

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 11/08 (MDE 15/001/2008, 14 January 2008) Medical Concern

**ISRAEL/
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN
TERRITORIES/
EGYPT**

Karima Abu Dalal (f) aged 34 – Cancer (Hodgkin's lymphoma)
Bassam al-Oehidi (m) aged 28 – Retinal detachment
Sha'aban Fares Salama Abu 'Obeid (m), aged 37 – Heart disease
Tayseer al-Qanou' (m), aged 50 – Tumour in eyelid
Ibrahim al-Qanou' (m), aged 28 – Hepatitis B with suspicion of liver cancer
Rami al-Masri (m), aged 25 – Tumour in optic nerve
Sameer Taleb (m), aged 47 – Vascular and spinal problems
Iyad Jandiya (m), aged 32 – Giant hernia
Rami Al-Arouqi (m), aged 29 – Bone tumour

Now receiving medical treatment: **Rihab 'Attia Abu Taha (f), aged 28**
Ahmad Mas'oud (m), aged 20
Amin Fayad (m), aged 28
Bassam al-Dos (m), aged 35

Four of the critically ill Palestinians named above have been able to leave the Gaza Strip to seek medical treatment abroad. However, other dangerously ill Palestinians who are in need of urgent medical treatment not available in the Gaza Strip continue to be denied passage out of Gaza by the Israeli authorities. The nine other people on the list all have cancer or other life-threatening illnesses and should be allowed to seek treatment in specialised hospitals without delay. Karima Abu Dalal's chances of survival are now said to be very low, and she urgently needs to be treated at an advanced medical centre.

Since the Israeli authorities tightened their blockade of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, closing the border between Gaza and Egypt, every one of the 1.5 million inhabitants must obtain the permission of the Israeli military authorities if they wish to leave the Gaza Strip. This is almost always refused. The Israeli military say they cannot allow these and other critically ill patients to leave the Gaza Strip because of unspecified "security" reasons.

The condition of Karima Abu Dalal, a 34-year-old mother-of-five who was diagnosed with cancer (Hodgkin's lymphoma) in 2006, has deteriorated in the last few days. She had a bone marrow transplant and chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatment in Egypt before the border was closed in June 2007. Her health improved after two intensive courses of chemotherapy in August in Nablus in the West Bank and she was due to continue chemotherapy and radiotherapy courses in November. However, numerous requests to leave Gaza for treatment have been rejected by the Israeli military authorities for unspecified "security reasons". The Israeli High Court of Justice also refused a petition against this decision brought by the Israeli branch of the non-governmental organization Physicians for Human Rights. The petition included a submission from a leading cancer specialist indicating that Karima Abu Dalal's life was in danger if her treatment were to be interrupted. However, the High Court judges ruled that they saw "no grounds for intervention."

Israel, as the occupying power, is responsible for the health of Karima Abu Dalal and all 1.5 million residents of the Gaza Strip. Denying passage to patients in desperate need of medical care serves no legitimate security purpose, as all patients undergo strict security checks at the crossing, and are generally gravely ill.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The siege imposed on the Gaza Strip by the Israeli army was tightened in June 2007 when Hamas took power by force. On 9 June 2007, the Israeli authorities closed Gaza's main gate to the outside world, the Rafah Crossing point to Egypt. Only a handful of Palestinians have since been permitted to travel from Gaza into Israel. Highly sporadic shuttle buses have also taken a handful of medical patients through Israel to Egypt and Jordan, but notice is often only given one day in advance making it almost impossible to coordinate the new referrals.

A temporary breach in the wall in the Gaza-Egypt border on 23 January 2008 did bring some temporary respite to the trapped population of Gaza. However, very few of those seeking medical treatment were able to take the opportunity to pass through to Egypt.

Medical facilities in Gaza lack the specialized staff and equipment to treat a range of conditions, such as cancer and cardiovascular illnesses. Hospitals and medical facilities are also increasingly short of drugs and disposable supplies as a result of Israel's blockades on Gaza's imports. According to the World Health Organisation, three patients died in January after being denied permits to leave Gaza via the only alternative crossing point to the Rafah Crossing, the Erez Crossing.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

To the Israeli authorities:

- calling for immediate action to allow Karima Abu Dalal and eight others (please name them all) to leave the Gaza Strip for urgent medical treatment that they cannot get at home;
- pointing out that under international law, Israel, as the occupying power, must ensure that the residents of the Gaza Strip have access to medical care to the same extent as nationals of the State of Israel.

APPEALS TO:

Ehud Barak
Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence, 37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia, Tel Aviv 61909, Israel

Fax: +972 3 691 6940
Email: minister@mod.gov.il
Salutation: Dear Minister

Brigadier General Avihai Mandelblit
Judge Advocate General
6 David Elazar Street, Hakiryia, Tel Aviv, Israel

Fax: + 972 3 608 0366
Email: arbel@mail.idf.il
Salutation: Dear Brigadier General

To the Palestinian Authority and Egypt:

- calling on them to work urgently to ensure that Israel reopens the Rafah crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, which is the only gate to the outside world for the population of Gaza.

Mahmoud Abbas
President of the Palestinian Authority
Fax: +972 2 296 3170/296 3179
Salutation: Dear President

His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
'Abedine Palace, Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +20223901998
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Israel, the Palestinian National Authority and Egypt accredited to your country. **PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 11 April 2008.