



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

ELCA Conference of Bishops statement on East Jerusalem hospitals

In early September, members of the Conference of Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) were saddened and dismayed to hear reports that the U.S. government was planning to discontinue financial assistance to Augusta Victoria Hospital and five other East Jerusalem hospitals.

We appreciate and strongly affirm ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton's Sept. 6 letter to Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, calling for the "release of \$25 million of U.S. FY 2017 funding that will help to ensure that there is no interruption in the treatment of Palestinians at the East Jerusalem hospitals, especially the most vulnerable cancer and kidney patients referred to Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) from Gaza and the West Bank."

She noted that, as an institution owned and operated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), "Augusta Victoria Hospital is able to operate because of the support of LWF member churches, like the ELCA, and long-standing partnerships with countries like the United States. In the last decade the U.S. government, through USAID, has invested nearly \$10 million in AVH to bolster its capacity as a cancer center. In addition, the U.S. government has provided over many years tens of millions of dollars in aid to help cover the costs of the cancer patients and others referred to AVH and the other East Jerusalem hospitals."

Eaton stressed the urgency of U.S. government action, saying: "The delay in the disbursement of the 2017 funding for the East Jerusalem hospitals is contributing to an acute and severe cash-flow crisis for AVH and the other hospitals," and that immediate release of the funds is necessary "so that AVH can make payments to pharmaceutical suppliers of cancer medications, pay staff and avoid any interruption in the treatment of patients."

In the past several weeks, neither the LWF nor the ELCA have received any official announcement about the status of this funding and, therefore, we appeal to President Donald Trump to instruct the U.S. Department of State to release this vital funding so these patients will receive the treatment and care they need.

About the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

The ELCA is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with more than 3.5 million members in more than 9,300 worshipping communities across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region. Known as the church of "God's work. Our hands," the ELCA emphasizes the

saving grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, unity among Christians and service in the world. The ELCA's roots are in the writings of the German church reformer Martin Luther.

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