



Three-month old Safaa after her surgery, made possible with the support of the Bambino Gesù Hospital

17 June 2019, Damascus, Syria – With support from WHO, a team of senior medical specialists from the Bambino Gesù hospital in Rome (the largest paediatric hospital in Italy) has just concluded a one-week visit to Syria to work with their counterparts in the Paediatric Hospital in Damascus.

The team has made several visits to Syria as part of a collaborative programme to build the capacity of the Paediatric Hospital in Damascus. WHO supports the hospital with state-of-the-art equipment and supplies, while specialists from Bambino Gesù provide supportive supervision and practical training on the latest techniques and advances in paediatric surgery.

“The strong cooperation between the Bambino Gesù Hospital in Rome and the Paediatric Hospital in Damascus comes at a time of great need,” said Ms Elizabeth Hoff, WHO Representative in Syria. “More than 6000 physicians, including highly trained specialists, have

left the country. Many critically ill children require complex care that is no longer readily available in Damascus.”

Three-month old Hanan was one of the infants treated by the team from Rome. Hanan has a rare form of congenital heart disease (known as truncus arteriosus) that, if left untreated, leads to early death. Dr Fiore Lorio, Director of Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery at Bambino Gesù, examined Hanan and decided to operate immediately. Hanan is now recuperating following her lengthy and delicate surgery, and Dr Lorio said he was confident that she would make a full recovery and grow up to live a normal life.

Dr Ali Al-Hraki, a paediatric surgeon in Damascus, said that he learned a lot from the Bambino Gesù team. “I joined the hospital recently, and appreciate the opportunity to learn from highly trained specialists. We are so grateful to the team from Bambino Gesù for helping us save the lives of vulnerable Syrian children at a critical time,” he said.

“Syria’s children are its future,” said Ms Hoff. “Thanks to the support and generosity of our colleagues in Rome, we have been able to give new hope to hundreds of children and their families.”

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