



Even after prior coordination with Israeli authorities, soldiers can hold up ambulances at checkpoints for extended periods of time When doctors in Hebron could not find the cause of 74-year-old Abu Abed's* acute pain they urgently referred him to a hospital in East Jerusalem. However, the ambulance he was travelling in was held up at the checkpoint entering the city. His frail wife is the only family member allowed to be with him.

"I went to the hospital in Hebron because I had terrible pains in my back and stomach. They did what they could but after nine days, when they weren't able to find out what was wrong, they sent me home. However, the pain didn't go away and I went back to the hospital. That's when they decided to send me immediately to Al Maqassad Hospital in East Jerusalem.

Despite the fact that I was really sick, it took a whole day to get the papers from the Israeli authorities for my transfer. At nine o'clock the next morning, we arrived in a Palestine Red Crescent Society ambulance at one of the checkpoints outside Jerusalem. The soldiers stopped us. I heard the driver talking to them, but I didn't understand what the problem was. I was lying in the ambulance, feeling totally helpless. I, an old man, was seeking medical treatment and it seemed no one was helping me. One and a half hours later, I was finally transferred to the ambulance that had come from Jerusalem to take me to the hospital.

Here at Al Maqassad Hospital I'm being looked after very well. They've run a number of tests, including two endoscopies, and they've sent some tissue to the laboratory. I should know the results shortly. I finally feel that someone can help me.

Only my wife, as sick and as old as I am, was allowed to accompany me. She stays at my bedside all the time. She even sleeps in a chair in my room. The Israeli authorities denied the requests from each one of my five sons to come to Jerusalem to visit me. Since we don't have relatives here, nobody can take turns with my wife in looking after me. So, as soon as I can, I want to return to Hebron to be with my family.

I'm 74 years old, sick and weak. How could I harm Israel? I don't understand why I'm being treated this way, why I'm not allowed to have my family with me when I need them the most." (November 2010).

* Abu Abed's name has been changed and some of the details of his story have been omitted in order to protect his identity.

Restricted emergency access to Jerusalem

Palestinians from the West Bank requiring emergency treatment available only in East Jerusalem are especially affected by the delay in accessing the city through Barrier checkpoints. Permission for emergency cases can be obtained the same day through the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS). This involves coordination with the Israeli District Coordination Office, the authorizing of a specific checkpoint for the patient to cross, and back-to-back ambulance procedures since West Bank ambulances are prevented from entering Jerusalem.

Even if permission is granted, emergency cases are frequently delayed. In 2009, PRCS recorded 440 delays and denials of ambulances throughout oPt, two thirds of which occurred at checkpoints accessing East Jerusalem.

The right to the highest attainable standards of health as enshrined in the WHO constitution and numerous human rights instruments. Four criteria make up the right to health: availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality.

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