



## **Emerging Voices for Global Health statement on the destruction of Gaza's health system and ongoing war and genocide in Gaza**

### **The war and genocide in Gaza**

For the past seven months, Israel has waged a devastating military assault on Gaza, killing at least 34,904 people, including over 15,000 children, and injuring 78,514 as of May 9, 2024 ([WHO 2024](#)). This assault was in response to Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, which killed 1,200 people, including 33 children, and took 252 hostages. These events are part of a long-standing conflict rooted in settler colonialism, apartheid, and the mass expulsion of Palestinians ([Khalidi 2020](#)).

Israel's continuous attacks have decimated essential services in Gaza, severely undermining the health and safety of its residents. Most public institutions crucial for health and well-being, including schools, hospitals, communication structures, water facilities, and sanitation systems, have been destroyed. Attacks on healthcare workers and journalists, along with blockades restricting fuel, medical supplies, water, and food, have further exacerbated the dire situation. The indiscriminate bombardment and use of starvation as a war tactic have created a humanitarian disaster, with Israel being accused of a "plausible genocide" according to a recent International Court of Justice ruling ([ICJ 2024](#)).

Gaza's 2.2 million residents are facing massive food insecurity and imminent famine ([WFP 2024](#)), rapid deterioration of maternal and child health, and risk of major preventable infectious disease outbreaks. Mothers are so undernourished and physiologically stressed that they are unable to lactate to feed their babies ([MSF 2024](#)). Half of the water and sanitation facilities in Gaza have been destroyed, and most drinking water is contaminated or salinized ([BBC 2024](#)).

### **The impact on the health system**

Palestinians face not only displacement and dispossession, central to Israel's apartheid system, but also staggering levels of discrimination and violence within the healthcare system—termed "medical apartheid" to describe race-based segregation leading to inequalities in healthcare access, availability, and quality ([Barhoush and Amon, 2023](#)). Specific to Gaza's health system, the World Health Organization has documented 445 attacks on health facilities and workers, resulting in the deaths of 493 health workers ([UN 2024](#)). Only 12 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are even partially functional ([IRC 2024](#)), and over half the ambulances in Gaza have been damaged ([WHO 2024](#)). The WHO also reports that 214 health workers have been detained by the Israeli military, where they may face inhumane conditions and torture ([UN 2024](#)). This month, renowned orthopedic surgeon Dr. Adnan Al Bursh died in Israeli custody after being detained for four months ([UN 2024](#)). Amputations and cesarean sections are being conducted without anesthetic, electricity, or essential medical supplies ([Reuters 2024](#)). Families and healthcare workers have been forced to attempt evacuating critically ill patients and premature babies from hospitals. In some cases, evacuation was not possible; horrific footage from Al Nasr Hospital shows decomposing bodies of babies who couldn't be safely evacuated from intensive care units ([CNN 2023](#)). The long-term impact on human suffering is immeasurable: 19,000 children are now orphaned in Gaza, every child has been traumatized ([UNICEF 2024](#)), and the entire population is coping with mental and physical harms that will affect present and future generations ([UN Women 2024](#)).



Christopher Lockyear, Secretary General of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), stated on February 22, 2024: "There is no health system to speak of left in Gaza. Israel's military has dismantled hospital after hospital. What remains is so little in the face of such carnage. It is preposterous. The excuse given is that medical facilities have been used for military purposes, yet we have seen zero independently verified evidence of this" ([MSF 2024](#))

### **Emerging Voices for Global Health condemnations, demands and commitments**

As Emerging Voices for Global Health, we are the change-makers of today's global health landscape, with the power to challenge the status quo and push for a more equitable world. As health professionals in medicine, public health, allied health, policy, advocacy, and leadership, we are committed to advancing health equity and social justice. Recently, the public health community has also rallied around the call to decolonize research, practice, and institutions ([Abimbola & Pai 2020](#), [Khan et al. 2020](#)). However, in the face of ongoing colonization and genocide, the silence and inaction of our medical institutions and research platforms, particularly those led by and located in the Global North, is deeply concerning and shameful ([Abi-Rached & Reinhart 2024](#)).

In light of the above, we, the Emerging Voices for Global Health,

#### **Condemn:**

1. The Israeli government's mass killing and displacement of civilians in Gaza over the past seven months; the destruction of Gaza's health, education, food, water, and sanitation systems; the bombing of hospitals and housing; and the attacks on healthcare workers, humanitarian workers, and journalists.
2. Hamas's attack on civilians in Israel on October 7, 2023.
3. The kidnapping and detention of Palestinians held without fair trial in Israeli prisons and detention camps, and the holding of Israeli hostages in Gaza by Hamas and other militant groups.

#### **Demand:**

1. An immediate and permanent ceasefire, an end to the blockade, and an end to the occupation in Gaza and the West Bank.
2. The release of all kidnapped and unjustly detained Palestinians and Israelis.
3. Full, unrestricted humanitarian access into Gaza for fuel, water, food, medicines, and other necessary supplies in accordance with international law.
4. The protection of all civilians, including healthcare workers, and the safeguarding of remaining health facilities.

#### **Commit to:**

1. Investigating, disclosing, and divesting from any financial ties between EV4GH and Israeli institutions, including sponsorships, grants, collaborations, and partnerships.
2. Boycotting complicit Israeli institutions until Israel complies with international law regarding the end of occupation in Gaza, the West Bank, and the Syrian Golan Heights; provides equal rights for Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel; respects, protects and promotes the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194 (BDS Movement 2024).



3. Supporting students, faculty, and staff engaged in protests at academic institutions in global solidarity with Gaza.
4. Convening a sub-group within EV4GH to identify strategies to leverage the EV4GH network and training program to support Palestinians working in the field of health systems research or advocacy.

Sincerely,

On behalf of The EV4GH Governance Board

**Dr. Charles Ssemagabo**  
Chair of Emerging Voices for Global Health

**Endorsement from EV Alumni and members of the EV Thematic Working Group (TWG) to strengthen our stance:**

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