

To the Leadership of the American Academy of Pediatrics:

On behalf of our colleague, pediatrician, and now detainee Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, we, the undersigned pediatricians, call on the American Academy of Pediatrics to begin advocating for an end to the targeting and detention of healthcare workers, the destruction of medical facilities, the starvation and killing of children, and the genocide of Palestinians. We strongly urge the AAP to call for an immediate ceasefire and opening of all necessary humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Over the last year, we have seen the complete and utter destruction of the healthcare system in Gaza, which has collapsed under both the overwhelming need for care as a result of the violence inflicted during this conflict as well as the deliberate and targeted destruction of healthcare facilities and staff by the Israeli army. Multiple international human rights bodies, including the United Nations, Amnesty International, and the International Court of Justice, have validated charges of genocidal actions by the Israeli government against the Palestinian people. Children have been some of its worst victims, with [UNICEF reporting](#) that, last year, Gaza was “the world’s most dangerous place to be a child”.

According to Amnesty International in their [December 2024 report](#), the Israeli military offensive has led to unprecedented destruction of occupied Gaza, with “relentless aerial and ground attacks” that “flattened entire neighborhoods and cities”. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have been killed or injured, [with children making up 44% of those killed by Israeli airstrikes](#) in the first 6 months of the assault. 90% of the Gazan population has been forcibly displaced. Humanitarian aid has been deliberately cut off resulting in “the collapse of water, sanitation, and healthcare systems”. Thousands of Palestinians have been forcibly detained, a group that now includes Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, pediatrician and medical director of Kamal Adwan hospital. Collectively, the population of Gaza now suffers from trauma with “likely permanent effects on their mental and physical health,” according to Amnesty International. Hunger is at catastrophic levels, with children suffering from severe malnutrition and dehydration to the point of not being able to “move or cry because of the severity of the weakness”. Communicable diseases now run rampant due to a lack of sanitation. Healthcare facilities like Kamal Adwan hospital have been forcibly evacuated and raided, with healthcare workers being detained, attacked, and killed. As of November, 2024, [UNICEF estimated](#) that “at least 4,000 babies have been cut off from lifesaving newborn care in the past year because of sustained attacks on hospitals.” With the destruction of the Kamal Adwan NICU, only four of eight NICUs in the Gaza strip are in operation with only 45 incubators between them in an area where 6,000 babies need intensive care during a typical year. Amnesty International and multiple other international bodies, have concluded that these actions constitute genocide.

Multiple American physician colleagues who have conducted humanitarian missions in Gaza have reported horrific conditions for the Palestinians there, including the deliberate targeting of children. Orthopedic surgeon Mark Perlmutter and trauma surgeon Feroze Sidhwa [reported](#) treating children suffering from severe malnutrition and septic shock, children admitted with direct gunshot wounds to the head who had been shot while playing, and children suffering blunt trauma from mass casualty events often during times of gathering like *iftar* during Ramadan. According to a [New York Times article](#) summarizing the experiences of dozens of doctors,

nurses, and paramedics, healthcare workers saw children with gunshot wounds to the head or chest nearly every single day. Children who they struggled to treat due to the lack of necessary medical equipment and hospital space died as a direct result of not having access to adequate medical care. They further reported severe malnutrition as well as severe psychiatric distress and suicidality in children as a result of the conditions in which they are now living. Newborns are also dying as a result of dehydration, malnutrition, and infections due to lack of formula, water, and sanitation. The regional director of UNICEF Middle East and North Africa [stated](#): “Vulnerable newborns and sick and wounded children in need of intensive care are being killed in tents, in incubators and in the arms of their parents. That this hasn’t galvanized enough political will to end the war, represents a fundamental crisis of our humanity.”

The mission of the AAP is “to attain optimal physical, mental, and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents and young adults. To accomplish this, AAP shall support the professional needs of its members.” The AAP claims it actively opposes “intolerance, bigotry, bias, and discrimination” and “is committed to using policy, advocacy, and education to encourage inclusivity and cultural effectiveness for all.” As per the AAP’s policy statement, [The Effect of Armed Conflict on children](#), “children should be protected from the direct effects of armed conflicts, and their food, housing, health and other basic needs should be safeguarded.” We call on the AAP to adhere to this mission and commitment to advocate for the health of all children, to support its members, to oppose intolerance and discrimination, and to use policy and advocacy to fight for an end to this horrific genocide. The children of Gaza are our children, our patients. The healthcare workers of Gaza are our colleagues, our friends. They need our support now more than ever.

We strongly implore the AAP to use its organizational powers to advocate immediately for the following:

1. The immediate release of pediatrician Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya and other healthcare workers from detention
2. An immediate end to the targeting of hospitals like Kamal Adwan throughout Gaza to allow civilians access to the medical care they need and to which they have inalienable rights
3. A ceasefire and the opening of borders to allow unrestricted humanitarian aid to the people and children of Gaza
4. An end of the occupation of Palestinian territories to ensure a safe and healthy future for the children of Gaza

If the AAP does not make tangible efforts to meet the above by January 31st, the organization risks losing a large contingent of its members who believe that this body no longer represents them or its fundamental mission.

This letter will be addressed to the following American Academy of Pediatrics leadership.

Executive Committee:

Benjamin Hoffman, MD

Susan Kressly, MD

Sandy Chung, MD

Margaret Fisher, MD

Mark Del Monte, JD

Board of Directors:

Patricia Flanagan, MD

Jeffrey Kaczorowski, MD

Margaret Fisher, MD

Patricia Purcell, MD, MBA

Lia Gaggino, MD

Dennis Cooley, MD

Susan Buttross, MD

Greg Blaschke, MD, MPH

Yasuko Fukuda, MD

Madeline Joseph, MD

Angela Ellison, MD, MSc

Kristina Rosbe, MD

Joelle Simpson, MD

Select Members of Senior Leadership Team:

Mark Del Monte, JD (CEO)

Anne Edwards, MD (CMO)

Joseph Wright, MD, MPH (Chief Health Equity Officer)

Cheryl De Pinto, MD, MPH (Senior VP, Primary Care and Subspecialty Pediatrics)

Janna Patterson, MD, MPH (Senior VP, Global Child Health & Life Support)

Alison Baker (VP, Child and Community Health)

Janet Henderson (VP, Chapter Relations and Member Engagement)

Jfeff Hild, JD (Senior VP, Advocacy)

Beena Kamath-Rayne, MD, MPH (VP, Global Newborn and Child Health)

Susan Martin (VP, Public Affairs)