

08<sup>th</sup> January 2025

## Boycott of OSSA Congress

The Islamic Medical Association of South Africa (IMASA) urges all healthcare professional but Ophthalmologists and optometrists in particular to boycott attending the OSSA congress 2025 taking place at Sandton Convention Centre in February 2025.

The local organising committee of OSSA, the Ophthalmological Society of South Africa, has invited an Israeli speaker, Didi Fabian from Sheba Hospital in Tel Aviv, to speak on Retinoblastoma.

Sheba hospital is associated with the IDF (Israel defence force), and as such, any doctor working there is also associated with the IDF.

It's also common cause that all adults in Israel have served in one capacity or the other in the Israeli occupation and genocidal machinery.

Despite numerous emails to Dr Barry Payne, head of the local organising committee, and to OSSA president Dr Steven Lapere, the exec and LOC have decided to continue with their invitation, and informed the speaker that they are not withdrawing his invitation, despite opposition by some members, citing that they are an apolitical organization. They have instead reassured the speaker of being welcomed to the congress.

Pleas to withdraw the invitation to the Israeli have fallen on very selectively deaf ears.

From the perspective of the academic programme, there are many knowledgeable academics the world over who can replaced the Israeli as a Paediatric Ophthalmology Specialist.

Shockingly OSSA has been rather disingenuous in their communications. They have expressed to members that the concerns by members were purely the speaker's nationality. Quite arrogantly and dismissive of their members concerns, OSSA has shown their members the proverbial middle finger by telling those who are not happy with the Israeli's invite, not to attend.

These actions, together with the recipient of the DJ Woods award this year (OSSA's highest award) being awarded to a very public Zionist supporter on social media, does not suggest that OSSA is non-political but has very much chosen to align themselves with the open wanton undisputed massacre of Palestinian Healthcare workers and complete destruction of all Healthcare infrastructure in Gaza, and this is not in keeping with an ethical society or one which is member centric.

The invite to the Israeli is akin to inviting a serving Nazi doctor during the middle of World War II and is no less offensive and legitimising of genocide.

It's inconceivable, given the live capturing of the massacres and reports from Amnesty International and various UN agencies that the OSSA executive is unaware of the scale and magnitude of the genocide still in progress. The latest deliberate attack on hospitals, capturing and ongoing kidnapping and torture of doctors is even more reason to apply BDS principles and isolate everything to do with Israel.

More than the armed struggle, it was the isolation of apartheid South Africa that forced the National Party to work towards ending apartheid.

UCT has banned any Academic with an affiliation to the IDF, although the organising committee this year is the Wits department.

We urge all Healthcare professionals to continue to pressurise OSSA to withdraw the invite to the Israeli.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/11/24/dying-in-hell-palestinian-medics-jailed-by-israel>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/opinions/2024/6/18/action-must-be-taken-on-alleged-complicity-of-israeli-doctors-in-torture>

<https://middle-east-online.com/en/who-chief-calls-end-israel%E2%80%99s-attacks-gaza-hospitals?s=08#off-canvas>

<https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/sickening-reactions-to-gaza-doctors-rape-and-murder-in-israeli-prison-18233438>

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<https://peoplesdispatch.org/2024/11/20/dr-adnan-al-burshs-death-by-torture-underscores-brutal-targeting-of-palestinian-health-workers-by-israel/>

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240710-israel-doctors-participate-in-torture-of-palestinian-detainees-al-shifa-director-says/>

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<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/12/pattern-israeli-attacks-gaza-hospitals-raises-grave-concerns-report>

<https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/538151.aspx>

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