



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 



Committee on International Justice and Peace
Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

October 2019

Dear President Trump,

With heavy hearts, and a deep sense of urgency we, the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on behalf of its Conference of Bishops, the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church on behalf of its House of Bishops, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committees on International Justice and Peace and Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, together wish to call your attention to our grave concern for the dire situation of the hospitals in East Jerusalem. We write to you to request an urgent meeting to discuss the impact of your Administration's decision to halt U.S. humanitarian assistance to these hospitals, and our call for you to restore funding as soon as possible.

The four medical institutions associated with us include: Augusta Victoria Hospital (Lutheran), St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital and Princess Basma Rehabilitation Centre (both Anglican/Episcopal), as well as St. Joseph's Hospital (Catholic), together with Makassed Islamic Charitable Hospital, and Red Crescent Maternity Hospital. These six hospitals, all fully licensed by the Israeli Ministry of Health, are providing invaluable medical care for the most vulnerable populations, including Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank. We consider them integral parts of our common commitment to ministry in the Holy Land.

These hospitals provide lifesaving and, in some cases, unique forms of health care not available otherwise to Palestinians. For example, Augusta Victoria provides kidney dialysis for children and state-of-the-art cancer care. St. John of Jerusalem is the only charitable provider of expert eye care in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre provides services for children with a wide range of disabilities and has become one of the pioneering rehabilitation centers in autism treatment in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. St. Joseph's is a 73-bed general hospital serving the Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem. All of these institutions provide extensive outreach services throughout the West Bank.

The East Jerusalem hospitals have relied on U.S. assistance for many years to cover a portion (approximately one quarter) of the costs of the patients referred to them by the Palestinian Authority. The decision to cut FY 2017 and FY 2018 U.S. funding has significantly contributed to the hospitals' inability to ensure ongoing safe and effective lifesaving treatment for patients. Without the capacity to pay staff or pharmaceutical suppliers for medications, or to avoid the resulting interruptions to patient treatment, some of the hospitals may soon have no alternative but to turn patients away. The only way to reverse this situation is to act expeditiously to restore U.S. funding.

We recognize that the situation is complicated and that many factors contribute to the PA's lack of payments to the East Jerusalem hospitals for the patients it refers to them. Yet, at the same time, our deepest concern is for the patients – especially the children – for whom this funding is a matter of life or death. Mr. President, we call upon you to restore this vital funding to the safe and effective operation of the East Jerusalem hospitals, and to do so swiftly so that these patients will continue to receive the lifesaving treatment and care they need. Such an action would surely reflect God's enduring mercy for us all.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Eaton

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Michael B. Curry

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop
The Episcopal Church

Joseph C. Bambera

Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera
Bishop of Scranton
Chair, USCCB Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

Timothy P. Broglio

Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA
Chair, USCCB Committee on Intl Justice and Peace