



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

October 1, 2019

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

With heavy hearts and a deep sense of urgency, we, the presiding bishop and Conference of Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, must call your attention to Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) and the other East Jerusalem hospitals. We are concerned about the impact that cuts in U.S. humanitarian assistance for the West Bank and Gaza are having on cancer patients and others treated in these facilities.

Without sufficient funds to secure the needed drugs for cancer treatment, AVH has been forced to delay treatments when doing so is ethically and medically acceptable, and it may soon have no alternative but to turn away patients who rely on the lifesaving treatments offered at AVH. AVH is owned and operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and several other member churches of the LWF. The LWF and its member churches intend to continue to provide lifesaving treatment to patients from the West Bank and Gaza through AVH, but the accumulated debt of the Palestinian Authority (PA) makes it increasingly difficult for AVH to pay staff, pay pharmaceutical suppliers for medications and avoid interruption of patient treatment.

We recognize that the situation is complicated and that many factors contribute to the PA's lack of payments to the East Jerusalem hospitals for the patients it refers to them. At the same time, the \$25 million in FY2017 U.S. funding that was cut and the \$25 million in FY2018 funding that has not been released to the East Jerusalem hospitals represent one-quarter of the cost of patients already treated by AVH and the East Jerusalem hospitals in those years. As of July 31, 2019, the PA debt to AVH alone was nearly \$40 million, a level that is unsustainable for the LWF.

We call on you, Mr. President, to restore funding vital to the safe and effective operation of the East Jerusalem hospitals as soon as possible so that the patients — especially children, who are particularly at risk — will continue to receive the treatment and care they need.

Sincerely,

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

The Rev. William O. Gafkjen
Bishop, Indiana-Kentucky Synod
Chair, ELCA Conference of Bishops

Cc: Secretary Mike Pompeo, Representative Nita Lowey, Representative Hal Rogers, Senator Lindsey Graham and Senator Patrick Leahy