



SOUTH AFRICA'S STATEMENT
77th SESSION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
27 May – 1 June 2024

COMMITTEE B

ITEM 20: HEALTH CONDITIONS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING EAST JERUSALEM, AND IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN

Chairperson,

South Africa thanks the Director-General for the report on the health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan, that have further deteriorated with the onset of the events of 7 October 2023.

My delegation continues to express its grave concern regarding the unprecedented humanitarian crisis and the harrowing realities that Palestinians are confronted by.

The Palestinian people have endured unmeasurable hardships and injustices as their homeland has been the epicentre of the conflict, with the denial of their inalienable human rights and particularly their right to health, right to food and right to life. For over 75 years, they have been subjected to violence, oppression, and systemic discrimination. Their cries for freedom, dignity, and equality have been met with deaf ears and closed borders.

Concerned with the escalation of the humanitarian and security situation in Palestine, South Africa took up the Palestinian cause to the premier legal body of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice (ICJ). We recall the provisional measures of the ICJ which have further warranted additional measures, that seek to avert the human suffering, death and destruction in Palestine. Among these is the Court's ruling to the State of Israel directing it *to take all measures in its power to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide*, and to enable the provision of urgently needed basic service and humanitarian assistance.

In clear defiance of this binding order, Israel has intensified its violence against the residents of Gaza and beyond. Palestinians continue to face starvation, famine, with the risk of epidemic-prone diseases due to a lack of clean water and sanitation, the collapse of the health system due to systemic attacks on essential infrastructure, as the delivery of aid continues to be disrupted, including the killing of humanitarian and aid-workers.

Chairperson,

South Africa remains convinced that the international community should exert all efforts through the various instruments at our disposal to improve the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly Gaza.

Furthermore, we should not allow the politicisation of healthcare and the provision of health services. Likewise, the residents of the Syrian Golan have experienced a similar fate wherein they are confronted with dire health conditions. Since 1967, when Israel occupied this territory, its inhabitants have lived under a state of perpetual uncertainty and fear. They have been denied their basic human rights, access to essential services.

Chairperson, South Africa once again calls:

- For an immediate comprehensive ceasefire in Gaza,

- Unhindered access to humanitarian and healthcare services,
- On the occupying power to grant the WHO access to the occupied territories, and
- For compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, we support the recommendations by the WHO concerning the need to safeguard and restore the health systems in the occupied territory.

In conclusion, South Africa reiterates its unequivocal support for the right to self-determination of Palestinian people, including their right to health, without discrimination.

My delegation supports the draft decision before us, as tabled, and urges the World Health Assembly to join in supporting it.

I thank you.