

April 12, 2024

**Re: Israel's inputs on the normative content related to right to health and access to health services of older persons**

Following your letter from 2 February, 2024, the State of Israel submits the following inputs on the normative content related to right to health and access to health services of older persons, particularly in times of conflict.

1. We are dismayed by the lack of specific attention to and condemnation of the barbaric and cruel attack that Israeli and foreign citizens suffered in Israel at the hands of Palestinian terror organizations Hamas and the Islamic Jihad during their terror attack against Israel on October 7th, 2023.
2. These actions and atrocities fall firmly under the category defined by international law as crimes against humanity, war crimes and could amount to genocide. They included indiscriminate shootings; torture; burning of human beings alive; massive destruction of homes; rape; beheadings; and kidnapping of 253 individuals of all ages, including babies, children, youth, women, persons with disabilities and namely, older persons. These acts of terror must be condemned by every organization that respects human values and promotes human rights.
3. Specifically, focus should be given to the crimes conducted against older Israelis. 116 innocent older persons – some with dementia, some holocaust survivors, many of them vulnerable and dependent – were brutally and inhumanely murdered in their homes or in captivity. More than 30 older persons were abducted and some are still in Gaza in the hands of Hamas, with no access to basic humanitarian necessities, including basic health services and medication. In this context, the lack of access by Red Cross personnel to those who have been abducted, and especially older persons, is alarming.
4. In addition to the lack of information regarding the medical treatment they receive and the conditions they are in, testimonies from older captive individuals who have returned suggest that many of their aids were deliberately taken from them, including glasses, hearing aids, sleeping aids and more.
5. The case of Ms. Alma Abraham underscores the precarious conditions faced by older captive individuals. Upon her return from captivity on November 26th, 2023, Ms. Abraham was found to be in a life-threatening condition, emphasizing the urgent need for proper care and attention to the health and well-being of captives, particularly older persons. As she continues her rehabilitation in an Israeli hospital, her case serves as a poignant reminder of

the challenges and risks faced by older individuals in such circumstances. It also emphasizes the importance of ensuring adequate medical care and support for captives, to prevent such dire situations from occurring in the future among older individuals still held captive.

6. Older persons (or “aged persons”), according to various universal international humanitarian norms (e.g. the Fourth Geneva Convention) enjoy special protection alongside other vulnerable groups (e.g. children or the sick and infirm).
7. Hamas bears full responsibility to protect the rights of all abductees, including older persons, to ensure proper medical treatment and to provide them with humanitarian aid.
8. We urge the international community to act in every possible way to protect them and ensure their immediate and unconditional release to Israel. An older person with dementia or any other older person among those abducted should not suffer under these intolerable conditions. Nothing can justify such actions and their consequences.