**The Role of Volunteers at Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP): A Quick Overview**

Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) is a UK-based charity dedicated to pursuing a future where all Palestinians can access an effective, sustainable, and locally led system of healthcare and the full realisation of their rights to health and dignity. Through our programmes across the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and refugee camps in Lebanon, MAP works with trusted and experienced partners to provide immediate medical aid to those in great need, while also developing local capacity and skills to ensure the long-term development of the Palestinian healthcare system.

MAP is extremely fortunate to have an exceptional volunteer network consisting of highly skilled specialists from the UK and beyond, who play a vital role in supporting our capacity building initiatives in Lebanon, Gaza, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Our volunteer network serves as an invaluable resource, enabling us to successfully execute numerous projects that would not be possible without the technical expertise of the volunteers. In 2022 alone, 82 volunteers joined MAP across an incredible 39 missions. We are now looking to expand our volunteer network to support our Vascular Surgery, Haematology, and Breast Cancer projects.

Volunteers play a pivotal role in a range of activities aimed at improving local healthcare services. While participating in in-person medical missions, volunteers lead training sessions and on-the-job training, equipping local healthcare professionals with targeted skills and knowledge. Through mentoring and supervision, volunteers offer guidance across medical disciplines, from surgical techniques to nursing practices and radiology procedures, outpatient clinics, case discussions and more. Collaborating closely with the local healthcare team, volunteers actively engage in multidisciplinary team meetings (MDTs), medical rounds, and conferences, facilitating a dynamic exchange of insights and best practices. MAP is introducing a comprehensive MDT approach across all its medical training projects, to great success in our breast cancer project in Gaza where now every case is meticulously reviewed and managed through the MAP-supported MDT process.

The typical in-person medical training mission will span a duration of approximately one week, during which the volunteers will travel to Lebanon, Gaza, or the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, depending on the nature of the project. The multidisciplinary group typically travels out from the UK on a Saturday, starting work on the Sunday with two days of outpatient clinics, surgeries and then holding training sessions later in the week. The cost of all flights, hotel, food and insurance is covered by MAP. The group usually return to the UK on the Thursday evening or Friday, unless they would like to stay on in the West Bank/Jerusalem at their own expense. The safety and security of our volunteers is of paramount importance. We provide detailed information before and during trips, and volunteers are accompanied by experienced local MAP staff.

In addition to in-person medical training missions, MAP encourages volunteers to support regular MDT meetings held on Skype/Zoom. UK medical volunteers review cases with local Palestinian colleagues to agree the next steps in patients’ diagnostics and treatment pathway. These help to maintain the relationship with the local team in between trips and were a lifeline during the pandemic when travel was not possible. Volunteers also extend their support remotely, providing virtual training sessions, webinars, and online resources. Moreover, volunteers offer technical expertise, advising MAP on procurement needs, guiding infrastructure development for healthcare facilities, inputting into reviews of clinical protocols and guidelines to ensure services align with international standards, and conducting pre-project assessments for MAP before a new project begins.