

Briefing Paper on

Augusta Victoria Hospital - Jerusalem

(updated 9 September 2018)

Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH), owned and operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), is the main cancer and kidney center serving Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. AVH, located on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, is supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Augusta Victoria Hospital is able to operate because of the support of LWF member churches, like the ELCA, and longstanding partnerships with countries like the United States. In the last decade the US government, through USAID, has invested nearly \$10 million in AVH to bolster its capacity as a cancer center. In addition, the US government has provided over several years tens of millions of dollars in aid to help cover the costs of the cancer patients and others referred to AVH and the other East Jerusalem.

AVH was accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI) in 2013 and re-accredited in 2016. JCI is a US-based body that assesses hospitals and health care facilities globally. This accreditation, valid for three years, examines every level of quality assurance and patient safety. AVH is also regularly inspected and licensed by the Israeli Ministry of Health.

The Trump Administration placed all aid to Palestinians under administrative review, including funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and 2017 humanitarian and economic aid that is vital for peace and stability in the area. The Administration then decided to cut over \$200 million in Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) Economic Support Fund assistance originally planned for the West Bank and Gaza and to end U.S. contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

All of this funding is important for addressing the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza. The release of the \$25 million in 2017 funding designated for Augusta Victoria Hospital and the other East Jerusalem hospitals is especially urgent in order to ensure ongoing treatment and to avoid putting cancer patients in jeopardy.

AVH and five other East Jerusalem hospitals rely on funding each year from the US and the European Union (EU) to cover approximately half of the costs of patients referred to these hospitals by the PA. Currently, AVH is owed over \$38 million of a total of \$80 million to the six East Jerusalem hospitals, including AVH.

The release of \$25 million of FY 2017 funding will help to ensure that there is no interruption in the treatment of Palestinians at the East Jerusalem hospitals, especially the most vulnerable cancer and kidney patients referred to AVH from Gaza and the West Bank.

In March 2018, the US Congress passed the Taylor Force Act in order to strengthen restrictions on aid to the Palestinian Authority in annual appropriations legislation. It is important to note that the Taylor Force Act includes specific exceptions for the East Jerusalem Hospital Network and a certain amount for wastewater projects and vaccination programs. Congress, through this Act, recognizes the vital role of Augusta Victoria Hospital and the other East Jerusalem hospitals and includes this exemption in order to ensure that cancer patients and others are not harmed by the Act.

The delay in the disbursement of the 2017 funding for the East Jerusalem hospitals is contributing to an acute and severe cash-flow crisis for AVH and the other hospitals. It is the intention of the Lutheran World Federation to continue to provide life-saving treatment to patients from the West Bank and Gaza, but AVH needs the US government to release the 2017 funding as soon as possible so that AVH can make payments to pharmaceutical suppliers of cancer medications, pay salaries, and avoid a major interruption in the treatment of patients.

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