

Global healthcare vigils demand release of Dr Abu Safiya, director of Kamal Adwan hospital in Gaza

Our reporter
6 January 2025

Healthcare workers from around the world took part in a global vigil Monday organized by Doctors Against Genocide (DAG) and several other organizations to draw attention to Israel's extermination campaign in Gaza, including targeted attacks on hospitals and healthcare workers.

The event, "Sick from Genocide" called on healthcare workers "to reflect on the immense moral injury of funding a genocide and engage the most important aspect of treatment: publicly demanding an end to the genocide in Gaza."

Among the demands raised by Doctors Against Genocide is the release of Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Gaza, who was abducted during the assault on the hospital and is being held by Israel.

Vigils took place across the United States, in New York, San Diego, Detroit; in Montreal, Canada and other cities. In the San Francisco Bay Area a vigil was conducted outside the Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center. In Montreal, a group of doctors protested in front of the Maison de Radio-Canada early Monday and others took part in a silent walk downtown to honor healthcare workers who have been killed in Gaza.

At the Wayne State School of Medicine campus in Detroit, school officials cut short a planned press conference by Doctors Against Genocide Monday afternoon in support of the vigil, reflecting the aggressive response of campus administrators to anti-genocide protests. A police sergeant stationed outside the venue told WSWs reporters, "We are not going to let this happen," saying it had not been cleared by the university.

Several pro-Palestinian youth who had been turned away stopped to speak to the WSWs. Aya, a Syrian immigrant said of the ongoing attempts to silence protests, "Everyone should be deeply disturbed by this response. What we have normalized in Palestine and the Middle East will definitely come here. We see it right in front of our face. Students are going to jail for protesting. They are getting rid of diversity programs. That is a direct response to the Palestinian movement here. People should be worried about what is happening here now."

Aya spoke about the recent Israeli assault on Kamal Adwan Hospital in Gaza. "Israel destroyed everything in the hospital and they took the director of the hospital, Hussam Abu Safiya, and we don't know about his whereabouts. They're stating now that they don't even have a record, but there's video of him walking into their tank.

"We are demanding that they release him and we are calling on other health care workers to speak up. We want to know that our doctors support humanity and that they don't support and stay quiet on things like genocide. This is something that should be spoken up about. We're here to support the doctors who are doing that. Everyone should be speaking up because, our country is literally supporting a genocide."

Aya added about the recent regime change operation in her homeland. "I want everyone out of Syria. Everyone has their hands in the Middle East. Get out and let the people do what they want to do."

Asked about the role of the Biden administration in backing the Israeli genocide to the hilt, Aya said, "It is ridiculous. We don't support them. They don't represent the majority of Americans. We don't want

our tax money funding a genocide. We want our tax money funding our own communities. People can't afford healthcare these days. Insurance companies are taking advantage of people. They can't afford to buy homes. They can't afford education. But we have billions of dollars for overseas to kill people."

The WSWs explained that the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, the youth organization of the Socialist Equality Party, called for young people to turn to the factories and mobilize the working class against the spreading wars. Aya replied, "Michigan is a very important state. We have the 'weapons' corridor up here in Sterling Heights. They have weapons manufacturers lining the streets of Warren and Sterling Heights. Thirty-seven percent of military vehicles are sourced from the state of Michigan for all of the US."

Her friend Sumayya added, "They are nothing without us [workers]. They cannot move anything. Once we realize that power—they are going to keep taking rights away from us until we say its time to stop. But we all have to decide that collectively. It will benefit everybody. Unfortunately it is taking a little bit longer to realize that."

One of the largest vigils was held in New York City. At a press conference, a statement was read from the family of Dr. Abu Safiya calling "on every living conscience and every international organization to call for our father's release and stop these crimes."

Organizers demanded the release of hospital workers and the end of the genocide and accountability for those responsible for these crimes.

The main speaker, Nerdeen Kiswani, the founder and chair of Within Our Lifetime, said, "Gaza faces a triad of death, wounds from air strike, hypothermia and malnutrition. Doctors report patients dying not only from injuries but also from infectious diseases caused by the collapse of the healthcare system under siege. Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sittah has stated that Israel has created a genocidal machine that takes human lives beyond the bombs and the shrapnel."

Supporters of the Socialist Equality Party and IYSSE distributed a statement from SEP National Secretary Joseph Kishore calling for the release of Dr. Abu Safiya. It stated, "Dr. Abu Safiya's abduction underscores the barbarity of Israel's war on Gaza. His life's work as a doctor and hospital director provided a

critical lifeline for children in a region that has endured decades of Israeli blockade, siege, and bombardment. The targeting of Dr. Abu Safiya, alongside the systematic destruction of Gaza's healthcare infrastructure, reveals the genocidal intent of the Israeli state."

It warned, "The genocidal campaign in Gaza is part of a broader imperialist war drive that threatens humanity with global catastrophe," including the US NATO war against Russia, expanding wars in the Middle East and the targeting of China.

Elise Tak, the daughter of Holocaust survivors from the Netherlands told the WSWs, "There is a connection with all the wars going on around the world. It is led by the US, Congo, Sudan, South America, everywhere. The military is all about money, they are killing people for money basically. I don't believe there is a difference between the Republicans and Democrats at all. They are not for us."

Several dozen doctors associated with Healthcare Workers for Palestine in San Diego gathered in Balboa Park on Monday. One worker employed as an intermediary between hospitals and insurance companies told the WSWs, "It's so filthy, the same elites that profit from denying people healthcare in the insurance side of things, also get the US involved in wars abroad. There should be no profit motive in healthcare."

When the WSWs reporter explained that it was necessary to mobilize the working class to stop the genocide he replied, "I agree, it's the workers who need to do something."

A pediatrician in San Diego said, "We can't make the Democrats change their policy. Bernie Sanders too, he's a charlatan who just says the right things sometimes. There is no 'left' in the government, the 'left' there is more neoliberalism."

Another physician said "it would be great if other workers joined us. It is something that needs to be organized."



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