

Mobilized to play a critical lifesaving role

AL WATANI HOSPITAL EQUIPPED AND ENABLED FOR COVID-19 THIRD WAVE

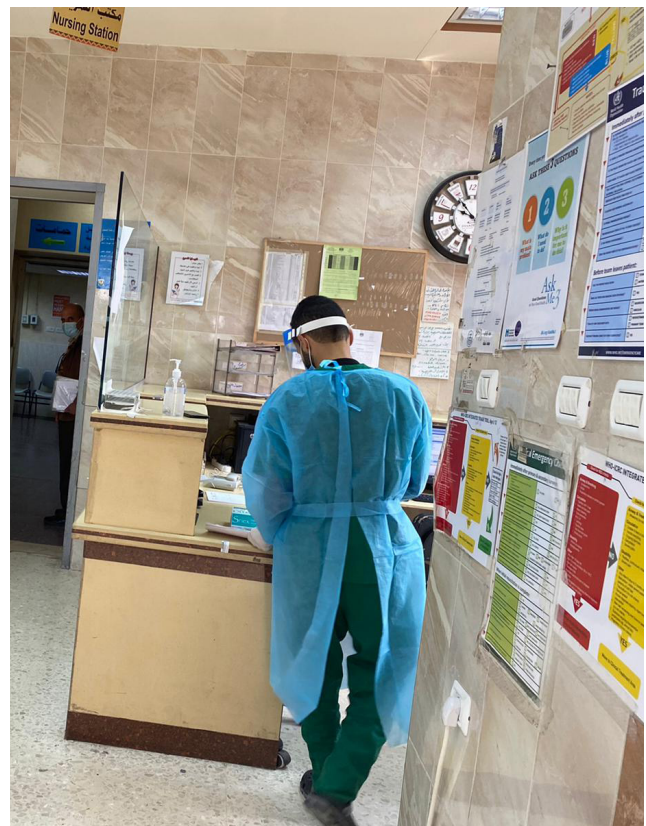
As the main referral hospital in the north of the West Bank, Al Watani Hospital specializes in internal medicine, heart surgery and cancer treatment. Constructed in 1901, the aging infrastructure was under enormous strain as the hospital prepared to treat the surging number of patients with COVID-19. “We could not isolate COVID-positive patients as there was no isolation room, and there was no triage,” said Al Watani’s Director of Emergency and Triage Jihad Mansour.

Thanks to generous funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Catholic Relief Services is providing comprehensive support to Al Watani and 13 other hospitals across the West Bank, equipping them for the immense challenges they now face due to COVID-19.

Thanks to the project, Al Watani is now organized to mitigate the transmission risk of the virus. Triage and isolation areas are in place, patient flow and red and green zones have been established, and infrastructure has been upgraded. Anas Odeh, a nurse working in the isolation room, said, “The safe environment is felt by the health workers as well as by the patients and their families. We feel safe inside the hospital.”

The project is also reinforcing critical infection control practices throughout the hospital. As Jihad Mansour said, “Now we are better equipped, we have more qualifications, more experience, and infection prevention and control (IPC) standards inside the hospital.” As hospital staff received role-specific IPC training, very few health workers became infected after the interventions. “Staff can better perform their duties now. They have the necessary training, and are more confident,” said Al Watani Administrative Director Samer Awartani.

At the end of 2020, as the northern region of the West Bank was hit unexpectedly hard by a third wave of COVID-19, project investments proved particularly timely.



An employee at Al Watani Hospital uses PPE while practicing project-supported infection prevention and control. Photo by CRS staff

Al Watani was able to transition fully to the COVID-19-response, using all its resources, staffing and beds to treat patients with COVID-19. As the West Bank battles COVID-19, Al Watani Hospital’s 312 employees, 62 patient beds, and ICU capacity are fully mobilized to play a critical, lifesaving role.

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**— SAMER AWARTANI
AL WATANI ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR**