



Médecins du Monde (MDM) Chapters in Palestine Statement on the excessive use of force against civilians in Gaza

The MDM chapters working in Palestine express their deepest concern regarding Israel's violent response against Palestinian civilians demonstrating near the perimeter fence with Israel in Gaza.

In the short span of only **five Fridays**, the Israeli army has killed **44** Palestinians, including **four** children, and injured over **6,790** civilians protesting for their right to return. Furthermore, according to the WHO, more than **96** healthcare staff have been injured and **16** ambulances have been damaged as a result of the violent response.

So far, the hospitals in Gaza have treated **4,003** victims with severe injuries, **18** per cent of them are under age and less than half of the urgent patients requiring referral to other hospitals outside Gaza have received the necessary exit permit from Israel. The high number of emergency cases is challenging hospitals' capacity and putting on hold thousands of elective surgeries.

The excessive use of force against Palestinians demonstrating in Gaza is a violation of the right to life, health and freedom of assembly. To this date, the use of live ammunition has severely injured **2,095** civilians. The majority of gunshot wounds have been to lower limbs, causing severe orthopaedic and vascular injuries leaving hundreds of the victims handicapped.

This crisis comes on top of a protracted situation. For over 11 years the Israeli government has imposed a strict land, air and sea military blockade to Gaza. Qualified as a violation of international humanitarian law, this collective punishment has had disastrous consequences on the daily life of millions of Palestinians. While the availability of goods is the most visible aspect, the impacts of the blockade are ubiquitous along the Strip and felt every single day. Health services in particular are constantly struggling to cope with the increasing problems:

- Water pollution and lack of potable water represent an imminent risk of waterborne diseases.
- Almost half of the essential drugs and disposables are constantly unavailable.
- Electricity cuts limit the regular provision to four hours, and therefore hampering the quality and services primary health centres and hospitals provide.

Present in Gaza for over 16 years, MDM medical teams have been working with volunteers, primary health centre staff and emergency departments of six hospitals improving emergency preparedness, as well as providing paediatric orthopaedic surgeries.

The **three MDM Chapters in Palestine**, namely Doctors of the World France, Spain and Switzerland, condemn Israel's excessive use of force against healthcare staff and civilians demonstrating in the Gaza Strip since March 30 and adhere to the international call for an independent investigation of each incident.

MDM chapters call for the absolute respect to the right to health, in particular eliminating any obstacle to access to health services outside the Gaza strip.

Finally, the MDM chapters urge the European Union to take concrete measures in order to implement the EU Parliament resolution 2018/2663(RSP) calling for the immediate and unconditional end to the blockade and closure of the Gaza Strip.