MOSUL, HEALTH EMERGENCY: A YEAR AFTER THE DEFEAT OF ISIS, 70% OF THE FACILITIES STILL OUT OF USE

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Mosul (AsiaNews) - At the end of the battle for the conquest of Mosul, the Islamic State (IS, ex Isis) stronghold in Iraq, at least 70% of the medical facilities of the northern metropolis are "out of use". Doctors Without Borders (MSF) operating in the Arab country warn that "thousands of people recently returned to their homes" live in conditions of "total insecurity" in unsafe buildings amid unexploded ordnance.

These, they add, "are the first causes of injuries" in the western sector of the city, in which - to date - there are "less than a thousand beds" compared to 1.8 million people, or "half of the minimum standards required in a humanitarian context ".

After years of violence and terror perpetrated by ISIS militias, normal life is returning to the eastern sector of Mosul and it is also much easier to move around the western districts. From the school classrooms to factories, to small businesses, the rebirth of the metropolis passes through the revival of school, work and the opening of commercial spaces unthinkable at the time of the "caliphate". These include a "literary café" dedicated to encounter and reading; however, the health situation remains difficult and medical care continues to be a problem.

"The population in Mosul - explains Heman Nagarathnam, MSF's chief of mission in Iraq in a statement - is growing day by day", but the health system "is not recovering" and there is a "huge gap between the services available and the growing needs of the population ". Hence the appeal to local authorities and the international community to work towards an immediate reconstruction of "health infrastructures" and at the same time guarantee "access to cheap medications".

The jihadist rule followed by the Iraqi army offensive caused heavy damage to nine out of 13 public hospitals, reducing the capacity to provide medical care and beds by 70%. The reconstruction work proceeds slowly and there is a huge shortage of beds. "Accessing health services - Nagarathnam continues - is a daily challenge for thousands of children and adults". The population "is growing", he adds, and in May alone "at least 46 thousand people returned" but the public health system "is not recovering".

"Emergency services are urgently needed he concludes - operating rooms, services for cancer patients and burns, as well as medical equipment and supplies of constant and low-cost drugs". These are joined by psychological care for traumas resulting from war and the loss of family and friends.

The dangerous living conditions in Mosul - poor hygiene due to lack of water and electricity, damaged buildings, devices and explosive traps in the city - put people's lives at risk. At the MSF hospital in the western sector, in the last 12 months the medical team has seen the war wounds decrease and the ones caused by mines increase.

Among the many cases treated by MSF doctors and volunteers, there is the young Anas (pictured), only 12 years old, admitted to the ward of war injuries in Mosul east. During the war he was hit in the spine by some shrapnel and can no longer walk. "We were outdoors - he remembers - when I was hit by a bullet out of nowhere [...] I dragged myself along the road until the ambulance arrived". After the accident, he concludes, he felt "sad and bored" when he watched friends play, but today "I learned not to feel frustrated".

http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mosul,-health-emergency:-a-year-after-the-defeat-of-ISIS,-70-of-the-facilities-still-out-of-use-44423.html

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