

---

**World Health Organization  
WHA 74 – 26 May 2021**

**Committee B (25)  
Health conditions in the Palestinian territory and the Golan**

Delivered by Ambassador Meirav Eilon Shahar  
Permanent Representative of Israel in Geneva

---

Thank you, moderator,

Director-General, Excellences,

We are still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and one of the common themes discussed in this fora is the concept of "building back better". This includes taking the lessons learned from the pandemic and reexamining how we address challenges with a different approach. The simplified conclusion is that we cannot continue to do more of the same.

Yet, the Item we are discussing today has been on the agenda since 1968. Year after year, this Item takes up valuable hours from a very tight agenda, yet benefits no one and does not reflect the reality on the ground.

The only reason this Item remains on the agenda, is to use the World Health Assembly to spread incitement against one country-, my country Israel.

We, Member States, must preserve this body as a specialized professional organization. This is not the UN general assembly, this is not the Security Council. WHO is not the place to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I want to ask the secretariat and member states here today what evidence is there that this annual ritual at the World Assembly works? What assistance has it offered to people on the ground?

Let me be completely clear, we do not object to any professional discussion on ways to improve the health conditions of the Palestinians. Just last week, WHO coordinated with Israel and other international organizations, the delivery of aid and medical supplies to the Gaza Strip. Israel with the Palestinian Authority and the WHO have coordinated the delivery of PPE and training of medical staff to combat COVID-19. The Palestinians, party to COVAX, have already received their first deliveries of vaccines. In addition, over 130,000 Palestinians from the West Bank were vaccinated by Israel.

The discussion here today has nothing to do with these efforts. The discussion today is about the misuse of this forum to score political points resulting in the politicization of a UN professional body. Unfortunately the report which is presented today also contributes to this politicization by not reflecting the reality on the ground, and by not mentioning Hamas by name.

Over 11 days, Hamas fired 4400 rockets at Israeli civilians while using its own population as human shields. It is a vicious terrorist organization that uses hospitals and maternity wards to hide its terror activities. It diverts humanitarian aid intended for the population of Gaza to build terrorist infrastructure instead. How can WHO report about the health situation without referring to Hamas' wrong doings?

Excellences,

The Syrian delegation persists with presenting this decision, yet the report itself refers to the Golan Heights in only one paragraph, paragraph 10. Let me quote it for you "*All residents of the Golan Heights (Arab, Druze, Jewish or otherwise) have full access to universal health care under the Israeli health care scheme*". This means that residents of the Golan Heights have the exact same access to health as residents in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem.

The Syrians push for this decision not because they care for the people of the Golan Heights, nor do they care for the Palestinians. Indeed they do not even care for the health of their own citizens. Throughout the conflict in Syria, which has cost the lives of over 500,000, the Syrian regime has systematically targeted its own health system, prevented aid access to their own population, and threatened WHO staff for just doing their jobs.

Excellences,

Israel cannot accept this political attack which harms the integrity of this professional body. We object to it and call for a vote. We will vote NO - I call on others to vote against it.

I thank you.