**Ceasefire now!**

Selena And Seiji Yamada

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Dr Hammam Alloh, a 36-year-old nephrologist, was killed in an airstrike on his family home on November 13. Prior to his death, when asked why he was not leaving his patients at the Al Shifa Hospital, he replied: “If I go, who would treat my patients? We are not animals. We have the right to receive proper health care. You think I went to medical school and for my postgraduate degrees for a total of 14 years, so I think only about my life and not my patients?”

Remember how back in November, during the siege of Al Shifa, Gaza’s largest hospital, Israel fed us lies about a Hamas command center underneath the hospital? Remember the fake video of the woman posing as a Palestinian nurse at Al Shifa? – accusing Hamas of stealing all the fuel and medicine from the hospital? Why would Israel invent such lies? Because they know that it is wrong to attack health workers and hospitals. Because they know that it is wrong to deny medicine to children.

In fact, it is Israel that has targeted health workers, ambulances, and hospitals – so that Gaza’s health system has been nearly completely destroyed. Under International Humanitarian Law, under the Geneva Conventions, it is prohibited to attack health workers and health infrastructure. There are actually rules of war that govern how militaries fight. That is why militaries paint their ambulances, field hospitals, and the helmets of medics with red crosses and red crescents.

It is obvious by now that Israel specifically targets Gaza’s health services. As well as its bakeries, food aid distribution sites, press, mosques, churches, schools and universities, its poets, its writers. Israel is trying to destroy the possibility of a next generation of health workers. Pregnant women undergo cesarean sections without anesthesia. Children have limbs amputated without anesthesia. Children are starving and drinking contaminated and brackish water. Infectious diseases such as diarrhea and skin infections are rampant. The trauma of bombardment and deprivation will lead to lifelong emotional scars.

This is the face of genocide. It is being livestreamed, and you can watch it on your phone. As citizens of the US, 3.8 billion of our tax dollars yearly go to fund this genocide. Joe Biden wants Congress to approve 14 billion more this year. This money is used to buy the F-16s and the tank shells. Our government vetoes the UN Security Council resolutions calling for a cease fire.

In health care, we work every day to understand the sanctity of life and the absolute immutability of death. We are all driven by our aspirations to preserve the health and livelihoods of our patients. Therefore, we cannot sit idly by as humans in Gaza are stripped of their basic right to live – never again able to follow their dreams, pursue an education, fall in love, or eat a warm, homemade meal.

Health care workers are faced with the fragility of the human body practically on a daily basis. During the course of our careers, we become intimately familiar with the value of a human life. By taking the Hippocratic Oath, we vowed first to heal patients to the best of our abilities, to treat them all equally, and to advocate for their health and wellbeing. Although the wording differs slightly among institutions, the essence of the Hippocratic oath is the same internationally.

For the past four months, we have watched a nightmare unfold in Gaza. We had expected ALL healthcare workers to be at the forefront of the fight against this massacre. But instead, medical journals and organized medicine came out with neutral statements. The Journal of the American Medical Association published an article which described the circumstances under which it is legal to target medical facilities.

We thus feel betrayed by medical institutions that supposedly uphold the value of human life – yet remain silent about the ongoing genocide.

One of us attended a “talk story” session with Hawaii Congressional Rep Ed Case. His constituents spoke eloquently on behalf of Palestine. It seemed that everything that could have been said about Gaza had been said, and every reasonable argument had already been made. At this point, Ed Case and politicians like him are choosing to remain ignorant – or they actually back genocide. They are certainly using our tax dollars to support it. We are past the point of words. So, maybe it’s not about choosing the right words. Maybe it’s something else.

Cornel West asks us, “What kind of country are we? What kind of people are we?”

As health workers of Hawaii, our answer is that we are people who decry genocide. We are people who stand for health and human rights.

On Friday, January 26, the International Court of Justice announced its “order indicating provisional measures.” Because the ICJ didn’t call for a cease-fire, the New York Times spun it like a win for Israel. But, apparently, in legalese, a cease-fire is when two warring parties stop fighting. But the ICJ is, however, clearly calling for an end to the genocide.

As health workers of Hawaii, we also call for an end to genocide now. This is a marathon, not a sprint. It is about remaining persistent in your advocacy at a level that you can maintain and being brave when the opportunity to speak up presents itself. More importantly, the biggest differences we, as individuals, can make are in our own circles with family and friends. If we can continue to pressure our communities to see the truth about what is happening, even if it takes years, things WILL change. They HAVE to change. We owe this to the people of Palestine and to oppressed people everywhere.

We hope to emphasize the inhumanity of what is happening and urge health workers everywhere to reckon with the sanctity of life and the absolute permanence of death, murder, genocide.

Excerpted: ‘Hawaii Health Workers Call for End to Genocide’.

Courtesy: Counterpunch.org