

To date, more than 340 healthcare workers have been killed in Israel's military offensive against the Palestinian population living in Gaza. An additional 350-400 have been injured and more than 100 have been arrested by the Israeli army. Thirty out of Gaza's thirty-six hospitals have been bombed to the point of non-functionality, while it is estimated that more than fifty primary care health centres have been destroyed. Additionally, one hundred and twenty-three ambulances have been damaged. The higher education sector has also been decimated, with all Gazan universities destroyed by bombing, and close to 200 academics having been killed by Israeli bombardment. Against the backdrop of nearly 30 000 Palestinians and about 1 200 Israelis having been killed in this military campaign, a worsening man-made public health crisis due to mass starvation, cold exposure, lack of clean drinking water and no access to healthcare for acute or chronic illnesses, we are undoubtedly witness to one of the most horrific events in modern history.

The South African Academy of Family Physicians (SAAFP) is an organisation that represents the interests of family physicians, who mostly work in poor and underserved communities in urban and rural South Africa. We choose to work in these communities because we believe deeply that we can make a difference in the lives of marginalised communities, working together with them to restore and enhance our collective sense of dignity and humanity. This love for humanity compels us to raise our voices in solidarity with those healthcare workers who have been killed, injured or arrested. We also raise our voices in support of those who courageously persist in caring for their patients despite the real threats of violent injury perpetuated by the Israeli military against on-duty medical personnel.

Our thoughts are with the many thousands of patients who are unable to access the healthcare they need. The children who have endured, and continue to endure, surgery without effective anaesthetic. The chronically ill, disabled and elderly who have no recourse to the palliative and rehabilitative care they need. The dialysis patients who can no longer access these life-giving services. As family physicians we are also acutely aware of the deep psychosocial impact of trauma, illness, disability and grief, and the long-lasting impact this can have on the lives of patients.

The SAAFP calls for the following:

- The SA government should continue its sterling diplomatic and legal efforts to bring an immediate and lasting end to this violence.
- National, regional and global medical organisations should speak out against this ongoing military offensive against a defensive population.
- Support to the Palestinian population for a comprehensive rebuilding process when the violence ends.
- Academic and health institutions extend moral and material support to Palestinian healthcare workers and academics.
- A particular focus on the holistic wellbeing of children in this conflict zone, with acknowledgement of the lasting effects of the emotional and psychological trauma they are enduring.