

DSPR-MECC Update on Gaza

27th of May 2024

For 233 days, Gaza has been witnessing the most brutal war in contemporary history with no signs of end. The attacks on the civilians are renewed and renewed, they have brought immense pain and suffering, with the loss of lives reaching unprecedented levels, more than 15,000 children and similar numbers of women, with all their hopes, ambitions and potentials, with all what they mean for themselves and for their families and communities. Streets are filled with dead bodies, injured people, pain after pain. Many trapped under rubble or lying in the yards and corridors of hospitals with few possibilities to be receive an adequate therapy. Hospitals are heavily damaged and lacking essential supplies to continue, they are operating by the overwhelmed and exhausted medical teams; More than 500 of medical teams have been killed, many others are arrested and subjected to torture, and world Health Organization described the situation “beyond catastrophic.”

The widespread destruction of civilian residential areas has made it impossible for most people to live under a normal roof, all DSPR-MECC staff are displaced at least for one time, they are telling us that they can't distinguish the places where they lived all their lives. Hunger and famine are claiming lives of innocent children while thousands of trucks laden with aid, awaiting prevented from entry, and Israel is insisting on manufacturing famine and use starvation as weapon. Amidst this humanitarian crisis, the world struggles to halt these atrocities and stop the ethnic cleansing carried out by those determined to proceed with their genocidal agenda, disregarding to what the world is saying, and disregarding decisions made by the highest legal entities at the global level, ICG and ICC.

The West Bank is strangulated under tight siege, solders at the checkpoints innovating different ways to humiliate people, delaying people for hours at the checkpoints and opening fire can easily happen for any reason or excuse. The United Nation's Office for the Coordinating of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) recently declared that “Since 21 May, Israeli forces, including an undercover military force, shot and killed eight Palestinians, including two children, in Jenin city and Jenin Refugee Camp. The fatalities included a 50-year-old doctor who was en route to work at Jenin Governmental Hospital, a teacher shot near a school, and a student who was riding a bicycle to school”. “Since 7 October, 489 Palestinians, including 117 children, have been killed and more than 5,000 Palestinians, including about 790 children, have been injured in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem”. Settler violence has reached an unprecedented level of terror in terms of numbers and brutality of these attacks; this is taking place with the presence and protection of the Israeli occupation's soldiers. UN-OCHA reported an average of around 4 settlers attacks taking place every day in West Bank for the last 8 months.

For further information read the last update by UN. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-humanitarian-response-update-13-19-may-2024>



DSPR-MECC response in Gaza

Since opening of the DSPR's clinic in Rafah in November 2023, our staff worked day and night under unsafe and very dangerous situation, most of them and their families were forcibly displaced from their homes in different locations like hundreds of thousands of people do, many refuged to Rafah as the Israelis named it "The Safe Area". They worked under very harsh conditions to secure the continuation of DSPR's mission in serving the people who are in dear need for primary health care services, dental and laboratory services, as well as health awareness and care and psychosocial support, to keep the hope alive for better life. The work continued until 6th of May, when the Israeli started its invasion to Rafah, controlled Rafah crossing point and ordered the people to move to designated locations, as Rafah is not a "Safe Area". But they keep chasing those tired families and targeting them by airstrikes and shelling in the new location they moved to, like what happened last night in Tal as-Sultan in northeast of Rafah, killing and burning some 40 people many of them are children and women, in the area that recently designated as "Safe Place".

The work in the Rafah clinic stopped, this is a result of inability to work as we became in the "eye of the storm", we will resume the work in Rafah clinic when this threat stopped, and we become able to reopen and serve people. Most of DSPR staff moved to the central area of Gaza strip and started implementing the alternative plan, which was previously prepared. A mobile clinic has been started, where a microbus has been rented and adapted to be used as a reception point and pharmacy, and another car rented for transporting the team that consists of physicians, nurses, pharmacist, social worker, management staff and logistic staff.



The first working day for the mobile clinic was the 13th of May, it started reaching out to different locations to meet the displaced people moved from other places and living in tents in a very deprived environment. The team found that the people visiting the clinic have different medical difficulties including lung infections, diarrhea, skin diseases, minor injuries and chronic diseases are among other needs.







In the first day the mobile clinic served 261 patients, some of them received more than one service and most of them received medicine. The information system's program has been inserted into the laptop to make sure that all data is saved and protected.



Now and after the widening of the Israeli occupation's incursion towards the center Rafah city and west of Rafah district, more people are forced to move again, the reports are estimating 900,000 people already newly displaced as the Israeli incursion is squeezing them out, like what happened yesterday in Tal as-Sultan, the vast majority are moving towards the central districts of Gaza strip, where we are planning to start another mobile clinic, as primary health care is extremely demanded. Below the photo portraits one of the forcibly displacement communities moved from Rafah to the west of Deir Bablah.



“12 May 2024, Palestinian Territories, Deir al-Balah: Tents for displaced people are crowded west of Deir al-Balah city in the central Gaza Strip after thousands of Palestinians fled Rafah after the Israeli army announced the start of a military operation there. Photo: Saher Alghorra/ZUMA Press Wire/dpa” resource link <https://english.aawsat.com/arab-world/5014381-misery-deepens-gaza%E2%80%99s-rafah-israeli-troops-press-operation>



Situation in the in Northern Gaza Strip

Gaza City and the Northern Gaza Strip returned to be the other highlight in teams of incursions, airstrikes and tough fight resulted in more casualties and destruction of civilian residential places. The difference this time is that it's concentrated in Jabalia and Jabalia Refugee camp, and some other locations in Gaza city, while people's movement in other areas of Northern Gaza and Gaza city became more familiar. This resulted in having more opportunities for people to meet some of their basic needs.

UN-OCHA in its last flash appeal wrote “Israeli bombardment from the air, land, and sea continues to be reported across much of the Gaza Strip, resulting in further civilian casualties, displacement, and destruction of houses and other civilian infrastructure. Ground incursions and heavy fighting also continue to be reported, especially in Jabalya as well as eastern and central Rafah”. “Fuel shortages persist, negatively affecting health interventions at hospitals and primary healthcare facilities”. “The delivery of nutrition services has been severely disrupted by the military incursion in Rafah and North Gaza and

resulted displacement”. “As of 19 May, 10 out of 16 bakeries supported by humanitarian partners in the Gaza Strip are operational, including four in Gaza city”.

DSPR-MECC’s work in Northern Gaza Strip

Since the beginning of the War on Gaza, the DSPR’s work in the northern part of Gaza Strip was limited to supporting the Christian community, and whoever the Christians refuged to both Churches can reach, in the communities’ surroundings both Churches, The Holy Family Catholic Church and Sani Porphyrios Greek Orthodox Church. This continued to be the case. The number of the Christians in Gaza has been reduced to less than 600, most of them are still residing in the mentioned churches.

DSPR-MECC calculated 23 staff members in the northern part of Gaza Strip, some are residing in the churches and others in different areas of Gaza City. With the slight improvement of peoples’ movement, it became possible to offer services, in addition to serving the Christian community in the churches and the surrounding communities.

DSPR staff met, with the leading support of the Central Office in Jerusalem, and the presence of three of board members in Gaza, thoughts have been shared, final assessment to the situation has been revised and a plan set to start a medical point in Alshejaiya. Maintenance has been done to the partially affected section, of the DSPR-MECC’s building of vocational training center in Alshejaiya, to be used as a medical point to serve the medical needs of the people in Alshejaiya and the surroundings, which is dearly needed, as well as to have one room as venue for psychosocial services to target children and mothers in psychosocial support activities.



Staff Meeting - Alshejaiya

With some of the medical equipment and furniture recovered from both damaged primary health care clinics in Al-Daraj and Alshejaiya which we used to run before the war on Gaza, and with the medicine and the medical supplies donated by World Health Organization (WHO), ANERA and UNICEF, the DSPR's medical point was successfully established. It was on the same day of the Israeli invasion to Rafah, 6th of May, it was Saturday, the day of Holy Fire, according to the Orthodox Church's tradition. We were hopeful that this coincidence would be a sign of light that illuminates the darkness of this terrible war, and instils hope for a better life, especially for those who have been tormented by this war for about 8 months.





Without any announcement that the medical point is opened, in the First day our team treated 82 patient, next day was more busy, 225 patients, and now the average patients received is 250.



Psychosocial activities are organized for groups of children, it's more to help bring children back to routine and encourage releasing their fear and creating balance in their psychological status.



Based on the success of Alshejaiya medical point, the the huge demand for primary health care services in northern Gaza after the collapse of the medical system, we started planning for second medical point in Gaza, we assessed the suitability of the location and the space at the main building of DSPR-MECC, in Al Zeitoun Quarter in Gaza City. Then we checked requirements for such a medical point there, the decision was made to start the process of renovating and bringing the requirement for that hopeful step. Unfortunately, as a result of the incursions of the Israeli army in Jabalia and the surrounding areas, many people forced to move, and we found that some families used the building as a refuge for their families. The board members asked them to leave as soon as they find an alternative. It seems it will take some time to have the place evacuated, and for moral reasons and the possible harm the evacuation might create, it has been decided to give more time and to resume our plan of opening the new medical center as soon as possible.



During the whole period of our emergency response, more than 66,000 persons have served, the breakdown for this number as follows:

Type of Service	Number of served persons
Medical Services	28,000
Psychosocial Support	15,000
Food Items	16,000
Unrestricted Cash Support	7,000
Total	66,000

We are grateful for having such a brave heroes and exceptionally dedicated staff, who decided to keep restoring hope and wiping the tears of those forgotten and tortured people. A big thank you for our partners and supporters, without your care solidarity and support, all of this can't be possible.

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven”. Matthew 5:16