

# Life & Times

## COVID-19 and conflict

Having completed my morning clinic and witnessing first-hand how well our local services have done in delivering the COVID-19 vaccine, I cannot help but reflect on how our medical counterparts are doing internationally. We should not only all be proud of our frontline staff delivering this historic vaccine roll-out and count ourselves fortunate, but we should also recognise the health inequalities around us and further abroad.

It has been eye opening to see the challenges each nation has faced in trying to deliver these crucial vaccinations in order to return to some form of normality. That being said, normality for some is still a far cry from how anyone should have to live, and, having followed the crisis that has unfolded in Palestine for too long, it is sad to say that few have had it harder than them in trying to manage this once-in-a-generation pandemic.

The recent conflict has led to the Palestinian Ministry of Health offices being bombed and the main Palestinian COVID-19 laboratory also being targeted. Our medical colleagues are overwhelmed and struggling for resources as they negotiate embargoes and await the trickle of humanitarian

support that comes through the Israeli checkpoints.

Managing a pandemic has been crippling for most healthcare services around the world such as in Italy or India. Managing a pandemic while receiving a constant stream of innocent casualties who were in the wrong place at the wrong time when the bombs started falling — that is unimaginable. At least 232 Palestinians, including 65 children, have been killed in the Israeli bombardment. On the Israeli side, 12 people, including two children, have been killed.

Where education and literacy are at a premium, every loss of life is regrettable and should not be chalked up as a statistic. However, when colleagues such as Dr Ayman Abu Al-Ouf, Head of Internal Medicine at the Al-Shifa Hospital, and Dr Moeen al-Aloul, a neurologist, were killed, in addition to the dentistry student Shaimaa Abu al-Ouf, these are huge losses for the local population, which will not have the opportunity to replace them and will further their already dire healthcare situation.

As was the RCGP's position with the Black Lives Matter movement, so it should be with the plight of innocent Palestinian

civilians and those who care for them. We cannot turn a blind eye and should have fresh memories that the stance of 'all lives matter' is inappropriate when talking about a disproportionate use of force by someone in power.

US Founding Father Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) framed the position all of us should adopt, individually, and on an organisational level, perfectly:

*'Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are.'*

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Editorial note: This article is commenting on the healthcare situation for Palestinian doctors and civilians. We reserve the right to edit or remove/not publish comments or letters that do not engage in a respectful and courteous debate.

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