

PRCS suspends coordination on medical missions in Gaza for 48 hours

(Al-Bireh – Gaza: 26/2/2024): The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) suspended all humanitarian coordination procedures on medical missions in the Gaza Strip for the next 48 hours, due to the failure to ensure the safety and security of the Society's Emergency Medical Services teams, the wounded and the sick in PRCS hospitals, centers and ambulances as a result of the lack of commitment and respect of the Israeli occupation forces to the procedures and coordination mechanisms agreed upon with the United Nations' organizations.

PRCS will assess this situation during the next two days to reach a conclusive result that enables it to protect its crews and their vehicles and to ensure that it will not be placed at risk of death or injury, through the intervention of active states in the international community to ensure this protection.

Yesterday evening, PRCS evacuated a number of patients from its Al-Amal Hospital in Khan Younis to Rafah hospitals due to their urgent need for advanced surgical medical intervention, in coordination with the United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which obtained approval from the Israeli occupation forces for this evacuation.

Despite the fact that the occupation forces knew the route of the convoy and the names and identity numbers of the staff accompanying the patients, the Israeli occupation forces intercepted the convoy for more than 7 hours and mistreated its members, especially the accompanying PRCS medical staff, and arrested three medics, releasing one of them after many hours.

This incident is not the first incident during which the Israeli occupation forces failed to respect the coordination conducted by the United Nations organizations with them, as they previously targeted PRCS ambulances on their way to evacuate injured people from various areas in the Gaza Strip, prevented and obstructed relief aid convoys from reaching specific areas in the Gaza Strip, especially in Gaza and its north, and it continues to detain a number of PRCS staff.

This unlawful behaviour adds to the list of flagrant violations of international humanitarian law committed by the Israeli occupation forces against medical personnel, the protected Red Crescent emblem, and the wounded and the sick in time of war.

Accordingly, the PRCS demands that the Israeli occupation forces release all the medical staff they have arrested, including the medical and administrative staff working in the field to perform their humanitarian tasks. The occupation forces must also respect the protected Red Crescent emblem in accordance with the provisions of international law, respect and protect the legal personality of the Society and facilitate its humanitarian mission, which is violated by the Israeli occupation forces, and protect the wounded and the sick who have sought refuge in its legally protected facilities as Protected Persons.

The PRCS renews its calls to the international community to compel the Israeli occupation forces to respect and protect medical personnel and facilities and to provide a safe humanitarian space that is essential for the survival of Palestinians in Gaza.