HOW THE OCCUPATION OBSTRUCTS THE DEVELOPMENT OF PALESTINIAN HEALTHCARE

RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

As the occupying power, Israel has an obligation to support the development of the health sector in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. After 50 years, Israel’s occupation is stifling the provision of healthcare.

States are legally bound under international humanitarian and human rights law to ensure that their policies create an enabling environment for available and accessible health care for all in the shortest possible time.

World Health Organization, 2016

HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

According to the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, in Gaza since 2000:

- The Palestinian population in Gaza has doubled
- Functioning primary health care clinics have decreased from 56 to 49

Area C constitutes the 60% of the West Bank under full Israeli civil and military control.

Between 2010 and 2014 Israel approved only 1.5% of Palestinian building permit applications.

There are still no permanent Palestinian health facilities in Area C.

Of the 351 Palestinian communities living in Area C:

- 23% have no access to healthcare at all
- 50% are more than 30km away from the closest clinic

By contrast, illegal settlements in the West Bank have modern health clinics and easy access to hospitals.

HEALTH WORKFORCE

The freedom of movement for health professionals is restricted by Israel, as well as Jordan and Egypt.

Between 2015-2016 there was a 28% decrease in permits issued to Palestinian health workers by Israel to travel through Israeli checkpoints for work or training.

In Gaza there are shortages of doctors and nurses specialised in:

- Heart surgery and catheterisation
- Oncology and cancer surgery
- Ophthalmology
- Neurosurgery

PRIORITISING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The shortcomings of the Palestinian health sector mean that many Palestinian patients must be referred either to other areas of the occupied Palestinian territory or to Jordan, Egypt or Israel.

MAP’S EXPERIENCE

MAP and IDEALS trained a local team of surgeons, nurses and physiotherapists to provide limb reconstruction treatment at Al Shifa Hospital, Gaza.

This contributed to a 33% reduction in orthopaedic management referrals between 2014-2016, potentially saving the Palestinian Ministry of Health over £1 million.

Medical referrals are the Palestinian Ministry of Health’s second largest expense, at 40% of the budget, costing £130 million for 49,000 patients in 2015.

MEDICAL SHORTAGES IN GAZA

In May 2017, 34% of essential medicines and 32% of medical disposables were at ‘zero stock’, meaning that less than a month’s supply was available.

This included:

- Cancer medications
- Medical disposables needed for operating rooms, emergency departments and intensive care
- Treatments for immunological diseases

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States, NGOs and international organisations must invest in sustainable Palestinian-led infrastructure to reduce costs and ensure impartial access to healthcare without the need for permits.