

NOTE

Left to Die

P C writes :

Israel is killing Palestinian patients by denying them access to life-saving treatment outside the besieged Gaza Strip, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Tuesday, April 1.

"The right to health appears to be optional for Palestinians," Ambrogio Manenti, the head of the WHO's West Bank and Gaza office, told a press conference. He asserted that case studies of patients who died while waiting for permits to travel to Israel for treatment show "nonsense, inhumanity and, at the end, tragedy".

The WHO listed 32 Gaza patients who died since October last year after Israel delayed or rejected their requests to be treated outside the strip, ranging from a 1-year-old child to a 77-year-old man. Six of them were waiting for Israeli authorities to issue a permit to enter while the others were denied permits because they were considered a security risk, including a 65-year-old woman. Some had obtained a permit but died while waiting for Israeli authorities to allow them to cross into Israel.

The Gaza Strip does not have much specialized medical care, and doctors traditionally transfer Palestinians to Egypt, Israel and to Jordan for treatment. Israel has been closing the Gaza Strip's exits to the outside world since Hamas took control of the territory last June after routing rival Fatah. It has completely locked down the coastal area since January, causing its sole power plant to shut down for lack of fuel. Most medical equipments were left standing idle and patients of chronic diseases resigning themselves to death.

Israel's denial to medical treatment is a new form of brutality that the Palestinians face day in and day out. And the international community remains a mute spectator to this tragedy. Palestinians are in a permanent war. But they are learning how to live and grow with war. □□□