

**Health Care and Public Health Professionals' Call to Immediate Action
to Address the Violence in Israel and Gaza and Its Health Consequences
Initiated by the Peace Caucus
October 27, 2023**

As health care and public health professionals, we unequivocally condemn terrorist attacks against civilians and violence during war against civilians. International law recognizes attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure as crimes against humanity and, when committed during war, as war crimes. The medical and public health consequences of this violence against civilians in Israel and Gaza have been and continue to be horrendous and catastrophic.

The health harms of violence to civilians extend well beyond morbidity and mortality from explosives and other weapons. Forced displacement and restriction of access to food, water, shelter, health care, and medicine create and exacerbate widespread suffering, illness, and death. When people live in crowded conditions during war, they are at increased risk of tuberculosis and other respiratory disorders. When they are denied access to safe water, they develop dehydration and potentially fatal diarrheal diseases, such as cholera.

Malnutrition makes people vulnerable to infectious diseases and causes long-term consequences on health and development. When people with diabetes, epilepsy, or chronic heart or lung disease cannot get their basic medications, they are at increased risk of serious complications and death. When pregnant women do not receive medical care and adequate nutrition, they are at increased risk of potentially fatal complications and delivering premature or low-birthweight infants. During war and terrorist attacks, exposure to violence and the threat of violence also causes mental health problems, which can persist for years afterward.

In addition, war violates human rights, damages critical infrastructure and housing, and diverts resources that support people's health. It also contributes to environmental contamination and degradation, pollution, and climate change.

We call on all parties directly and indirectly involved in the violence in Israel and Gaza and its consequences to immediately:

1. End the violence against all civilians and ensure their security;
2. Free all hostages;
3. Protect all health care workers and health care facilities;
4. Ensure that humanitarian assistance is promptly provided; and
5. Begin to build sustainable peace by ensuring human rights and justice for all.

We also call on health care and public health professionals, as well as their employers and professional organizations, to promote and support these actions.