



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

November 2018

The Presiding Bishop and Conference of Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 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 raise their grave concern that the Trump Administration has apparently decided to halt further U.S. humanitarian assistance to hospitals in East Jerusalem as part of a wider curtailment of U.S. funding that has been assisting the Palestinian people for many years.

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, 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 life-saving 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.

Each has benefited from U.S. assistance for decades and, therefore, this decision to discontinue that funding leaves the patients, the wider Palestinian community, and us disappointed and perplexed. It is difficult for us to understand why this humanitarian assistance is being brought to a halt, given that lives are being threatened unnecessarily.

Calling the decision "a blow to the health of the city", more than a dozen Israeli doctors recently said, "a sudden and significant cut of support for medical services will cause imminent and serious harm to the health and wellbeing of those residents of the city who are well-served by these hospitals and medical centers."

In addition to being a morally correct thing to do, U.S. funding is key to paying pharmaceutical suppliers of medications, paying staff, and avoiding any interruption in the treatment of patients. We call on the President to restore this vital funding so that these patients will continue to receive the treatment and care they need.

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

The Rev. William O. Gafkjen
Bishop, Indiana-Kentucky Synod, ELCA
Chair, ELCA Conference of Bishops

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop
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Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera
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Chair, USCCB Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio
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