

Israel continues ban on entry of medical equipment and supplies into Gaza



File photo shows a wounded Palestinian girl being brought to receive medical treatment at the Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, Gaza Strip, after Israeli airstrikes hit various parts of the blockaded Palestinian territory. (Photo by Getty Images)

Gaza City, January 9 (RHC)-- The Palestinian Health Ministry says the Israeli regime continues to prevent the entry of direly-needed medical equipment and supplies into the blockaded Gaza Strip. Bassam al-Hammadin, a senior official with the ministry, made the remarks in a statement on Saturday, the Palestinian Information Center news outlet reported.

He said the enclave's health sector is suffering from an acute shortage of vital medical devices, especially X-ray imaging machines. Medical equipment across the coastal sliver's hospitals and health centers have become worn-out and outdated from long years of use, Hammadin said, adding that the regime's ban on entry of new equipment has increased the overall burden on Gaza's health sector.

The official also described Israel's decision to allow some medical devices into Gaza as a "media stunt," asserting that these devices, which Israel claims to have allowed into Gaza, could be already imported without any coordination with the regime.

Last week, the ministry said Israel does not allow shipment of X-ray imaging machines into the coastal territory, adding that requests for eight different types of such devices and spare parts for existing equipment, have been either rejected or delayed over the past 14 months.

Medhat Abbas, a ministry official, said Israel has slapped the ban, although the equipment was being funded by international relief and medical institutions on behalf of hospitals in Gaza. "In the whole world, there is no such thing where those who want to buy medicine or medical equipment do not get a permit from the occupier...," he said.

COGAT, the Israeli regime's military body responsible for civilian affairs in the occupied territories has, however, alleged that the Palestinian resistance movement of Hamas and other resistance groups were "systematically and cynically taking advantage of humanitarian and civilian shipments of equipment and goods...." The Palestinian Health Ministry has refuted the allegation about the medical equipment having dual uses as a lie.

The Israeli regime occupied the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip during a Western-backed war in 1967. Tel Aviv withdrew from Gaza in 2005, but has been keeping the territory under a crippling land, aerial, and naval siege as well as regular deadly offensives.

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