

New York hospital cancels medical presentation over speaker's support for Palestinians

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17 November 2023

Last week, Montefiore/Albert Einstein College of Medicine (AECOM) in New York City canceled a grand rounds speaker presentation by Dr. Ghazaleh Moayedhi because she had stated her solidarity with Palestine and called for a ceasefire in an Instagram post. This incident is part of the ongoing effort on the part of the ruling class to suppress opposition to Israel's genocidal campaign against Gaza.

Moayedhi is a Texas-born Palestinian-American and a board-certified obstetrician-gynecologist and complex family planning specialist. She works in Texas, which enacted the antidemocratic "fetal heartbeat" law in September 2021. The law prohibits abortion after fetal cardiac activity becomes detectable. This development usually occurs at about six weeks of pregnancy, which is before most women even know that they have become pregnant. In this right-wing atmosphere, Moayedhi advocates for women's reproductive rights, often traveling to other states like Oklahoma to perform legal abortions.

Moayedhi was scheduled to give a presentation called "Healthcare through a Human Rights Crisis" at Montefiore. "I educate about how the current US abortion crisis results from 'compromises' that normalize denying others human rights," she wrote on Instagram. "My talk is about how complicity with abortion stigma has allowed a basic human right to become illegal."

After they invited Moayedhi to give her presentation, the administration of Montefiore became aware of an Instagram post in which she had expressed support for the Palestinians. "Solidarity with the Palestinian people is, and has always been, a reproductive justice issue," Moayedhi wrote.

"For over a half century, Palestinians have been denied their fundamental human rights," Moayedhi stated.

"Palestine has been turned into the world's largest open-air prison, and the continued systematic oppression and genocide of Palestinians has been funded by US taxpayers. There is a humanitarian path to peace, and it starts with those who have the most power laying down their arms. Please talk to your families, your neighbors, your friends and your representatives. Reproductive justice means ceasefire now."

In an email canceling the presentation, Dr. Edith Gurewitsch Allen, interim chair of the department of obstetrics, gynecology and women's health, wrote, "While our department and AECOM/Montefiore are decidedly apolitical and neutral on the issue of the current situation in Israel and Gaza, the speaker has been outspoken on one specific side, on the national scene—in a manner that has been painful for others to be exposed to."

In a pious tone, Allen cited the institution's call for "unity and tolerance" before adding that "passions are nonetheless heightened among many of us, and even if the speaker's planned topic for tomorrow is unrelated, we must remain sensitive to the feelings of members of our community and not appear to give support to one side or the other."

Allen's description of Montefiore as "apolitical and neutral" is a lie. After the October 7 attack by Hamas, Dr. Philip Ozuah, president and CEO of Montefiore, wrote an email to staff in which he condemned violence against innocent civilians in Israel but failed to mention Palestine. Moreover, Ozuah stated that AECOM/Montefiore is willing to assist those in Israel "in any way possible." This message toes the line of US imperialism, which openly endorses Israel's genocidal onslaught as justified self-defense.

Moayedhi responded to the hypocritical cancellation of

her presentation in another series of Instagram posts. “My talk on human rights was canceled ... because I have openly talked about human rights,” she wrote.

Moayedhi held firm to her principled position and implicitly called for healthcare workers to act. “As physicians, I believe we have an ethical imperative to advocate for the health and safety of all people. Healthcare is not apolitical. As a Texas abortion provider, I know exactly what happens when medical institutions are ‘apolitical and neutral.’ We are living it now. The same moral compass that guides me to provide abortion care compels me to speak up. Ceasefire now.”

The cancellation of Moayedhi’s presentation follows attacks on other healthcare workers and students who oppose the crimes of the Zionist Israeli government, which is backed to the hilt and financially supported by the Biden administration and every other Western imperialist government.

In October, New York University’s (NYU) Langone Winthrop Hospital terminated resident physician Dr. Zaki Masoud for expressing pro-Palestinian views. He had stated his support for the struggle of the Palestinian population of Gaza against Israeli violence. NYU law student Ryna Workman was blacklisted, doxed and removed from their position as president of the university’s Student Bar Association for having issued a principled statement supporting Gazans’ right to resist oppression.

Despite the efforts to suppress opposition through anti-democratic tactics, millions of people around the world are protesting the Netanyahu government’s genocide. Protests have been held in every major city, as well as in small towns. Close to a million workers and students protested in London last weekend in the face of the threat of arrest by the Sunak government.

In New York City, protests, rallies and student walkouts have been held almost daily throughout the boroughs. At a recent rally, the *World Socialist Web Site* asked a healthcare worker about workplace suppression of pro-Palestinian views.

“It’s not really spoken about,” she said. “A lot of my colleagues are Jewish and have family in Israel. So, there was very much what felt to me a very pro-Israeli [sentiment], concern for only one side, and not concern for the Palestinian side. We got an email saying, ‘We have to have respectful speech at work.’ I’ve never seen an email like that. I feel like I don’t really have an outlet except to go to places like this.”

She continued, “I’m here primarily because I’ve just

been horrified by what we’ve been seeing. It’s so clear that they’re not targeting Hamas, they’re targeting Palestinians. The bombing of hospitals is absolutely unconscionable. The bombing of refugee camps is also absolutely unconscionable. These are war crimes.

“There’s an oath that we take to save all lives, and the fact that there are no medical supplies [in Gaza]—I can’t even imagine [what it’s like]. Children in refugee camps covered in burns—no antibiotics. Again, it’s like we have the casualty and death toll, but the unspoken number of people who die of infections—I doubt that those numbers will be counted as directly related to this conflict.

“So, I’m really thinking about long-term health effects for the entire region, and it’s devastating. To target people in hospitals, I can only imagine the chaos. Sometimes I’ve gone to shifts thinking I wish I could be relieving a Gaza nurse right now. I wish I could allow someone to go home and get some sleep. My heart is really with the workers and the patients who are in these hospitals.”

Like the imperialist governments and their corporate sponsors, the corporatist trade union bureaucracies are suppressing the pro-Palestinian sentiments of the rank-and-file workers. They have all but ignored the Palestinian trade unions’ call to stop the shipment of arms to Israel.

The Thurston-Lewis-Mason Central Labor Council, which covers unions in an area south of Seattle, recently passed a unanimous resolution in principled opposition to the production and transportation of weapons to Israel. The AFL-CIO intervened to overrule the resolution, and President Liz Shuler sent a memo to all state federations, area and central labor councils declaring that “only the national AFL-CIO is authorized to take public positions on national and international issues.”

The defense of free speech and the fight against Israel’s genocide can only be carried out in opposition to both capitalist parties and the trade unions and other institutions that support them. This fight requires the unity of the international working class, armed with a socialist program.



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