

When medical duty and advocacy are one-sided, both sides suffer

Roghieh Dehghan and colleagues' Correspondence¹ is troubling. It is a one-sided, uncritically pro-Hamas, and scathingly anti-Israel commentary written under the guise of a piece on medical ethics. Genuine concern for humanity demands caring for people caught up on both sides of conflicts.

Causing a war to begin must be considered in terms of the ethical balance, yet there is no mention of the fact that Hamas terrorists and Gazan civilians broke an existing ceasefire on Oct 7, 2023, and stormed into Israel to kill, rape, mutilate, burn alive, and sexually violate² approximately 1200 innocent people, while taking another 250 people hostage. The authors simply reference the current conflict with, "[S]ince the escalation of Israel's violence in Gaza and the West Bank on Oct 7, 2023".¹ The Correspondence also does not mention that, since Oct 7, 2023, approximately 13 000 rockets have been indiscriminately fired into Israel (with direct hits to hospitals);³ Gazan hospitals are being used as military hubs for Hamas;⁴ roughly 200 000 people in Israel have been displaced;⁵ and the Israeli hostages have not received one visit from the International Red Cross.⁶

We agree that the devastation in Gaza is profound and that it must be addressed. A reasonable person would undoubtedly sympathise with a letter that calls for an end to the suffering of all individuals affected by the war, regardless of which side of the border they reside on. We argue that gratuitous political discourse does not have a place in prestigious, peer-reviewed medical literature. This trend needs to be addressed.

We declare no competing interests.

Editorial note: The Lancet Group takes a neutral position with respect to territorial claims in published text and institutional affiliations.

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- 2 Gettleman J, Schwartz A, Sella A. 'Screams without words': how Hamas weaponized sexual violence on Oct 7. *The New York Times*, Dec 28, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/28/world/middleeast/oct-7-attacks-hamas-israel-sexual-violence.html> (accessed Jan 21, 2024).
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- 4 Fabian E. The Times of Israel. Gaza hospital director admits Hamas used medical complex as operational hub. *The Times of Israel*, Dec 19, 2023. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/gaza-hospital-director-admits-hamas-used-medical-complex-as-operational-hub/#:~:text=In%20footage%20published%20on%20Tuesday,a%20base%20for%20operational%20activity> (accessed Jan 22, 2024).
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- 6 Foundation for Defense of Democracies. Red Cross will not aid in transfer of medicine to hostages in Gaza. *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, Jan 19, 2024. <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2024/01/19/red-cross-will-not-aid-in-transfer-of-medicine-to-hostages-in-gaza/> (accessed Jan 23, 2024).



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