



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

February 4, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I am writing to you today about a matter of immediate importance and concern.

For nearly 65 years, the Lutheran World Federation, of which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a member, has operated the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH). The Hospital is an institution on the Mt. of Olives in Jerusalem, which provides life-saving health care to Palestinians. The critical medical services provided by AVH are currently threatened by an acute financial crisis caused by the accumulated debt from the Palestinian National Authority (PA). The debt arose from unpaid treatments in 2013 for patients referred by the PA to AVH. The debt is now at EUR 18,000,000 and growing every month. As a result, the hospital is now unable to procure any medications and meet its obligations to its professional staff caring for thousands of patients monthly. The hospital is reaching a point where it does not have the cash to pay its bills and is nearing a point where it will no longer be able to treat patients.

The ELCA has continued to provide annual financial support to the AVH. However, our urgent request is for the U.S. Government to **cut out an amount from its bilateral support to the PA and restrict it to paying the PA debt to AVH**. If the U.S. and several other governments who have been approached by our partners can provide EUR 3 to 4 million each, the problem will be solved and PA patients will not have to worry about where and how they can find medical care.

AVH provides a number of specialty services to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, especially cancer care and treatment. The US Government has provided enormous support for AVH, particularly in the development of the cancer unit. AVH has helped to give hope to patients with breast cancer, to a large extent because of the US support of an AVH mobile mammography unit serving the West Bank, provision of a state-of-the-art radiation therapy unit at AVH, and provision of a bone marrow transplantation unit. The visit to AVH of Dr. Jill Biden in 2010 helped to solidify the US relationship with AVH and other visits, like that of Rep. Steny Hoyer in 2013, have been key in highlighting the effectiveness of US diplomacy through foreign aid to the region and its far-reaching impact on the improvement of health services for Palestinians.

It is also important to note that:

1. AVH is operating in the black; if all payments would be made by the PA, AVH would be able to continue being solvent.
2. AVH is managed efficiently and effectively; this crisis results solely from the PA's inability to pay.
3. The money that the U.S. Government would deduct from its support of the PA would be covering PA payable accounts and would be helping the PA meet its obligations. It is money for the PA, not AVH.

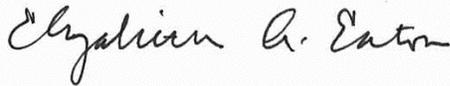
4. This money would not be a grant to AVH, but rather a way to assist the PA. Nevertheless, the money should be restricted to AVH so as to preserve this successful Palestinian institution in East Jerusalem.
5. The LWF/AVH will have an international audit firm manage this process. The funds will be applied only to bills related to the PA and nothing else. The LWF/AVH will account for every Dollar/Euro for every PA referral and present a fully transparent process, as always.
6. The UNRWA has been on strike for the last 58 days and so AVH also lost the little income normally received from UNRWA.
7. It is the political responsibility of the U.S. Government to preserve the *status quo* in East Jerusalem and to ensure that a humanitarian crisis does not develop. A humanitarian issue will most certainly arise if the AVH is unable to meet the needs of patients seeking treatment. The lives of patients at the AVH must not be placed in jeopardy because of this situation.

I am enclosing for your reference a recent letter from the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, the Rev. Martin Junge, which describes the Hospital's situation in further detail.

I appeal to you for swift action at once so that this important institution can continue its essential provision of health care and treatment for thousands of Palestinians at this critical moment.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



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

Enclosure

CC: The Honorable Tim Kaine, Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs
The Honorable James E. Risch, Ranking Member, Senate Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs
The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman, House Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
The Honorable Theodore E. Deutch, Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Ambassador Anne W. Patterson, Asst. Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs
Christopher Henzel, Director, Office of Israel and Palestinian Affairs, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Anne C. Richard, Asst. Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration
Dr. Rajiv Shah, Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development
Mr. R. David Harden, Mission Director, USAID, U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv