

**The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP**

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
King Charles St  
Westminster  
London SW1A 2AH

20 August 2018

**Dear Foreign Secretary,**

I am writing on behalf of the British Medical Association to express our grave concerns about increasingly severe restrictions placed by Israeli authorities on patients seeking to travel outside Gaza to access life-saving treatment.

According to several recent reports from leading human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, Physicians for Human Rights Israel, and Human Rights Watch, the number of permits for medical travel granted by Israel is at an all-time low. According to figures from the World Health Organisation (WHO), Israeli authorities approved only 54 per cent of permit requests for those seeking medical appointments outside Gaza, the lowest rate since 2008 when the WHO began collecting figures. The WHO further reported that 54 Palestinians, 46 of whom had cancer, died in 2017 following denial or delay of their permits.

Since 2007, when Israel imposed a land, air, and sea blockade, Gaza has effectively been closed. As a result, sophisticated diagnostic and therapeutic medical services of the kind required to treat illnesses such as cancer are unavailable. Reputable reports also suggest that Palestinians from Gaza missed at least 11,000 scheduled medical appointments in 2017 after Israeli authorities denied or failed to respond in time to applications for permits.

Withholding access to healthcare and treatment contravenes both medical ethics and international law, particularly the right to health as enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (article 12) and Article 25 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We are writing to urge you to take up this issue with Israeli authorities as a matter of urgency to ensure that the health rights of all seriously ill patients in Gaza are respected.

Yours sincerely



**Dr John Chisholm CBE**  
Chair, Medical Ethics Committee

