

Dr Mark Porter,  
BMA council chair  
BMA House, Tavistock Square  
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31 May 2017

Dear Dr Porter,

On 17 April 2017, over 1,000 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention centers declared the beginning of an open hunger strike to protest poor conditions in prisons and violations of basic rights. The prisoners' demands include: proper medical care, an end to Israel's practice of administrative detention and stopping the use of isolation.

We write to you with regards to widespread reports of actions planned by the Israeli authorities in response to this hunger strike. These which range from directives issued by the Israeli Ministry of Health to hospitals to require physicians who refuse to force treat hunger strikers to find doctors willing to undertake this action, as well as blueprints for setting up units within Israeli prisons and a field hospital to treat hunger strikers, the latter in cooperation with Magen David Adom and the Israeli army, and a possibility of foreign doctors being brought into force-treat and force-feed the hunger strikers.

There are serious grounds for concern that the Israeli actions are designed to break the hunger strikers and that the involvement of the medical community will constitute a violation of medical ethics. Primarily, that of the Declaration of Tokyo and Declaration of Malta, of which the latter calls for the prevention of the coercion of hunger strikers, clinical independence, confidentiality and trust-building, while emphasizing that force-feeding is 'unjustifiable'. The Malta Declaration, which states, amongst others, that "Whatever their role, physicians must try to prevent coercion or maltreatment of detainees and must protest if it occurs" (principle 1) and that "physicians or other health care personnel may not apply undue pressure of any sort on the hunger striker to suspend the strike" (guideline 6).

Medact respectfully requests that based on the grave and urgent situation described above, the BMA urge the World Medical Association to instruct its affiliate physicians to refrain from force feeding and call on free access of independent physicians to hunger strikers. We request that this call, if possible, be done in a public manner, so that the Israeli authorities are aware of the stance of the BMA.

Your Sincerely,



Dr David McCoy  
Director  
Medact

**Medact**

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