



Medical staff from three hospitals in East Jerusalem received WHO training on mental health emergency response. Credit: WHO

In December 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) in cooperation with the Palestinian Counseling Center (PCC) provided training to 70 medical staff from three general hospitals in East Jerusalem on mental health emergency response. The training was based on the WHO [Psychological first aid guide for field workers](#) that reflects the emerging science and international consensus on how to support people in the immediate aftermath of extremely stressful events.

During the training, nurses, general practitioners, social workers and lab technicians from Augusta Victoria Hospital, Saint Joseph Hospital and Al Maqased Hospital discussed ways to deliver psychological first aid, sustain patients and their caregivers' well-being and support them in coping with mental health issues during emergencies.

Shoushan Franj, who is leading the psychosocial staff team at Augusta Victoria Hospital, says: “The training helped us to understand better how to prioritize the response in emergencies and the role of each department in mental health preparedness. It was also a great opportunity to highlight the importance of social workers at hospitals and the need to integrate mental health support in the treatment processes. Our next step is to draft and finalize an emergency intervention plan on mental health.”

During and after emergencies, people are more likely to suffer from a range of mental health problems. Some may develop new mental disorders after an emergency, while others experience psychological distress. Those with pre-existing mental disorders often need more help than before. Through a series of training workshops, WHO provides capacity building to the health staff across the occupied Palestinian territory to scale up their ability to respond to the mental health problems during emergencies.

The workshops are part of the WHO project funded by the European Union - *Building Palestinian resilience: Improving psychosocial and mental health responses to emergency situations*. The project addresses critical gaps in the development of mental health services in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly concerning mental health emergency response.

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