

Summary of Meeting with Suhaila and Dr. Maher - Monday, March 10th

The desperate situation in Gaza continues to worsen. Dr. Maher shared that this war is the most devastating of all of the wars he has endured in his lifetime. 2.3M Palestinians are suffering. There continues to be a halt on essential supplies including food, medicine and fuel. 65-70% of all homes are completely destroyed and it is still cold in Gaza.

Dr. Maher shared with us that he is sheltering in one kindergarten room within a Catholic church just up the road from Ahli with 4 other doctors and their families. He walks to the hospital every day. He said that everywhere you go it smells like blood, death and destruction. As doctors, they have to decide which patients to try to save and which patients to sacrifice. This is a daily reality for Dr. Maher and his staff.

Ahli has 140 committed staff - 10% are Christian. This is a testament to how people of different faiths can work together to serve the most vulnerable. There are now only about 620 Christians left in Gaza - pre war there were about 1,000. To quote Suhaila, "The mission of Ahli Arab Hospital is that we are for all...the Chief Surgeon is a Muslim, the Chief Officer is a Muslim, the Chief Pharmacist is a Muslim. Our mission is humanitarian and we are for all people."

Ahli is considered the main hospital in Gaza for casualties serving about **25,000 patients monthly for free. Pre-war** Ahli cared for 36,000 patients **per year**. Ahli is the only hospital in northern Gaza with active ICU beds, just three to serve the population of the entire region. Every day, more than **600 outpatients** arrive seeking care, and the burn unit treats **150 patients daily**. The operating theater runs **17 hours a day**, performing more than **450 surgeries each month**, many using outdated equipment. Ahli has the only functioning CT machine in Gaza - it runs 24/7 - more than 100 CT scans daily. Dr. Maher fears that the equipment will break. There is no way to secure parts for broken equipment or to acquire new equipment.

Both Dr. Maher and Suhaila said that were it not for the financial support from AFEDJ, Ahli Hospital would have closed. Both Suhaila and Dr. Maher said, “AFEDJ is not just a donor and we are not just beneficiaries; you are our partner in the continuity of this mission.”

[Note: Suhaila, who has dual US citizenship, was evacuated from Gaza late in 2023 and is now staying with family in South Carolina. She is in almost daily phone contact with Ahli staff and the Diocese of Jerusalem office. – HJB]