

Medical Services

The curfew has severely impinged upon the medical infrastructure and services in the territories, primarily as a result of restrictions placed upon the freedom of movement of medical personnel and patients.

A. Difficulties in Access to Medical Attention

Persons who do not possess a telephone face extreme difficulties in obtaining medical attention. Leaving the house to call an ambulance is a violation of curfew and is dangerous, as is traveling in a private car without permission from the authorities. According to information received by **B'Tselem** from the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees, there have been cases of loss of blood, and serious complications as a result of delays in medical treatment. In hospitals, the number of patients receiving medical care, and the number of births, have dropped considerably.

B'Tselem has been informed that in al-Muqassed Hospital only 150 births have been registered, as opposed to an average of 500 births in a normal month. Since 75% of the hospital's staff live in the West Bank, many have been forced to sleep near the hospital since they are unable to travel within or exit the territories.

B. Travel Restrictions on Medical Staff

Between 30-40% of the medical staff in the territories is unable to reach their place of work because they were denied travel passes.

Even with the lifting of curfew for a number of hours, there are still many restrictions on the movement of medical personnel. For example, since the curfew is lifted between different hours according to area, medical personnel who work outside the region they reside in need a permit to pass from district to district. Not all medical workers are granted such passes.

Doctors and nurses in al-Muqassed Hospital in Jerusalem have received passes enabling them to travel from the territories to work, but other personnel such as orderlies, sanitation staff, clerks, and engineers have been denied passes. Four hundred and sixty of al-Muqassed's 700-member staff live in the territories. Only 260 of them have received travel passes.

C. Preventive Medical Care

Preventive treatments and medication have ceased entirely on account of the curfew. Pre-natal care, inoculation of infants, and routine checkups have been postponed indefinitely due to severe staffing shortages.