

**Ms Amanda Pritchard**

Chief Executive  
NHS England

*Sent via email*

12 January 2024

Dear Ms Pritchard,

We are writing on behalf of the BMA to express our concern regarding reports from our members of discrimination, antisemitism and Islamophobia faced by medical students and doctors within medical schools and the NHS. As an institution that plays a crucial role in providing healthcare services to a diverse population, it is imperative that the NHS upholds the values of inclusion and diversity, maintaining an environment that is free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination, not only in patient care but also in the treatment of its own healthcare staff.

Members have raised with us concern that many doctors and medical students have been feeling marginalised or have faced adverse consequences due to their identity, race, personal and political views, and religious beliefs, lately exacerbated by the ongoing escalation of conflict in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. Some examples include doctors feeling unable to express their religious identity, challenges in exercising their freedom of expression, threats to refer doctors to the GMC, doctors feeling unable to share their views about the impact of the conflict on themselves or their colleagues, friends and families.

Incidents like these are troubling as they not only impact the well-being of the individuals involved but also because they have the potential to compromise the quality of patient care if healthcare professionals are unable to express their identity and views in the workplace.

We urge the NHS to take proactive measures to ensure a supportive and inclusive working environment for all doctors, regardless of their personal beliefs. The NHS already has bullying, harassment, discrimination, and dignity at work policies, and we urge you to consider sending further communications to trusts to remind their leadership of how and when these policies should be applied in practice. Highlighting that policies and communications must be culturally sensitive to the diverse identities in the NHS workforce, and that for many who have cultural ties to the conflict there may need to be additional awareness and sensitivity to ensure fair outcomes.

A healthy and psychologically safe workforce must be a priority for the NHS. Any member of staff who suffers from racism or any form of discrimination including antisemitism or Islamophobia is one too many. We know that whilst it remains unmeasured, the impact on these individuals' lives both in, and outside the workplace both now and in the long-term is serious.

As medical professionals we understand the broad challenges faced by the NHS. However, it is crucial that this issue is addressed in a manner that upholds the principles of equality, protects the rights of

**Co-chief executive officers:** Neeta Major & Rachel Podolak

Registered as a Company limited by Guarantee. Registered No. 8848 England.  
Registered office: BMA House, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9JP.



individuals to express their beliefs without fear of retribution, and ensures a safe working environment for all.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and trust that you will take the necessary steps to safeguard the well-being of doctors, medical students and all staff working in the NHS.

The BMA will continue to provide support to doctors who are facing these unacceptable incidents of antisemitism, Islamophobia, discrimination, and undue pressures in the workplace and would be happy to have our organisation signposted to in any communications to medical students and doctors.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing about the actions taken to address this important issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Banfield', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Professor Philip Banfield**  
Chair of Council, BMA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Patel', with a small flourish at the end.

**Dr Latifa Patel**  
Representative Body Chair and Equality Lead, BMA