

JBIMA Editorial

Prof Sharif Kaf Al-Ghazal, Editor in Chief

Assalamo Alaikom

The situation in Gaza is currently preoccupying all our minds. I find myself constantly remembering the scenes of our colleagues there whose lives have been shattered as a result of the Israeli bombardment over the past 22 months.

The documentary “Gaza: Doctors Under Attack”, was finally screened by Channel 4 a few weeks ago, months after the BBC declined to broadcast after fears over impartiality. Having watched the documentary and been close to tears at times after what I witnessed, it’s a grave stain on the BBC’s reputation to have prevaricated and ultimately declined to show it. The documentary, which billed itself as a “forensic investigation” into claims that the IDF has been systematically targeting Palestinian medics in all 36 of Gaza’s hospitals, is a harrowing watch. It confirms what we had been clear for a long time; medical professionals have been targeted to cripple Gaza for years to come. As difficult as a building is to replace after it is destroyed, it can be done. But to constantly maim and kill medics who need years of training sets the rebuilding process back indefinitely. After all, a society can’t recover and one day progress without effective healthcare.

The documentary also shone a light on medical ethics, and the complicity of Israeli medics in the torture of their Palestinian counterparts. Some Israeli medics simply refused to treat Palestinian medics who had been detained, whilst some actively harmed them by physically abusing them. An anonymous Israeli medic recalled seeing a Palestinian detainee being forced to undergo an operation with no anaesthetic. The medic refused to share his name or face to the camera out of fear of reprisals which shockingly demonstrates how Israeli society as a whole is essentially

complicit.

Whilst there have been encouraging scenes more recently of young people refusing to join the IDF due to its crimes in Gaza, these are too few in number and too late. Israeli medics have signed the metaphorical Hippocratic oath like any other doctors; why have they all stayed silent? What doctor inflicts pain instead of treating it? Humanity as a whole has to do better, and the role of the WHO must be under greater scrutiny here. It has been relatively quiet on the medical situation in Gaza until recently when it has spoken of impending famine. The lack of food, water and medicine allowed into Gaza due to the Israeli blockade is drawing out the suffering. To witness a completely man made famine in the 21st century is shameful for humanity. We say never again, but continue to turn a blind eye to atrocities.

The fact that this is happening in the age of social media and when most of us in the West have 24 hour access to the internet within the palms of our hands is shameful. In the past, other populations could claim ignorance. We don’t have that option. Young people of all backgrounds and religions have protested across the world and some have joined aid flotillas, but the international response from states, the UN and other organisations is poor.

The Muslim Ummah as a collective must reflect on its role here too. Instead, rulers are navel-gazing and offering tepid support for a two-state solution which is not going to do anything on the ground in Gaza.

Humanity as a whole has to do better. When history is written in the years to come, children will ask their parents and grandparents about what happened here; how will humanity’s failure here be explained?

On a happier note, I would be remiss not to thank colleagues at BIMA for all their hard work in organising the most recent Annual Conference in late June. The tagline “Saving the Health of the Nation” was particularly apt in an era where we see the rise in health problems due to structural inequities and the challenges of 21st century living too.

Thank you to all the organisers, speakers, and contributors. I am delighted that so many well presented and excellent posters will be shared in this edition of JBIMA.

It is the hard work of our contributors and the interest of our readers which keeps this journal going.

May Allah ease the affairs of the Palestinian people and guide us all.

With very best wishes
Wassalam.

Prof. Sharif Kaf Al-Ghazal
JBIMA, Editor in Chief