

# Gaza's collapsed health system requires urgent action from the global health community

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Dear Editor,

For more than 22 months, the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip endured catastrophic conditions, resulting in extremely poor living standards and the near-total destruction of its healthcare infrastructure (1). More than 58 000 civilians have been killed since the onset of the current hostilities in October 2023, among whom are 17 900 children and 9500 women (1,2). Over 139 600 individuals have been injured, while approximately 10 children per day undergo at least one limb amputation. Widespread destruction has placed more than 470 000 civilians at risk of malnutrition, with at least 85 children and infants already dead due to starvation (1).

In this context, Gaza's health system has been pushed beyond imaginable limits. As of July 2025, WHO reported that all, except 2, hospitals in the Strip had been damaged, destroyed or non-functional (3). Cancer care is no longer available anywhere in the territory (4), and primary health care services have largely collapsed, leaving the population without access to basic preventive and chronic disease care.

The sacrifice of health care professionals in Gaza is unprecedented. At least 654 have been killed while fulfilling their duty. In a single strike in March 2025, 15 medics were killed—an event captured in a video clip by the sole survivor (2). This tragic event exemplifies a broader and

systemic violation of medical neutrality, underscoring the urgent need for international accountability.

This letter is not intended to debate the political roots of the conflict. In the face of such profound human suffering, these become secondary. What must be urgently addressed is the lack of a unified and firm response by the global health community. As physicians and health professionals, what are we doing—beyond our individual sentiments—to collectively stand for our colleagues under fire? Where is the global health movement that upholds the right to practice medicine, rooted in the Hippocratic Oath, even in times of war?

We are failing—not merely as institutions, but as a profession—to protect our own. We are failing to speak out effectively against the continuous targeting of health workers, and by extension, the civilians they care for. Targeted actions are urgently needed, including joint statements from international professional bodies, advocacy for humanitarian corridors and the establishment of task forces to support health care delivery in the Gaza Strip.

We must use the platform of journals such as EMHJ and other related publications to call for the protection of health workers and the defence of human life, the first and ultimate duty of our profession. Publications such as EMHJ can also play a leading role by supporting and publishing relevant documents, organizing aid initiatives and calling for accountability.

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