



The healthcare community has a responsibility to highlight the ongoing destruction in Gaza

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A month before Mahmoud Abu Nujaila, a doctor who worked with Médecins Sans Frontières at Gaza's Al-Awda hospital, was killed by an Israeli airstrike along with his colleagues, he wrote on a hospital whiteboard:

"Whoever stays until the end will tell the story. We did what we could. Remember us."¹

Doctors working in Gaza have made urgent pleas, saying that they feel abandoned by the world amid renewed Israeli airstrikes.² More recently, the United Nations reported that several paramedics and rescue workers were killed and buried in a mass grave by Israeli forces in southern Gaza.³ Over 18 months of relentless attacks, thousands have died,⁴ and the healthcare infrastructure has been almost entirely dismantled.^{5,6} Access to vital medical supplies has been systematically restricted, and basic necessities for life—clean water, food, sanitation, and energy—have also been destroyed.^{1,7,8}

The Israeli military's conduct plausibly violates the Geneva Conventions, which prohibit attacks on medical facilities and mandate the protection of civilians during armed conflict.^{9–12} The failure of global institutions to uphold and enforce these rules in Gaza—and the actions of powerful states to obstruct justice and accountability—reflects a moral failure and a breach of legal obligations.^{13,14} For the world order to regain moral legitimacy and credibility, human rights violations must be confronted impartially with ethical integrity and consistent application of international law—even if it means challenging the interests of the powerful.

In the wake of such destruction, what responsibilities does the healthcare community have? The core values of healthcare—preservation of life, human dignity, justice, and alleviating suffering—place moral obligations on healthcare professionals worldwide to speak out against systematic human rights violations. Defending Palestinian human rights often carries the risk of backlash, including threats to employment and reputation, requiring healthcare professionals to balance their moral duty against potential professional and personal repercussions. Healthcare institutions have a responsibility to support and protect their staff when they speak out in defence of Palestinian human rights. This is not only about freedom of expression, but a moral duty to oppose injustice and affirm the core principles underpinning medical practice: to care, to do no harm, and to stand with those whose health and dignity are under threat.

The healthcare community is broad with varying capacities to respond to this crisis on individual and institutional levels. Individual healthcare

professionals can apply their expertise to advocate for human rights, participate in emergency medical relief efforts, and raise awareness within professional circles. Additionally, healthcare practitioners could choose to take a stand by declining to collaborate with organisations that support or legitimise military actions in Gaza. To promote accountability, they can also provide expert testimony to human rights bodies and document the health consequences of the ongoing crisis. The suffering in Gaza demands that professional bodies develop clear ethical guidelines on the duties of healthcare professionals outside the conflict zone.

At the institutional level, medical organisations and global health bodies have greater leverage to push for policy changes and pressure governments to enforce international law. A sustained and relentless call for an immediate ceasefire is essential to protect what remains of Gaza's healthcare infrastructure and deliver urgent humanitarian aid. Rebuilding Gaza's civilian and healthcare infrastructure will require substantial resources and sustained commitment. The trauma inflicted on the people of Gaza will have wide-ranging and long-lasting public health consequences, including physical injuries, malnutrition, communicable diseases, psychological trauma, and the collapse of healthcare services. Tackling these challenges will be an immense task, requiring coordinated international support and long term investment.

Medical institutions and the public health sector can play a crucial role in providing material resources and professional expertise.¹⁵ This could include facilitating the delivery of medical supplies, providing remote clinical and public health support, and supporting Palestinian healthcare professionals with training and resources. Universities and research institutions can contribute by documenting and publishing evidence-based assessments of the health impact of the war on Gaza and disseminating critical findings to inform policy and humanitarian responses. Given the lack of access to higher education and postgraduate training in Gaza, healthcare students and trainees must be supported with opportunities to continue their education as visiting students and scholars or through high-quality online instruction from volunteer health professionals.

Honouring over a thousand Gazan healthcare workers who have been killed¹⁶ requires more than remembrance—it demands meaningful action. It is everyone's moral duty to speak out and urge accountability for violations of humanitarian law. However, justice in healthcare means actively

supporting the people of Gaza in their suffering and helping to rebuild Gaza's health system.

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