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MDM voices its concern regarding the current situation in the Gaza strip and its impact on health.

Since the withdrawal of the Israeli Army from the Gaza strip on the 12th of September 2005, and despite the difficulty in obtaining exact figures, MDM, as an international medical organization, considers that the restricted access through Erez and Rafah Terminals has deprived a large number of Palestinian patients from access to specialized medical health care both inside Israel and Egypt. In fact, since the completion of the withdrawal, Rafah terminal has only been randomly opened five (5) times, while movement of patients through Erez terminal remains severely restricted.

These travel restrictions have particularly affected patients who require specialized treatment which is either unavailable inside the Gaza strip or fails to attain adequate standards such as heart operations, catheterization, dialysis and chemotherapy.

Prior to the withdrawal from Gaza, hundreds of patients were able to obtain permits from the Israeli military authorities in order to exit the Gaza strip either through Erez terminal to Israel or Rafah terminal to Egypt. Even then, access depended on the security considerations at any given moment.

Nowadays, security considerations doubled by the restricted access through both terminals deprives the civilian population as well as hundreds of patients of their basic right to health which is guaranteed by international humanitarian law (IHL).

Furthermore, since the completion of the withdrawal, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) has been flying over the strip at a very low altitude, faster than the speed of sound, creating loud explosions. MDM is highly concerned by the impact of these measures on the health of the Palestinian population and specifically on patients and vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, children and elderly people. IHL strictly condemns the use of collective penalties against the civilian population in order to target political factions.

MDM is concerned that the current situation will have severe repercussions on the health of the civilian population and particularly on patients and vulnerable groups, which may lead to a general deterioration of their condition.

In accordance with IHL, Israel remains the “occupying power” since it continues to maintain “effective control” over land, air and sea around the Gaza strip.

MDM demands Israel to guarantee access of the Palestinian population to medical services and to refrain from imposing collective penalties on the civilian population in clear violation of IHL principals.

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