

Healthcare workers speak out against the genocide in Gaza as Palestinian healthcare system crumbles

Katy Kinner
20 November 2023

Over the weekend, the genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza intensified with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) bombing two UN schools, refugee camps in Bureij and Nuseirat in Central Gaza and the continued onslaught and occupation of hospitals and health facilities.

A team with the World Health Organization (WHO) reported on Sunday from Al-Shifa Hospital, calling the facility a “death zone.” The team described a mass grave dug next to the hospital entrance and noted that hundreds of patients have been forced to evacuate over the weekend by foot. Special concern was voiced for patients remaining in Al-Shifa who cannot evacuate due to spinal injuries, critical illness or wounds. Over 32 babies remain in critical condition along with 25 healthcare workers who refuse to abandon their remaining patients.

Since October 7 over half of Gaza’s buildings have been leveled and water, food, electricity and fuel have been cut off by the IDF. Only 10 of Gaza’s 36 hospitals are still functioning, leaving only 1,400 beds and no anesthetics or other critical medical supplies to treat the tens of thousands of wounded victims.

Millions of people across the world have reacted to this genocide by organizing and participating in anti-war demonstrations opposing the NATO imperialist powers’ full backing of the war. Workers across the US, Europe and the Middle East have refused to handle or sought to block arms shipments to Israel. Healthcare workers across the world have joined the mass protests—making statements, organizing rallies and writing open letters to protest both the genocide and the victimization of fellow healthcare workers who have spoken out against the slaughter.

A nursing student from Maryland told the *World*

Socialist Web Site, “The people of Palestine are fighting against the genocide of their people at the hands of Israel, funded by the United States government. ... Hospitals and children being the target of bombings are clear signs that Israel is willing to take innocent lives for political gain. As young people, it is our duty to call out injustice and speak up for those Palestinians who have been silenced. The whole world may be watching, but there are many individuals comfortable with turning a blind eye to genocide if it fits their agenda. I can only hope the world will hear the cries of Palestine.”

Indra, a nurse from Hollywood, California, spoke to WSWS reporters at a demonstration against the genocide. She said, “I’m here to support my colleagues that are in Gaza right now that are being killed. I’m here against the massacre that’s happening. And we need to do something and stop the killing right away. This is just absolutely horrific what’s happening. We need to come together and stop the killing right now.”

While healthcare workers are bravely taking a stand for the citizens and fellow healthcare workers in Palestine, the US healthcare establishment, including medical institutions, journals and medical schools, have refused to call for a ceasefire, a position that is completely antithetical to the principles embodied by medical professions.

In early November, the American Medical Association (AMA) rejected a resolution by the membership to call for a ceasefire. The American Public Health Association (APHA) published a statement on November 3 which wasted no breath describing the public health crisis on the ground in Gaza, instead stating, “APHA condemns the brutal

assault by Hamas and recognizes Israel's right to exist and defend itself." A recent article published by the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) made a weak call for healthcare workers to oppose genocide while only denouncing violence by Palestinians in the October 7 uprising and spreading the spurious claims of Hamas using hospitals as military bases.

It is becoming increasingly clear that these establishments do not speak for the healthcare workers themselves. A November 16 open letter authored by healthcare workers associated with the Jewish Voice for Peace chapter in Atlanta, Georgia, called for a ceasefire and for medical institutions and the media to "stop silencing and intimidating Palestinian voices and to take a clear stand against the war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide committed against the Palestinian people."

The letter also directly opposed the JAMA article, stating, "These institutions which attempt to justify war crimes or genocide do not speak for us as medical professionals or as people of conscience who value each and every life." The letter is signed by physicians, nurses, physical therapists and other healthcare workers from across the country.

Last week, Montefiore/Albert Einstein College of Medicine (AECOM) in New York City canceled a grand rounds speaker presentation by Dr. Ghazaleh Moayedi because she had stated her solidarity with Palestine and called for a ceasefire in an Instagram post.

Tasha, an ICU nurse from Southern California, spoke to the WSWS about worsening conditions in the US healthcare system as billions are sent abroad to fund the genocide of Palestinians. "I think we have a healthcare crisis right here at home that is deserving of the funds. We have citizens that suffer every day through paying back healthcare debts, figuring out how they're going to pay for cancer treatments. And we have high mortality and an infant mortality crisis. I think we have plenty of options at home to spend the money on."

Tasha then spoke out against the genocide in Palestine: "It's a humanitarian crisis. I feel like there's a stronger word out there for it. I will call it a genocide. And from a nursing perspective, we sign an oath to save as many lives as possible. It's a moral injury for healthcare workers worldwide."

She continued, "We are supposed to serve as facilities of safety and solitude for healing and for people that need help regardless of what background that you come from. And that no longer serves the purpose for Gaza."

Tasha also condemned the Democratic Party, "Those Democrats are doing things that do not support their constituents. They don't support the ideas of the constituents at all."

Tasha added that she is encouraged by the growing movement of the masses against war. "I think we need more of it. I'm very proud of the workers that come together in solidarity to show the power that we have if we stand together in numbers."

Healthcare workers across the US work under ever worsening conditions as billions of dollars are spent killing fellow workers abroad. 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