

World Bank confirms that Israeli restrictions hinder Palestinians' access to healthcare



Palestinians are finding it increasingly difficult to access life-saving healthcare. (File photo by Getty Images)

Washington, September 29 (RHC)-- The World Bank says restrictions imposed by the Israeli regime and the worsening economic condition in the besieged Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank hinder the Palestinians' access to healthcare.

In a report titled "Racing Against Time," the Washington-based global lender said the restrictions on movement and trade in the West Bank, and Gaza and the divide between the two Palestinian territories were among several factors putting the Palestinian economy at high risk. "Given population growth trends, income per capita is thus expected to stagnate."

"The fiscal constraints weigh heavily on the Palestinian health system and particularly on its ability to cope with the mounting burden of non-communicable diseases," Stefan Emblad, the World Bank's director for the West Bank and Gaza, said in a statement released with the report.

The restrictions, including "a lengthy, bureaucratic regime of permits," often makes it hard to provide timely life-saving healthcare to Palestinians, he said. Access to outside medical referrals for treatment of cancer, heart diseases, and maternal and child-birth conditions are significantly affected due to physical and administrative constraints, the statement said. "The situation is particularly critical in Gaza, which suffers from a more limited health system capacity and where patients struggle to get needed medical exit permit applications on a timely basis."

"Research figures show that the near-blockade of Gaza has had an impact on mortality, as some patients do not outlive the length of the permit process."

The Israeli regime has been preventing the entry of medical equipment for Gaza hospitals as part of its blockade on the coastal territory. The report said restrictions on travel without permit make it hard for the Palestinians to receive life-saving treatment in time, particularly those in the Gaza Strip.

After they receive approvals and financial coverage for treatment, patients are required to apply for exit permits the regime issues to be allowed to leave through Beit Hanoun, the only land crossing for the Palestinians moving between Gaza and the rest of the occupied territories.

Last week, a leading international humanitarian organization said Israeli authorities had deprived a considerable number of Palestinian children of life-saving healthcare in Gaza during the first half of 2023.

A report published on Wednesday by the UK-based organization Save the Children said nearly 400 children in Gaza, at least two children per day, were denied permits to travel to the West Bank and receive critical treatment in that time span. In the majority of cases, Israeli authorities denied or delayed permit applications for those accompanying patients during their medical journey.

Devastated by 16 years of the Israeli blockade and recurrent military attacks, Gaza's healthcare system faces immense challenges, with the entry of vital medical supplies, equipment and medications severely restricted by the regime.

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