

The Rt Hon Lord Cameron
Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Sent via email

12 January 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

Re. Humanitarian crisis in Gaza

We are writing to you, on behalf of the BMA (British Medical Association), to express our grave concern about the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Gaza. As medical professionals, we are deeply alarmed by the disregard for international humanitarian law and the principles of medical neutrality enshrined in the Geneva Conventions.

We have liaised with our colleagues in Médecins Sans Frontières and are aware of the dire situations medical professionals are facing in Gaza. Normal medical services have been suspended; supplies including water, fuel and medicines are highly limited or unavailable entirely; the majority of hospitals have been forced to close.

Furthermore, the Israeli blockade of Gaza has led to an inexcusable shortage of basic necessities to all civilians including, but not limited to, water, food, and fuel. This is having an extraordinarily damaging impact on the wellbeing of the populace and contributing to disease outbreaks, leading the UN and the Red Cross to describe the situation as a “humanitarian crisis”.

There has been damage to hundreds of medical facilities. According to the World Health Organization, there were 427 attacks on healthcare by the end of November. Hundreds of medical personnel have lost their lives. Two members of a Médecins Sans Frontières convoy were killed in what has been described as a “deliberate attack”, a clear breach of international humanitarian law.

The above is a mere snapshot of the devastation and horror that is being faced in the region. To us and many international observers, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the UN, this represents a clear breach of international humanitarian law. The impact on healthcare and health workers is indicative of a violation of medical neutrality.

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The BMA has developed a detailed position statement¹ on the crisis, focussing on medical neutrality, including key asks to protect the health rights of those impacted. We strongly urge the UK Government to work with other governments to call for:

1. An immediate ceasefire
2. Respect for international humanitarian law
3. Respect for medical impartiality and neutrality
4. Resumption of supplies and resources entering Gaza
5. The establishment of a humanitarian corridor

The situation in Israel and Palestine is a far-reaching crisis and its impact is felt around the world. It is vital that the UK stands up for human rights and medical neutrality during this crucial period if, for no other reason, than it is the right thing to do.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Philip Banfield
Chair of Council, BMA



Dr Latifa Patel
Representative Body Chair and Equality Lead, BMA

¹ <https://www.bma.org.uk/what-we-do/working-internationally/our-international-work/bma-position-israel-gaza-conflict-2023#:~:text=Addenda-Introduction,health%20rights%20throughout%20the%20world.>