

Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee in Australia defends medical practitioners targeted for opposing Gaza genocide

Clare Bruderlin
21 January 2024

The Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee (HWRFC) in Australia met last Wednesday and unanimously passed a resolution denouncing the victimisation of health workers speaking out against the genocide in Gaza. The January 17 resolution, which is published below, is a powerful response to the systematic and vicious witch-hunting of health workers by pro-Zionist forces. It calls for health workers across Australia and internationally to circulate the resolution amongst their colleagues and send messages of support to the HWRFC.

Wednesday's meeting, which was attended by doctors, nurses, aged care and mental health workers, and hospital services employees, began with a brief report on the rising number of Covid-19 infections and the deepening crisis in public health in Australia. It then reviewed the horrendous impact of the ongoing Israeli military attacks on Gaza.

HWRFC member and *World Socialist Web Site* writer Stephen Griffiths told the meeting that the health system in Gaza had all but collapsed following sustained Israeli military attacks over the past three months. Some 374 health workers have been killed, he said, and currently there were only 1,400 hospital beds for Gaza's 2.5 million population.

Griffiths noted that health workers in Australia have held vigils on a weekly or fortnightly basis opposing these war crimes and voicing their concerns through petitions, meetings and on social media. He then referred to a [WSWS article](#) published that day which revealed that many of these workers have been targeted by pro-Israeli elements, bogusly accusing them of "supporting the murder of Israelis," "hating Jews," and being "terrorist sympathisers."

Last month, these right-wing forces launched a petition calling on the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation

Agency (AHPRA) and the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) to prohibit health practitioners from using the slogan "from the river to the sea," claiming it to be "antisemitic."

Two members of the Australia and New Zealand Doctors for Palestine Facebook group in attendance spoke about their experiences.

One Sydney general practitioner suggested that health workers needed "a coordinated, unifying stance" to oppose all attempts to silence workers.

"There has to be an international campaign [against the targeting of health workers], which is not just happening in Australia but internationally," she said.

The other doctor said: "Our group was formed because there had been silencing across all other medical forums with people being removed for just asking about the charities they could donate to..."

"We've been hitting our head against a brick wall every step of the way when it comes to unions or medical colleges."

She said the group was aware of at least 13 health workers reported to AHPRA and explained that one pro-Zionist social media page had issued a public call for volunteers to help report on health workers speaking out against the Israeli assault on Gaza. "It's a systematic effort to make vexatious complaints," she added. "Women of colour, especially of Islamic background, are being targeted when it comes to these notifications."

After further discussion the HWRFC meeting developed and then unanimously passed the following resolution:

"This meeting of the Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee condemns the doxxing and victimisation of doctors and other health workers in Australia by Zionists and other extreme-right elements who have falsely accused them of antisemitism for opposing Israel's

military onslaught against the entire Palestinian population in Gaza.

“Doctors and other health workers have been reported to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)—the country’s principal medical regulatory and discipline body—or to their employers. These reports could lead to disciplinary action or even the loss of AHPRA registration.

“This is a desperate attempt to use Australian medical authorities to destroy the careers of health practitioners who, in line with their Hippocratic Oath to “do no harm or injustice,” are informing the wider population and oppose the war crimes being committed against the Palestinians in Gaza.

“In just over three months, the Israel Defence Force has killed over 24,000 Palestinians, half of them children, and more than 300 healthcare workers. The bombing campaign has left more than half of all Gaza’s buildings damaged or destroyed. The healthcare system has collapsed, with only 15 out of the 36 hospitals in Gaza even partially functional. Those that remain open confront acute shortages of medical equipment, medicines and manpower.

“The attempted silencing of health workers is a component part of the pro-Zionist genocidal war and an attack on the basic rights of the entire working class, and must be opposed. This committee resolves to develop a campaign to defend all victimised medical practitioners and to alert and mobilise health workers across Australia and our counterparts internationally who are facing the same anti-democratic attacks.”

Other health workers in attendance spoke in favour of the resolution.

John, an aged care worker from Newcastle, said, “This will win support. There is real concern among my co-workers about what is happening in Gaza but they don’t know what to do. Workers will support you if they understand what is actually happening.

“There should be a far-reaching campaign amongst health workers, paramedics, doctors, service staff, aged-care workers, but also among other sections of workers, teachers and transportation workers.”

“There’s also got to be a rebellion against so-called organisations which ‘lead us.’ They’re cutting conditions and doing nothing to oppose attacks on the democratic rights of workers,” he added.

Donna, a Melbourne hospital receptionist in attendance, endorsed the resolution and after the meeting said the doxxing of health professionals was “scary” and

“threatening.”

“You wouldn’t think it was controversial to say that you don’t support genocide,” she said, “and yet people are being exposed and stalked for saying exactly that. The main issue is that there’s a concerted effort by some people to intimidate doctors and other health professionals supporting the Palestinian cause and who are anti-war.”

“They’re doing this in a clandestine manner by infiltrating private social media groups such as Doctors for Palestine and Facebook groups. You have to prove who you are and show your Medical Board registration in order to gain entry to these groups. It will make people very worried if they cannot trust their own colleagues,” she said.

“I think the resolution is great. It must be very lonely for practitioners who are caught up in this, especially if they’re unaware that there is support for them from within this country and abroad. Health workers will respond. In my heart, I feel that the majority of health workers oppose what is happening to the Palestinians, she added.

The HWRFC resolution is an important step in the struggle against the efforts of the pro-Zionist forces to silence health workers and other sections of the working class speaking against Israeli war crimes in Gaza.

We urge health workers in Australia and internationally to circulate this article and the resolution, and send statements which we will publish in the coming days, explaining why you support this campaign. If you are being victimised we will maintain your anonymity and privately discuss with you how to push back this attack.

Email: sephw.aus@gmail.com

Twitter: [@HealthRandF_Aus](https://twitter.com/HealthRandF_Aus)

Facebook: facebook.com/groups/hwrfcaus



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact