

The horrific health crisis in Gaza – the World Medical Association and the entire medical community must unequivocally support healthcare professionals and advocate for the end of atrocities perpetrated by the Israeli government

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The atrocities committed by the Israeli government in Gaza have included the killing of nearly 2 000 health workers and tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians. Gaza's health workers deserve universal praise for their unwavering dedication to this population suffering under the Israeli invader. The World Medical Association and the entire medical community have remained silent or have taken insufficient positions in support of these selfless individuals, and have failed to clearly advocate for the Palestinian population.

Keywords: health crisis in Gaza, killing of Palestinian and health professionals, medical community inadequate support, atrocities by Israeli government

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My focus here is our brave colleagues, physicians and allied professionals who continue to work in dire situations in Gaza, without the necessary equipment, medicines and anaesthetics, subjected to long hours and at risk of being killed and/or imprisoned by Israeli occupation forces. For the record, Israeli attacks have killed nearly 1 000 patients, both through violence and through the disruption of care. Physicians for Human Rights Israel reports that at least 1 580 healthcare workers (8.2% of the workforce) have been killed.^[1] The World Health Organization reported that 94% of Gaza's hospitals have been severely damaged or destroyed, and by early 2025, only 17 of 36 hospitals were reported to be partially functional, with the remainder closed or out of service.^[2]

It is unconscionable that medical professional organisations have remained silent for most of the last 2 years, or taken insufficient or superficial positions in support of these selfless individuals, and have failed to clearly advocate for the Palestinian population. Remaining silent or failing to take an unequivocal position in such a situation is tantamount to supporting the aggressor – it is complicity.

Only recently (September 2025), 11 national medical associations out of 115, or <10% of members of the World Medical Association (WMA), have taken a stand and published the 'Joint National Medical Associations statement on the healthcare crisis in Gaza'.^[3] This statement begins: 'We have watched, with increasing dismay, the destruction inflicted on the Gazan healthcare system by Israeli forces since October 2023. We are appalled by what our colleagues in Gaza have been subjected to, in violation of international humanitarian law, and demand that action is taken to protect them and their patients.' Although the document contains seven important points, it does not include a single word regarding the Palestinian civilians killed by Israel, including women and children. Furthermore, there is no mention of the inadmissible bombing of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli army, or the restriction of access to food and humanitarian

aid, which are responsible for the appalling health situation in Gaza. On the positive side, the associations presented this statement to the WMA at its 76th General Assembly, which led to the issuing on 11 October 2025 of a resolution calling on the Israeli government to 'comply with the Geneva conventions and other applicable instruments of humanitarian law'.^[4] In recommendation 1, it calls on Israel to 'instantly halt all forms of attacks on healthcare personnel, patients, healthcare facilities and food and medical aid logistics in accordance with the Geneva Convention'.^[4] Recommendation 2 calls 'upon its constituent members to unequivocally condemn attacks on healthcare personnel and facilities during the ongoing conflict in line with the Geneva conventions and international humanitarian law'. As in the aforementioned statement, there is not a single word about the people of Gaza affected by the unacceptable and cowardly attacks by the Israeli military, who are the sole perpetrators of the 'destitution and preventable deaths of more than half a million people in Gaza'.^[4]

It must be noted that, according to the WMA's website, its purpose 'is to serve humanity by endeavoring to achieve the **highest international standards** in Medical Education, Medical Science, Medical Art and **Medical Ethics, and Health Care for all people in the world**' (emphasis added).^[5]

Given that several peer-reviewed publications by physicians describing the horror and carnage that they have faced in Gaza have been widely circulated, the superficiality and lip service of the inadequate WMA document are glaring. Some recently published articles^[6-8] are exemplary in their call for the recognition and protection of patients and healthcare professionals, and they assert that support for physicians in Gaza must resonate and expand throughout the global medical community, which must play its part in ending the atrocities. More importantly, they also recommend medical-legal partnerships aiming at influencing global leaders to intervene, and through international tribunals, ensure that accountability and justice are achieved.

In addition, Sidwa *et al.*^[7] note how their colleagues in the USA often dismiss their descriptions of the horror, or consider them exaggerated and politically motivated.

While preparing this article, I accessed the live broadcast of 13 October 2025 showing the most cynical and hypocritical ceremony of the Israeli Parliament and the appalling speech by the President of the USA. To begin with, while praising the inadmissible invasion and horrific destruction of Gaza and its civilian population, he called it a war. It was not a war; it was a powerful army, backed by many so-called Western democracies, with an incredible number of weapons aimed at defenceless civilians, mostly women and children, in a planned ethnic cleansing. And it is worth noting that what had been reached was a ceasefire, not a peace treaty – and, of course, the victimised Palestinian people were not even mentioned, much less the much-needed establishment of a Palestinian state.

In conclusion, it is urgent that representative medical institutions, such as the WMA, take a genuine stance to not only support health professionals, but more importantly and unequivocally, declare the need to promote and protect the human rights of Palestinian civilians from the massacre and destruction of their homes and infrastructure in Gaza, reminding us that this ceasefire agreement can be broken at any time.

Most importantly, the health professionals in Gaza must be commended by all for their unequivocal dedication to this suffering population under the Israeli invaders. And also, for having the

courage to publish their experience and positions, even when facing criticism from colleagues who downplay their reports. If any group of individuals deserves a Nobel Peace Prize, it is them.

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