

From: Harriet Wheeler

**Executive Head of UK Office**

**St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital**

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Dear supporters,

Hope this finds you well.

With hostilities in Gaza and Israel continuing for the past 9 months it is now reported more than 37,500 people have been killed and 80,000 injured in the Gaza Strip. It is also reported that 1,500 Israelis have been killed with more than 5,400 injured since October 7th, 2023. The two parties (Israel and Hamas) have failed to reach a ceasefire agreement.

Israeli forces have continued with a land incursion in Rafah City and as a result the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt has been closed since the start of the Hostilities. Some 800,000 refugees have sought refuge in other safer areas, mainly in the middle of the Gaza Strip. Over the past few weeks, there have also been extensive military activities in parts of Gaza City as well as neighbouring refugee camps.

The SJEHG emergency medical intervention has continued despite the escalation in hostilities in Rafah. Our team in the city had to evacuate and move to the Khan Younis area in the middle of the Gaza Strip. We continue to provide primary eye care and basic public health services at 4 locations in the south, middle and north of Gaza.

Over the past month and due to the increased intensity of fighting, our team treated, on average, 700 patients every week. More than 7,000 patients have received eye care since the launch of the emergency intervention in April. We have secured sufficient medical supplies locally and we are delighted to learn that our shipment of medical equipment and medications has reached Gaza City through the Jordanian- Israeli Humanitarian Corridor.

With a very well-established phase one of our intervention, we are keen to move to phase two in the next few weeks. This will focus on the prevention of blindness and treatment of Diabetic Retinopathy – the leading cause of blindness in Gaza - and will start as soon as we are able to transport refrigerated medications across the border.

Phase three of the plan, which we anticipate will not commence before the end of the year, will focus on rehabilitating our Gaza Hospital to resume very highly needed surgical and medical intervention.

As for our staff, most who were residing in Rafah City have now moved to Deir El Balah (middle of the Gaza Strip) and remain unharmed. The Hospital has continued to pay staff despite all challenges.

For detailed information on the current Gaza crisis, please refer to the latest update on the website of the United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs website- <https://www.ochaopt.org/crisis>

In East Jerusalem and the West Bank, the security situation remains fragile with sporadic incidents and violence occurring on a daily basis.

Our outpatient clinical activities in Jerusalem continue at 90% capacity where most of the outpatients are from the Jerusalem district. As for surgery, the Jerusalem Hospital operates at almost 80% capacity as compared to the prewar period.

At the Hebron Hospital, clinical activities have been sustained at almost 95% capacity with an increased number of surgeries performed at the Hospital every week.

Outreach services including the child vision screening project are progressing very well with an increased number of patients screened and referred, especially from refugee camps.

To date, more than 46,000 children have been screened by the 3 teams across the WB refugee camps as well as in East Jerusalem. Almost 20% of those screened needed referrals for further examinations, diagnostic procedures, and surgeries at our Group's facilities.

Monthly updates continue to be published on our website:

<https://www.stjohnehospital.org/israel-gaza-hostilities-weekly-bulletin/> where you can also find out information about our [Saving Sight in Gaza Emergency Appeal](#).

With warmest wishes and our sincere thanks for all that you do.

Best wishes

Harriet