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## **Knights Templar**

### **St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital: May 2021 update**

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Dear Brother Knights,

During what continues to be an uncertain time, your invaluable support has allowed us to remain optimistic. While we anticipate losses as a result of COVID-19, you have played a vital part in helping us to protect our much treasured Eye Hospital. Although the pandemic has drastically affected the hospital's ability to operate and treat patients, we hope to be in a much better position by 2022 and continue our mission to transform lives by saving sight.

#### **Recent crisis in Israel and Gaza**

The recent crisis in Israel and Gaza began as a consequence of the confiscation of houses and eviction of Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. As violence escalated, hundreds were injured in Gaza and over 25 people died. In Jerusalem, the violence led to hundreds of injuries. Around 20 of the casualties resulted in eye injuries, most of which have caused severe irreparable damage to eye tissues. Our clinical staff have been responding to this crisis and working tirelessly to help those in need. Our doctors have managed casualties at the hospital and have collaborated with their peers at other East Jerusalem Hospitals to provide ophthalmic care to those most in need. We are hopeful that the temporary ceasefire agreed on 20th May will endure.

#### **COVID-19 update**

At the beginning of the year a third wave of COVID 19 struck Israel but fortunately most restrictions began to ease by the first week of March. There have been no spikes in infection for the last 3 weeks and at the time of this update, the number of new cases is less than 100 for a population of around 10 million. The vaccination programme has played a huge part in this success, with almost 5.5 million Israelis citizens now vaccinated. The Israeli Ministry of Health has eased restrictions on wearing masks outdoors and has completely reopened the school system. Currently, travel to Israel is restricted to residents of the country and those who received two vaccines.

In the West Bank and Gaza there is a dramatically different picture, there has been a significant increase in the number of infections. Gaza has been worse affected over the past three weeks. Palestinian Authority controlled areas have seen limited vaccinations in the areas with less than 200,000 vaccinations being issued out of almost 4.5 million people.

#### **Staff Vaccinations:**

All eligible staff working in Jerusalem have received their two doses of Pfizer vaccine, in line with the Israeli Ministry of Health initiative.



All eligible staff in Hebron and in Anabta have received the first dose of the Sputnik V vaccine. In Gaza, the majority of staff have also received their first dose of the Sputnik V vaccine.

By the end of May we plan for all West Bank and Gaza staff to be fully vaccinated.

## The St John Eye Hospital Group

During the first three months of 2020, Israel and the Palestinian Territories were almost free of COVID-19 and very little restrictions were in place.

The Group's clinical activities for the first quarter of 2021, compared to the same period a year ago, look promising.

- There is an 8% increase in outpatient activity and in all Hospital sites, excluding the Muristan Clinic and the Outreach clinic in the West Bank
- The newly established Kofer Aaqab clinic (a 3-day eye care clinic outside the separation wall linked to outreach activities) is performing well
- The number of surgeries being performed has increased by 8% and there is a 28% increase in cataract surgery
- Paediatric surgery remains consistent and is almost performing at the same level as the year before with only 6 less operations

## Thank you

In closing, we are very grateful to the Knights Templar. Your reliable support and generosity has allowed us to continue our sight saving work and we hope to do our utmost to keep you informed as our one of our most faithful supporters.

Wishing you good health and safety.

Kind regards,

Trishna Datta  
Fundraising Officer  
St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital