

The IMC-TMA struggle in the international medical arena against Israel's crimes

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There are many oppressed peoples in the world. In the geography of West Asia (the Middle East), the Palestinian people, with whom we share this region, are among those subjected to the harshest forms of oppression, alongside the Kurdish people. The Palestinian people have long been resisting and struggling against the process of colonisation carried out in Palestine for more than a century by the Zionist project, backed by the imperialist powers, and against the policies of occupation, displacement and discrimination pursued by the state of Israel founded in 1948. The heroic struggle of the Palestinian people against imperialism and Zionism has become a symbol across the world, inspiring oppressed peoples.

The Al-Aqsa Flood operation carried out on 7 October 2023 by the Palestinian resistance organizations against Zionist Israel represents one of the major turning points in the more-than-century-long history of the Palestinian people's struggle, and it did not come out of nowhere. This uprising was a just and legitimate response to the occupying, murderous and ethnically cleansing Zionist state of Israel and to those who back it.

After October 2023, occupying Israel persisted, as before, in its policy aimed

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at eliminating all conditions of life so that the Palestinian people would surrender, renounce their rights and leave their homeland. It elevated this aggression to the level of genocide. As an important component of this genocide, it has deliberately and consciously targeted Gaza's health infrastructure and health workers. During this period, the great majority of Gaza's hospitals were bombed. At least 36 hospitals suffered severe damage and were rendered unusable. In addition, the Israeli state directly targeted and killed more than roughly 1,700 health workers, while many others were detained, tortured or killed in prison. At the time of writing, the total number of recorded Palestinian deaths in Gaza had exceeded 71,000, while the number of wounded had surpassed 170,000. Under conditions in which the bombardment continued intensely and the heavy siege remained in place, Palestinian doctors and health workers, despite being directly targeted, upheld the honour of humanity by struggling with all their strength to heal the wounded.

1. Why was the Istanbul Medical Chamber Solidarity Working Group with Palestine founded?

The Istanbul Medical Chamber (IMC) has long been a professional organization that has managed to fuse the struggle to improve physicians' rights and working conditions with the struggle for the people's right to health, a task also assigned to it by the law governing the Turkish Medical Association (TMA).¹ It has been a broadly supportive organization, attentive to physicians.

It has never regarded health and the right to health in the narrow sense of health services alone. Many of the determinants that affect health actually lie outside the "health field". Economic, social and political conditions have a direct impact on health. Unfortunately, the geography in which we live has taught us this through bitter experience. We live in a region where economic crises and social and political convulsions are never absent. For this reason, IMC does not concern itself only with matters pertaining to the "field of medicine"; it also struggles against injustices arising from relations of oppression in society. For the chains fastened around the necks of the oppressed are at the same time fastened around the necks of physicians.

IMC sides with the oppressed, the just, and the weak; it is not neutral. It was therefore inconceivable that it would remain silent in the face of the human drama endured by the Palestinians. To support the just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people against occupying and genocidal Israel, and to defend their freedom, is not only a humanitarian and internationalist duty, but also a requirement of medicine and of the values of the medical profession. Measures such as ending the geno-

¹ Law No. 6023 on the Turkish Medical Association, Articles 1 and 4, <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuatmetin/1.3.6023.pdf>

cide and immediately removing the obstacles blocking the provision of healthcare and medical supplies would constitute a major step towards the liberation of the Palestinian people and of all the oppressed in the region and in the world, workers, labouring people, oppressed nations, and women alike.

Even before 7 October 2023, IMC took part in platforms established in solidarity with the Palestinian people against the atrocities inflicted on them, as well as in actions and events organized for that purpose. Likewise, after 7 October 2023, in response to the genocide launched by occupying Israel, IMC was among the initiators of one of the first mass protest actions in Turkey following Israel's deliberate and knowing bombardment of the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza on 17 October 2023.² In order to support and show solidarity with the just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people, IMC also joined the Palestine Action Committee founded in Istanbul on the call of BDS³ Turkey on the 76th anniversary of the Nakba.⁴ Bringing together many pro-Palestinian political parties, trade unions, associations and professional organizations, the committee represented a first in the history of Turkey in this respect.

The problem of the liberation of the Palestinian people is, of course, not one that can be reduced to the field of health. Above all, it depends on developments in the political (and, intertwined with it, military), social and economic spheres. While health is an arena directly affected by these broader determinants, the number of organizations in the world that treat health itself as a terrain of struggle is small. For that reason, it was imperative both to lay bare in detail the devastation wrought by the genocide in the field of health and to organize the struggle against genocide internationally from within the field of health, which is IMC's principal area of activity. This was at the same time a strategic choice. For while demands for political, economic and cultural sanctions against Israel were relatively more visible, efforts to generate similar pressure in the health field were far more limited. An international solidarity built within the health arena therefore had a special significance in making Israel's crimes visible and in legitimising the very idea of sanctions in this sphere as well.

For this purpose, we decided not only to rely on IMC's own members and resources, but also to form a working group that could include pro-Palestinian organizations in Turkey, above all those active in the field of health. Such a working group

2 The Istanbul Medical Chamber, "Press Statement Against the Hospital Massacre in Gaza", 18 October 2023, <https://filistin.istabip.org.tr/filistin-halkinin-yanindayiz>

3 BDS stands for "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions".

4 Nakba (Arabic for "catastrophe") is the historical event referring to the forced displacement of approximately 700,000 Palestinians and the depopulation of hundreds of Palestinian villages during the process that led to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Palestinians commemorate 15 May each year as Nakba Day.

would also allow us to remain active in periods when there was no active war in Palestine, but occupation and blockade nonetheless continued.

To that end, in February 2025 we founded the Solidarity Working Group with Palestine within IMC and began work, with the aim of building solidarity with the Palestinian people, who are fighting for their historical and human right to life, wherever they live; ensuring that the Palestinian question remains on the agenda not only in times of war but also in periods of so-called “peace”; supporting Palestinian doctors and health workers; organizing solidarity together with national and international health organizations wherever possible; and generating pressure for the Turkish state to impose a full embargo on Israel and for this to be organized on a world scale.

2. The World Medical Association and its stance during the genocide

The World Medical Association (World MA) is an international organization founded in 1947, with the medical associations of 118 countries as members. Its official purpose is to serve humanity by contributing to the highest international standards in medical education, medical science, and the art of medicine, medical ethics and health services for all people in the world.

Although the formal structure of the World MA gives the appearance of an international organization in which all member medical associations are equally represented, the actual balance of power is by no means independent of the political and institutional weight of countries. Historically, the medical associations of imperialist countries such as Britain, the United States and Germany have wielded considerable influence within the organization. Owing to both the number of physicians they represent and to the relations they have built with international medical institutions, these associations rank among the decisive actors within the World MA. The Israeli Medical Association (Israeli MA) is likewise an active member of the World MA and acts in close coordination with the medical associations of the imperialist countries. By contrast, TMA, the South African Medical Association and the medical associations of certain Latin American and Asian countries have tended to stand out as actors representing a more critical line on human rights and violations in the spheres of war and health.

These relations of power make themselves felt not only in institutional relations but also in decision-making processes. Within the World MA, policy texts and resolutions come onto the agenda through proposals submitted by member associations. These proposals are first discussed in the relevant committees, then considered by the World MA Council, and finally put to the vote in the General Assembly. Although each member association formally has voting rights, the number of physi-

cians represented and the historical weight that some medical associations possess within international medical institutions are important factors determining their real influence. For this reason, decisions taken within the World MA often emerge not simply as reflections of technical medical policy, but also as reflections of international power relations.

Another reason for this tendency lies in the historical context in which the World MA emerged. The organization was founded immediately after the Second World War and at the outset of the Cold War. In this period, a large portion of the international institutions took shape under the political and institutional weight of the Western bloc. Many workers' states remained outside the World MA for a long time, and the organization's orientation was shaped to a great extent by the influence of medical associations in Western Europe and North America. This historical legacy is important for understanding the background to the World MA's language in international crises, a language that tends to avoid direct confrontation with imperialist states and with states allied to imperialism, as in the case of Israel. Instead, it takes refuge in the rhetoric of "medical neutrality".

The World MA is not alone in this respect; international organizations of a similar kind are likewise not independent of ideological and political influences. These institutions are shaped under the pressure of both their members and international power relations. Their decisions and modes of operation are therefore often far from possessing the "supra-ideological" or "universal" character they claim. The historical line of the World MA, too, has largely been one that avoids confronting imperialism and Zionism—under certain conditions even supporting them—and that often indirectly legitimises this line. The statements issued during the most recent war in Gaza have provided a contemporary example of this orientation. The press statement issued by the World MA on 13 October 2023, for instance, implied that the Al-Aqsa Flood operation had occurred for no reason at all. It condemned Hamas, demanded that the hostages held by Hamas be released, yet did not utter a single word against Israel, indeed conveying a strong message of solidarity with the Israeli MA.⁵

Two days later, on 15 October 2023, the World MA called on the warring parties not to target health personnel or health facilities and stated that medical supplies destined for Gaza should be sent through a humanitarian corridor to be opened for that purpose.⁶ At first glance, aside from its equalising approach to the two sides,

⁵ The World Medical Association, "Strong Condemnation of Hamas's Attack on Israel and Call for the Immediate Release of Hostages", 13 October 2023, <https://www.wma.net/news-post/wma-strongly-condemns-the-attack-of-hamas-on-israel-urging-immediate-liberation-of-hostages/>

⁶ The World Medical Association, "The World Medical Association Stands Firmly for the Principles of Medical Neutrality ...", 15 October 2023, <https://www.wma.net/news-post/the-world-med->

there seemed little in this text to object to. But when Israel's intensive bombardment of Gaza began, there was no response from the World MA. Moreover, as became clear again and again in what followed, the bombardment also targeted hospitals as symbolic and strategic sites. Indeed, only two days after the World MA's 15 October statement, Israel bombed the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza. Yet no condemnation or assessment whatsoever came from the World MA. In the subsequent period, throughout the devastation and genocidal process waged by Israel in Gaza, a similar attitude was maintained in its statements. The World MA neither explicitly condemned Israel, criticized the Israeli MA, nor called on it to act. In many of the texts issued by the organization, it was not even possible to identify who the perpetrator of the attacks was.

The last straw, however, was the press statement published by the World MA on 19 May 2025. The ceasefire reached on 19 January 2025 had been unilaterally broken by Israel on 18 March, and at the beginning of May 2025 an expansion of the attacks on Gaza had been announced. Yet the statement published by the World MA was again dominated by a language that equalised the two sides. The text called on both parties to comply with international law and not to target health workers and health facilities. More than that, it established a framework implying that the war had begun with Hamas's attack on 7 October and called on Hamas to release the hostages in its hands. But the war had not begun on 7 October, nor was the question of hostages confined only to those held by Hamas. In addition, there was a colossal inequality in the balance of forces between the two sides. From October 2023 onward, Israel had systematically targeted Gaza's health infrastructure; hundreds of attacks had been carried out against hospitals, and more than 1,500 health workers had lost their lives. In such a context, the real addressee of the World MA's call should have been Israel.⁷

This stance is, in fact, nothing new for the World MA. During apartheid, the Medical Association of South Africa (MASA) came under growing criticism internationally because it failed to develop an effective professional stance against the regime's racist policies. As a matter of fact, in 1976 MASA withdrew from the World MA following diplomatic obstacles that became concrete when, first Japan and then Ghana, refused visas to South African delegates. But the deeper crisis emerged in 1977 with Steve Biko's death under torture in detention and the acquittal of the doctors implicated in the case. The failure to conduct an effective

ical-association-stands-firmly-for-the-principles-of-medical-neutrality-as-defined-by-the-geneva-convention-and-calls-on-all-parties-to-respect-international-law-and-the-integrity-of-unr/

⁷ The World Medical Association, "World Medical Association Calls on the Israeli Government to Ensure Humanitarian Aid Reaches Gaza", 19 May 2025, <https://www.wma.net/news-post/world-medical-association-calls-on-the-israeli-government-to-ensure-humanitarian-aid-reaches-gaza/>

disciplinary process against those doctors further undermined MASA's legitimacy in terms of medical ethics and human rights. Despite this, MASA's readmission to the World MA in 1981, with the support of the American Medical Association, was seriously protested by anti-apartheid physicians and many national medical associations.⁸ The criticism concerned not only the nature of the relationship between the professional association and the apartheid regime, but also the fact that MASA was granted renewed international legitimacy without any genuine ethical reckoning after the Biko affair. In protest, the British Medical Association (British MA) left the World MA in 1984. In this way, the World MA's discourse of "separating ethics from politics" or of "remaining neutral" was revealed, in the face of systematic oppression and racist state violence, as a stance that in practice legitimised the status quo. After the end of apartheid, the physicians' organizations in South Africa were restructured. The South African Medical Association (SAMA) active today is not a direct continuation of MASA, but was founded within a new institutional framework that included the anti-apartheid National Medical and Dental Association (NAMDA). This historical experience shows that, in the face of regimes of systematic oppression, the claim of neutrality advanced by international professional organizations can often signify not ethical neutrality, but a tacit endorsement of existing relations of force. The equalising language used today in the context of Gaza is a reminder of this historical experience.

About a month after the statement of 19 May 2025, on 20 June 2025, the World MA issued a new statement. While it had not, to that day, condemned by name a single health centre targeted by Israeli attacks in Palestine, the World MA moved at lightning speed to condemn an attack on a health centre in Israel.⁹

3. The British MA takes the first step internationally

The British MA, following the resolutions¹⁰ adopted at its Annual Representative Meeting in June 2025, published in July 2025 a text summarising these decisions. The text condemned the situation created by Israel in Gaza and called on the government of the United Kingdom to play an active role in investigations and prosecutions concerning allegations of genocide. It also drew attention to the fact

8 Mandisa Mbali, "A Matter of Conscience: The Moral Authority of the World Medical Association and the Readmission of the South Africans, 1976–1994", *Medical History* 58, no. 3 (2014): 393–412.

9 The World Medical Association, "Statement Condemning the Missile Strike on a Hospital in Israel", 20 June 2025, <https://www.wma.net/news-post/wma-condemns-missile-strike-on-israeli-hospital-and-calls-for-protection-of-healthcare-facilities/>

10 The British Medical Association, "ARM 2025: Resolutions on International Relations", June 2025, <https://www.bma.org.uk/bma-media-centre/arm-2025-bma-passes-resolutions-on-international-relations>

that while the World MA had swiftly condemned an attack on a health centre in Israel, it had issued no comparable statement regarding the systematic destruction of the health system in Gaza, and it underlined that the Israeli MA had remained silent in the face of Palestinian health workers and health facilities being targeted, detained and killed. The text concluded by calling for a letter to be sent to the World MA so that attacks on health services, including those in Gaza, are condemned consistently, and for relations with the Israeli MA to be suspended until it explicitly reaffirmed medical neutrality and condemned the attacks on healthcare in Gaza.¹¹

The step taken by the British MA represented one of the clearest decisions up to that point by any medical association in the world to openly confront the World MA and the Israeli MA. In the days that followed, these decisions would become an important turning point, encouraging many medical associations that had hitherto acted timidly and refrained from taking a concrete stance, and pushing them to move into action under the leadership of TMA. This intervention did not merely signify the British MA's declaration of its own position; it also created the institutional basis of legitimacy for the international line that TMA would later broaden.

4. A call from the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine to TMA

As the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine, we had been carrying out work to document the humanitarian and health crisis in Gaza, to bring it to public attention in Turkey, and to establish links with various international organizations active in this field with whom we had not previously been in contact. Yet beyond these efforts, it was clear that an initiative capable of having a real international impact was needed.

We thus raised the idea of organizing a regional meeting of medical associations in support of Palestine with the participation of medical associations in West Asia that adopt an anti-Zionist line. In a preliminary meeting with the TMA Central Council, this proposal was received positively. In our informal contacts, the Jordan Medical Association also appeared open to such a gathering. It would also have been possible to secure the participation of the Palestinian medical authority. With the participation of these and several other medical associations from the region, such a meeting could have been held in Amman, the capital of Jordan. However, because active war conditions persisted, along with a range of other obstacles, this initiative could not be realised. We hope that such a meeting can be held in the

¹¹ The British Medical Association, "Update on the British Medical Association's Position on the Israel–Gaza Conflict", 4 July 2025, <https://www.bma.org.uk/what-we-do/working-internationally/our-international-work/an-update-on-the-bma-s-position-on-the-israel-gaza-conflict>

period ahead.

At precisely this juncture, we came across the decision of the British MA mentioned above. We attached great importance to this decision and thought it had to be amplified on a world scale. We therefore decided, first of all, to place the matter on the agenda of our umbrella organization, TMA.

On 4 July 2025, as the Executive Board of the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine, we wrote a letter to the TMA Central Council. After summarising the catastrophic humanitarian and health situation in Gaza, the letter continued as follows:

(...)

As an extension of the reactions recently expressed by institutions and organizations bringing together physicians across the world, the British MA has taken a historic step against the silence of the World MA in the face of the health catastrophe in Gaza. In that spirit, we believe that a stronger, broader and more international response must be organized.

To that end, we believe that TMA should make a call containing the following points:

- 1.The establishment of a permanent ceasefire and a durable peace,
- 2.The opening of humanitarian aid corridors at the borders so that humanitarian aid and medical supplies can enter Gaza unconditionally,
- 3.The restoration of the distribution of humanitarian aid in Gaza, under the leadership of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA),
- 4.The strict observance of the Geneva Conventions and international law with regard to the protection of health facilities, health personnel and patients,
- 5.The release of detained health personnel,
- 6.The necessary arrangements to enable the transfer of patients from Gaza to Turkey,
- 7.The urgent initiation of the necessary work to support Gaza's healthcare system, which is on the verge of collapse.

We believe that such a call would have an important impact on the political authorities, the national and international medical community, and public opinion.

In addition, we believe that an open public letter should be sent to the World MA and the Israeli MA conveying our criticisms of their one-sided attitude on this question.

Should it be deemed appropriate and necessary, we wish to state that, as a working group, we stand ready to provide every kind of contribution.

In its reply dated 16 July 2025, the TMA Central Council informed us that the letter had been forwarded to the TMA Office of International Relations and that the initiative of the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine was considered as valuable. The council further stated that

- letters would be written on this matter to the United Nations, the World MA and the Israeli MA
- work would be carried out to secure the adoption of a resolution on this matter at the World MA General Assembly to be held in Porto, Portugal, in October 2025
- the decision adopted in favour of solidarity with Palestine at the 77th Grand Congress of TMA would be made public.

5.The road to the World MA General Assembly

In the period leading up to the Porto General Assembly, TMA, while on the one hand engaging in diplomatic initiatives aimed at changing the World MA's stance, on the other hand began to work on texts that could be submitted to the World MA General Assembly and establish contacts with other national medical associations.

In July 2025, TMA prepared a proposal addressed to the World MA and placed it on the agenda of member medical associations. This document discussed in detail the destruction suffered by Gaza's health system and emphasised that attacks on health workers, patients and health facilities had to stop immediately. At the same time, it pointed to the open violation of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions and demanded that the World MA adopt a clear position on the matter.¹²

At this stage, three distinct but connected steps were taken here: a letter was sent to the World MA calling on it to make an explicit appeal to the Israeli government; a formal motion was prepared to be discussed at the World MA General Assembly; and a joint text was opened for signature by member associations together with the British MA. Though close in content, these three initiatives differed from one another in function and in addressee.

As part of this multi-layered line, TMA also sent a letter to the Israeli MA, clearly stating that the targeting of health workers, the bombing of hospitals and the ill-treatment of detained health workers were incompatible with the values of the

¹² The Turkish Medical Association, "Resolution Submitted by the TMA for Discussion at the World MA General Assembly", 28 July 2025, https://www.ttb.org.tr/haber_goster.php?Guid=6a372a28-6bc2-11f0-a4f1-bd2273d9e8fe

medical profession. It thus made known to the Israeli MA that relations could not be maintained if no clear stance were taken on these questions.¹³

As these initiatives began to resonate internationally, TMA and the British MA prepared a joint text calling for a stronger and clearer stance in the face of the health catastrophe unfolding in Gaza.¹⁴ The document, which was sent to the medical associations that are members of the World MA and simultaneously opened for their signatures, listed demands such as an immediate ceasefire, the cessation of attacks on healthcare facilities, the release of detained health workers, the unobstructed delivery of humanitarian aid, and compliance with international humanitarian law. This initiative served to make visible the emerging alignments and polarization among medical associations internationally on the eve of the World MA General Assembly.

Opening the joint text for signature also drew into the issue many medical associations that had long remained silent or acted cautiously. As the World MA General Assembly in Porto approached, medical associations from eleven different countries, including Ireland, Spain, South Africa, Tunisia, Pakistan and Uruguay, signed the text, and the initiative thus won a broader basis of international support.¹⁵ In a statement shared with the international public on the day the World MA General Assembly began, concern was expressed over the severe damage inflicted on Gaza's health system by Israeli forces since October 2023, and it was stressed that the targeting of health workers in violation of international humanitarian law was unacceptable. The statement listed demands such as a ceasefire, the protection of healthcare services, independent investigations, and the unobstructed delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. This joint declaration became an important step in making visible the common position that had taken shape among international medical associations before the Porto General Assembly and in calling on the World MA to adopt an explicit stance.

6. A rupture in Porto: the World MA General Assembly

The World MA General Assembly held in Porto in October 2025 convened un-

13 The Turkish Medical Association, "The TMA Called on the Israeli Medical Association to Take an Active Stand to Prevent the Humanitarian Tragedy in Gaza", 16 September 2025, https://www.ttb.org.tr/haber_goster.php?Guid=32500200-9300-11f0-9f74-bd5fa10d5dac

14 The Turkish Medical Association and British Medical Association, "Letter from the TMA and the British MA to the Member Medical Associations of the World MA Calling on Them to 'Act for Gaza'", September 2025, https://www.ttb.org.tr/haber_goster.php?Guid=a6ce2bbc-994e-11f0-bc01-624b51b495cd

15 The Turkish Medical Association, "Joint Statement by Medical Associations from Different Countries on the Humanitarian Tragedy in Gaza: Urgent Measures Must Be Taken", 8 October 2025, https://www.ttb.org.tr/haber_goster.php?Guid=de33f0d3-a436-11f0-9982-42010a9c0003

der the shadow of these debates. TMA's representatives at the General Assembly were Prof. Dr. Alpay Azap, President of the TMA Central Council, and Prof. Dr. Murat Civaner, Coordinator of the TMA Office of International Relations. The attacks in Gaza on health workers, patients and health facilities had become the foremost issue on the agenda of the General Assembly. On the first day of the assembly, various democratic mass organizations held protests for Gaza in front of the conference venue. In the declaration read by the protesters, the World MA's silence regarding what was taking place in Gaza was denounced, and the organization was called upon to adopt a clearer stance against the Israeli government and the Israeli MA. The declaration also thanked some medical associations, including TMA, the British MA and the SAMA for their sensitivity to the situation in Gaza. The fact that the protesters carried placards referring positively to TMA and chanted slogans in its favour was a source of pride, showing that the defence of medical values rising from Turkey had also resonated internationally.¹⁶

As a result of the negotiations, the World MA, on the basis of the motion submitted by TMA, unanimously adopted a resolution at the General Assembly calling on the Israeli government to comply with the Geneva Conventions and the other fundamental texts of international humanitarian law.¹⁷ TMA's was the only motion on Gaza submitted to the General Assembly in Porto. It was first discussed in the socio-medical committee, then in the council, and finally in the General Assembly. Throughout the process, there were attempts to dilute the political weight of the text, to render Israel invisible and to reduce the matter to a conflict between two equal parties. In particular, the amendment proposed by the German Medical Association leaned towards a line that presented the devastation as if it were merely the result of a war between two equal sides, thereby pushing Israel's direct responsibility into the background and obscuring the perpetrator. By contrast, proposals coming from the Scandinavian countries were closer to TMA's line. In the end, thanks to the intensive contacts, meetings and negotiations conducted by the TMA delegation, the resolution was preserved in its essential political content. The dominance of a language that obscures Israel and equates the oppressed with the oppressor was

¹⁶ The Turkish Medical Association, "The World Medical Association General Assembly Opens in Porto Amid Demonstrations", <https://www.ttb.org.tr/745ygzk>

¹⁷ The Turkish Medical Association, "The TMA's Motion Was Adopted Unanimously: The World Medical Association Called on the Israeli Government to Comply with the Geneva Conventions", October 2025, https://www.ttb.org.tr/haber_goster.php?Guid=6f327a00-a81b-11f0-8e44-42010a9c0003; The World Medical Association, "WMA Resolution Calling on the Israeli Government to Comply with the Geneva Conventions and Other Applicable Instruments of Humanitarian Law", 76th WMA General Assembly, 11 October 2025, <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-resolution-calling-on-the-israeli-government-to-comply-with-the-geneva-conventions-and-other-applicable-instruments-of-humanitarian-law/>

not allowed.

Unlike World MA statements issued during the genocide, the adopted resolution did not employ ambiguous language covering over the perpetrator. By addressing the Israeli government directly, it demanded an immediate halt to attacks on health workers, patients and health facilities, respect for medical neutrality, the unobstructed delivery of humanitarian and medical aid to Gaza, the involvement of independent investigators, attention to the situation of detained health workers, and a comprehensive study by the World Health Organization to establish the scale of damage done to Gaza's health system and to address reconstruction and reparations. It also called on the World MA and all member medical associations to condemn clearly and unequivocally the attacks on health workers and health institutions in the ongoing conflict.

The Porto resolution became a document shaping the World MA's future stance. Indeed, after the General Assembly, the World MA published this text as an official policy document, thereby giving it an institutional character that went beyond the provisional assessment of a meeting. Thus, for the first time on this scale, the pro-Israeli language prevailing within the World MA and blurring political responsibility was seriously challenged. Whereas earlier statements had often rendered the perpetrator invisible, the text adopted in Porto was compelled, to the extent possible, to employ the correct words required by the values of the medical profession. This resolution also meant that Israel's targeting of health workers in Gaza, and its systematic attacks on the health system and the Palestinian people, were now openly placed on record in the international medical arena. In short, the Porto resolution marked a historic turning point: it opened a breach in the World MA's silent and conciliatory line towards Israel and demonstrated what organized international pressure can achieve.

7. The anti-Zionist struggle in the field of health must continue

The attacks carried out by the occupying Zionist Israeli state against Gaza systematically targeted civilians, hospitals, ambulances, and health workers. The bombing of hospitals, the arrest and killing of health workers, and the obstruction of humanitarian and medical aid constituted clear violations of international humanitarian law and the ethical values of the medical profession. The deliberate destruction of Gaza's health system, infrastructure, and health services formed one of the central dimensions of genocidal devastation. In this context, the field of health became one of the principal terrains of struggle where colonial violence was directly exercised and the conditions of life of an entire people were targeted.

The World MA's silence during the early stages of the genocide, and its language that equated the perpetrator and victim, brought into sharper focus the question of

what kind of political position international medical organizations should adopt in such a process. The resolution adopted in Porto showed that this line was not unchangeable, and that even institutional structures such as the World MA could be forced open through organized intervention and international solidarity. This resolution does not merely signify a limited change in the World MA's discourse on Palestine. It also represents a historic threshold by making Israel's crimes in the field of health more visible within international professional organizations and by establishing more clearly that discussions of isolation, sanctions, and political pressure—until now largely kept outside this sphere—also constitute a legitimate line of struggle in the field of health.

This threshold was not crossed spontaneously. The initiative launched by the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine, and its adoption by the TMA and transfer to the international level, provided the political and organizational foundation of the process leading to the Porto resolution. The efforts to make visible the destruction inflicted upon Gaza's health system, the contacts established with international medical associations, and the joint initiative carried out together with the British MA played a decisive role in the emergence of the unanimously adopted Porto resolution. The fact that an initiative launched at the local level was able, through a correct political line and determined international intervention, to produce results on a platform such as the World MA showed that struggle in the field of health is not merely a form of bearing witness, but a terrain of struggle capable of producing direct political consequences.

The Porto resolution also demonstrated that the struggle to be waged against Israel in the field of health does not have to remain limited to the level of statements, exposure, and moral reaction. It is now more clearly visible that institutional relations, forms of representation, partnerships, and mechanisms of international legitimacy in the field of health are themselves matters of political struggle. While hospitals are being bombed in Palestine, health workers are being killed, and the health system of an entire people is being systematically destroyed, questioning Israel's ordinary international position in the field of health, expanding discussions of isolation and sanctions in this sphere, and advancing this line through more concrete instruments have become urgent tasks that can no longer be postponed. The breach opened in Porto shows that the international struggle against Israel in the field of health has entered a new stage.

The Porto resolution also revealed a broader truth: international professional organizations are not "neutral" or "universal" institutions. The positions adopted by these institutions are shaped within the political balance of forces created by their members, health workers, and international public opinion. The refusal of physicians and health organizations to remain silent in the face of the genocide in Gaza

has shown that it is possible to create a form of solidarity powerful enough to alter the direction of such international institutions. Yet it should not be assumed that this gain will become permanent on its own. Implementing, following up, expanding, and transforming the decisions taken into new fields of intervention all require political struggle. The consolidation of an anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist line in the field of health depends on the solidarity of health workers, the determined stance of professional organizations, and organized pressure capable of challenging the regime of legitimacy in this sphere. The breach that has been opened can widen only to the extent that this pressure is sustained.

Therefore, the result achieved in Porto is not a conclusion but a beginning. The field of health can no longer be conceived as a neutral ground standing outside colonial occupation, genocidal destruction, and the international normality that protects them. The task today is to transform the political opening created in Porto into a lasting line of struggle, to carry forward the instruments of isolation, sanctions, and international pressure against Israel in the field of health, and to raise solidarity with the Palestinian people to a more organized, more sustained, and more effective level. The breach opened in Porto has shown that the common and determined intervention of physicians' organizations can alter the stance of international institutions. For this reason, the Porto resolution should be regarded as a historical threshold that will shape the future course of the struggle for isolation and sanctions against Israel in the field of health.¹⁸

¹⁸ In such a barren environment, in which many medical associations across the world have been hesitant to take a stand against the World MA and the Israeli MA, we owe thanks to all those whose labour made this initiative possible and turned it into an oasis in the desert. I would like to thank above all Prof. Dr. Serap Erdoğan Taycan, a member of the Executive Board of the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine, who contributed in this period to the work of the TMA Office of International Relations and is also President of the Central Executive Board of the Turkish Psychiatric Association; Prof. Dr. Alpay Azap and the TMA Central Council; Prof. Dr. Murat Civaner and the TMA Office of International Relations; the IMC Executive Board; and the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine. Thank you all. Solidarity.

