

Azaria stories

The Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association got this story recently (31/1/2006) sent in Arabic. It needs to be read remembering that Aizaria/Abu Dis was/ is part of Jerusalem and the Al-Mukassed Hospital — hardly any distance — is the East Jerusalem general hospital that doctors in Abu Dis have expected to send patients to since it was built. The Wall is now blocking the way there — and now this new measure. This is from a doctor in Abu Dis.

(This has been translated from the Arabic...)

You know that the only passage between Al Quds (Jerusalem) and Abu Dis for cars is Azzaem checkpoint. And this is also the only path for ambulances. And you know too that the passage of ambulances depends on the mood of the Israeli soldier present at the checkpoint. And for the last month, the entry of ambulances from Abu Dis and the neighbouring towns to Jerusalem hospitals has been completely forbidden. And if the soldier is in a good mood, and lets the ill person through, then the ill person has to call an Israeli ambulance to go to the hospital which is about 100 metres from the checkpoint, which is very expensive for us — about £100. And very often, the ill person can't afford that, and so he feels forced to return, either home or to another hospital on the Palestinian side, which means going through many new checkpoints to a hospital which doesn't have much equipment.

This is what happened to Haji Arefi Aleyan, 75, resident of Abu Dis. She had a stroke and we tried to transfer her to the CVA general at Makassed hospital in Jerusalem, and when she got to the checkpoint, the soldier told her that she could only go in an Israeli ambulance and for the sum that I have mentioned above. So they were forced to take her to the hospital in Beit Jala, Bethlehem, where she was told she needed some tests (brain CT, brain MRI) that they could not do there. They decided to go back to the checkpoint to go to Mukassed hospital, Jerusalem, and accept the conditions imposed by the Israeli soldiers — but the Israeli soldiers then refused to allow that, and they told the people accompanying her that she had to go to the Israeli civil administration and apply for a permit to allow her to go to Jerusalem. So the patient went to Beit Jala hospital again and after contacting international medical establishments and human rights institutions, she was finally allowed to go to Jerusalem in an Israeli ambulance service. She is now, thank God, in good health.

The second case is that of another old lady, Miriam Abu Hillah, 65. She was sent to Makassed Hospital, Jerusalem, after she had a brain haemorrhage. After many attempts and arguments with Israeli soldiers at the checkpoint, she wasn't allowed to pass through, so we were forced to take her to Jericho Hospital — but it was too late as the haemorrhage was severe and the lady died a few days later after being in a long coma for this period.

This is exactly how our life is in this part of the world, and this is what it means to be a doctor here. I don't know exactly what they are going to invent for us next, to increase our pain and torture.

I ask you to help us through the medical institutions and human rights organisations to sort out this problem, because it happens daily....

We send you the most beautiful of greetings and we promise you to remain steadfast despite all repressive measures.