

## MEDICATION SHORTAGES LEAVE WOUNDED PEOPLE WITHOUT FULL CARE IN GAZA

15 April 2025



Medication shortages leave burn victims without full care in Gaza

Mohammad, an 11-year-old boy, lives in a shelter in Al-Daraj school near Gaza City. He once resided in nearby Al-Shuja'iya with his parents and five siblings, but the war tragically took his mother's life. And it was displacement from his home that also led to him being seriously injured.

Mohammad regularly visits the UNRWA medical point to have a burn wound treated and to receive essential medication. However, due to critical shortages amid a ban on aid supplies imposed by the Israeli authorities, the doctor is often unable to provide him with the full course of treatment he needs. As his doctor explains, "We're supposed to adhere to a strict burn protocol, providing patients like Mohammad with sufficient medication and dressings for proper at-home care. But with supplies so limited, Mohammad must come to the medical point daily for ointment application and wound care."

For over a year and a half, the children of Gaza have been deprived of education and the basic necessities of a normal childhood, constantly exposed to the threat of death. They fall asleep each night uncertain if they will awaken to news of a loved one's passing or another displacement order. Even for young children, days are consumed by the struggles of securing water, building fires for cooking and heating, and trying to find safe refuge with their families.

"I was burned while helping my grandmother," Mohammad recounts, "We were trying to build a fire to cook and heat water. We have no cooking gas, nothing at all. I search for firewood, paper, anything that burns, to help her start the fire. That's how I got hurt, and it's so painful. I come here every day, and it helps a little, but nothing really makes the pain go away."

The scarcity of medical care and essential medicines only compounds their suffering and intensifies their psychological trauma. For a child like Mohammad, whose burns receive treatment, the physical wound is only part of the ordeal; the psychological scars may last a lifetime.



Loretta, a two-year-old, suffered burns when scalding liquid spilled on her in the chaos of a recent shelling. Her experience mirrors Mohammad's. Displaced from her home, she now lives in an UNRWA school. Her mother brings her to the medical point each day for treatment, but pain relief is often unavailable.



Sharif, a 40-year-old father of two and a former sweets salesman, has seen his life grind to a halt since the war began. His situation worsened when he was shot while displaced in southern Gaza. He has lost count of the number of times he has been forced to flee, constantly searching for safety, only to be injured in the process. Returning to northern Gaza, he found his home destroyed and now resides in an UNRWA shelter. He visits the medical point daily for dressing changes, monitoring, and medication, but he rarely receives the full amount he needs. "I'm supposed to have this metal plate removed in the next couple of months, but I don't know what will happen," Sharif says. "I'm in constant pain when I move and have to rely on a wheelchair. This injury has crippled me, and I can't do anything. The worst part is not getting enough medication to heal, and there's not enough food to help me recover."

Within the confines of a medical point spanning no more than 20 square metres, a team of 15 doctors attends to approximately 700 patients daily. They provide essential primary care services, including prenatal care, chronic

disease management, psychological support, speech and hearing therapy, and physical rehabilitation. Situated on the edge of a shelter overflowing with displaced families living in cramped conditions, the medical point struggles to combat malnutrition and poor sanitation, creating a breeding ground for disease.

Dr. Muhammad, who heads the medical point, explains, "Standard medical protocols are simply not feasible here. With around 30 patients arriving at the dressing room at a time, many of whom are war-wounded or children with severe burns requiring immediate dressing changes, we are forced to rush. Doctors cannot rest for even a moment during their shifts. Moreover, the doctors and caregivers themselves are displaced, having lost their homes, yet they continue to come to work every day, providing medical care to all who need it. We are doing everything we can, but the conditions are dire. We make do with what we have, but the severe shortages of medicine, painkillers, and other essential medical supplies pose a grave threat to the lives of our patients and exacerbate this medical crisis."

Displaced individuals crowd outside the medical point, awaiting their turn for treatment: pregnant women, the elderly, asthma sufferers, children with burns, and those wounded by the war. They mingle with doctors and caregivers, some turned away without medicine, others fortunate enough to receive treatment. The healthcare provided by UNRWA is an indispensable lifeline for these displaced people, but the aid ban imposed by Israeli authorities makes it increasingly difficult to treat patients adequately, all the more so in the face of unprecedented levels of need.