

Canada votes against health care for Palestinians at the World Health Assembly

 canadiandimension.com/articles/view/canada-votes-against-health-care-for-palestinians-at-the-world-health-assembly

Canada had previously voted against a WHA resolution noting Israeli attacks on health care workers in occupied Palestine

Owen Schalk / May 31, 2022 / 4 min read

Canadian Politics | Middle East | Human Rights

World Health Organization headquarters, Geneva. Photo by Yann Forget/[Wikimedia Commons](#).

On May 25, 2022, the World Health Assembly held a vote regarding the dire health conditions in occupied Palestine. The [WHA report](#) on which representatives voted called on the Israeli state to end its open and systemic denial of health care to Palestinians in the occupied territories, to supply Palestinians who require medical procedures with travel permits to reach a suitable facility, and to refrain from perpetrating acts of violence against health care workers, in accordance with international law.

The report notes 235 attacks against health care workers and facilities in the occupied territories in 2021, causing injury to 106 health workers and damage to 57 ambulances and 124 health care facilities. Likewise, the World Health Organization has confirmed 58 attacks on health care workers and facilities in 2022. One person died and 47 were injured by these Israeli attacks.

The WHA report recommended that Israel allow necessary amounts of medical supplies to enter Palestinian territory, “end the arbitrary delay or detention of ambulances and health care workers,” allow health care workers to operate on “seriously or fatally injured” Palestinian patients, and improve prison conditions while discontinuing “cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment” of Palestinians. In conclusion, the report advised the Israeli state to end the use of excessive force, movement restriction, and “practices of demolition and/or displacement” against the Palestinian people in order to “respect, protect, and fulfill underlying social determinants of health for the Palestinians in the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.”

On the report’s final page, the authors call for international medical cooperation to ensure the improvement of health services in occupied Palestine. This section explains that those who vote “yes” on the resolution will: “support efforts to strengthen the protection of Palestinians from violations,” particularly those that target patients, health care workers, and medical

facilities; they will “work to uphold accountability under international law;” and, finally, they will “promote coordination at the technical level between health authorities... to ensure the protection of health for all by all and that health services are ring fenced and depoliticized.”

Canada was in the minority of countries that voted “no” to the report’s recommendations and its call for international cooperation to promote health conditions in occupied Palestine. In total, 14 representatives voted against the measure while 83 voted in favour. Thirty-nine countries abstained. The “no” tally is largely comprised of the usual suspects—Canada, the United States, Australia, Israel itself, Bolsonaro’s Brazil, Colombia, numerous European states—but also a disappointing surprise in Xiomara Castro’s Honduras, whose representative chose to align themselves with some of the world’s most extreme supporters of Israeli apartheid on an international forum.

Breaking: Canada just voted AGAINST a report at [@WHO's](#) World Health Assembly which calls for improving health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. [#WHA75](#) [@jyduclos](#) [pic.twitter.com/9cisOZO9bU](#)

— Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East ([@CJPME](#)) [May 25, 2022](#)

Israeli’s representatives did not take kindly to the vote. Despite the fact that the report offers clear statistics on the vast gap in important human development indicators between Jewish settlers and Palestinians, namely in infant mortality, life expectancy, and deaths from noncommunicable diseases, Israel’s ambassador to the United Nations, Meirav Eilon Shahr, accused the WHA of being a politicized organization and asserted that those who supported the resolution “continue to allow the Palestinians to hijack this professional forum.”

Later, Canada co-sponsored a resolution condemning Russian attacks on health care workers and facilities in Ukraine. In [his address](#) to the WHA plenary, Canadian Minister of Health Jean-Yves Duclos stated:

[We] need to be united in our unequivocal condemnation of all wars, including Putin’s unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine, and we need to be firm in our condemnation of any and all attacks targeting health workers, health care supplies, and health facilities.

The previous day, Canada had voted against the WHA resolution noting Israeli attacks on health care workers and facilities in occupied Palestine and calling for an end to Israel’s discriminatory administration of care.

“In its ‘No’ vote on May 25,” wrote Michael Bueckert of [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#):

Canada made a deliberate decision not to apply [the above principle] to the situation facing Palestinians, who suffer from similar attacks by Israeli occupation forces. This demonstrates a clear double standard, sending the message that international law does not apply to all states, and that some lives are worth more than others.

Duclos' statement is almost breathtakingly hypocritical. It shamelessly elides the fact that Canada's representative at the WHA had one day earlier excused Israeli attacks on medical workers and facilities in occupied Palestine. In this vote, Canada simultaneously justified violence against health workers while voting against the principle of universal care, instead siding with an administration that is now globally recognized as an apartheid state that "employs a regime of Jewish supremacy between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea."

Owen Schalk is a writer based in Winnipeg. He is primarily interested in applying theories of imperialism, neocolonialism, and underdevelopment to global capitalism and Canada's role therein. Visit his website at www.owenschalk.com.

We Need Your Help

More than 75% of our operating budget comes to us in the form of donations from our readers. These donations help to pay our bills, and honorariums for some of our writers, photographers and graphic artists. Our supporters are part of everything we do.

[Donate Now](#)