

Dr. Hassan Najjar , The Physician of the Nation and Its Living Conscience - Obituary

Dr. Tammam Kilani

Senior Ophthalmic Consultant in Vienna, Austria, President of the Union of Arab Physicians and Pharmacists in Austria

Correspondence: dr.kelani@hotmail.com

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

“And whoever saves one life, it is as if he has saved all of mankind.”

On April 25, 2026, one of the brightest chapters of Arab medicine in the Diaspora came to a close. Dr. Hassan Najjar, passed away at the age of 91, after a life spent as a healer of wounds—both of individuals and of nations—and as a defender of the oppressed, from Aleppo to Bosnia to Gaza.

This is a comprehensive documentary account of a man who was not merely an individual, but an institution walking on two feet.

First: The Physician and Surgeon... From Istanbul to Stuttgart

Birth and upbringing:

Dr. Hassan Najjar was born in 1935 in the city of Aleppo, into a distinguished patriotic family. His father, Yassin Najjar, was among the notable figures of Aleppo who resisted French colonialism.

Education:

He completed his secondary education in 1952 and graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at Istanbul University.



He later specialized in general surgery in West Germany, training in Hanover hospitals until he attained the rank of Senior Consultant Surgeon.

Return to the Homeland:

He worked as a physician in Morocco, in the city of Youssoufia, before returning to Aleppo in 1970. There, he contributed to the establishment and development of Aleppo Private Hospital (formerly Hanano), where he headed the surgery department and became one of the pioneers who introduced modern surgical practices to the city.

Second: Between Imprisonment and Assassination Attempt... The Price of a Free Word

Dr. Hassan's path was not paved with ease. He paid dearly for his principles:

1. He was arrested in 1979 under the former regime of Hafez al-Assad, as part of a campaign targeting intellectuals and independent physicians.

2. In 1980, he survived an assassination attempt when intelligence forces stormed the operating room during a procedure. He was forced to leave Syria for Germany after a warning from an honorable officer that his name was on an execution list.

Exile did not silence him. He opened a clinic in Stuttgart and transformed his personal suffering into a public cause.

Third: The Architect of Arab Physicians in Europe... 25 Years of Building

In Germany, Dr. Hassan chose not comfort, but construction:

1. He founded the Union of Arab Physicians in Europe and served as its president for 25 years, transforming it from an idea into the most powerful Arab medical body in the diaspora.

2. A pioneer of medical conferences, he was the driving force behind launching Arab medical conferences from Europe to Arab capitals, connecting thousands of physicians, transferring knowledge, and opening training opportunities for young Arab doctors.

3. He insisted on continuing the ***"Arab Physician"*** medical journal as the only Arabic-language medical publication issued in Europe, believing that the Arabic language can encompass all sciences.

4. In 2008, he signed a historic twinning agreement in Vienna between the Union of Arab Physicians in Europe and the Union of Arab Physicians and Pharmacists in Austria.

5. He contributed to numerous medical and educational initiatives, including Al-Andalus University in Al-Qadmous, Syria, where he served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees—his body in Germany, but his heart in the homeland.

Fourth: The Relief Doctor... From Bosnia to Palestine to Syria

Dr. Hassan believed that *"medicine without humanity is an incomplete profession."* He personally led medical relief missions to every place where wounds were bleeding:

1. Afghanistan: During the Soviet occupation, he carried his surgical kit into dangerous areas مناطق to treat the wounded and civilians.

2. Bosnia and Herzegovina: In the 1990s, he was among the first Arab physicians to reach besieged Sarajevo, working in field hospitals under bombardment and saving hundreds of lives from genocide.

3. Palestine – Gaza: Palestine was never absent from his heart. He joined medical delegations that broke the siege on Gaza, performed complex surgeries under near-impossible conditions, and trained local doctors.

4. The Arab and African worlds: From Somalia to Yemen to refugee camps, he left his mark wherever there was suffering.

Fifth: Defender of Detainees... The Voice of the Voiceless

Dr. Hassan never forgot those behind bars. He was active in advocating for Syrian detainees—including his own brother—through international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International.

He turned his office in Stuttgart into an operations room for documenting violations and corresponding with European parliaments.

He believed that defending a prisoner's freedom is no less important than removing a tumor from a patient's body.

Sixth: With the Syrian Revolution... The Doctor Returns at Seventy-Seven

When the Syrian revolution erupted in 2011, he was 77 years old. While others retired, he put on his white coat once again:

1. He established medical centres in Reyhanlı and Antakya along the Turkish border to treat wounded civil Syrians and displaced .
2. He personally worked shifts in an emergency clinic with twenty beds, performing surgeries, visiting camps, and following up on the needs of the displaced.
3. He conveyed the suffering of the Syrian people to medical and human rights forums across Europe, becoming a voice of the revolution in international conferences.

Conclusion: The Knight Has Passed... The School Remains

What can be written in elegy for such a man?

We write that he was the physician of the nation and its living conscience.

We write that he combined the surgeon's scalpel with the heart of a revolutionary, the precision of a scholar with the compassion of a human being.

We write that the Union of Arab Physicians he founded, the conferences he launched, and the patients he healed in Bosnia, Gaza, Aleppo, and Antakya all testify that he truly "*saved all of mankind.*"

Rest in peace, O father of surgeons.

You have left us a school whose name is this: *to be a physician is to be, first and foremost, a human being.*

Your legacy is a trust upon our shoulders—your students in Europe and the Arab world—and it will not be lost.