



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

FIFTY-NINTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
Agenda item 13

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Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan: progress report

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

ANNEX

**Report of the Israeli Ministry of Health
to the Fifty-ninth World Health Assembly
May 2006**

On the topic:

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ISRAELI MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND
THE PALESTINIAN HEALTH AUTHORITY
2005-2006**

1. During the last year, May 2005 to May 2006, Israel has maintained its humanitarian policy towards the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank areas. Israel is continuing to provide medical care to Palestinian patients in Israeli hospitals, provide public health laboratory services in Israel, grant training programmes to Palestinian physicians and nurses in Israel and enable medical and pharmaceutical supplies to enter the Gaza and West Bank areas. This humanitarian attitude is continuing despite the fact that the Palestinian Ministers of Health have remained opposed to previous agreements and to the normalization of relations in the field of health care, and despite terrorist acts against Israel's civil population. The Palestinian Ministers of Health have continued to oppose the renewal of professional contacts between the two parties and have refused to unfreeze the activities of the joint committees on health and medicine. A few consultation meetings between Israeli and Palestinian West Bank experts in the area of public health have been held on the subject of avian influenza, only as a result of requests from Palestinian public health experts from the West Bank, and the decision of their Minister not to hamper such meetings. Public health experts from the Gaza area were unable to participate in these meetings, having failed to obtain approval from their Minister.

2. In regard to the provision of hospitalization and ambulatory services to Palestinians in Israeli hospitals, it is important to remember that the accumulation of Palestinian debts to the Israeli hospitals is an ongoing phenomenon. After delays of several months, the problem of payment has been partially resolved, due to a procedure formulated by the two finance ministries.

3. Concerning the training of Palestinian physicians and nurses in Israeli hospitals, for a long period of time the Palestinian Ministry of Health stopped sending health professionals to Israel for training programmes, and halted the provision of financial support to trainees. Palestinian trainees are only enrolled in training or specialization programmes in Israeli hospitals through Israeli nongovernmental organizations or through the Hadassah Medical Organization, which organizes suitable hospitals and departments for the programmes; it also funds training projects through donations from donor countries.

2005 – THE YEAR OF DISENGAGEMENT

4. This year was characterized by a relative decrease in the tension and a relative improvement of the general situation. The disengagement from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria was completed in August 2005. However, this event did not have any impact on the official relations between the health experts of the two parties. Nevertheless, Israel continues with the same humanitarian policy and the same system of assistance, to benefit the civil population.

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN COOPERATION IN THE FIELDS OF HEALTH AND MEDICINE BETWEEN MAY 2005 AND MAY 2006

Provision of medical care to Palestinian patients in Israeli hospitals

5. About 30 000 patients from the West Bank have been treated in Israeli hospitals over the past year. Around 12 000 of them were hospitalized, and about 18 000 received ambulatory services of various kinds. About 6500 patients from the Gaza area have been treated in Israeli hospitals over the past year. Around 3000 of them were hospitalized and about 3500 received ambulatory services of various kinds. In spite of the fact that the Palestinian Authority delays or halts payments to Israeli hospitals, the Israeli medical centres have no hesitation in immediately admitting Palestinian patients, without delays or restrictions.

Provision of public health laboratory services to the Palestinian Health Authority following requests from the Palestinian party

6. Public health laboratories of the Israeli Ministry of Health continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian Health Authority in the area of laboratory tests for poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, influenza and other viral diseases.

Ad hoc meetings of experts on public health events or crises, following requests from the Palestinian party

7. A few professional consultative meetings of public health experts on crucial issues of public health and infectious diseases were convened during the past year. The main items on the agenda were avian influenza and pandemic influenza.

Facilitating the transfer of medical equipment and medicines into the West Bank and Gaza areas

8. Israel facilitates the transfer of medical equipment and medicines donated from abroad to the Palestinian territories.

Provision of training programmes for Palestinian physicians and nurses in Israeli medical institutions

9. During the past year, Palestinians have been participating in training programmes in Israel. As the Palestinian Ministry of Health does not cooperate with the Israeli Ministry of Health, the training programmes are organized by Israeli nongovernmental organizations. Israeli nongovernmental organizations like the Hadassah Medical Organization, the Peres Center for Peace, the Economic Cooperation Foundation, the Save a Child's Heart Foundation and other organizations, prepare training programmes for individuals and finance them with donations from donor countries.

10. Forty-five physicians and five nurses have been participating during the past year in the following medical and surgical training programmes: five physicians have been continuing their full residency programme in anaesthesiology and intensive care, urology, gastroenterology and pathology; 34 physicians have been continuing an intermediate period of training of about two years in various specialities and subspecialities in internal medicine and surgery, as well as in oncology and pathology; six physicians have been participating in a short training programme of between three and 12 months in several specialities belonging to the categories of internal medicine and surgery; and five nurses have been participating in a one-year training programme of emergency and trauma medicine and intensive care treatment.

ISRAELI'S HOPES

11. Israel hopes that Palestinian terrorism will end, and that a peaceful dialogue will resume, leading to a new era of fruitful cooperation between the two parties.

12. The Israeli Ministry of Health believes that cooperation between the parties in the fields of health and medicine should resume. The Israeli Ministry of Health calls for the resumption of the work of the joint committees in the fields of health and medicine, for the benefit of both peoples. The Israeli Ministry of Health strongly believes that cooperation in the aforementioned fields can only benefit reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, paving the road to eventual peace.