medical equipment and ambulances received as donations to the Palestinians from European and Arab countries as well as international organizations.

ESCALATION OF PALESTINIAN TERRORISM NECESSITATED ISRAELI RESPONSE

14. In March 2002 alone, 104 civilians were killed and 833 wounded. The horrifying event on 28 March 2002, when 29 innocent civilians were massacred during the festive dinner of Passover in a Netanya hotel, the Israeli Government was forced to act, in order to ensure the safety of Israeli civilians.

15. The IDF operated against the terrorist infrastructure located in cities and villages. It refrained from using excessive force, preferring to conduct house to house searches while trying not to harm innocent civilians. The cost of this restraint was the loss of 33 soldiers. Palestinian terrorists were not so hindered – they used Palestinian women, children and the elderly as human shields. Laboratories manufacturing bombs and explosives were located in civilian neighbourhoods. Houses of innocent citizens were booby-trapped. This callousness caused several Palestinian civilian casualties.

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN INTERACTION AFTER 28 MARCH 2002 AND THE RELATIONSHIP IN THE FIELD OF HEALTH

16. The Coordination Office for the Territories handled water and electricity supply failures in hospitals. Combined Israeli and Palestinian teams repaired damages and ensured the supply of water to hospitals. Teams of the East Jerusalem Arab Electricity Company were asked by the Coordination

Office to repair all electricity breakdowns in hospitals. The Office and the IDF supplied generators to secure the continued medical activities during electricity breakdowns. Oxygen and medical gases as well as diesel oil for generators were continuously supplied. Cities and hospitals were provided with fuel, diesel oil and cooking gas. Transfer of medicines and medical equipment from Palestinian stores to hospitals in the West Bank continued.

17. The cooperation between the Coordination Office, the IDF, the Ministry of Health and other relevant authorities enabled the admittance of medicines, medical equipment, blood units for transfusion, ambulances and different humanitarian supplies donated by Arab and European countries: Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Tunis, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Norway, Sweden, France, Italy, Russia, Greece and Turkey. Donations have been received from the United States of America, Japan and from international organizations like WHO, UNRWA, USAID, the Red Cross, the World Bank and "Physicians Without Borders".

18. Israel is ready to assist the Palestinian Health Authority with the supply of pharmaceuticals and medical equipment – we are ready to help at any moment if requested.

19. Cooperation between the Israeli Magen David Adom and the Palestinian Red Crescent continued despite the military confrontation.

20. Provision of public health laboratory services to the Palestinian Health Authority continues, free of charge.

21. The Coordination and Liaison Office in the West Bank enabled, with the Coordination Office for the Territories, the evacuation of the sick and casualties of military confrontation to Palestinian hospitals. Palestinian patients under haemodialysis treatment due to chronic kidney insufficiency were transferred by the IDF to Israeli hospitals in cases when movement to a specific Palestinian hospital was not possible due to fighting. Cancer patients in need of radiotherapy were transferred to Israeli hospitals by the IDF.

22. When the Palestinian Health Authority requested approval of patient and/or casualty transfers for treatment abroad, the Coordination Office of the Territories and the IDF responded positively to all requests.

ISRAELI HOSPITALS UNDER THREAT OF PALESTINIAN TERRORISTS AND AMBULANCES USED FOR TERRORIST ASSAULTS

23. There are warnings of terrorist acts against emergency rooms of Israeli hospitals, to be carried out at times of casualty admission. There were also thefts of ambulances that could be used to enter Israeli hospitals in terrorist attempts.

24. Due to these warnings the Israeli authorities took strict security measures. Every ambulance arriving at an Israeli hospital is checked to make sure that it has not been stolen and does not carry explosives. In addition, the injured brought to hospitals are checked at the entrance of the emergency room, in case they are terrorists posing as casualties.

ISRAEL'S ASPIRATION FOR CESSATION OF TERRORISM, FOR RENEWAL OF DIALOGUE TOWARDS PEACE AND FOR OPENING A NEW ERA OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE ISRAELI MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND THE PALESTINIAN HEALTH AUTHORITY

25. Israel is striving for the cessation of all hostilities and for a return to the negotiating table in order to reach a peaceful solution.

26. The Israeli Ministry of Health calls on the Palestinian Health Authority to appeal to its political leadership for an official approval to renew the work of the joint committees in the field of health and medicine, to the benefit of both peoples.

27. The Israeli Ministry of Health strongly believes that cooperation in these fields will be conducive to building a strong and stable bridge to peace.

= = =