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Prof. Shai Ashkenazi
Chairman, Israeli Pediatric Association

Mrs. Dana Moss
International Advocacy Coordinator
Physicians for Human Rights, Israel

Dear Professor Ashkenazi and dear Dana,

We write to you regarding children in Gaza impacted by restrictions on exit of patients from the Gaza Strip.

As a pan-European body, the European Academy of Paediatrics represents the views of paediatricians from across Europe. We publish regularly and have a strong mandate to speak for paediatricians from across the continent to safeguard the wellbeing of children and families. www.eapaediatrics.eu

As we understand from Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI), as a result of the collapse of the coordination mechanism between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, hundreds of patients from Gaza - including cancer patients and children - have been prevented from leaving the Strip for critical medical treatment unavailable locally. PHRI reports that in the last two months, it has assisted nearly 50 children, out of nearly 200 patients in total. Of these patients, only half were finally permitted to leave Gaza for treatment and three patients, including two children, have died.¹

According to PHRI, despite the cessation of the work of the Palestinian Civil Affairs Committee, Israel has maintained bureaucratic restrictions that prevent access to medical care and violate the right to health and rights of Gazan children. These have included only permitting "urgent" cases to apply for medical exit permits, refusals or delays in responding to roughly 50% of patient requests, delays of patients in Erez Crossing and lack of transparency regarding direct patient applications to the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) through the on-line form the latter has provided.²

¹ Jack Khoury, 23 June. Gaza Infant Dies After Heart Surgery Postponed Due to Cessation of Coordination With Israel. *Haaretz*. Retrieved from <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/.premium-gaza-infant-dies-after-surgery-delayed-due-to-cessation-of-coordination-with-israel-1.8942800> [accessed June 2020]

² Update regarding coordination for travel by patients and accompanying persons out of the Gaza Strip July 2020, Physicians for Human Rights Israel. Available at <https://www.phr.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/patient-exit-gaza-july-2020.pdf>

The EAP recognise that in tense political situations such as this, it is difficult to fully untangle the reasons for such border disagreements. As Israel created the medical exit permit system, regardless of whether the Palestinian Civil Affairs Committee resumes its functions, any bureaucratic restrictions from anyone ¹ should be avoided and patients allowed to access treatments in a timely manner.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has called on state parties to recognise the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. (art.24) The World Medical Association calls on constituent members to “insist on the rights of all women and children to full and adequate medical care, especially where religious, social and cultural restrictions or discrimination may hinder access to such medical care.”

Children are children : we respectfully request that the Israeli Pediatric Association, the Palestine Pediatric Society and the PHRI support the right to health of children from Gaza, including swift and safe access to medical treatment in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israel. We call on both parties (Israel and Palestinian Authority) to address these issues urgently for the sake of the children and to make it clear that patients whose medical care is not defined as “urgent” should be allowed to access treatment, provide medical exit permits within a reasonable time-frame that corresponds to the urgency of the patients’ medical condition. Bilateral support and cooperation will be essential if this is to succeed.

Looking forward to work together for the best future of children’s health,
Yours sincerely



Prof . Adamos Hadijpanayis
EAP President



Prof. Robert Ross Russell
European Board Paediatrics Chair