

February 15, 2024



The First International Conference to Rebuild Health Sector in Gaza Sets Out Course For the Future Reconstruction Roadmap

New Amman Declaration Affirms the Moral Imperative to Take Action and Outlines Priorities for Alleviating Escalating Health Crisis

[Amman, Jordan & Washington DC] – The First International Conference to Rebuild Health Sector in Gaza, held in Amman on February 7 and 8, under the patronage of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein of Jordan, has successfully concluded, uniting a diverse international delegation of clinical and medical experts, business leaders and policy makers from over sixty organizations and more than twenty-five countries from the Middle East, Europe, Asia, North and South America, and New Zealand.

Key participants included ministers of health from Jordan, Palestine, Libya, and Tunisia, as well as representatives from the World Health Organization, UNDP, UNRWA, UNICEF, the World Bank and the Red Crescent Societies from Jordan, Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, and the ICRC, in addition to Arab Universities including American University of Beirut, University of Jordan, Yarmouk University and Balqa University. The conference format was hybrid, with more than 500 in-person attendees and hundreds attending virtually.

The conference highlighted the critical humanitarian and health challenges faced by the population in Gaza—particularly children, vulnerable women, and the elderly—amidst the ongoing conflict. The panelists underscored the urgent need to address the unprecedented healthcare challenges in Gaza, emphasizing the necessity for global collaboration and a coordinated effort to call for protection of healthcare professionals, hospitals, and ambulances, as well as support for relief efforts to rebuild the health system on the ground.

The participants all agreed there was an urgent need for a ceasefire and affirmed equal commitment to the common cause to rebuild the health system in Gaza. Special emphasis was made of the following:

1. It is of utmost priority to preserve the life of all humans. We call on all involved organizations to coordinate calls for humane treatment and to extend support for the heroic efforts of healthcare workers in Gaza.
2. Medical organizations in the US and Europe should issue consolidated and coordinated action plans designed to facilitate medical care, medical evacuations, and access to medical supplies and basic needs. Related, we call for open borders for medical and humanitarian aid without restrictions.
3. Special attention must be paid to the care of orphaned children, who constitute an extremely vulnerable population with specific, far-reaching needs. Humanitarian, medical and wrap-around social needs are critical to avoid abuse and traumatization.
4. The preservation of educational opportunities for medical and other allied health students, including facilitating the linking of students with educational opportunities abroad while the Gaza healthcare system is being rebuilt, is key. Ensuring the future of the health workforce in Gaza is vital for ensuring the future health of the citizens of Gaza.

Dr. Omar Lattouf, conference Chair, remarked, "As we embark on the critical mission to rebuild Gaza's health system, recognizing the urgency and afflicting challenges faced by its people is crucial. International collaboration is vital for providing the necessary support and resources."

Insights from the conference stressed the importance of acknowledging the strength of the existing public health system prior to the events of October 7th to understand the complex needs of Gaza's population who have been severely impacted by the conflict and displacement. The dire situation calls for immediate action to provide essential health services caused by significant damage, and to replenish rapidly diminishing medical supplies and equipment.

A strong commitment was shown towards utilizing the "Future of Gaza Health; Needs Assessment" report as a guiding document, which advances a phased comprehensive approach and roadmap to health rebuilding. The international community's support was deemed indispensable in rebuilding Gaza's health infrastructure, including facilities, equipment, and workforce.

The conference concluded with a call for a second international meeting that will delve deeper into the quantitative needs and requirements, whilst further addressing fundraising and resourcing initiatives. This second meeting would also focus on specialty-specific challenges and conditions related to the war, with consideration for the unique challenges to the healthcare ecosystem in Gaza.

The Amman Declaration [below], a unified call to action, was issued, urging transnational organizations, governments, NGOs, and the global community to come together in rebuilding Gaza's health system. Participants pledged to work tirelessly towards a sustainable and resilient future for the people of Gaza.

The First International Conference to Rebuild Health Sector in Gaza was organized by the National Arab American Medical Association and Jordan Medical Association in partnership with Jordan Engineering Association and other professional associations such as Federation of Arab Engineers, the Arab Medical Union, the Private Hospitals Association, Academy of Life Sciences, Palestine Physicians in Europe, Jordan Physicians in Germany, Palestine Children Relief Fund, FAJR Scientific, Global Surgery Umbrella, Egypt Medical Association, Oman Medical Association, Jordan Dentists Association, Jordan Pharmacy Association, Jordan Nursing Association, Heal Palestine and other international institutions, bodies and associations from around the world, representing a wide range of sectors, disciplines, and backgrounds.

The Amman Declaration

Issued Upon the Conclusion of the First International Conference to Rebuild Health Sector in Gaza, Held in Amman on February 7, 2024, under the patronage of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein

We unequivocally affirm that Gaza civilians—like all civilians—must be protected and cared for during times of war and conflict. Likewise, the people of Gaza should not have their lives and livelihoods destroyed, their health and well-being jeopardized, nor the healthcare and medical services subjugated to destruction, whether intentional or incidental.

Therefore, we declare:

Article 1: A health system is a system. If any one part of the system is under attack or dismantled, the entire system is prone to fail. We contend a health system includes every aspect of delivering aid and maintaining health, from ambulance services and first responders to the surgical theater and the rehabilitation of patient; from access to clean water and food, to proper waste disposal, to access to primary health care. The Gaza health system is both vital and vulnerable.

Article 2: It is a moral obligation to provide basic needs, healthcare and medical aid to Gaza civilians. Civilian populations in war zones must be permitted the right to immediate access to life saving health services. It is the duty of all responsible governments, organizations, and world citizens to assist in providing urgently

needed emergency health services to besieged population in war zones such as the case in Gaza, and to exert every possible means to allow sufficient health care needs and life-maintaining supplies and resources to be delivered unhindered.

Article 3: Hospitals and healthcare facilities are sacrosanct. "Civilian hospitals organized to give care to the wounded and sick, the infirm and maternity cases, may in no circumstances be the object of attack, but shall at all times be respected and protected by the Parties to the conflict." (Geneva Convention Article 18). Furthermore, no party should conduct any military operations, nor store munitions, nor take refuge in a hospital or healthcare facility as it may put civilians in harm's way.

Article 4: All Gaza civilians delivering—and receiving—healthcare and medical aid must not be hindered, intimidated, nor targeted. There should be no "obstacle to the humanitarian activities" and that wounded and sick "shall be respected and protected in all circumstances." (Geneva Convention Article 18). Gaza civilians requiring access to the available healthcare "system" must not be forced into choosing temporary security over lifesaving and life-prolonging treatment and medical attention.

Article 5: Rebuilding the Gaza health sector will require a Gaza-led private-public international coalition. Strategies for rebuilding Gaza's damaged, destroyed, or substandard healthcare facilities—and their correlated health services and staffing—must be designed, supported, and rebuilt as soon as possible by all relevant governmental and international NGOs with Gaza leadership and Gaza input, considering the holistic system-based approach to health and its determinants whether social, environmental, economic, or political.

Article 6: The establishment of an international trust under Palestinian control. This trust must be put in place to fund: 1) the immediate restoration of well-functioning public health system including primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare services capable of adequately meeting the needs of the population of concern such as the population of Gaza now, including their specific wartime requirements; 2) assistance in implementing strategies for the immediate and long-term reconstruction of the health services, including medical structures, equipment, and personnel; and 3) developing a sustainable and protected future health care system for the population as is required for Gaza, and to ensure that such enacted plans will have resilience to withstand similar occasions of instability.

We call upon all interested parties, including individuals, governments, humanitarian organizations, and healthcare associations to act posthaste—with all respect to Gaza leadership and culture—and join our apolitical and non-sectarian coalition. We further call upon all parties to demand immediate

ceasefire, open access to Gaza for delivery of food, water, healthcare needs and other life-sustaining supplies, repair damaged and dysfunctional healthcare facilities to resume their functionalities, stop avoidable deaths and allow the urgent evacuation of ill or injured citizens, particularly children, in order for them to receive life-saving treatment.

In addition to an immediate cease-fire, all above items require the opening of the Rafah crossing to allow incoming aid and evacuation of injured, as well as the restoration of UNRWA funding. We urge the international committee to work in this direction to avoid further deterioration of the living conditions of the Gazan population who are facing death, injuries, famine, and displacement.

Thus, we declare our interest to work with the global community to limit suffering, save lives, heal the injured, and protect all civilians irrespective of citizenship, nationality, or religious affiliation, with the goal being better and more comprehensive healthcare for all the people of Gaza.