



## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

October 13, 2017

H.E. Dr. Husam S. Zomlot  
Ambassador  
Chief Representative of the PLO General Delegation to the United States  
1732 Wisconsin Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C., 20007

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you today out of concern for the health and well-being of Palestinians who are patients at the Augusta Victoria Hospital, operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in East Jerusalem. As you may know, the Hospital started in partnership with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) as a major medical facility in Jerusalem after the 1948 war to care for Palestinian refugees. Today, most of the patients served by AVH are Palestinians being assisted with life-saving specialized care.

However, the Hospital's ability to continue this work has reached an avoidable crisis due to the Palestinian Authority's failure to continue to pay the costs incurred as it serves patients, many of whom need urgent health care. Last May, as the Hospital was running out of vital medication to treat critically ill patients due to non-payment of debts for services rendered in 2016, the Hospital was forced to turn patients away.

In immediate reaction and over the past several months, the Palestinian Authority offered numerous assurances and promises that a substantial payment on the debt would be made but these assurances have failed to materialize to a degree that reduces the debt to a manageable level. Due to the lack of payments from the PA, Augusta Victoria Hospital has increased its debts toward its own suppliers, which currently stand at about NIS 160 million, and fully exhausted its lines of credit, including overdrafts. While the Minister of Finance confirmed in September that the PA would immediately settle all outstanding 2016 debts, this has failed to materialize. Last Monday, the Hospital announced that, due to the lack of PA payments and an acute shortage of resources, AVH is preparing to halt all but life-saving operations starting Monday, 16 October.

Mr. Ambassador, the AVH provides life-saving treatment to cancer and kidney patients from Gaza and the West Bank and the current financial uncertainty is taking an emotional and psychological toll in addition to their medical vulnerability. A payment of at least 80 million NIS is needed urgently to ensure that there is no interruption to their care and well-being. On behalf of all the patients at AVH and as LWF Vice-President for the North America region, I appeal to you in the strongest terms to bring this matter to an immediate, positive conclusion.

God's peace,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Cc: The Honorable Bob Corker, U.S. Senate  
The Honorable Sherrod Brown, U.S. Senate  
The Honorable Ron Johnson, U.S. Senate  
The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer, U.S. House of Representatives