

SPRING 2025



AFEDJ

American Friends of the  
Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

Building Hope in the Holy Land



## WHERE HOPE REFUSES TO DIE

### The Unbreakable Spirit of Al Ahli Arab Hospital

The sun rises over Gaza, casting shadows over the ruins of homes, schools, and shops. Amid the rubble, signs of daily life remain - a child's doll, a broken chair, a book. Yet, in the devastation, one place of hope still stands — Al Ahli Arab Hospital. For over 35 years, Suhaila Tarazi, General Director of Ahli Hospital, has led with unwavering determination. By her side is Dr. Maher Ayyad, Medical Director, whose dedication has never faltered. Together with their staff, they persevere, providing critical, life-saving care to all who come through their doors during this humanitarian crisis in Gaza.



Photo: Suhaila Tarazi, General Director, meeting patients.

### At Breaking Point

Gaza's healthcare system is collapsing under the relentless strain of war. Over 2.3 million people face shortages of food, medicine, and fuel, and the blockade on essential supplies has severely restricted access, leaving the limited remaining resources even more scarce. With 70% of homes destroyed and no prefabricated shelters allowed, the displaced find refuge where they can — in churches, schools, and the kindness of others. Ahli Hospital has become a lifeline for the injured and sick, yet its resources have been stretched thin and are now severely dwindling.

Each day, the hospital accommodates 600 to 700 outpatients and 120 inpatients, despite having only 50 beds. Corridors have become makeshift wards, and tents in the hospital garden provide shelter for the overflow of patients. The burn unit alone sees 150 patients daily. The operating room runs 17 hours a day, performing 450 surgeries a month. **Before the war, Ahli served 36,000 patients annually. Now, they treat 25,000 patients each month.**

"There are only three ICU beds for all of northern Gaza," Dr. Maher explains. "We are forced to send patients home far too soon to make room for others. And still, people keep coming."

Anesthesia supplies are dwindling, and essential medical equipment breaks with no spare parts available. Ahli's single CT scanner serves one million people. "If this machine stops working," warns Dr. Maher, "Gaza will be without a CT scanner."

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## A Sanctuary for All

Despite the overwhelming challenges, Ahli remains a place of refuge. Unlike many other facilities, the hospital does not turn anyone away. "Nobody pays even one penny to receive care here," says Dr. Maher. "The accounting department is closed. Everyone is treated for free." The hospital's mission is clear: to serve all people, without discrimination. "We are the only hospital not connected to any political cause or institution," says Dr. Maher. "We are here for everyone." Staff members work tirelessly, even as many have lost their homes. Dr. Maher himself now lives in a kindergarten classroom at a Catholic church, sharing the space with four other families. He walks to the hospital each day, determined to conserve what little fuel remains. And yet, even as they work through unimaginable grief and loss, the staff find moments of purpose. "When you see a child smile because of our work, you know there will be a tomorrow," Suhaila says.



## Rebuilding in the Ruins - With your Help

Rebuilding Ahli Hospital will take years, with engineers estimating \$1.6 million needed for repairs alone. Medical supplies remain in constant demand, old and unsafe equipment needs replacing, and new staff must be trained to meet the growing needs. It all seems insurmountable. Still, the spirit of Ahli endures. "Ahli is a place of love, peace, and tolerance," says Suhaila. "We want to build places of peace, not wars of division." As the world watches, the plea from Gaza is simple. "Please work for peace," implores Dr. Maher. "We want to live in peace together — Israelis, Jews, Muslims, Christians. We just want to live." With every life saved, every wound treated, and every act of kindness, the people of Ahli continue their mission. Even as the violence and destruction persists, Ahli Hospital refuses to give up hope. We must not either. **Your support** can help restore life, healing, and peace. Together, we can make a difference. **Partner with AFEDJ today**, so Ahli Hospital can continue to be a beacon of hope in Gaza.

*"We want to live in peace together — Israelis, Jews, Muslims, Christians. We just want to live."*

DR. MAHER AYYAD



Photo: Dr. Maher Ayyad with a young patient.

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# HEART TO HEART

From Jerusalem to Gaza

In the Gaza Strip, where disabilities are alarmingly prevalent, access to rehabilitation services has long been a critical need. A 2017 survey revealed that 50% of all people with disabilities in Palestine reside in Gaza. Years of blockade and conflict have only worsened this crisis, making healthcare access exceedingly difficult.

In 2021, Jerusalem Princess Basma Center (JPBC) surveyed rehabilitation centers in Gaza, uncovering severe shortages in services and specialized care. Determined to help, JPBC planned to launch the "Heart to Heart: From Jerusalem to Gaza" initiative in October 2023. However, war broke out, deepening the humanitarian crisis and halting all plans. Undeterred, JPBC quickly mobilized, and a team of four therapists began providing essential care at the Rehabilitation Unit located at Al Ahli Arab Hospital.

*"The motivation that unites us all is love: the love of work, the love of the city, the love of being with people and sharing their pain."*

AL-ZAHRAA



Photo: Staff at the JPBC satellite unit in Gaza.

Despite the ongoing conflict, the team has expanded to seven professionals, delivering over 8,117 therapy sessions to 700 children in 2024 alone. Among those receiving care is Mohammed, a ten-year-old boy whose war-related injury severed all the tendons in his right hand. Initially, he felt hopeless, unable to use his hand at all. But at the JPBC Rehabilitation Unit, he began intensive therapy with his father by his side. Slowly, he regained movement, even managing to hold a pen—something he never thought possible. Though he continues to require treatment, JPBC's multidisciplinary team remains committed to his recovery.

Despite immense challenges, the JPBC team in Gaza works tirelessly, supported by staff in Jerusalem who provide expertise and moral support. "The motivation that unites us all is love: the love of work, the love of the city, the love of being with people and sharing their pain," says Al-Zahraa, an occupational therapist at JPBC.

## YOUR GENEROSITY SAVES LIVES

Right now, in the Holy Land, people are facing impossible choices. For parents, that means wondering how long they can keep their children in school. For patients, it's whether they can afford the care they urgently need. And for the humanitarian institutions of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, it's a daily fight to keep their doors open to all who seek help. In a region often marked by division, each institution offers something rare: a refuge where anyone seeking healthcare, education, or the chance for a better life is welcomed with dignity, no matter their background or ability to pay.

With your partnership and support, that promise can endure for generations to come. When you give to AFEDJ directed to "where the need is greatest," you become a part of an extraordinary community. Donate now at [afedj.org](https://afedj.org) or scan this QR code.



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