

NECC/DSPR-Gaza interventions during the current crisis:

Near East Council of Churches: <http://neccgaza.ps/>

Since the first day of the 2014 war, NECC started advocating against the deterioration of all life aspects, killing of civilians, destroying the houses and everything, attacking the innocent people, displacement of families, urgent needs and shortages of medication. Updates, messages and stories were sent directly to DSPR/ Jerusalem (when electricity and internet were available), sometimes through the phones. NECC could not operate the health care centers as the three clinics are located in very hot and dangerous places: Shijaia, Darraj/Tuffah and Rafah. NECC serves people living in vulnerable places and sadly, those places and people were attacked directly from the air and from the ground so intensively it was impossible to open the health centers. This happened to many other UN and governmental clinics as well.



Distributing food and hygiene packets

In addition many members of the NECC staff, being a part of the Gazan people, lived in these places and have been greatly affected. One member of the NECC staff lost her son at a UN school after displacement and another lost her nephew. At least four NECC staff members were displaced to UN schools, many of them whom their houses were destroyed totally or partially and are no longer habitable. But besides all of this, NECC took its responsibilities and, as a response to the

urgent needs of the affected people, started working on the ground during the war by doing rapid assessment of families displaced at the Orthodox Church, nearby mosque and surrounding places at Zaitun area. NECC purchased food and non-food items from the local market and distributed food, hygiene and mineral water kits. More than 800 families received food and non food items and NECC plans to distribute more. While the Zaitun area was also not a safe place, it was safer than others.

On 6th of August, NECC opened the three clinics but the one in Shijaia area was in need of some renovation as it was partially damaged during the bombardment. Even the streets and houses along the roads that lead to the clinic were damaged. NECC administration announced to the three centers that all the services will be provided for free for all ages to both genders. The medical team inside the clinics noticed during the two days an increase in number of patients and an increased needs for health care to Palestinians in the three areas. Most cases during the two days were suffering from upper respiratory tract infection, gastroenteritis, diarrhea, vomiting and skin diseases. Those notes meet the notes of specialists in MOH and UN about the increase of infectious diseases due to lack of water and sanitation that may cause a public health problem if not faced. NECC is expecting an increase in number of patients attending the NECC clinics in the three vulnerable areas, especially women and children who are the main target

groups of NECC health program. The increase in number of patients is expected due to the deterioration of health status in Gaza especially after destroying the only power station, lack of water and sanitation, unhealthy shelters, limited quantities of food. NECC also expects an increase of anemic and malnourished children, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. To meet the increased needs for mothers and children, the clinics will look for more resources to provide medications, iron supplements, multivitamins, baby milk powder and nutritious food. Unmet needs mean more deterioration of health status of children and mothers. Moreover, as electricity cuts have increased to more than 20 hours per day, NECC must use the generators most of the time which means more fuel demanded than before as NECC operations include using lab devices, machines, ultrasounds, sterilization devices, laptops and computers which need electricity to work.

NECC is also planning to provide intensive psychosocial support to children and mothers living in the three area: Shijaia, Darraj and Rafah, especially those who witnessed the massacres in Shijaia and Rafah. We have a lot of stories from our beneficiaries who used to attend NECC and witnessed the two massacre and the psychosocial counselors received many calls and requests during the crisis and ceasefire directly from the traumatized people about their deep need of psychosocial support. NECC had good and successful experiences in this type of interventions from the previous two wars on 2009 and 2012 that met the needs of affected and traumatized children and mothers. NECC is also planning to support the affected families as a part of livelihood support either through cash assistance or through job creation, as they also did after the previous two wars.

All the above mentioned activities and interventions that NECC started and planned to implement are an emergency response to meet the affected people's needs of health care, psychosocial support, food, cash relief, cash for work to compensate their loss, to cope with their pain and suffering and to start again a normal life.

Al Fakhoury Family Story:

Nahedah Ibrahim, married with three daughters and one son, lives at Al Nazzaz Street in the Shijaia area. They were inside their house during the massacre from 19th to 20th of July, on the ground floor with another 5 families of her husband's relatives. The warplanes attacked the mosque in front of her house. The two houses of her neighbors were totally destroyed and sadly, those two families were killed under the rubble of their houses.

Nahedah speaks of not hearing anything but the sounds of shells, missiles and ambulances. At 6 am, Nahedah left the place with all her relatives, her children and husband. During their flee, they saw dead bodies on the streets and injured who asked for help. But nobody could help as everyone was running to save himself from the indiscriminate bombing. Nahedah said that her 3 daughters; 9, 8 and 6 years old respectively and her son 13 years old; were running too for a long distance without stop past all the images of dead bodies and injured people.

The chaos that rages in the Gaza Strip does not hide itself from young eyes. Rafif, Nahedah's 6 years old daughter, also spoke of what she saw: many people who were running and holding their babies and children and screaming due to the shells and missiles everywhere and many houses totally destroyed. Yet, in the midst of this horror, Rafif continues to play with her favorite toy. On the 1st of August, during the announced ceasefire, Nahedah went to look for their house but she could only find Rafif's preferred toy before fleeing once again as the ceasefire was breached.



Rafif and her favorite toy

Now Nahedah and her small family are staying

with her father's family in a small house with around 30 other relatives without access to drinkable or tap water, electricity or enough food. She thanked NECC greatly who did support her family and provide them with food, hygiene and mineral water kit.

In the end, Nahedah said that she hopes this war comes to an end soon.