
OCHA Humanitarian Update**5 December 2014****Gaza: suspension of cleaning services at hospitals and clinics raises serious concerns**

On 4 December, all cleaning services provided to 13 hospitals and 56 primary health centers operated by the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza, including disposal of medical waste, were suspended until further notice. As a result, the MoH was forced to suspend a range of medical services, including all services in out-patient clinics at hospitals, obstetric and gynecology services, and non-urgent surgeries (approximately 180 thus far). This has also significantly increased the risk of contamination and spread of diseases in medical facilities.

This measure has been implemented by the seven companies providing cleaning services to the MoH, after recurrent strikes in previous months, due to a lack of payment for their services since June 2014. Around 750 workers employed by these companies have not received their salaries for the past five months.

The MoH is urgently seeking to cover the salaries of some 300 of these staff and raise \$100,000 to procure cleaning supplies, as an emergency measure, pending longer-term solutions for covering the outstanding salaries. The total cost for cleaning services in MoH facilities is approximately \$2.5 million per year.

The halt in cleaning services exacerbates the situation of an already strained health system, affected by chronic energy problems, a shortage of equipment and medication, and a lack of training opportunities for its staff, stemming in large part from over seven years of blockade. This has resulted in prolonged delays in access to treatment and increasing referrals outside of Gaza. With these precarious conditions, the health sector had to manage a large influx of injuries from the July-August 2014 hostilities, some of which continue to require specialized treatment.

Disclaimer: Data and analysis provided in this Humanitarian Update is based on preliminary information available. Further assessments are pending.

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