



21 January 2019, Gaza - The World Health Organization is concerned over the potential impact the evolving fuel crisis in Gaza might have on the lives and health of patients whose treatment requires uninterrupted power supply if no immediate solution to address the aggravating shortages is found.

The functionality of Gaza's 14 public hospitals is increasingly jeopardized by electricity shortages and the rapidly declining UN coordinated fuel reserves required to run emergency generators during prolonged electricity cuts from the main grid.

Several of the most severely impacted hospitals have already put rationalization measures in place and suspended sterilization, diagnostic imaging, cleaning, laundry and catering services during cut-off hours. Elective surgeries have been further reduced and drastic service reductions, including closures of wards and hospitals, are imminent, doctors and nurses in Gaza are warning.

Hundreds of patients, including newborn and children, whose life depends on the availability of dialysis services, incubators and ventilators in intensive care units, and other electrical life-sustaining devices, and those requiring surgical interventions will be directly affected.

“The acute fuel shortages are rapidly exhausting the last coping capacities of the health system in Gaza, which is struggling with chronic shortages of pharmaceuticals, medical supplies and electricity. Without a quick solution to address the critically low emergency fuel supplies in hospitals, many of the most vulnerable patients will be put at risk. Following our visits to several affected facilities in Gaza to assess the situation firsthand, we call on all parties to de-politicize health and to collectively ensure that lifesaving services are sustained,” said Dr Gerald Rockenschaub, head of WHO office for the West Bank and Gaza.

Current fuel reserves are expected to sustain critical hospital services for only a few more days, depending on the number of hours of electricity cuts.

WHO calls on the local authorities in Gaza and on all parties and stakeholders to meet their responsibilities and to ensure the right to health and sustained access to essential health services for all patients.

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