

Sick From Genocide FAQs

What does being Sick from Genocide mean?

Being "Sick from Genocide" reflects the immense moral injury, emotional trauma, and grief experienced by healthcare workers as we witness genocide and other human rights violations against patients and colleagues, such as those in Gaza. This is beyond upsetting—it is emotionally traumatizing and has significant psychological effects, including feelings of helplessness and outrage.

These emotions are compounded by the knowledge that US tax dollars are supporting these atrocities. The only way to truly counteract this sickness is to end the genocide and implement an arms embargo. The moral injury and outrage we feel are immense. Healing from this complicated grief will take different forms depending on the person and the context. One way to combat the sickness of feeling helpless is to take action, rather than merely resting at home. Being with others, engaging in advocacy, and staying active can be incredibly healing. These actions also send a powerful message that we will not remain silent or passive.

FAQs for Patients

- **Q: How much sick leave can I take?**
 - 1-14 days can be covered by a Doctor's Note. This may be paid or unpaid depending on your employer's policy. Many states have mandated minimum paid sick leave.
- **Q: What if my clinic/hospital requires a Doctor's Note for 1-2 days of Sick Leave?**
 - Consider what symptoms you are suffering from most and contact your specialist or primary care provider (PCP). If you need help finding a licensed clinician in your state to write a note, contact DAG at [email address].
- **Q: What if I need more than 1-2 days of Sick Leave?**
 - Contact your PCP, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), or other HR programs at your workplace.
- **Q: What should I do during Sick Leave?**
 - This depends on your needs. Some may find rest and self-care helpful, while others may benefit from connecting with others through healing circles, vigils, or prayer. Activities such as attending collective grieving events can provide emotional support. Since genocide is the cause of your sickness, participating in activities aimed at ending genocide—such as advocacy, awareness campaigns, or community action—can be the most healing and helpful. Remember, recovery is personal, and there is no "right" way to process your emotions.

- **Q: Sample Scripts for asking for Sick From Genocide Leave:**

- Option 1:
I hope this message finds you well. I am feeling unwell today due to the emotional and physical toll from witnessing the ongoing genocide in Gaza including the targeting of fellow healthcare workers, and the displacement of patients. As a result, I am unable to work and kindly request a day off to recover.

Thank you for your understanding.
Best regards,

[Your Name]

- Option 2:
I need to take a mental health day off. As a nurse and a human being, it's been overwhelming witnessing the ongoing genocide in Gaza and knowing that my tax dollars are funding such atrocities. I need this time to process and recharge so I can continue to care for others effectively.

Thank you for understanding.

Best regards,
[Your Name]

- Option 3: (for trainees)

Hi Chiefs,

It's come to a point where I need to request medical sick leave. My people in Gaza continue to face genocide and I want to be the best I can for my patients and the program.

Would you mind initiating a meeting with Dr [PD] and anyone else that needs to be there?

Thank you for understanding.

Best regards,
[Your Name]

FAQs for Doctors

- **Q: What if I'm being asked to write a Sick Leave note for a patient?**
 - Write a brief dated letter on letterhead:
"To Whom It May Concern: This letter confirms Mx. [Patient's Name] (DOB [Date of Birth]) cannot attend work/school on [Date] due to illness. Sincerely, [Your Name]."
 - If you are interested in writing sick leave notes for people in your state, please contact DAG at info@doctorsagainstgenocide.org.
 - Employers are legally prohibited under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) from asking about the nature of the illness. In practice, they almost never contact the physician for a 1-2 day sick leave note. However, longer leave requests (see Option B below) may sometimes prompt inquiries for additional information.
 - Key Points to Consider:
 - Know your clinic's policy regarding the establishment of a doctor-patient relationship for sick leave notes. Communicate clearly to potential clients whether you can provide an ongoing doctor-patient relationship or if your involvement is limited to writing the note.
 - Licensed healthcare practitioners such as MDs and DOs can write these notes; notes by practitioners with other licenses may be accepted depending on the employer.
 - Some employers may accept notes from licensed therapists for mental health (MH) issues, but physician notes are generally required.
 - If a patient's needs exceed your capacity to provide care, offer referrals to local mental health resources or the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (988), which is an excellent resource for emergencies or psychiatric crises.
 - Scheduling Options:
 - You may schedule these patients into your regular clinic hours or consider opening a free clinic.
 - Be aware of the added emotional burden on both the clinician and patients due to the traumatic stress of witnessing or being affected by genocide-related events. Offer appropriate support as needed.
 - Traumatic Stress Consideration:
 - When patients are experiencing trauma from witnessing genocide or related events, it is vital to handle their cases with empathy and care. While writing a sick leave note might seem simple, it could be the first step in addressing larger emotional and psychological needs. Be prepared to provide resources and referrals as necessary.
- **Q: Should I include the diagnosis on a Sick Leave note?**
 - No, including a diagnosis could violate HIPAA regulations. Employers are prohibited under the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) from asking about the nature of a disability unless it affects the patient's ability to work.
- **Q: What Diagnoses should I consider if I need to fill out a form for a patient?**
 - Use your clinical judgment. Consider discussing this with the patient, particularly if they have a preexisting condition exacerbated by trauma. Potential ICD codes include:
 - F43.20 Adjustment Disorder
 - Z73.0 Burnout
 - Z65.4 Victim of or exposure to crime, terrorism, or torture
 - Y36.90 War operations
 - F43.9 Trauma and Stressor-related Disorder
 - F43.0 Acute Stress Disorder

- **Q: How can I assess the mental health impact of genocide on patients?**
 - Witnessing genocide can trigger flare-ups of various medical conditions, especially in patients with comorbid PTSD. These may include symptoms such as insomnia, headaches, nausea, muscle tension, teeth grinding, exacerbations of chronic pain (e.g., back pain), fatigue, flare-ups of autoimmune conditions, GERD, asthma, depression, anxiety, diabetes, heart disease, or high blood pressure.

When documenting, simply record what the patient reports during the visit, using standard clinical practices. Document the visit as you normally would, ensuring accuracy and thoroughness.

Take a detailed history and physical with a focus on mental health symptoms, including:

- Anxiety
- Anger
- Depression
- Lack of sleep
- Fear
- Panic attacks
- Flashbacks
- Feeling as if everything around you is collapsing
- Feeling as if the hospitals will collapse and be bombed
- Obsession with the news
- Worry that relatives, friends, and family members will be killed
- Having nightmares
- Night terrors
- Survivor's guilt
- Lack of interest in everyday activities

Additional Symptoms Reported by Palestinians (Afana et al. 2018, J of Health Psychology)

- Hardship, suffering, tribulation (mahana)
- Irritability or interruptions of sleep (arak nafsi)
- Low confidence and self-esteem, astray (tayah)
- Nervousness or nervous (asabiah)
- Nervous breakdown (inhjar assabi)
- Psychological persecution (idehad nafsi)
- Psychological pressure (daget nafsi)
- Psychological crisis (azamat nafsiah)
- Fear syndrome (khoufa)
- Feeling as though one is going mad (majnoon)
- Feeling baffled, startled, foolish (hawas)
- Feeling of a gust, outburst, surge (tafran)
- Feeling of the head being empty (rasi fadi)
- Feeling stupid or foolish (mahbul)
- Feeling worried (kalak)
- Freezing of feelings, numbness (tabalud fe el masha'r)

- **Q: Can I provide additional documentation if requested by an employer?**
 - Yes, but only within the boundaries of HIPAA and ADA compliance. Provide only the information specifically requested by the employer, ensuring patient confidentiality is maintained.

- **Q: Are there resources for physicians experiencing moral injury from witnessing genocide?**
 - Yes, support networks, healing circles, and advocacy groups like DAG can offer resources to address moral injury and provide mental health support. Engage with these organizations to process and channel your emotions constructively. Channeling your energy into activities aimed at ending the genocide and supporting the victims can be most therapeutic.
- **Q: Can FMLA leave be used?**
 - Clinical judgment and an established doctor-patient relationship are needed when authorizing this. This is unlikely to be sought outside of those who have lost direct family members and may be suffering from more severe mental health consequences of bereavement and traumatic stress or caring for a family member who is suffering. The FMLA form would also ask about the date of return to work and recommendations for medical follow-up. Here is more info on FMLA for mental health: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla/mental-health>
- **Q: What should I do if I feel morally called to be at work (e.g., caring for an evacuated Gazan, caring for hospital patients in an under-resourced environment)?**
 - Consider using the opportunity to gently raise awareness about the situation in Gaza with colleagues, for example:

"I had a great holiday too, but it was devastating to hear that the last neonatal unit in North Gaza, Kamal Adwan Hospital, was bombed shortly after Christmas, and its operating rooms set on fire. The Israeli military claimed it was a Hamas stronghold, but they made a similar claim about Al-Shifa Hospital, which an independent Washington Post investigation disproved. The situation is heartbreaking. Many doctors with ties to the area are staying home today to grieve and recover. I almost stayed home too, but I wanted to be here to care for this patient. What do you think?"

This approach invites conversation and reflection while fostering empathy, encouraging awareness, and maintaining professionalism in the workplace.

For additional questions, please email:

info@doctorsagainstgenocide.org or healthcareworkerspalestine@gmail.com





EYEWITNESS GAZA
ANTI-GENOCIDE ADVOCATES



CODE
PINK



SO,



US CAMPAIGN FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Animal Healthcare Workers
Against Genocide

