

British Medical Association

0300 123 1233 bma.org.uk
BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP
T 020 7383 6447 F 020 7383 6233
E jsheather@bma.org.uk



Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan St.
PO Box 187
Kiryat Ben-Gurion
Jerusalem 91950, Israel

Ethics

Our Ref: DPAJS/js

6 August 2014

Dear Prime Minister

The British Medical Association is gravely concerned about the impact of recent hostilities on medical facilities and health personnel in Gaza. News reports, corroborated by Amnesty International, indicate that these facilities have come under fire, with devastating consequences. We understand that medical teams have been prevented from reaching injured people and removing the bodies of those killed, particularly in the Rafah and Khan Younis districts.

The principle of medical neutrality, and the binding obligation on all combatants to respect and protect medical services and personnel, is a fundamental principle in international humanitarian law. We therefore call upon the Israeli authorities to ensure that medical facilities, ambulances, and medical and emergency workers are protected, that clear orders are given to Israeli troops reaffirming that all medics and medical facilities must be presumed to have civilian status, and that a criminal investigation is opened into all incidents of Israeli fire on medics or medical facilities.

In addition to respecting the neutral status of health services and personnel it is vital that Israeli defence services ensure safe access for ambulances and medical and emergency personnel to all areas of the Gaza Strip to facilitate the transfer of the wounded and dead to hospitals, and to ensure the safe movement of ambulances between hospitals throughout the Gaza Strip. Critically injured and ill patients must also be ensured safe transfer to hospitals outside the Gaza Strip for life-saving treatment.

Yours sincerely

Dr Mark Porter
Chairman of Council