



Healthcare Restricted: Female Cancer Patients in Gaza



Photograph by Eddie Gerald

The Global Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue
and Democracy - MIFTAH
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Background:

The Israeli-imposed siege and the frequent aggressions targeting medical facilities in Gaza have debilitated the health sector and its capacity to provide proper medical services. This is exacerbated in cases of chronic diseases, which gives rise to a need to leave the Gaza Strip to receive medical treatment in the occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem, or elsewhere. However, Israel imposes a strict and discriminatory permit regime, which has a disproportionate impact on medical patients given their conditions, and it is not unusual for these permits to be significantly delayed or ultimately refused by Israel.

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH) collected questionnaires from 102 women diagnosed with cancer in the Gaza Strip to assess the quality of the treatment, availability of equipment, accessibility, and referral process.

The full report is accessible [here](#).



Main Findings

Condition of hospitals and healthcare facilities in Gaza:

75% of women who received at least part of their cancer treatment in Gaza expressed that the treatment was inadequate due to:

- lack of equipment
- lack of medication
- temporary improvement before the disease spreads again
- medical errors
- inadequate treatment by doctors

72% of respondents stated that they are dissatisfied with the treatment due to:

- Highly outdated medical equipment
- lack of availability of specialized doctors
- inaccuracy of test results, including CT scans and X-rays
- lack of availability of necessary medication
- lack of early diagnosis (73% of responding women were diagnosed when the cancer was in its intermediate or advanced stages)

Condition of Israeli checkpoints traveling out of Gaza

Respondents described the inspection process at the Beit Hanoun crossing point out of Gaza as lengthy, tedious, and inconsiderate of the condition of cancer patients. On many occasions, cancer patients are separated from their accompaniment, had to wait long hours, and carry their own bags, as Israel forbids Palestinians leaving Gaza from using bags with wheels.

Trouble and delays getting out of Gaza for treatment led to deteriorating conditions for 67% of respondents, and 1 case passed away due to the inability of the patient to leave the Gaza Strip again.

Legal Dimension:

The Israeli policy of imposing a siege on Gaza and the associated measures are a violation of its obligations as an occupying power under international human rights law, and international humanitarian law vis-à-vis the right to health, such as:

- **Article 12 of The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** guarantees the right to health and affirms the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.
- These measures are infringing on the inherent right of people to life, as contained in **Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**.
- The Israeli-imposed siege on Gaza also violates Israel's obligations under **Article 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention** which states that "the occupying power has the duty of ensuring and maintaining the medical and hospital establishments and services, public health and hygiene in the occupied territory".
- Further, the siege on Gaza violates **Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention**, which prohibits all measures of collective punishment.
- The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**).



A Palestinian ambulance crosses into Egypt through the Rafah border crossing. [Mohammed Saber/EPA]

Conclusion and recommendations

The 16-year-long Israeli-imposed blockade and closure on Gaza has had detrimental impacts on the health sector in the besieged Strip. Specifically, the siege has compromised the ability of the healthcare sector to deliver proper medical services due to the absence of crucial medication, equipment, and supplies under flimsy security pretexts. Ultimately, frequent aggressions and targeting of health facilities and the Israeli-imposed siege on Gaza compromises the availability, accessibility, and quality of healthcare services available to Palestinians in Gaza.

MIFTAH urges the international community to:

- Put an end to Israel's impunity and hold it accountable for its persistent crimes, including the crime against humanity of apartheid, through the adoption of effective and concrete measures;
- Exert pressure to lift the blockade on the Gaza Strip and allow for the free movement of people and goods;
- Ensure the urgent implementation of UNSCR 1325 to provide immediate protection for Palestinian women and to put an end to Israel's impunity;
- Support the UN Special Rapporteur in the oPt, the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion, the ICC investigation and the UN Commission of Inquiry.