

cohealth calls for peace in Gaza and Israel

December 2023

cohealth is deeply concerned by the ongoing violence in Gaza and Israel, and the devastating impact it is having on everyone in the region.

We join the widespread calls from around the world for an immediate and permanent ceasefire on humanitarian grounds and an end to violence. We call for all parties to uphold human rights, abide by international law and not only protect civilian lives, but ensure that food, fuel, clean water, electricity, aid and health care can reach those who need it.

We strongly condemn the bombing of healthcare and hospitals including the attacks on Al-Shifa Hospital, Al-Quds Hospital, and the Indonesian Hospital.

Contrary to international law, hospitals and health services have been directly attacked, and health workers risk death and injury as they strive to care for and treat the sick, wounded, pregnant, young and elderly in horrendous conditions. Nearly 300 health workers have been killed.^[1] At least 26 of the 35 hospitals in Gaza are not functioning.^[2] The head of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom. Ghebreyesus, said: 'Gaza's health system is on its knees and collapsing.'^[3] As a health service, cohealth supports the need for doctors and healthcare workers being protected to provide safe humanitarian aid in conflict-affected areas.

Since October, Australia's Department of Home Affairs has granted temporary visas to 1700+ people from Israel and recently approved 800+ visas for Palestinians. cohealth welcomes this government decision; an opportunity for people to leave a place of fear, and come to Australia for safety, support, and hope. While safety is paramount, we also acknowledge the trauma these people will be carrying as they arrive in Australia: the trauma of what they've witnessed; the trauma of being displaced and separated from the places, and in many cases, people they love.

As a health service that works closely with refugees and people in our community affected by conflicts around the world, we see firsthand the devastation war has on people. Access to healthcare and urgent supplies are fundamental human rights and must be protected even in times of conflict. cohealth staff, clients and community members have family and friends affected by the escalating violence. They are hurting, they are grieving, and they all want peace.^[4]

As a health service committed to human rights and health and social equity, cohealth condemns violence of any kind. These acts of violence and war have and continue to result in the deaths of civilians.

cohealth calls on the Australian government to do everything within its power to continue to promote an immediate and enduring ceasefire in Gaza and Israel.

^[1] <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-66> accessed 12 December 2023

^[2] <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/29/save-what-remains-of-gaza-hospital-director-says-amid-bombing>

^[3] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/11/israel-hamas-war-idf-khan-younis-gaza-hostages-threats>

^[4] <https://asrc.org.au/2023/11/02/statement-from-the-asylum-seeker-resource-centre-on-the-escalating-violence-in-palestine-and-israel/>