

# *PLO leader Saeb Erekat in critical condition with COVID-19*

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Ramallah, October 19 (RHC)-- Prominent Palestinian leader Saeb Erekat is in critical condition and his health has deteriorated as he undergoes treatment for COVID-19-related complications. Erekat, 65, was moved from his home in the occupied West Bank city of Jericho to Jerusalem's Hadassah hospital on Sunday.

"Mr Erekat had a quiet night but this morning his condition deteriorated, and it is now defined as critical," a statement from the Israeli hospital's spokeswoman, Hadar Elboim, said on Monday. "Due to respiratory distress, he was put on a ventilator and placed in a medically induced coma."

The statement said Erekat was also being treated for a bacterial infection. Erekat "arrived in serious condition" and was receiving oxygen, the hospital said on Sunday, adding that his condition was "serious" but "stable."

Hadassah said it was “in contact with international medical authorities regarding the treatment policy of this complex patient”.

The longtime chief Palestinian negotiator, who is Secretary General of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), tested positive for the coronavirus on October 8th. He is considered vulnerable due to the fact that he underwent a lung transplant in 2017, which suppressed his immune system.

“Following his contraction of COVID-19, and due to the chronic health problems he faces in the respiratory system, Dr Erekat’s condition now requires medical attention in a hospital,” a PLO Negotiations Affairs Department statement said.

Erekat is one of the most visible Palestinian officials on the world stage and a top aide to President Mahmoud Abbas. A proponent of a two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Erekat has been a leading Palestinian voice in opposing Israel’s settlement policy in territory it captured in the 1967 Middle East war.

There have been 42,490 confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus in the illegally occupied West Bank, including 381 deaths.

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