



Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territory: The Practise of Medicine is Being Used As a Political Tool

Statement by Tlaleng Mofokeng, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health

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As a child survivor of a brutal apartheid regime, I know first-hand the trauma both seen and untold as well as enduring inter-generational physical and mental health impact of racism, structural discrimination and violence.

This inhumane situation in the oPT does not represent a moment of reflection or learning for the world. On the one hand, it represents a display of a recalcitrant attitude of an occupying regime and its allies and on the other hand, an indomitable commitment to the autonomy of the Palestinian people, amidst in real time coruscant violence.

This evolving crisis is incompatible with the realization of the right of everyone to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. **The practise of medicine itself is being used as a political tool.** The attacks, harassment and threats of violence against healthcare workers, health facilities, humanitarian organizations, and underlying determinants of health continue to catapult this humanitarian situation to proportions yet to be fully quantified, if at all possible. I remain concerned at the ongoing risks of water and airborne diseases, the lack of dignity proper preservation and storage of the deceased as well as the absence of dignity for their burial. **The impact of weapons used in war on public health heightens recurrent and future health, economic, social sequela due to blast, heat, radiation injuries amongst others.** The right to health, in all its forms and at all levels is experiencing formidable structural challenges.

The extent to which sustainable human development, peace and security has been achieved must be measured and understood by the extent to which human rights are protected, promoted and fulfilled by all member States.

Any peace mediation process must not perpetuate the prevailing power imbalances and must take into account the false narratives of equivalency between occupied people and an occupying nuclear power. All interventions must centre human rights of all people.

Albeit through the glistening eyes, and burning flesh, thirst and starvation, we witness the collective indestructible human spirit. This is no exceptional display of resilience by the Palestinian people, it is a story of many people all over the world who continue to be dehumanised, abused and suffer from oppression, displacement, massacre and erosion of dignity through conflicts and war.

The future of the world has no space for selective approaches to human rights principles and cannot justify war. The evacuation orders must also be examined as a tool to further displace Palestinians from their land with no prospect of returning. An end to all forms of violence including colonial and imperialist violence must remain the ultimate goal. **Though the pen may hold powers, world leaders have much more than the pen and must utilise all available avenues and responsibilities entrusted upon them** for prevention, recourse and justice.

I reiterate yet again the call on an immediate ceasefire and end to the occupation of the Palestinian territory.

ENDS