The dilemma of the Palestinian health crisis

The intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict is rooted in a historical dispute over the ownership of 10 000 square miles of part-desert territory roughly bounded by the River Jordan to the east, the Mediterranean Sea to the west, the Lebanon and Syria in the north and Egypt to the south. A two-state solution has been proposed, but each side has its rejectionists – Israelis who reject the concept of a Palestinian state and claim all of the West Bank as part of the Jewish promised land, and Palestinians who reject the right of existence for the Jewish state and are sworn to destroy it. The conflict has a history stretching back some several centuries. So which side is right? Harry S Truman probably summed it all up when he said ‘No two historians ever agree on what happened, and the damn thing is they both think they’re telling the truth.’

And history probably doesn’t matter as much to the ordinary man, woman and child on the street in either Israel or Palestine, as does the reality of now. For years Israel has endured Palestinian rocket and suicide bombing attacks with indiscriminate loss of life and property, and Palestinians have had to live with the devastation of retaliatory aerial bombings, military raids, mass arrests and the demolition of whole neighbourhoods in the occupied territories.

In the exercise of its right to defend itself, its citizens and its territory roughly bounded by the principles of international humanitarian law … groups operating within or outside the occupied territories are unconditionally prohibited.’

Thus indiscriminate attacks, such as bomb attacks against Israeli civilians, are absolutely and unconditionally prohibited.

In this fractious political environment, many Israeli doctors have remained true to their professional calling. Palestinian patients who make it to Israeli hospitals receive the best of care.