

**Baroness Tonge visits WA projects in Jerusalem
25th February 2008**

Welfare Association (WA) Board member Baroness Tonge, and her husband Dr. Keith Tonge, were able to visit WA projects in East Jerusalem at the end of February 2008.

Prior to her political career Dr. Jenny Tonge specialized in reproductive health and community services, working mainly in specialized, West London. Dr. Keith Tonge is a neuroradiologist at St Thomas Hospital in London, now semi-retired. Both were delighted to be invited to visit hospitals supported by WA-UK through two EU-financed projects: 1. 'East Jerusalem Hospitals Co-ordination Project' and 2. Emergency Support for Selected Medical Services project.

The overall aims of the hospitals co-ordination project were to promote better health care services for the Palestinian community by improving the viability and financial sustainability of six Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem through improved co-ordination and upgraded services (in Makassed, Augusta Victoria, Saint Joseph's, Saint John's Ophthalmic, Red Crescent Maternity, and Princess Basma Hospital for Disabled Children) as part of the Palestinian health care system. The emergency support project developed specialised services in five of these hospitals such as upgrading an operating theatre at the Red Crescent Society Hospital, new sterilisation equipment for St. Joseph's Hospital and upgraded nurse training at the Augusta Victoria Hospital, etc.



Dr. Jenny Tonge (second left) discusses improvements at Augusta Victoria Hospital with the Hospital's Director Dr. Tawfiq Nasser (centre) and Dr. Keith Tonge (second right)

Baroness Tonge and Dr. Keith Tonge were given a tour of Augusta Victoria Hospital accompanied by Hospital Director Dr. Tawfiq Nasser, where they visited new departments and services, including those established with the support of the Welfare Association.



Dr. Farouk Abdul Rahim: Al Makassed Hospital Director (centre), Dr. Keith Tonge (far left) and Dr. Jenny Tonge (Right) discuss the services provided by Al Makassed Hospital.

At Al Makassed Hospital, the major referral hospital for Palestinians, Baroness Tonge and Dr. Keith Tonge met with the Hospital Director, Dr. Farouk Abdul Rahim, and Medical Director, Dr. Bassam Abu Libdeh. Dr. Abdul Rahim discussed the improvements the EU funded projects had made to their service delivery and explained the latest difficulties facing the health sector in Jerusalem, especially problems related to physical access to services due to Israel's separation of Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank.

After visiting the hospitals Baroness Tonge stated:

“I am appalled at the difficulties people in the West Bank have in accessing treatment at what are their own hospitals. We were both depressed by the permit system which dictates the lives of the people and restricts their movement, often causing suffering and death. We would like to strengthen the links that already exist between Al Makassed and the Augusta Victoria Hospitals, with hospitals in the UK.”



Baroness Tonge and Dr. Keith Tonge were pleased to have an opportunity to learn more about the heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem and to visit the Al Aqsa Mosque.