

Petition opposes intimidation of Australian health workers who have spoken out against Gaza genocide

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Thousands of Australian health workers have signed a petition over the past four weeks demanding that the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) stop pro-Israeli vigilantes using these bodies to victimise health workers speaking out about the Gaza genocide.

Over the past three months, doctors, nurses and other health workers using social media and other platforms to oppose the unrelenting military attacks on Gaza have been subjected to a barrage of false allegations of antisemitism and bullying racist slurs.

Many have had their personal details published online, others have been reported to AHPRA—the country's main medical regulatory and discipline body—calling for them to lose their accreditation and jobs.

Titled “Protect Australian healthcare workers advocating for human rights,” the new petition has been signed by over 4,100 health practitioners since mid-December, half of them in the past two weeks.

The petition, which was initiated by the Australian Islamic Medical Association and Australian and New Zealand Doctors for Palestine, is addressed to MBA chairperson Dr Anne Tonkin. The MBA is responsible for the registration of medical practitioners and students, the development of professional standards, codes and guidelines, and investigating notifications and complaints.

The petition alleges that “vexatious,” “Islamophobic” and “deceitful” complaints have been made to the MBA and AHPRA in violation of established codes of practice and in an “abuse of process.” It urges these agencies to publicly oppose this and to reinforce “all healthcare professionals that racist, Islamophobic, and antisemitic comments in the workplace or on social media will not be tolerated.”

An accompanying Open Letter also calls on AHPRA, the Australian Medical Association and the Health Care Complaints Commission to issue a statement on this witch hunting. It specifically cites AHPRA’s and the AMA’s statutes requiring them to oppose any form of bullying or harassment of colleagues.

The Open Letter quotes from the World Medical Association Declaration of Geneva which says that medical practitioners are bound to “solemnly pledge to consecrate (our lives) to the service of humanity” and to “maintain the utmost respect for human life.”

The Open Letter then cites a World Health Organisation report on the catastrophic health conditions, particularly in northern Gaza, and the overall impact of the sustained Israeli military attacks on medical facilities and health workers.

“In such dire circumstances,” it states, “our moral, ethical, and professional obligations are to use our voices to highlight the plight of the people in this humanitarian crisis.”

Australian health workers, the letter continues, have responded to the catastrophe by writing to the AMA and politicians, and discussing the situation with their colleagues on social media. Pro-Israeli elements reacted by accusing them of “supporting the murder of Israelis,” “hating Jews,” being “terrorist sympathisers” and other bogus and provocative claims.

“A significant concern arose amongst us when some of the undersigned were threatened with ‘reports to AHPRA’ for discussing the humanitarian crisis and advocating for relief. This has led to the ‘gagging’ of any promotion of non-secular, medical organisations, such as MSF [Médecins Sans Frontières]—unprecedented in this forum.

“This has left us feeling deeply distressed, threatened and extremely unsafe. These threats appear to be vexatious, with the primary motivation being to cause harm to another health practitioner, rather than genuine concern regarding patient safety.”

The Open Letter concludes by repeating calls for the AMA and AHPRA to tell their members that “inappropriate, unsubstantiated, and slanderous comments, which risk reputations and livelihoods, will not be tolerated.” It insists that the AMA, which covers all registered doctors, “voice its concern for the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza and advocate for an end to the siege.”

The growing numbers of medical practitioners and health workers signing the petition makes clear that the health workers will not be intimidated and are fighting back.

These sentiments are powerfully expressed below in a tiny sample of the statements of those endorsing the petition.

Sadha wrote: “I am a nurse and was silenced in my workplace when I promoted a peaceful vigil in support of Palestine to other staff members. We must not be silenced [because] this is an issue of human rights. I wholeheartedly support every doctor standing up for the victims of genocide!”

Emma commented: “There should be measures in place to prevent bullying of healthcare workers, regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion. False reports against healthcare workers that have no merit should not be allowed and should be investigated.”

Maisa said: “As a health care professional and as a human, I can’t stay silent to the genocide, war crimes and the murder of over 30,000 people. I can’t believe it has been over three months now. Our government needs to call for a ceasefire.”

Ayman stated: “Innocent doctors are being defamed for standing with the humanitarian crisis and against the killing of innocent civilians which has been documented by many organisations on the ground including the UN and Doctors without Borders.”

Scores of others said it was a “duty” for health workers to call out atrocities being committed by the IDF in Gaza and angrily denounced bullying attempts to silence those speaking out.

“This is doxing to scare people into staying quiet about gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Nobody should be sanctioned for speaking up for human rights,” **Danielle** commented.

This was echoed by **Fatima**, who wrote: “If we don’t protect our healthcare workers from racist attacks, we have started to fail as a civil society. They have a right to speak and should be supported when speaking out against genocide.”

Roisin, another health worker, commented: “What we have seen over the past three months in Gaza is so unjust and horrific. But equally terrifying is the continued censorship of media and continued unwavering backing of Israel despite its actions clearly contravening international law. It is so frustrating to feel so powerless in the face of such reckless and blatant attacks on Gaza.”

Early this month, Sarah, a Melbourne general practitioner, explained to the *World Socialist Web Site* that she had been verbally abused and threatened for daring to oppose the Gaza genocide.

“I was one of those reported, even though I posted in a private group. It was said it was offensive to the Jewish people/colleagues, by another doctor who screenshotted it, so I’ve been reported twice to the medical board for posting [on social media].

“Now I have been doxxed, as part of a group of doctors who have been doxxed, which means that our posts, which were part of a private group, have now been put on Instagram, a public site, with defamatory comments.

“So, underneath it’s got my name, my place of work, pictures of myself and my children, with comments saying that I am antisemitic, that I support the Holocaust, all these defamatory comments, and saying, ‘would you trust this doctor in your care?’ and encouraging the general public to report me with my full name on it.”

These vicious attacks on the democratic rights of health workers are replicated internationally in escalating threats by pro-Zionist governments and other political agencies against journalists, artist, teachers, students and any others opposing the Gaza genocide.

While the Australian health workers’ petition is an important

initiative and should be supported and widely shared, its appeals to AHPRA, the MBA and the AMA will fall on deaf ears. None of these agencies acknowledged the petition’s existence, let alone responded to it.

In fact, the AMA has only made two statements since October 7. The first was on October 31 when it called on “all parties to not use health facilities as military quarters or depots, nor to target health personnel facilities and vehicles.”

In other words, it gave credence to Israeli government claims that Palestinian fighters were hiding in hospitals, thus justifying the IDF’s bombing of Gaza medical facilities.

The only other response on the AMA website was earlier this month when it directed its members to donate to the MSF or the International Committee of the Red Cross. Nor have nurses and midwives associations or other health workers’ unions taken any action to defend members being targeted and vilified by pro-Zionist ideologues.

To defeat these anti-democratic and pro-war attacks, health workers must reach out to other workers—journalists, teachers and industrial workers—and organise their fight through the building of independent rank and file committees. The struggle against genocide in Gaza is linked to the defence of the democratic rights and social conditions of all workers against the capitalist profit system.

We urge health workers who are being victimised to contact the Health Workers Rank and File Committee who will maintain your anonymity while discussing your situation and how to take forward this fight.

Email: sephw.aus@gmail.com

Twitter: @HealthRandF_Aus

Facebook: facebook.com/groups/hwrfcaus



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact