

Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa (Te ORA) Statement of Solidarity with Palestine

Te ORA calls for a **permanent ceasefire**, an **immediate end to the siege in Gaza**, an **end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine**, and for the **New Zealand government and the global community to immediately impose cultural, political, academic and economic sanctions on the state of Israel**, just as it did to apartheid South Africa, **until there is a Free Palestine**.

Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa (Te ORA), the Māori Medical Practitioners Association, has a membership of nearly 500 medical doctors, medical students and Māori health associates, and has a longstanding history of advocating for Māori health, health equity, Indigenous health and broader health issues from colonisation to climate change that impact on communities locally, nationally and globally.

Te ORA is made up of tāngata whenua from across Aotearoa me Te Waipounamu who have chosen medicine and health as a vocation, but who are also, and first, part of hapū and iwi who have survived raupatu, endured state-sponsored violence, resource dispossession, and the devastating effects of introduced infectious disease as part of our shared history of British colonisation.¹ Te Tiriti o Waitangi has been breached on a daily basis by the British Crown and its representative, the New Zealand government, as evidenced by Māori health outcomes,² Māori incarceration statistics,³ Māori educational outcomes in mainstream schooling,⁴ and Māori life expectancy.⁵ In essence we remain, for now, under colonial government and experience the many health effects that a hugely disproportionate exposure to the determinants of health inequities would foreclose.⁶

¹ See, for example: Cormack, D., Kukutai, T. (2022). Indigenous peoples, data, and the coloniality of surveillance. In A. Hepp, J. Jarker, L. Kramp (Eds). *New perspectives in Critical Data Studies: the ambivalences of data power*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 121-141; King, M. (2013). *Te Pūea: A Life: A Life*. Penguin Random House New Zealand Limited; Moewaka Barnes, H., & McCreanor, T. (2019). Colonisation, hauora and whenua in Aotearoa. *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, 49(sup1), 19-33; Reid, P., Cormack, D., & Paine, S.J. (2019). Colonial histories, racism and health—The experience of Māori and Indigenous peoples. *Public Health*, 172, 119-124.

² Waitangi Tribunal. (2023). *HAUORA: Report on Stage One of the Health Services and Outcomes Kaupapa Inquiry*. (WAI 2575). Available on: https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_195476216/Hauora%202023%20W.pdf

³ For example: Department of Corrections. (2023). *Prison facts and statistics - September 2023*. Available on: https://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/statistics/quarterly_prison_statistics/prison_stats_september_2023; Waitangi Tribunal. (2017). *Tū mai te rangi: Report on the Crown and disproportionate reoffending rates (WAI 2540)*. Wellington: Waitangi Tribunal.

⁴ For example: New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (2022). *NCEA pathways through senior secondary: achieving equitable outcomes for ākonga Māori and Pacific students on their NCEA journey*. Available on: <https://www2.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Publications/Insights-papers/NCEA-pathways/NZQA-Insights-Paper-Pathways.pdf>

⁵ Statistics New Zealand. (2021). *National and subnational period life tables: 2017–2019*. Available on: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/national-and-subnational-period-life-tables-2017-2019>

⁶ Reid, P., Cormack, D., & Paine, S.J. (2019). Colonial histories, racism and health—The experience of Māori and Indigenous peoples. *Public Health*, 172, 119-124.

We align ourselves, therefore, in Indigenous Solidarity with the Palestinian people, who are at this time under a most brutal and cruel siege by the state of Israel.⁷ This is the same state who, heavily supported and enabled by the United States and the United Kingdom, have violently occupied Palestine and operated an apartheid regime for many years.⁸ We, as Māori doctors, as health workers, and members of the global Indigenous community stand in solidarity with struggles for a Free Palestine.

Every human being has the right to the highest attainable standard of health, and thus everyone must have equitable access to the resources that determine good health,⁹ including access to clean water, nutritious food, safe housing, education, and healthcare. Under the Israeli occupation and apartheid regime, Palestinian people do not have these basic human rights to health met.¹⁰

The current genocide of Palestinian people by Israel and its military supporters has included systemic destruction of the infrastructure of the health system, and the targeting of the health workforce, making it impossible to provide best practice care for the many patients inside hospitals and health clinics who require emergency and ongoing care.¹¹ We recall with devastation the news that, as the direct result of invading occupation forces, NICU infants, with the power to their incubators turned off, with their oxygen lines stopped, were left not only to die, but for their bodies to decompose.¹²

⁷ Special Procedures. (2023). *Gaza: UN experts call on international community to prevent genocide against the Palestinian people*. 16 November 2023, Available on: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/11/gaza-un-experts-call-international-community-prevent-genocide-aga-inst>

⁸ Barhoush, Y., & Amon, J. (2023). Medical apartheid in Palestine. *Global Public Health*, 18(1), 2201612, DOI: 10.1080/17441692.2023.2201612; Special Procedures. (2023). *Gaza: UN experts call on international community to prevent genocide against the Palestinian people*. 16 November 2023, Available on: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/11/gaza-un-experts-call-international-community-prevent-genocide-aga-inst>

⁹ Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). *Right to health | tika ki te whai oranga*. Available on: <https://tikatangata.org.nz/human-rights-in-aotearoa/right-to-health>; United Nations. (1966). *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. Available on: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>; World Health Organization (WHO). (2023). *Human rights*. Available on: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/human-rights-and-health#:~:text=The%20right%20to%20health%20includes%20goods%20and%20services%20for%20all>

¹⁰ World Health Organization. (2022). *Right to health: barriers to health and attacks on health care in the occupied Palestinian territory, 2019 to 2021*. World Health Organization. Available on: <https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/9789292740887-eng.pdf?ua=1>

¹¹ Smith, J., Kwong, E.J.L., Hanbali, L., Hafez, S., Neilson, A., Khoury, R. (2023). Violence in Palestine demands immediate resolution of its settler colonial root causes. *BMJ Global Health*, 8:e014269. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2023-014269; World Health Organization. (October 2023). *WHO Operational Response Plan: occupied Palestinian Territory*. Available on: https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/emergencies/who_operational_response_plan_opt.pdf?sfvrsn=a04284b5_2&download=true

¹² Salam, Y., Abdelkader, R., Mulligan, M. (December 3 2023). 'Abandoned babies found decomposing in Gaza hospital weeks after it was evacuated'. Available on: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/abandoned-babies-found-decomposing-gaza-hospital-evacuated-rcna127533>

We can never unsee these images, and we will never forget. We bear witness to the countless videos and photographs of killed and severely injured Palestinian civilians, and those survivors acting as first responders. We also bear witness to the targeted destruction of ambulances, and the killing of ambulance drivers and first responders.¹³

We bear witness to the killing and abduction of doctors, nurses, and other health workers. We mourn for our colleagues who lost patients and family members and continued to work.¹⁴ We mourn for our colleagues forced to leave the bedsides of their patients, knowing they would not survive. We bear witness to the horrors that ensue once a hospital cannot provide limb-saving, and life-saving care, and aftercare.

We condemn the systematic destruction of the hospitals of Gaza¹⁵ including the International Eye Hospital on the 8th of October 2023, the Al-Ahli hospital on the 17th of October 2023, the relief Centre for the rehabilitation of the disabled on the 25th of October 2023, AlQuds hospital on the 29th of October 2023, the Turkish-Palestinian friendship hospital on the 30th of October 2023, Al-Shifa hospital on the 3rd of November 2023, Al-Rantisi hospital for children on the 5th of November 2023, Psychiatric hospital on the 5th of November 2023, Al-Nasr Children's hospital on the 8th of November 2023, Indonesian hospital on the 9th of November 2023, Al-Awda Hospital on the 9th of November 2023, Kamal Adwan hospital on the 3rd of December 2023. We fear this list will become longer.

We condemn the coordinated, systematic destruction of both life and the possibility of life. We recognise that without emergency healthcare, any severe injury normally treatable, any limb normally salvageable, becomes untreatable, unsalvageable, and so normally survivable injuries become unsurvivable. We find this catastrophic reality utterly devastating.

Medical professionals have both moral and ethical obligations to advocate for the right to health in every instance where it does not exist, and for every human being it does not exist for. In its guidelines for the responsibilities of doctors in management and governance, the Medical

¹³ Smith, J., Kwong, E.J.L, Hanbali, L., Hafez, S., Neilson, A., Khoury, R. (2023). Violence in Palestine demands immediate resolution of its settler colonial root causes. *BMJ Global Health*, 8:e014269, doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2023-014269; World Health Organization. (October 2023). *WHO Operational Response Plan: occupied Palestinian Territory*. Available on: https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/emergencies/who_operational_response_plan_opt.pdf?sfvrsn=a04284b5_2&download=true

¹⁴ Alser, O., & Alser, M. (2023). Urgent call for protecting health-care workers in Palestine. *The Lancet*, 402(10414), 1746-1747.

¹⁵ Alser, O., & Alser, M. (2023). Urgent call for protecting health-care workers in Palestine. *The Lancet*, 402(10414), 1746-1747; Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (8 December 2023). Hostilities in the Gaza strip and Israel: Flash Update #63. Available on: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-63>; World Health Organization. (October 2023). *WHO Operational Response Plan: occupied Palestinian Territory*. Available on: https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/emergencies/who_operational_response_plan_opt.pdf?sfvrsn=a04284b5_2&download=true

Council of New Zealand (MCNZ) asserts that “The interests and safety of patients must always be your first concern”.¹⁶ Further, in its Cultural Safety standards for doctors, the MCNZ states cultural safety requires us to consider, “challenging the cultural bias of individual colleagues or systemic bias within health care services, which may contribute to poor health outcomes for patients of different cultures”.¹⁷

Te ORA takes these moral and ethical responsibilities seriously. We consider the patients of our international medical colleagues to be of equal humanity and dignity as our own patients. Thus, in the event that our international colleagues cannot advocate for the rights of their patients, Te ORA extends our voices and our support to them, with every expectation that if ever the tables were turned, our international colleagues would speak up for us, our patients, and our communities.

Te ORA wishes to convey its deepest grief and solidarity with the people of Palestine, experiencing genocide on the background of a cruel occupation by Israel. It is in line with our own tikanga Māori values as tāngata whenua, with medical ethics in our medical practice, with cultural safety and standards of professionalism as guided by the MCNZ, and as members of the global Indigenous and health communities that we stand in support of a Free Palestine.

We extend our solidarity to all peoples and nations under occupation and facing genocide when we say the words Free Palestine. We are strengthened in our solidarity as we remember Indigenous Māori leader and scholar Dr Moana Jackson, who drawing upon the words of Dr Martin Luther King stated, “the arc of history does curve towards what is just”,¹⁸ and we end with the words of Fannie Lou Hamer, “nobody’s free until everybody’s free”.¹⁹ With that we say, Free Palestine. End.

¹⁶ Medical Council of New Zealand. (2021). *Responsibilities of doctors in management and governance*. Available on: <https://www.mcnz.org.nz/assets/standards/667244bffa/Responsibilities-of-doctors-in-management-and-governance.pdf>

¹⁷ Medical Council of New Zealand. (2019). *Statement on Cultural Safety*. Available on: <https://www.mcnz.org.nz/assets/standards/b71d139dca/Statement-on-cultural-safety.pdf>

¹⁸ Jackson, M. (xx). *Interview with Moana Jackson*. Available on: <https://natlib.govt.nz/he-tohu/korero/interview-with-moana-jackson>

¹⁹ Hamer, F.L. (2014). “‘Nobody’s Free Until Everybody’s Free.’: Speech Delivered at the Founding of the National Women’s Political Caucus, Washington, D.C., July 10, 1971”, in M. Parker Brooks & D. W. Houck (eds), *The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To Tell It Like It Is*. Available on: <https://doi.org/10.14325/mississippi/9781604738223.003.0017>