

Palestinian Authority Says 3,500 Gaza Patients Threatened by Rafah Closure



Ramallah, November 25 (RHC)-- Palestinian officials have warned about the deteriorating health conditions of thousands of patients in the besieged Gaza Strip following Egypt's closure of the Rafah crossing.

The spokesperson for the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza, Ashraf al-Qidra, said that some 3,500 Palestinian patients are in dire need of medical treatment in the coastal sliver which is under Israeli siege.

Qidra warned that Palestinians were eagerly waiting for the Rafah crossing, along the Gaza Strip's border with Egypt, to open as they must travel to the neighboring country in order to receive much-needed treatment.

He called on the International Red Cross and human rights organizations to pressure Egypt to open the Rafah crossing and to allow patients to travel to receive medical treatment.

The crossing was last opened for four days in August. Following its closure, Palestinian border official Maher Abu Sabha expressed hope that the crossing would soon "reopen in both directions permanently."

The Rafah crossing serves as the only gateway out of the blockaded Palestinian territory bypassing Israel, which closed all other crossings several years ago. Rafah has only been open for a total of two weeks since the start of the year.

Dozens of Palestinian patients have lost their lives due to a lack of medicine and medical supplies since Israel imposed a blockade against the impoverished Gaza Strip, which is home to some 1.8 million people, in 2007.

In August, the Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas, warned that some 17,000 Palestinians were in urgent need to leave the strip for medical assistance.

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