

# The American Medical Association rejects a resolution for ceasefire in Gaza

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The Israel Defense Force (IDF), with the complete backing of the United States and European leaders, continues its ongoing genocidal assault on the defenseless people of Gaza, maniacally targeting hospitals like Al-Shifa and the healthcare workers that have put their lives on the line to treat the hundreds and thousands of wounded.

But the American Medical Association (AMA), the most powerful medical lobbying group in the country, voted not to take up a resolution calling for “a ceasefire in Israel and Palestine in order to protect civilian lives and healthcare personnel.” The resolution was proposed by 135 medical students, residents, and physician fellows and the Minorities Affairs Group at a recent interim meeting of the AMA House of Delegates.

Dr. Hussein Antar, MD, MPH, an alternate delegate from Massachusetts, speaking on behalf of the Resident and Fellow Section, explained that the resolution met the criteria of the AMA’s bylaws regarding advocacy and immediacy. Antar said that the resolution abided by the *medical neutrality* statement adopted by the Board of Trustees November 9, which “implores that all parties at all times to understand and minimize the health costs of war on civilian populations, support physicians around the world to practice medicine ethically in any and all circumstances, including during wartime without fear of persecution, and condemns the military targeting of healthcare facilities.” He argued, “But we believe the largest physician group in the United States can and should do more than that. This issue is too vital for us to evade discussion.”

Dr. Andrew Gurman, a former AMA president, interjected that the resolution dealt with “geopolitical issues,” and therefore was not within “the purview of this House.” He chided those bringing up the resolution that the House’s role was to discuss issues facing doctors and patients in the US and not the plight of the defenseless Palestinians and the willful attack on the healthcare infrastructure. Others followed suit in this cowardly manner, claiming that the scope of the meeting was not to discuss if the conflict in Gaza constituted a “just” or “unjust” war.

Dr. Luis Seija, a delegate defending the resolution on behalf of the Minority Affairs Group, rose to speak to the attendees on the very real mass violence and deaths occurring there. He was abruptly cut off by Dr. Lisa Bohman Egbert, speaker of the House of Delegates. “What we are discussing right now,” she interjected, “is whether this is an appropriate resolution for this house to discuss at this meeting.” Seija was forced to hold his remarks and

then quickly, by a vote of 136 to 458, the House of Delegates ended any further discussion on the resolution with the insulting caveat that it could be presented again at a future meeting.

The hypocrisy shown by this multi-million-dollar professional association of physicians, which has advocated a return to “normal life” amid the COVID pandemic, is beneath contempt.

For these well-established and well-heeled physicians, the genocide in Gaza meets none of their “neutrality” criteria and warrants no discussion. But that was not the case with regards to the US-NATO proxy war in the Ukraine against Russia. A month after the conflict commenced in February 2022, the AMA had no problem asserting their opinions, regardless of their “neutrality.” The group released a statement noting, “The AMA is outraged by the senseless injury and death the Russian army has inflicted on the Ukrainian people. For those who survive these unprovoked attacks, the physical, emotional, and psychological health of Ukrainians will be felt for years.”

They added, “In addition, the Russian military targeting health care facilities violates every standard of decency. We join physicians everywhere—and especially in Ukraine—who are calling for an end to this war so we can work on healing the terrible damage already inflicted.” To top this off, the AMA Foundation said it provided \$100,000 in aid to alleviate the “humanitarian crisis for citizens in Ukraine.”

Past AMA President Dr. Gerald Harmon, a US Air Force veteran, wrote soon after, on April 8, 2022, “The AMA is outraged by the brutal assault of the Russian military in Ukraine, and we stand with the World Medical Association and our other international partners in calling for an immediate ceasefire and an end to all attacks on health care workers and facilities.” He notes that at the time, the then six-week conflict had led to 3,000 civilian casualties and more than 60 medical personnel and their patients had been killed or injured.

In the three days that it took to draft and submit the resolution, as Dr. Antar had noted, six hospitals had been bombed by Israeli forces.

As of two days ago, more than 11,000 people have been killed and close to half have been children. The Norwegian newspaper *VG* made an analysis of the victims of Israeli aggression in Gaza between October 7-26 and found that five-year-olds represented the largest age group.

Northern Gaza has been cut off from the South and more than a

half-million people are trapped in place under siege. The major medical center in northern Gaza, Al-Shifa, has ended all services as lack of fuel and water means that the limited services they can render are under the most barbaric conditions. Operations, including caesarean deliveries of babies, are done without anesthesia, blood products or antibiotics. Wounds fester untreated. Shrapnel lays buried deep in tissue among those that have survived. Some lay in soiled beds with amputated limbs without even bandages to cover them.

This means that those with critical wounds sustained by the unrelenting bombing campaign and ground invasion will assuredly die an agonizing death. Lack of medicines, food, and clean water also means the corridors of these hollowed-out hospitals will become their grave.

Dr. Marwan Abusada, head of surgery at Shifa Hospital, who sent a detailed account to the *Telegraph* via UK charity Medical Aid for Palestine, said, "We have a health disaster. We have a type of worm, called white flies, covering the wounds after the surgery. They appear after one day. Most injuries and surgeries have no follow-ups as the medical teams cannot cope with the influx of injuries every hour. On a normal day, we have a capacity of 210 beds, and now we have more than 800 patients that need to be admitted."

He concluded by saying, "We are trying to continue delivering services to the patients who need kidney dialysis, urgent catheterization, and neonatal incubators, but we are delivering the bare minimum. The situation is catastrophic."

The MSF International (Doctors Without Borders) posted on November 11 a statement from Dr. Mohammed Obeid, surgeon at Al-Shifa: "We are nearly sure that we are alone now. No one hears us ... the problem is to be sure that we can evacuate the neonatal patients because we have about 37 to 40 premature babies." Such is the horrific criminal state and condition where every minute a life is extinguished needlessly.

The ventilators that had been supporting life for premature neonates and those requiring life support in the ICUs or dialysis machines for those without adequate kidney functions have stopped working. Bodies of the dead are wrapped in linen and left to decompose in the open because there is no cold storage for these bodies.

Meanwhile, healthcare workers who walk the long corridors have to be on guard from drone and sniper attack. A representative of Doctors Without Borders said, "One member of a medical crew who tried to reach the incubators to lend a helping hand to babies born inside was shot and killed. We lost a baby in the incubator; we also lost a young man in the intensive care unit."

On November 11, UK protesting doctors spoke on behalf of the director of the Major Trauma Hospital in Gaza, and read his message to the international media. "We as medical staff want to leave, but we cannot. We might not survive until the morning. We don't want to be killed here just because we remain committed to our patients and our medical profession. I am calling for help urgently. Please do whatever you can through your governments or the International ICRC or the Red Cross to arrange a safe corridor for the medical staff. Please treat this as TOP URGENT."

Yesterday's the IDF killed Dr. Hammam Ellouh and his entire

family at his home, enraging many in the healthcare community. Dr. Ellouh, a nephrologist at Al-Shifa Hospital who was described by his colleagues and patients as a beacon of light, had been recently interviewed by "Democracy Now." He told Amy Goodman, the host of the program, "Many thousands refugees, people like us, who used to live in dignity, have no longer houses and no doors to close to protect them as they are surrounded by wastewater, by garbage. They don't have a supply of clean water to drink. Many of them have a lot of missing members of their families. They don't know if they are alive or not. I tell my family we at least have a house to live in. Surprisingly, my four- and five-year-old children accept this as a comfort, as a better situation."

When Goodman asked him why he wasn't going south with his family given the warning made by Israeli forces, he told her, "If I go, who treats my patients? We are not animals. We have the right to receive proper healthcare. You think I went to medical school and for my postgraduate degrees for a total of 14 years, so I think only about my life and not my patients?"

Dr. Ellouh was training other doctors in Gaza and transforming the care for patients with chronic renal disease, who will now be facing a slow and horrifying death. Along with his death, two other physicians who deliver obstetric care, Dr. Basel Mehdi and Dr. Raed Mahdi, were killed on the same day.

More than 200 healthcare workers have perished in the genocidal attack on Gaza. Not only are their hospitals being targeted, the practitioners of the healing arts are being snuffed out like the fuel and water to ensure that not only will the Palestinian people die, they will suffer agonies in the process.

These images and stories that are emerging by the minute out of Gaza are not unknown to the body of physicians that constitute the AMA. Their position is not only abhorrent, but completely antithetical to the principles embodied by the profession. By their decision to practice, they assume not only the mantle of the social ailments as professed by Dr. Ellouh, but a political responsibility to protect the lives and well-being of people and decry the criminal genocide and ethnic cleansing taking place.

This cowardice and reactionary position displayed by the AMA recalls the words of Leon Trotsky: "The bourgeoisie and its agents use the war question, more than any other, to deceive the people by means of abstractions, general formulas, lame phraseology: 'neutrality,' 'collective defense,' 'arming for the defense of peace,' 'struggle against fascism,' and so on. All such formulas reduce themselves in the end to the fact that the war question, i.e., the fate of the people, is left in the hands of the imperialists, their governing staffs, their diplomacy, their generals, with all their intrigues and plots against the people."

As there is no red line that will not be crossed by these war mongers, there is no lifeline to Gaza except for the emergence of the international working class in opposition to capitalism, fascism, and imperialist wars.



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