

Rallies and press conferences held by healthcare workers across the world in opposition to the genocide in Gaza

Katy Kinner
6 November 2023

Healthcare workers across the globe are joining the mass movement against the continued genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza, carried out with the full support of all the imperialist powers in the US-NATO axis. Nearly 10,000 Palestinians have been killed thus far, and nearly half have been children.

This weekend alone, protests broke out on every inhabited continent with at least a quarter of a million protesting in Washington D.C., making it the largest anti-war protest in the US since the 2003 demonstrations against the US invasion of Iraq.

There are increasing reports of the Israeli military targeting hospitals and medical staff in the past few days. On Friday, Israel carried out an airstrike on an ambulance at the gate of Al Shifa hospital, killing 15 people and injuring 60 others, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. The Al-Shifa hospital is currently housing over 30,000 refugees and patients and is running out of fuel and electricity. Doctors at Al-Shifa have reported that large numbers of wounded Palestinians are languishing without treatment as supplies and medicines have run out.

Al Jazeera also reported that the Indonesian Hospital in Bait Lahia in Northern Gaza and al-Quds hospital in Gaza City were struck during air raids. These attacks follow the devastating bombing of the Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on October 17. Some 500 were killed sparking an increase in global outrage, with many healthcare workers spurred into action, heeding the calls from fellow healthcare workers at the scene of the bombing to call for an immediate ceasefire and halt to the siege on Gaza.

Since the beginning of the Palestinian uprising in

Gaza and the subsequent assault by the IDF, healthcare workers have written letters, organized rallies and held press conferences in the name of fellow healthcare workers and citizens in Palestine.

In the UK, 8,000 healthcare workers signed an open letter in mid-October denouncing the UK Department of Health and Social Care's expressed solidarity with Israel. The letter called attention to the Israeli siege cutting off access to clean water, food and energy, which especially impacts Palestinians requiring medical care.

The letter describes ventilators for patients in the ICU and incubators for premature babies being shut off after generators had run out of fuel. In addition, the letter calls attention to the confirmed and rising death toll of healthcare workers. According to the WHO's report published on October 24, 73 healthcare workers in Gaza have been killed, and 57 healthcare facilities have been attacked since October 7. The medical and public health crisis is growing more dire by each passing day.

In the Northern California Bay Area, University of California San Francisco (UCSF) healthcare workers held a press conference on November 1 at the hospital's entrance, calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Dr. Jess Channam, a clinical professor of Psychiatry and Global Health Sciences at UCSF, stated, "Doctors and healthcare workers cannot provide care. Basic medical supplies are not arriving. The devastation of healthcare infrastructure is happening at every level and in every sector of Gaza right now."

Dr. Leigh Kimberg, also of UCSF, spoke about the danger of disease outbreaks, such as cholera due to the lack of fresh water. She added, "As a doctor, a mother, a person whose Jewish ancestors fled antisemitic

violence and pogroms, and as a human being, I call on all doctors, healthcare workers, and healthcare institutions around the world to respond to this genocide with a firm and unwavering commitment to our sacred oath.”

A rally held days later at nearby San Francisco General Hospital was attended by more than 100 doctors and nurses. Healthcare workers spoke strongly against the attacks on Gaza, citing the deadly bombing of Al Ahli Arab hospital. The rally featured a photo of the Al Ahli hospital workers giving a press conference after the bombing, still in scrubs, surrounded by the bodies of the dead.

A UCSF nursing student, Matt McGowen, one of the organizers of the rally, called attention to the growing urgency to stop the siege on Palestinians. “The blockade of food, fuel, medical supplies and water are all contributing to the public health disaster that poses just as much of a threat to life as bullets and bombs.”

Hiba Elkhatib, the founder of Palestinian Public Health group, also spoke at the rally and called for a united fight of healthcare workers against the genocide of Palestinians. She stated, “I want to make it very clear that we will not be silenced. What is happening in Gaza is not just an attack on Palestinians, but an attack on public health and the health field as a whole.”

In New York City on November 3, healthcare workers with NYC Healthcare Workers for Palestine held a rally and vigil calling for an immediate ceasefire and calling for healthcare workers around the world to oppose the genocide. A healthcare worker at the rally shared a message for Palestinian healthcare workers.

She stated, “You are hands and voices and tears that bear witness, bind wounds, deliver new life, carry the torn up, bleeding dead bodies of your people even while the state of Israel and its fascistic international supporters, including the US government, attempt to destroy your society. ...We will not let our fear or the repression of the system forget or neglect you. And we will not stop fighting!”

In Ohio, 150 people had gathered in downtown Toledo on the same day for a rally organized by healthcare workers calling for a ceasefire. An Emergency Room physician, Dr. Hatem Elhady, told the crowd he was leaving for Egypt immediately to try to help Egyptian and Palestinian healthcare workers provide medical aid. He said, “They’re working day

and night. ... They don’t even have time to rest, and if they rest, it means people die.” After a group prayer, the protest marched toward Congressman Marcy Kaptur’s office to demand she work toward a ceasefire.

In Australia, nurses, doctors and other healthcare workers rallied in central Melbourne on October 20 to protest against the murderous offensive in Gaza. The demonstration in Melbourne came a day after a similar rally of healthcare workers in the western Sydney suburb of Liverpool. Healthcare professionals in both Sydney and Melbourne organized their rallies independently of their respective trade unions. No representative of the unions was featured at either event.

Healthcare workers across the world, in solidarity with Palestinian healthcare workers, have responded bravely in their show of opposition against Israel’s genocide in Gaza. These sentiments are shared by much of the population as expressed by the mass and global character of recent protests. At the same time, the major media conglomerates continue to ignore or slander any show of opposition, parroting the sentiments of capitalist politicians from the US and other imperialist governments who refuse to endorse a ceasefire, the central demand of the protests.

The opposition of healthcare workers to war is connected to the massive increase of strikes by healthcare workers in a fight against worsening working conditions, unsafe staffing and the gutting of public health resources, which make it increasingly impossible for healthcare workers to do their jobs.

The genocide in Gaza and the increasing exploitation of workers across the world both find their roots in the crisis of capitalism. The critical question in halting the genocidal war is a unification of the struggles of workers and youth around the world in a common movement against imperialist war and capitalism and for socialism.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)