

Duty and advocacy for Palestine: Jewish doctors' response

As a group of Jewish health-care professionals who, since Oct 7, 2023, have witnessed daily manifestations of antisemitism by both health-care professionals and the general public as a consequence of the disinformation spread through social media and national news organisations, we strongly reject the false claims made by Roghieh Dehghan and colleagues in their Correspondence published in January, 2024.¹

First, the claim that Israel escalated the violence on Oct 7, 2023, completely ignores the fact that over 3000 terrorists invaded Israel's sovereign border on the morning of Oct 7 and killed, tortured, raped, burnt, and kidnapped over 1400 Israelis, Arabs, and multiple other nationals.² Since then, Israel has embarked on a conflict with Hamas to bring the more than 240 Israeli hostages home and to eradicate Hamas, a terrorist organisation, which is committed to killing all Jews and swears to repeat the atrocities of Oct 7 "again and again".³

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) have gone to enormous lengths to try to ensure the safety of innocent Gazan civilians, including sending millions of phone calls, leaflets, and text messages, and setting up safe areas and humanitarian corridors for the Gazan population⁴—more than any other army would have done, according to US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby. Unfortunately, whatever efforts the IDF have made to protect innocent civilians will be to no avail if Hamas keeps putting Palestinians in harm's way as human shields (eg, through their documented, deliberate targeting of Gazans trying to access aid and the 18% of Hamas rockets fired toward Israel, which are falling short and killing and injuring Gazan citizens).⁵

Dehghan and colleagues fail to mention the multiple indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israeli health-care facilities and the injuries and deaths of Israeli health-care workers,⁶ which have necessitated the construction of underground facilities in most Israeli major hospitals. Dehghan and colleagues also fail to mention the use of Gazan health-care facilities as prisons for Israeli hostages and command centres for Hamas.⁷

If Dehghan and colleagues wanted to stand in solidarity with health-care professionals, their moral imperative should have dictated that they stand with all health-care professionals, both in Gaza and in Israel. If they really wanted to show "a moral and political response to injustice and suffering",¹ they would be demanding that Hamas release all hostages and disarm immediately, rather than asking for an immediate end to the violence, which would leave Hamas in power to repeat the atrocities it carried out against Israel on Oct 7 and would keep innocent Palestinian citizens under constant threat from Hamas, a terrorist organisation.

We all want to see an end to hatred in health care at a time when extremism is rife. It is important that all citizens, particularly health-care professionals, refrain from demonising minority groups and exacerbating racial and ethnic tensions.

This Correspondence was written in response to events as they occurred in January, 2024. 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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For more on Israel's underground health-care facilities see <https://www.npr.org/2023/11/08/1210712449/north-israel-hospitals-go-underground-lebanon-hezbollah>

For more on US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby's statement see <https://www.timesofisrael.com/white-house-says-israel-making-effort-to-protect-gaza-civilians/>

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