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Okay. Goodbye. Thank you, see you

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and your we are now live so, just so you know we're going to give it a minute or two to let people file in, before we get underway, but if you are here for SMS a webinar, talking about coded vaccines for Palestinians you are in the right spot.

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Don't go anywhere we will get started, shortly.

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Just going to give this another minute.

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Before we get going.

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and.

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Sorry, we'll try to make sure this is on Facebook Live before we get going.

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Well, my colleagues will sort that out because I think we shall start. So good morning everyone and welcome. My name is Kristen McCarthy I am f maps, Director of grants and operations and I'll be the moderator for today's conversation so want to thank

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everyone so much for joining us today to discuss exactly what's happening in Palestine, with regards to covert vaccinations and the role the State of Israel is playing refusing to play in that process.

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Just for context if you've read any of the headlines this week about the state of coded in the West Bank and Gaza you know that the outlook is grim Gaza experience is experiencing a new surge cases and hospitalizations and the West Bank hospitals remain

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at full capacity. Meanwhile, Israel is thought to be close to reaching herd immunity, thanks to its highly successful vaccination program which has been praised worldwide.

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I feel like every time I turn on NPR and they have a segment on covert they talk about Israel as a shining example of how to do this.

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How to vaccinate. So, but, well every with those, giving accolades Israel fail to mention is that there's a huge asterisk on Israel's vaccination drive, which is that Israel is refusing responsibility for vaccinating more than 4 million Palestinians living

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under his control in the West Bank and Gaza. While every citizen including settlers living in the West Bank and Palestinians living in East Jerusalem with permanent residency are able to receive the vaccine Israel is not only refused, its legal responsibility

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for vaccinating Palestinians living under occupation, Israel has also not meaningfully helped Palestinians run their own vaccination effort that has left the PA and Hamas to turn to foreign governments to secure, just a small number of vaccines.

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So, to discuss all of these issues and more. I'm delighted to be joined by two experts who I will introduce here very briefly, their full BIOS are on our website, fmep.org.

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And I think there will be a link to that, put in the chat Please keep your eye on the chat. For more resources, first we have yet to see who is a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Central Florida.

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She is a 2020 2021 Fulbright us scholar to the West Bank, a policy member of all Sheva, and a non resident fellow at the Arab center Washington DC.

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We also have had them as deadly, who is the director of occupied Palestinian territory department at positions for human rights, Israel, kinda holds an MA and human rights and transit transitional justice from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and a

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bachelor's degree in social work from Tel Aviv University. A few of our regular housekeeping notes before we get going.

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The format for today's webinar is a discussion between the panelists and myself will go for about an hour, an hour and 15.

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We are being recorded and hopefully it's live on Facebook, greetings to Facebook if you're there.

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In addition to my own questions, we are always happy to have questions from the audience please use the q amp a box you can find that at the bottom of your screen.

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Please do not use the chat box chat box is only for technical difficulties if you are having any problems with the webinar, and for you to keep your eye on.

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As I said earlier, my colleague Sarah and we'll be putting in a ton of links to resources and how to follow our panelists and all that good stuff and the Twitter box.

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I mean in the chat box. If you miss anything in the chat box. Do not worry, we will post all of those resources, along with the recording of this video on our website later.

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And we're going to email it out to all of you.

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And finally, please note that we have enabled the closed captioning function for those who prefer to read rather than Listen, if you have any trouble with the closed captioning or need help, please just write to us in the chat box.

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And with that, let's go. We're going to start with Gaza.

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And I think what's important is that before we start talking about vaccines, I want to get a sense of what's actually happening with Kovats So will you paint a general overview for us of how the Kobe pandemic is currently being experienced in Israel as

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compared to the West Bank and Gaza.

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First I want to thank you Christian and foundation for Middle East, East for initiating this discussion, very important discussion, and I'm happy to be here today with you and with era.

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And regarding the situation in Israel so.

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Israel is almost going back to normalcy gradually.

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After its national a vaccine campaign that proved and administrative type effectiveness.

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More than, 52%, of the population in Israel is fully vaccinated, with the to those this, and the percent of positive, this is 1.1, which is very low compared to the Gaza Strip.

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A, and those that specially in the Gaza Strip now with the,

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with the fact that the 44% of a test are positive.

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And we're witnessing significant decrease in daily in you pieces.

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In the past couple of days, the newly.

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The Daily new cases where 100 130. And this is, of course, allowed the gradual reopening of Israel's economy and commercial. For example, a Paris, restaurants, James and even a Israeli airport the Ben, Ben Gurion Airport is open now and there has been

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more, you know,

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like using this on the restrictions.

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In terms of school and kindergartens, a, they're there, they are also a open a partially.

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Now, vaccine wise maintenance has report that Israel has in ancient to obtain a more Pfizer vaccines, we're talking about millions of the Pfizer the scenes, alongside seven in million doses of Madonna and s3 cynic the vaccines that is right purchased

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at the beginning of the campaign and did not use our own.

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of the campaign and did not use our own. And it seems also that Israel is going for securing more doses to pregnant women, children, above, 12, and other, the categories and also wishes to secure more those is in case people needed to be vaccinated more

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than once a year. As well, a middle has reported on a vaccines waste as Israel has purchased more those is then it needs.

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But I think that is the most important thing to emphasize and note is the the problematic aspects of Israel's national vaccine campaign and their agreement with Pfizer company.

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A as Israel has become a real time, a laboratory for the Pfizer company.

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And although the Minister of Health tried repeatedly to avoid answering this questions. It seems that the fiber company will be securing all vaccines for Israel in exchange.

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In exchange for a data regarding the effectiveness of a the vaccine and some media reported also that medical information of Israeli citizens will be a transferred to the Pfizer company, Israel also agreed on a joint study with the Pfizer, a company,

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and all, all these, you know issues raised a troubling ethical and legal questions in a public debate in Israel.

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Especially that many of Israelis have linked the the elections and the charges against Netanyahu, and to his great efforts to secure a vaccines that Israel also has paid.

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So, this is generally the situation and it's Ray. Thank you. You definitely covered a lot of ground in that.

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I mean there's like I said there's just so many different angles to to

Israel's own vaccination program. So Yara I want to turn to you now to add to that picture, specifically, try to give us a sense of what's happening in the West Bank and Gaza, and

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what the underlying disparities are there specifically with regards to help cope it as being experienced right now.

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Yeah, well, of course, first off, thanks for having us here. Great to meet you. Um, you know, building off with other was saying I think it's first important to very briefly illustrate the disparities before the pandemic to get that context of to understand

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what's happening today and I'm kind of why it's happening. Prior to the pandemic. The average life expectancy of a Palestinian was 10 years less than that of an Israeli, and that includes settlers in the West Bank who of course are living on the same

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land as Palestinians and significantly higher maternal mortality infant mortality. And these are kind of basic indicators for the functioning of a health system, so just looking at them, base level that Palestinian health system was really deficient.

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The Palestinian health system was really deficient. Even Palestinian citizens of Israel experience worse health outcomes and their Jewish Israeli neighbors. So this tells us it's not just it's not a matter of resources.

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It's about equity of distribution of these resources, Palestinians have fewer hospitals they have fewer ICU beds.

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They had fewer ventilators, they have of course significantly fewer vaccines and they're, they're basically at a deficit on any measure you could think of in terms of, you know, social support.

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So as of today I checked this morning, active cases are near their peak level for the entire past year at just under 30,000 active cases, there have been a total of about 3000 deaths.

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Luckily, most cases have been with younger populations so that's undoubtedly kind of spared some of the higher mortality rate.

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We're seeing case positivity rates as was just noted of upwards of 40% in recent testing in the Gaza Strip in the West Bank ICU capacity is at 100%.

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There have been new lockdowns new curfews new closures to travel between the main areas and the villages. All gatherings including weddings, funerals have been banned again and troubling is we've seen the be 117 UK variant which is thought to be much

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more contagious and that's driving the most recent cases in both territory so to me that's really worrying.

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But you have an economy that's been struggling for decades and under various forms of covert lockdown for a year, and people are really desperate to get back to work and get back into society, and the World Bank predicted a dip have up to 35% of Palestinian

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GDP just in a year due to coven. So I don't think we're going to be able to go back to the same levels of compliance for masking and social distancing that we saw at the beginning of the pandemic with just over 5% of Palestinians vaccinated so far.

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Basically every indicator seems to be heading in the wrong direction. And so at the same time talking about disparities you have upwards of 60% of Israelis that have received at least one shot more than half are fully vaccinated.

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So literally on the other side of the wall you have a country that's reopening gyms and bars and concert halls while the situation in the West Bank and Gaza is literally the worst it's been since the pandemic started.

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Thank you.

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Yeah, I want to stick with you because I want to go straight into what the Israeli government's position has been on vaccine Palestinians living in the occupied territories.

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And if you can just contrast what their response and posture has been on that to what their duties and obligations are under international

law, that would be terrific.

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Yeah, well, it's important to note that of course Kobe does not in the first instance where Israel has not fulfilled its legal obligations, but we'll get into that, um, Israel's position, essentially, is that Palestine is just another autonomous neighboring

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state that the PA is solely responsible for Palestinian vaccination, and that any support Israel provides is charity or humanitarian need and it's not due to any Israeli legal obligation anything like that.

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That's just the same as them providing vaccines to any other poor country.

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I think this position was laid out pretty plainly towards the beginning of the pandemic. When the Israeli health minister said and I'm quoting, if it's the responsibility of the Israeli health minister to take care of the Palestinians what exactly is

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the responsibility of the Palestinian health minister to take care of the dolphins in the Mediterranean, unquote. So let's remember that at the same time.

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Israel is arguing that the International Criminal Court the ICC can't take up the Palestinian case in part because Palestine is not a sovereign state.

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So this vaccination issue is one of those instances where Israel is choosing to exercise maximum control over Palestinians, yet take minimal responsibility for their well being.

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Fortunately international law is quite clear on this. It's important to emphasize that Palestine was recognized only as a non member observer state by the UN in 2012, it does not have an autonomous government, it does not have control of its borders and

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Israel controls all movement of Palestinian goods and people. Despite statements by some Israeli ministers and legal scholars, everybody, every international body continues to recognize Israel as the occupying power including Israel's own Supreme Court

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in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, since 1967. So in that occupying power framework, the Fourth Geneva Convention mandates, many responsibilities for an occupying power towards an occupied population.

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And, you know, typically when you think of a military occupation. This is a short term, kind of emergency last ditch period, this is not meant to last decades and decades.

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So it is a burden some commitment to care for an occupied territories, public health, their hygiene, their medical supplies, food, water etc.

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These duties according to the Geneva Conventions are not displaced by humanitarian aid. So, for example, donations of vaccines that Palestinians get does not displace Israel's responsibility, and perhaps most importantly, no agreement between the occupied

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and the occupying power removes these protections so many that are arguing and this is what I think most of us in this call and that are probably listening have heard is that Israel no longer has this duty towards Palestinian health, because of the Oslo

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Accords.

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It's important to remember that the Oslo Accords, which were signed in the mid 1990s, when it was an interim agreement, it was meant to lead to some final status negotiation by the year 2000.

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So aside from the fact that Geneva itself dictates that no agreement supersedes the conventions and the fact that the Oslo Accords themselves were written as an interim agreement.

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Even if we were to accept all of those premises, the Oslo Accords themselves lay out what the Palestinian authorities responsibilities are specifically with regard to vaccinations.

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They include Hepatitis B polio. Many of the vaccines that all of us, you know in around the world receive as children.

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Regarding contagious diseases the Oslo Accords actually stipulates anyway that the two sides must cooperate and coordinate. And lastly I just I have to point out that the sudden defense of the sanctity of Oslo and a Palestinian sovereignty.

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It just seems very convenient to point it out now in this pandemic considering very few of the same entities have ever noted or advocated for the multiple other provisions of Oslo, that were never enforced that were meant to give Palestinians autonomy

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so to now say in this pandemic that after decades of stifling the Palestinian economy and health system Palestinians have to procure their own vaccines.

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I just think it's wrong on a legal level of course but also pragmatically and morally.

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Thank you. Yeah.

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I have another question for you on the Oslo legacy but I think we'll get to that in later rounds. Sure, coming to you how to your has raised the Israeli Supreme Court.

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So I want to come to you on that topic as well, because I know that the physician physicians for human rights and a coalition of other Israeli and Palestinian NGOs recently submitted a petition to the Israeli Supreme Court, asking it to essentially force

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the government if I'm understanding and right to vaccinate all Palestinians living in the occupied territories. So can you explain to us what this case is about what its legal arguments are and then just, can you give us an update on on where it stands

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and how you see it proceeding.

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So as you see the petition was led by position for human rights as well together with five Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations.

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And we address address in the petitions three main arguments.

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The first one was he the leader one regarding his word his obligations and I think that year I just did the terrific introduction, so I won't be delving into the details of the legal arguments, it was basically based on the international law and Israel

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as obligations as an occupying a power.

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Also, it was based on a, the Supreme Court the Supreme Court, a precedent, and it a addressed the extent of control that Israel has on Palestinian life.

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An space and the fact that Israel controls passage and movement of Palestinians aa birders social determinants of health and the Palestinian Academy.

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And it was a control which hugely impacted and harmed. The state of health in the occupied territory.

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And we also addressed the a theological a argument.

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The petition actually a emphasize a that Israel has a legal moral and ethical obligation towards the Palestinians, and it derives from its occupation and ongoing control of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

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For decades, in, as and as I say that was also supported by international law and Israeli court precedents.

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The petition also focused on the the state of health in the occupied territory.

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The economic system and a it argues that these have been subjected for many years to restrictions imposed by Israel, and were affected by Israel's control.

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For example, restrictions on movement and passage of medical teams that Israel has been imposed for decades now, and it resulted in that and availability of medical expertise in the West Bank, and in the Gaza Strip.

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For example, in ecology, physicians.

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And also it addresses the fragmentation of the Palestinian territory in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which also resulted in fragmentation in the health system which has hugely also impacted the ability of a the health care

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system in Palestine to function as a single unit.

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In addition to many other practices and restrictions. A that brought to the development of the health care system in a Palestine for decades, and a all of these practices and the situation and the day or conditions in which the fragmented Palestinian

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system has been functioning for decades now, made it also impossible for the PA, and for the hip system the Palestinian health system to deal with the covert 19 pandemic properly and independently without the support of the international community, and

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other donors and states.

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A and we also reminded the court that as the RSC also that the Oslo Accords.

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Do not displace the Fourth Geneva Convention and his for his responsibilities and duties as an occupying power.

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And for that, if the neurological argument. It was also backed a by a professional opinion, by the Israeli Association of Public Health, physicians and Israeli Medical Association, and they have been calling actually four months now for Israel to vaccinate

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Palestinians, because they understand that, for herd immunity, the area between the whole area between the Danube River and the Mediterranean Sea is single epidemiological unit for herd immunity.

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And because they also a acknowledge that.

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He for herd immunity the whole Palestinian population should be vaccinated, immediately, as well as they.

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We address in a logical argument, the fact that there is a constant movement between a the Palestinian territory whether the Gaza Strip the West Bank, or East Jerusalem and Israel.

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For example, a the Palestinian workers and we saw that Israeli vaccinated, in a huge delay Palestinian workers and we can also talk about this later, as well as settlers.

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Joe settlers in the West Bank, a personal workers in settlements patients from the Gaza Strip.

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Were doing their journeys to Palestinian hospitals in the West Bank, and in East Jerusalem so if Israel. Actually wishes to isolate Palestinians to not take responsibility for their health and a, You know, for providing them with vaccines.

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It is, you know, difficult to do so.

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But we can also I think later, talk about these wishes and Israel's conduct in terms of isolating Palestinians in the Palestinian territory.

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Thank you so can you just give us an update on are there important court dates coming up or is where is this petition in the court system. Yeah, so I'm the only this is, this isn't that has been made is that the state should be providing and submitting

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the response by the 13th of April, and I also want to say that a statement of support has been circulated among his professional is human rights and legal professionals in support of the statement, and a petition and I will be also sending the link in

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the chat, for those of you who are listening to us today. If you are health professionals human rights and legal professionals, it would be very beneficial if you also signed the petition sign that statement is worth.

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Great, thank you. Yes, please share that link.

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So I want to actually stick with you gotta switching gears a little bit.

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So what I want to know what, if anything, Israel has done for Palestinians in the West Bank right because it's not the Israel hasn't done anything. They've given.

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cross into Israel and Palestinians who work in the settlements. So will you explain to us more about these sort of interventions and Israel's activities for, or to vaccinate policy needs in the West Bank.

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Yeah.

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Yeah. Okay.

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So, if we examine the map of Israel's interventions to vaccinate Palestinians, we see that this word vaccinated only Palestinian workers, as I said with the hugely.

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The huge delay.

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In addition to another five 1000 moderna proxies to medical staff in the West Bank and I remind those of you who are familiar with the, you know, situation in the West Bank has also a zero feed about the dire condition in the West Bank and the fact that

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we have estimated the 20,000 medical staff in the West Bank and the fact that Israel sent 5000 within a vaccine. It's enough, only for 2500 person so it is almost, you know, nothing.

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In terms of a assistance and we're also examining Israel's extent of control.

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In the Palestinian territory. Now, when there's really Ministry of Health, decided to vaccinate all status misperceptions in his way,

regardless of their nationality, they explicitly excluded the Palestinians, they had this, you know, sentence at the,

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you know, bottom of the page saying that this decision is a not applied to Palestinians in Israel.

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A, whether they have a permit or they are status lyst persons.

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And, and also they said that this decision also does not apply to Palestinian workers later on after a press release of human rights organizations, they see that they have another plan for Palestinian workers.

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They up until this moment, these early Minister of Health have not yet declared that it is in their intention to vaccinate that this list Palestinians and Palestinians with permits and we're talking about almost 10,000 Palestinians living in Israel with

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a with a permit or without a permit. In fact, Peter i is likely to petition the High Court to revise this in human decision. And this might be happening in the next couple of weeks.

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Now, on the one hand, we can argue that Israel vaccinated Palestinians, out of utilitarian motive.

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They have exceeded. It almost 100,000 workers.

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As you know, it makes a sense in terms of the a logical, you know, sense.

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But on the other hand, is refusing refusal to vaccinate some 10,000 Palestinians, living in Israel, which also can, you know, a fit their herd immunity.

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And it has the potential to refute this argument that Israel will, and should vaccinate Palestinian for, you know, for its on interest, which means that it is likely that Israel vaccinated Palestinian workers as they are the backbone of his for his economy

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and the decision not to vaccinate them a can harm actually is really employers, namely Israel has given very little to the wristband. A and for Gaza in not only that they did not assist and they can I say assistance assistance because it is really duty

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and responsibility, but also there is really nice it, two months ago, debated whether, is it a should allow the transfer of vaccines from Ramallah and other countries to the Gaza Strip.

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And also, relating to what a year said about the contradictions in Israel a stand on the Oslo Accords in this discussion in the, in the Knesset is on the one hand, that is really the Minister of Health was dressing and saying that it is not Israel's responsibility

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to vaccinate Palestinians as health and other civil areas are under the ABA you know responsibility and control, but in the same room, a discussion regarding whether to allow the transfer of access to Palestinians in Gaza Strip.

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You know was was present so I think this contradiction is also seen within, within Israel within a different a government offices and within the public.

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So, yeah, welcome back. I'm going to ask you more about Gaza, and justice, I just want to see the final sentence.

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I think that, you know, from Israel's conduct a and, you know, specially that avoiding vaccinating Palestinians makes no sense. If the neurologically.

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It seems that is well, as I said earlier, which is to isolate Palestinians in Gaza Strip, and in the West Bank, for some extent.

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In order not to bear the economic burden, and most importantly, acknowledge their responsibility for the health of Palestinians. Yeah, thank you. I find the self interest argument for why Israel should be vaccine Palestinians, a difficult one to hear

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repeatedly repeatedly that it's in Israel's interest to do this, it's not just that it's Israel's legal obligation, so you're coming to you to kind of add to what data laid out on West Bank, Palestinians, and

to clarify for us what's happening specifically

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for Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, who are, you know, residents of Israel permanent residents of Israel. So can you tell us what's happening there.

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Sure. So, as you know, most Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, are permanent residents of Israel, although we are seeing increased rates of these Palestinians, applying for Israeli citizenship because being with permanent resident status if you leave

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the territory for too long you can have difficulties coming back you can lose access to your land. It's just a very it's a very strange setting of governance Limbo so Easter slim has been underserved historically I mean even on matters of smallest trash

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collection for example, the there, the PA Israel does not permit the PA to really function there.

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So, when Israel opened its vaccination rollout, they did set up vaccination centers in East Jerusalem because they do count East Jerusalem nights, as their population they have by Israel's own claims they have annexed East Jerusalem, even though the international

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community does not recognize this um so since the beginning of the pandemic.

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Human rights activists and groups have been kind of really worried about the situation East Jerusalem because there were initial like the Palestinians tried to put up checkpoints to, to prevent movement they tried to put up clinics, Israel, took down

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the checkpoints they arrested Palestinian organizers who are trying to you know put forth information about coven they initially did not release coven related information in Arabic and Hebrew only in Hebrew, and maybe one of the links we could drop in

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the chat there was a report by the Palestinian NGO of hack from I think June or July, that look specifically at the issue of how East Jerusalem was being left behind encoded so they pointed out, lack of testing facilities inaccurate and unreliable data

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harassment and arrest of Palestinian health activists who tried to, you know, put out information build clinics, on the fact that so that the their hospitals in East Jerusalem the Palestinian hospitals are the best Palestinian hospitals that Palestinians

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can access outside of going to Israel or Jordan, or Egypt, but the hospitals are nearing a breaking point you started to see.

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high. You know there are countless reports coming out of this this this this very tiny territory I mean I encourage your viewers to look at a map of East Jerusalem, and yet it has almost as many coven cases as much bigger parts of the West Bank like their

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alma area the Nablus area in East Jerusalem cases are very high as I stated, Israel does, they did roll out the vaccination effort but you saw a much slower rate of vaccination.

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So initially, this was blamed on a lack of information as I said, but also vaccine hesitancy. And now I think as March, kind of, you know, rolls into April and more people are seeing other people get vaccinated we're seeing rates of vaccination in East

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Jerusalem and especially in certain pockets really increasing. So the hope is that it will take kind of the opposite trajectory of the rest of the West Bank as more vaccinations, come out and at this point so many people living there have been infected

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already. There's really only you know can only go up at this point, we hope, we hope, indeed.

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All right, God, we need to hear about Gaza.

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So will you tell us what's happening in Gaza, we know that God is entering a new wave of outbreak. 25 I think, I think you're I said almost 40% positivity test coming back positive.

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So we tell us what's happening in Gaza.

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With the with vaccines.

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Yeah.

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Yeah. So, the, a person and very positive, this is 44. Now in the data strip and they, they're actually witnessing second wave, and it is more harsh than previous wave and we're hearing about large number of infections and the situation, a, you know,

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is, is bad in terms of closures and movement restrictions and movement, universities are closed again.

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And in terms of vaccines, the Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip.

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He has received a total of, a almost 90,000 maybe some more.

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A vaccines.

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A the majority of them are the Sputnik vaccine that ocean one in some Chinese scenes in addition to the vaccine security through Kovacs a desperate Seneca and the Pfizer a vaccines, and a as published by the Ministry of Health, they are planning actually

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actually to vaccinate 1.2 million people in the Gaza Strip with priority for his workers.

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And

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I think what is important to a actually know that address when we're talking about the situation in the Gaza Strip is not only a situation in terms of vaccinations and how many vaccines have arrived or how many has been a vaccine needed but also to talk

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the how the corona virus and the fact that he, there is still no public a campaign to vaccinate Palestinians in Gaza Strip is a 15, mainly patients in guys, and their access to medical a person's.

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The situation in terms of the health state has been, you know,

difficult even before the pandemic the healthcare system in Gaza has been struggling to meet the needs of the population even before the pandemic mainly because if there is really closure

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and restrictions on a the passage of patients have a medical devices and some of the, you know, materials needed a are listed as, do we use to Israeli does not allow the influence of these.

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A materials, which means that as long as a.

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There are no enough vaccines to vaccinate, the whole population in the Gaza Strip. The history system will continue to be burdened with, with a challenges and since the beginning of a pandemic Israel has been increasingly restricting that movement of

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patient from the data strip to hospitals Palestinian hospitals in the West Bank, and in East Jerusalem and it is allowing only life saving it treatments.

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So if you want to obtain the permit, it is allowed only for patients who need the life saving treatments such as a dancer, a patient, while the need is still the same need in the Gaza Strip all of these unavailable treatments in the Gaza Strip before

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the pandemic are still unavailable, which means that many patients in the Gaza Strip now

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have no access to medical care since the beginning of that pandemic.

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Great, thank you and if time allows, I'm going to come back for another round of Gaza questions because it's important to know what's happening.

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So Yara I want to ask you briefly to just respond, I think I feel like there's been a fair amount of Israel patent itself on the back over these very limited interventions for workers for Gaza traders for these very small programs that I think we're perfectly

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laid out by yourself and in Canada. So how do you respond, how do you respond to this what do you say to people who defend Israel's actions

by pointing to these small interventions.

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And given that Israel's ported to have a surplus of vaccines, which was mentioned earlier that it could be sending the Palestinians. can you get like why aren't they doing more.

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Oh, there's so much there, um, and you know I've also heard like like we were discussing earlier that they are being kind of defended because they're vaccinating Palestinian citizens of Israel, so I think it's a pretty low bar to brag that one of the

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most highly developed countries in the world is making vaccines available to a minority population of its own citizens.

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Israeli citizens are Israeli citizens, regardless of race or religion. So, you know, they certainly should receive the same benefit any other citizen of that state would receive they pay taxes they vote in elections, they should get vaccinations.

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So I don't really see that as a sort of defense I think some people seem to think it is the counter argument of course is that Israel has a case to not vaccinate its own Arab citizens.

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So the situation and to me in East Jerusalem is similar by Israel's own account, they annex Eastern Islam, even though the international community still views it as occupied the Palestinians that live there is really residents that Israel doesn't allow

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the PA to do anything there so there's not even a pretense that Israel is not responsible for the people that live there.

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But as you note and your question things get a little more complicated when we talk about the other populations of Palestinians Israel has vaccinated.

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But I think it's important to remember that none of these small interventions seem to stem organically from Israeli policy, they all came after massive pressure and condemnation so for example.

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First, there was the issue of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails,

I mean, is there any more acute example of a person being subject to a state than being jailed and, you know, incarceration facility.

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They had to be petition and pressured to do so. And again, you can argue that this was in their best interest because Palestinian prisoners interact with Israeli prisoners interact with Israeli prison guards there were many cases of prisoners and guards

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that had coven early in the pandemic.

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So you know that, that seems again to just kind of make sense I don't see that as any benevolent action.

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Then in March, months after Israel started its own vaccination campaign, nearly a year after the first Palestinian workers from Israel started bringing coven back to the West Bank, then they agreed to vaccinate the Palestinian workers, again this was

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not some pre established stance that they said oh we're all we've always planned on doing this.

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This was after months of pressure and condemnation. And again, you can argue that this isn't Israel's best interest because these Palestinians go in and out of Israel every day.

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As I said, Israel's construction sector is 70 75% Palestinian so if you start seeing massive outbreaks and this population Israel's construction sector kind of shuts down.

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So with regards to the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

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Israel pledged a 5000 vaccine donation but for my information and maybe one day you have more updated numbers they've only delivered 2000 so far.

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So we've heard the idea floated that Israel will donate its vaccine surplus. Once it finishes its, its mass citizen vaccination campaign. But there are recent reports that Israel has plenty of spare vaccine sitting in storage facilities they have orders

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for 10s of millions more, I assume this is for some booster program they intend to roll out and in six months or so.

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And they're still not vaccinating Palestinians today, so as to your much more complex question as to why they're not doing more, you know, Israel has never fulfilled its Geneva mandate and responsibilities to Palestinians, in part because many Palestinians

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and influential figures.

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I'm sorry Israelis and politicians and influential Israeli figures and legal scholars, they simply refuse to acknowledge the occupation and so if there's no occupation, then there's no legal responsibility so it's very convenient to say, This land is

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disputed, but the PA is responsible for the people that live there. And when there's a two state solution in, I don't know, a million years, then you know we can figure out some more of these questions, it's much easier to blame the PA, and I mean let's

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be clear I think the PA has handled this situation very poorly since the beginning. But again, they're not a true governance body of a sovereign state so their hands are tied in many ways.

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and there's been a few cases where Israel outright blocked or rejected Palestinian requests for vaccines, there was a case when Palestinians asked for.

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Maybe 10,000 or so vaccines in the late fall for healthcare workers that was rejected. There was a recent case of a Palestinian student from Tel Aviv University who was told she'd be able to get a vaccine drove the hours to the university was turned away

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for several days until a global pressure campaign they eventually vaccinated her. And then this example the other brought up earlier where the Israeli Knesset debated and in fact blocked for several days is shipment from one Palestinian entity to another

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Palestinian entity. So, I don't even see how you could argue that Israel should have been involved in that process, except, of course,

Israel has to approve any exports and imports from Palestinian land so they have taken every opportunity I think to

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do the bare minimum, only when there has been an outcry from advocates from public health professionals from groups like PHR, have they moved forward on any of these initiatives and and with their election over I thought maybe the vaccination of Palestinians

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might pick up that doesn't seem to be the case so they seem to be kind of embracing this viewpoint that there really is very little role for them here.

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Thank you.

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You've telegraphed I think where I'm going next which is to talk about the Palestinian Authority, and what they have been able to accomplish under these conditions so without any systematic or significant Israeli intervention.

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to orchestrate its own vaccination drive so will you walk us through what and how the PA has been working, and I'm talking specifically about the PA and the West Bank, if you can add in Hamas.

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Great. I know that's a lot to cover. So what are they doing and where they've been getting these vaccines, share so I will try to minimize throwing numbers at your viewing audience because I know that can kind of close their eyes glaze over but you know

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when you look at the Israeli vaccinations it's basically all Pfizer and they like, Heather said had this initial deal with Pfizer paid a lot for it so there's one.

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They like the father said had this initial deal with Pfizer paid a lot for it so there's one. There's one kind of consistent vaccination driving Israel in the territory is in the Palestinian territories, the procurement process is extremely fragmented,

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at best, just like basically anything else there.

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As of the latest data I could find released by the World Health

Organization, the Palestinians have received just over 250,000 doses, and this excludes the 100,000 or so that Israel provided to Palestinians with Israeli work permits.

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in the West Bank.

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More than half of these vaccines are actually the Chinese vaccine. And then there's a several 10s of thousands from Pfizer and AstraZeneca 8000 from the Russian the Sputnik vaccine and 2000 of Moderna, which was that Israeli donation that we alluded

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to earlier in Gaza, almost all of the vaccines are the Russian vaccine, primarily because of a significant donation from the United Arab Emirates. And then in Gaza you have just over 10,000 each of AstraZeneca Pfizer and you know Moderna which is the Chinese

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vaccine. So while the PA did buy some of these vaccines, they've spent 10s of millions of dollars. Most our donations thus far from Russia, China, India, states in the Gulf, and they started to receive some shipments through the World Health Organization's

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Kovacs program, which is their vaccination program for low resource countries.

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So because the world's high income countries are supporting Kovacs, in essence, they're subsidizing the Israeli occupation by paying to vaccinate Palestinians instead of holding Israel to its legal responsibility to do so, the Palestinian Authority can't

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afford the rates that Israel or other high income nations paid to these pharmaceutical companies, rich nations globally have bought up 75% of existing vaccines so you have one, you know, dozens of low income countries that are kind of fighting to get

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that 25% I mean, in some regards This is a supply issue. These pharmaceutical companies are trying to produce vaccine quickly but with with richer countries buying up huge shipments it makes it really hard.

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By the time it trickles down to these low resource countries.

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So you're since November or December you've been hearing these constant reports from the PA about a small deal here or there in a very piecemeal way, very little transparency about how much they're spending, very little transparency about who they're

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allocating vaccines to, we heard some initial reports that initial shipments went to like the Palestinian soccer team for example, and we have no idea how exactly they plan to get to this 75 or 80%.

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of the population that needs to be vaccinated for herd immunity that would allow the territories to reopen in a meaningful way. So then just to end with him as they have bought, very few vaccines almost all of the vaccines and Gaza at the moment our donations.

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And again, no long term plan, we don't know.

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It seems to me like they're kind of waiting this out seeing who will have a surplus who will donate. Many people have already been infected. So, just by mass there's fewer people to get infected in the future unless these variants kind of start giving

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us problems.

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Great, thank you gotta, you see what's happening on the ground. So what's your assessment of the Palestinian authorities campaign so far, and it's capability of the training and administering the vaccines.

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And if you can add what groups like PHR I physicians for human rights Israel play in the vaccination effort. And also, another question for you is just like where, how are these vaccination drugs working do people go into hospitals or their mobile clinics,

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kind of, what does that look like practically.

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Yeah, so every time as about the PA ability to secure vaccines for the whole population.

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I refer them also to what's happened since the beginning of the pandemic. I mean if the PA has been calling since the beginning of the

call with 19 for support to secure basic supplies to combat the virus such as this kid gloves masks, etc hygiene material

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for hygiene measures. And the majority of these supplies were secured by the international community the WHO THE UNICEF and other donors. Then, I don't think that expecting the pH, to be able to initiate in a national campaign for vaccines and to be able

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to independently and without the intervention of Israel a to do so is just unrealistic, the PA.

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As you're also seed is not the sovereign state. They do not control birders, they do not control imports and exports. Even the vaccines, they have a obtained, whether the Russian vaccine the Chinese vaccines or the CO bucks each and every vaccine.

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Before it reads the Palestinian territory whether the western or the Gaza Strip. It has to be approved, first by this really Minister of Health, and this is according to the Paris Agreement.

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A as part of a the Oslo, a court, and

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it was now, like ages ago but a at the beginning of this really national a companion to vaccine it is what it is.

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We have reached out to Israeli Ministry of Health, and to the coordinator of the government activities in the directory and we asked whether a vaccine will be allowed to the Palestinian territory and we of course do not encourage or support the fact that

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Israel and Israeli Minister of Health should be allowing God not allowing that transfer of vaccines and drugs to the Palestinian territory, but it just, you know, absurd that there is really a minister of health have insisted since the Oslo Accords to

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approve drugs and medicines to the Palestinian directory and do these drugs that weren't approved for Israeli citizens were not allowed to the Palestinian a directory and the PA, you know was first actually to import it drugs in high prices such as you

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know prices that is what la can pay, and it is really absurd that Israel allowed the transfer or a approved the Russian boxing to the Palestinian territory, because it was in their interest that the Palestinian received the Russian vaccine, even if it's,

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you know, wasn't a approved, so they don't, you know, take responsibility over the supplies the supply of a book things.

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So, again, it is important to know that the Palestinian Authority doesn't have, you know, the capacities.

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Ama, you know, they don't control their economy in order to, you know, be able to secure vaccines to the whole population. Now, when we talk about the role of organizations such as a vision for human rights is way.

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I think that

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the role.

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I see it as a rule in two directions.

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The first one that actually the two directions should be, you know, complementing one another.

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The first one is to challenge is was policy, and decisions, and the petition that we submitted to the High Court is one example, and I and when I said the challenge is was policy a mean internally challenge Israeli policy and conduct to engage in public

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debate and to and discourse and to influence the debate within Israel to challenge it to point out the problematic and dangerous aspects of a, of the debate and the public discourse in a as well.

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human rights. A, and also to lead and reinforce counter arguments, using multiple tools, and measures, whether

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International, the local advocacy in, in the Knesset a public companies, etc.

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A other direction is to support to reinforce and to compliment the efforts of Palestinian human rights organization, and they're doing a lot of good work and efforts overseas and within the international a community to pressure, and to mobilize different

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agencies, such as a the UN and the EU, to take action and to first Israel to fulfill its legal and moral obligations toward the Palestinians, including the protection of the right to health as an occupying power.

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Great.

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Thank you for that era, a bit of a maybe provocative question I don't know, for you.

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How do you think Palestinians would feel about I mean, so, so we're asking Israel to do more, right, that seems like the baseline.

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What does that mean do we do we want Israel to run a vaccination drive in the West Bank, through the military Do we want Israel to help secure vaccines and let the PA run it through their own broken fragmented healthcare system.

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So, what is the ask, and how do you think Palestinians would feel about that.

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What does that look like in your mind. Yeah, so this is a really interesting question because when I first started speaking and writing about this. That's the question I would get so what you want the IDF just running around the West Bank, you know, and

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Gaza vaccinating people. And I think there is a really big continuum between do nothing and have your soldiers running around the territory vaccinating.

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You know, the PA which did assume responsibility for routine vaccinations. If you look at vaccination rates in the Middle East, the Palestinian territories actually are great.

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They are very high, almost all children receive routine vaccinations.

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It's a pretty successful system so I think there's there's got to be several asks temporarily speaking, the initial immediate ask is, distribute vaccines to Palestinian public health facilities, private facilities pharmacies, schools, just like we're

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doing here in the US, I mean all of us are getting, you know people are getting vaccinated at sports arenas and gyms and anywhere where you can get medical perfect personnel to do that.

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Israel does not need to deploy anyone there the medical personnel is there, it's a medical Palestinian healthcare workers can receive their vaccines and they can be insured some level of protection.

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I think they can more than handle the vaccination effort, will it be totally smooth, will it be super efficient and fast you know I don't know about that.

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But certainly, then we can criticize the PA, and how they're handling the rollout, but they don't have the resources to do that at the moment so I think the Ask right now is for Israel to provide the vaccines to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, allow

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them to do the job that they've been doing for 30 years and vaccinate their people. But then the long term ask is What about the next crisis. What about the next pandemic.

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What about the next war in Gaza. What about the next, you know, climate change or any number of crises that are coming.

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I really hope that this has shown us that this is not a sustainable system, and who suffers, you know, while we have these abstract talks about two states this and one state that and yada yada.

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It's the Palestinians on the ground you know I have, you know, my family lives there they want vaccines, they don't care how you get them, life is very hard right now.

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They can't see each other family is very important to Palestinians, you can't have a wedding you can't have a funeral. The economy is absolutely.

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I mean, there's no adjective to adequately describe how poorly things are going right now so we need to save these complex political debates. For when emergency and urgency is not have the question you know now is not the time to say okay well let's figure

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out if the PA is really as you know this that or the other state and then we can vaccinate policy and this is happening where a year in Israel is almost reaching herd immunity.

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I don't understand why we can't do both. I don't think it's, it's, it's yes and it's vaccinate today and discuss how we can D colonize find sovereignty, reach a liberated Palestinian state in the future and then hey, I'm happy to do endless webinars criticizing

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the PA all day long, but right now it's simply so much as out of their hands, Israel has a significant role to play.

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Great. And I think you maybe have answered this question, but I do want to invite you to elaborate if you want if not, we can go through to you but it's you know it's this, what seems like perennial conundrum about how Israel treats Palestinians, wanting

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to sideline them just as a humanitarian issue, and divorce that from the political context so does that worry you at all with how we're talking about covert and vaccinations for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and even East Jerusalem.

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How do you approach this humanitarian or political categorization I guess of Palestinian issue in the Israeli mind.

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Um, so this is a complex topic but for the sake of time I'll, I'll try to keep my comments brief, you know, this is an I'm going to argue against what I just said, because it's it's it's easy to say right now there's a crisis, we need to put these really

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challenging questions on hold and I think right now this is a unique once in a lifetime hopefully crisis that we do need to deal with

immediately. But if we continually put off the tough questions until there's no crisis.

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Well it's these tough questions that are causing the crisis, so we will be waiting forever if we're waiting for some sort of acceptable status quo before we can move on to what happens to Jerusalem what happens to refugees, what are the borders these

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kind of core issues.

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We don't want more efficient dependence on humanitarian agencies we want less dependence period, that is the long game here.

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We want autonomy, you can't functionally run anything resembling a sovereign country without it, and those are ultimately political challenges. None of this as possible under the stranglehold of the occupation.

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You know you can't tell a child from Gaza that needs urgent cancer care today that that child needs to wait until you know there's a decolonization framework or until there's a formal two state solution for that to happen so for me today looking at the

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covert numbers coming out of Palestine my initial thought is, this is a humanitarian mission right now, and those kinds of urgent situations you accept help when you're offered.

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We try to use whatever political tools we have but Palestinians need vaccines they need them now. However, this humanitarian trap that you point out is really potent, and in fact humanitarian agencies have almost entirely taken the burden off of Israel

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to fulfill its duties, long before this, in many cases, Israel actually actively demolish his clinics and schools and facilities that the EU or, you know, some USA ID has paid to build to meet Palestinian needs.

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So, Israel is not just not fulfilling his responsibility, it's it's it's being subsidized by these external humanitarian agencies and is in some cases actually actively destroying them.

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So, at the end of the day Palestinians, you know are human beings that need care but we also need a longer term project to force, accountability, not just on Israel but around the structures around it, including the UN including the actions of the US,

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that defend Israel's actions, no matter what they are, even when these actions go against these entities own stated goals so you won't find many countries who don't in words condemn the settlement project for example, but when new settlements are built,

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nothing is done. So how do we prevent Palestinian suffering today, while fighting against the political currents brought by Israel by all third parties and in many cases, even the PA.

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I think this is a struggle for all of us watching participating for Palestinians and for Israelis who see this as a problem.

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Thank you. That is very powerful.

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Had I want to come to you, to close we have about five minutes left. And I want to come to you with kind of a bigger question and just Israel, Palestine, but, you know, Palestine, of course, is not the only place where authorities are struggling to get

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it under control and find access to vaccines that's the story across, you know, impoverished countries and countries that can't pay the same price is that is really the United States can pay to buy these vaccines.

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And so while Israel, of course, has a special circumstance and that it's, you know, rejecting it legal duties to vaccinate Palestinians. It's certainly not the only country that is totally rejecting its moral responsibility to do more.

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So can you talk to us about the global equity for vaccines and what the broader trends in vaccine distribution that we should be watching and caring about and advocating for.

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Yeah, totally. I think that this really is not the only you know example for a country racing to buy vaccines. A, I think the US is

also another good example for this other European countries, a as I mentioned before, and I think that the dependent make,

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he has.

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Although I think many of us wish that this won't be you know the reality.

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And what happens, happens in the ground but the pandemic did, you know, demonstrate a game that a countries, especially rich countries are not acting in solidarity and global responsibility.

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But rather, taking selfish steps.

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As I said by racing for securing vaccines to their own population and I think that we're witnessing, you know, national vaccination in many countries.

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And, you know, some countries such as Israel, or even purchasing more vaccines. Then they need, using them to politically, a better gaming and diplomacy and we've heard about, as well as intention to send a vaccine, two countries to support them politically

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him.

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You know, this makes vaccines inaccessible to people in, you know, poor countries and put income countries but not only a poor income countries.

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However, I think we do understand today that the pandemic is is global. It's a global issue a global challenge, and the solution and the responses we should be in must be a global effort.

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Now, although I avoid using utilitarian arguments, especially with the Palestinian

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with a Palestinian topic, although I do agree with the

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latest answer for the question. And I wish that countries you know we're providing assistance of the Philadelphia tea and moral and global responsibility, but countries are doing this.

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So, what about the, you know, advisable economical and, you know, public health perspective that you know sees that if the pandemic is not controlled in you know one region, it can spread.

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And, you know, the virus can mutate and make the vaccines, less effective and I don't know if you are, you know, familiar with a barren foundation that stated that an equal allocation of vaccines could cause the global economy trillions, a year bringing

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even stronger economies into a deep, a crisis.

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I think that if the pandemic continues.

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I'm afraid that we will see more human rights violations by governments and more political instability.

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And I think that is well again, not only leaving medical apartheid and denying vaccines for population based on their nationality and race but also has been, you know, exploiting the a the pandemic for civilians and, you know, by security services so

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just to end I think that countries. Should you know work for global solution, and I think that distributing vaccines, in all countries, according to, you know, at risk groups, for example, or the elderly in all countries are all the health workers in

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all countries may be should be the solution.

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So much more we could dig into I'm sad we're out of time today but I want to thank you both so much I want to thank everyone who showed up to this webinar.

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I'm sorry we didn't get to all of them, but we always share your questions with our panelists that they know what people are interested in. We will post a recording of this webinar, along with all of the resources that we shared today on the FMS website@mep.org it should be

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