ACT: Gaza clinic destroyed by Israeli missile
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JERUSALEM, 11 January 2009--Israeli missiles struck an ACT-supported clinic in Shaja'ih in Gaza city on Saturday night, run by the Middle East Council of Churches. The clinic was totally destroyed, but no one was injured, since the building had been previously evacuated.

"The clinic is completely destroyed with all its equipment and medical supplies," reports Zack Sabella from the council's Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees.

"Minutes before the missile hit the building, which hosts the clinic, the Israeli Air Force fired a warning missile next to it, forcing all residents of the building and the adjacent buildings to flee the area. A short while after, the army directly hit the building and razed it completely."

Two trucks for Gaza on Monday
Two trucks are ready for transportation of medicines, nutrition supplements and blankets to Gaza. Liv Steinmoeggen, the ACT representive in the area, says the trucks will enter Gaza on Monday.

ACT members are transporting food and supplies including 12,000 cartons of high protein biscuits, 20,300 liters of fortified milk, blankets and quilts, and close to US $68,000 worth of medical supplies in this first shipment. The delivery across the border into Gaza is coordinated through the UN, which is responsible for the transport.

Staff live at the hospital
The Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, run by the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, continues to receive and care for many patients each day who are injured, wounded or burned. Up to 40 new patients are seen each day and many of them require hospital admission and surgery.

The increased surgical load is placing additional strains on hospital staff and supplies -- anesthetics, suture material, operating room linens, equipment, bandages and the surgeons themselves. Until additional healthcare personnel are available, the hospital staff continue to work long intervals without rest and struggles against exhaustion. Some hospital staff are now staying in the hospital around the clock, adding to the hospital's obligations.

In addition, Al Ahli is now receiving up to 15 patients per day that are referred from Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. Patients are also being seen, especially children, who are experiencing the effects of fear and psychological trauma. According to ACT member staff many Gazans will need psychosocial assistance after the war is over, especially since they have never experienced such violence by the Israeli army up to this current war.

Hospital without power
Large-scale efforts are underway to deliver needed material assistance to the Al Ahli hospital, but the procedures required for safe delivery impose security-related limitations on the amounts of supplies that can be delivered and the time required to get them to the hospital. The hospital is short of fuel which is required to continue operating the electrical generator because little electricity is available in Gaza. Without additional fuel soon the hospital will have no electricity, which would greatly impact its ability to deliver services.

No glass, no cash, no food
Glass windows and doors at the hospital have been shattered by nearby rocket and missile strikes. Glass is unavailable in Gaza at the present time for permanent repair, so the windows are temporarily covered with plastic rubbish bags until plastic sheeting becomes available for better protection from the cold.

Food is in increasingly desperate need. Efforts at this time are focused on providing nutritional products for the most vulnerable people, particularly children and nursing mothers.

An additional scarcity in Gaza is cash, as many banks are closed due to the lack of cash. During this time, the Episcopal Diocese is providing the cash necessary for the hospital to carry out its work and is also providing assurance that any debts incurred by Al Ahli Hospital will be honored.