

A Cry for better medical care in *Al-Aqsa* Mosque from a Palestinian doctor in *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem)

Sofian Hamodeh, MD

Anaesthetist in Al-Maqased Hospital, East Jerusalem, West Bank, Palestine

Correspondence: sdhamoudeh@gmail.com

Al Aqsa Mosque has suffered for decades from clear neglect by those responsible for it, especially in terms of health, medical facilities, and clinics. Despite the presence of tens of thousands of worshippers in its courtyards and corridors during the days of the year.

Perhaps (for me) as a doctor who was born in Jerusalem and grew up there, educated in its schools, worked in the city, moved between its hospitals, and spent his life in the vicinity of al Aqsa Mosque, I can say that I lived this tragedy in its vastness. Perhaps what increased the emergence of this tragedy is what happened during the month of Ramadan of this year which showed the extent of the suffering experienced by health sector among Arabs in the city of Jerusalem and al Aqsa Mosque in particular.

Perhaps the conflict of sovereignty over al Aqsa Mosque between the Islamic Awqaf department and the Israeli authorities, and elements of bureaucracy from these departments has led to an increase in the gap in the deliberate neglect of the mosque. The actions of the Israeli police who stormed al-Aqsa mosque ahead of Jerusalem Day march earlier this year made matters difficult. (1).

For example, the mosque only contains one medical clinic that is not equipped with the necessary medical equipment and has a narrow space that is not sufficient to provide first aid to the injured patients. And there is no doctor, except one nurse. And there is a small open cart to transport patients on stretchers on it. There are also no umbrellas in the mosque courtyards to prevent sun stroke which expose the worshippers in the month of Ramadan to heat stroke, dehydration, and loss of consciousness. Adding to that, the overcrowding in its courtyards which makes it difficult to transport the injured patients to the emergency clinic when necessary. This sort of help has been requested before. (2)

Other suffering for doctors is when they're called to enter the mosque to help injured patients. By closing the gates of the mosque and isolating it from areas around it and preventing anybody from entering or leaving which exacerbates injuries and delays the arrival of assistance to injured people in good time.

There is no health relief system that includes al Aqsa Mosque or the worshippers in it similar to the relief system in the city of Jerusalem which is entirely under Israeli Sovereignty at least. The BBC reported that 90 Palestinians were injured in Israeli crackdown with more likely not to have been documented. (3)

Despite the complicated health situation in the city, some health associations operate shyly and humbly with their simple capabilities to serve the worshippers inside the mosque. However, they lack the trained persons, the necessary equipment, and the medical expertise to assume these responsibilities, especially like the disastrous situation that occurred in the month of Ramadan this year.

What can we conclude from these events?

1. Al Aqsa Mosque must be identified from any other conflicts in the region and dealt with as a small village that has its own peculiarity for all Muslims in the world (Al-Aqsa capacity can reach 180.000 - 200.000 of worshippers) (4).
2. Improving the status of clinics inside the mosque, either by expanding them or increasing their numbers in addition to improving their performance and efficiency and training their medical staff.
3. Providing an ambulance inside the courtyards of the mosque to transport injured patients.
4. Increasing and developing awareness and guidance in first aid and disaster management, especially in areas

that are difficult for beneficiaries and ambulances to reach.

5. Increasing the efficiency and training of the working staff and employees there.
6. Establishing special courses and training sessions on how to deal with difficult conditions, places for evacuation and how to manage in the event of closing gates of the mosque.
7. Unifying the efforts of health associations and institutes in operation there and providing an effective communication network among them.
8. Protecting the rights of doctors and patients and avoiding assaulting them or preventing them from performing their humanitarian role towards patients.
9. Al Aqsa Mosque should receive greater attention from all Muslims around the world. It should also be present in their minds, spreading its news in newspapers, magazines, and publications. Clarifying the truth of what is being plotted against it in the city of Jerusalem, and receiving moral and material support.

References

1. <https://www.google.co.uk/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/10/dozens-injured-in-clashes-over-israeli-settlements-ahead-of-jerusalem-day-march>
2. https://m.facebook.com/PAMAPalestinian/posts/urgent-masjid-al-aqsa-critical-medical-situationjoin-pama-in-supporting-medical-2779733685577162/?locale=ne_NP
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-57034237.amp>
4. <https://www.alhadath.ps/article/40179/-هندسياً-خاص-المسجد-الأقصى-لا-يتسع-لأكثر-من-180-ألف-مصل>