PRESS RELEASE

UN Agencies call for respect of health premises and the right to health care

Jerusalem, 2 November 2015

During a visit to Makassed hospital in East Jerusalem on Sunday, the Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT), Robert Piper, questioned recent actions by Israeli security forces in and around health care facilities in occupied East Jerusalem. He was accompanied during the visit by senior UN officials from UNRWA, UNSCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO and OCHA.

"Actions that undermine the ability of health workers to provide care to those in need are violations of international law. The conduct by the Israeli Security Forces during several entries into Makassed hospital this past week is unacceptable and must not be repeated" Mr. Piper said.

On 27 and 28 October armed police forcibly entered the hospital to reportedly obtain the medical files and security camera footage relating to a child who had been treated in the hospital before, and who is currently in Israeli custody. On 29 October, Israeli security forces fired tear gas canisters and other projectiles inside the hospital premises when medical staff were holding a peaceful protest against the recent events. The search operations disrupted health services and caused panic among patients and medical staff.

In addition, medical services are being impeded by checkpoints recently established near Augusta Victoria Hospital, following the escalation in violence in East Jerusalem. These obstacles have delayed access of patients and staff, as well as medical referrals between Augusta Victoria and Makassed hospitals.

"The right to health is a fundamental human right which Israel must respect and protect at all times" Mr. Piper concluded.

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