



PRESS RELEASE

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Ambulances Prevented from Entering Palestinian Neighborhoods in East Jerusalem without Prior Approval or Police Escort

- **Magen David Adom (MDA) ambulances may not enter Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem to transfer injured or sick persons to hospital without a police escort, even in life threatening situations**
- **Preventing ambulances from entering Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem without a police escort violates the residents' right to life and health**
- **Adalah, Physicians for Human Rights – Israel and Al Mezan Center for Human Rights sent an urgent letter to the Israeli Deputy Minister of Health and the Jerusalem Police Chief demanding the immediate cancellation of this policy**

Adalah, Physicians for Human Rights – Israel and Al Mezan Center for Human Rights [sent an urgent letter](#) to the Israeli Deputy Minister of Health and the Jerusalem Police Chief on 10 November 2009 demanding the immediate cancellation of instructions preventing Magen David Adom (MDA) ambulances from entering the Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem without prior permission and police escort even in emergency cases.

According to the instructions, the MDA ambulance must wait in a Jewish neighborhood adjacent to the Palestinian neighborhood and may not enter it to transfer the injured or the sick person to the hospital until a police escort arrives, even in life threatening situations. In many cases, the patient's family members must transfer him/her in their own cars to the ambulance, which could increase the severity of the illness or injury and result in medical complications.

These procedures violate the first rule in the work of emergency crews, which is to provide medical aid as soon as possible, and the state's obligation to ensure the life and physical well-being of each person under its authority. These practices may also be considered medical negligence by the MDA and a violation of professional and medical ethics. Further they may constitute cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment under international law.

These instructions do not apply to Jewish settlements in the heart of Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem; the ambulances travel through the Arab neighborhoods to reach the Jewish settlements without any police accompaniment. A case in point is the settlement of Nof Tzion, located in the heart of the Jabal al-Mukaber neighborhood in southeast Jerusalem; it is just separated by one street. The ambulances travel on this street on their way to the settlement, but refuse to enter this same street to transfer a Palestinian patient without police protection.

Mr. Fuad Abu Hamed is the "Clalit" health care clinic director in the Sur Baher neighborhood in East Jerusalem. He emphasized that when an ambulance is called to the clinic to transfer a patient to the hospital, it is forced to wait outside the neighborhood for a long time, even an hour or more until the police arrive to accompany it to the clinic. **This delay sometimes leads to a significant deterioration in the patient's condition or even death.** Recently, an ambulance was called to the Silwan neighborhood to transfer a person suffering from angina to the hospital. **The ambulance waited for more than two hours at the entrance of the village; the police refused to accompany the ambulance** claiming that a violent quarrel was taking place which could put its forces and the crew at risk.

Attorney Haneen Naamnih of Adalah argued in the letter that "these examples, among many others, prove that the considerations determining the work of the Israeli ambulances in Jerusalem are not objective; they do not take into account the seriousness of the patient's condition but solely consider his/her nationality and place of residence in violation of the law."

Ms. Reut Katz of Physicians for Human Rights-Israel stressed that "the police escort of ambulances to transport patients coupled with their presence alongside medical staff during the treatment process also constitutes a flagrant violation of the privacy rights and medical confidentiality of the patient."