

Swiss healthcare workers against genocide:

Relay hunger strike in front of the Federal parliament.

www.shwag.ch
#hcwfasting4gaza

1. Background

- a. Gaza is a human-made tragedy happening under our eyes. Killings, hunger, thirst, displacements and attacks on healthcare facilities are used as weapons against the civilian population. These violations humanitarian laws, are to be considered war crimes, reaching the proportions of a genocide¹.
- b. As healthcare workers (HCW) we are particularly concerned by the attacks on healthcare facilities and personnel: the mortality of healthcare workers is 2.6x that of the general population, which in turn is affected to proportions never seen in modern war history. Approximately 1600 HCW have been killed since the beginning of the war.
- c. Our federal government is passive: its exhortations and actions fall short of the reality of the situation as reported by independent NGOs, UN organizations and the ICRC.
- d. Appeals and words condemning the actions of the Israeli government and the IDF are visibly not enough. Several experts, in particular Israeli journalists who dissent with the Government, say that only targeted sanctions and the threat of political isolation would constitute relevant pressure on the Israeli government².
- e. We base our assessment and actions on facts reported by independent colleagues, NGO and Institutions (MSF, CICR, Emergency, WFP, UNICEF etc.)
- f. Some countries have already started actions similar to what we plan: in Italy a movement of HCW fasting for Gaza has reached 30'000 participants in one day³
- g. On September 8th, at the beginning of the Autumn Session of Swiss Parliament, a motion will be submitted discussing "Israeli crimes during the war in Gaza. Measures to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law and binding international law."

2. Definition of objectives and message

- **Our action**
To protest by maintaining a continuous presence of multiple health care workers, in professional attire and on a 24-hour hunger strike, at the entrance of the Federal Palace in Bern throughout the Autumn session of Parliament (September 8–26).
- **Our message:**
 - We fast for Gaza, where mass killings, hunger, thirst and the destruction of healthcare facilities are used illegally as weapons against the civil population, and where our colleagues are killed, wounded or work in the most severe distress.

- **Our aims**

- To raise awareness among the Swiss population and within parliament about the severity of the situation, which has been downplayed in a considerable portion of the Swiss press.
- To increase pressure on our government to assume its moral and political responsibilities as signatory and custodian of the conventions of humanitarian and international laws.
- To raise support to the establishment of targeted sanction against Israel by the Swiss government, as rightly implemented against Russia after the attack of Ukraine.

2. Organization and logistics

- The objective is to maintain a daily, daylong presence on the square. To do this we plan a relayed presence of HCW (two at a time -both activists present for 12 hours).
- The Autumn sessions of the two chambers of the Parliament and of its commissions runs from September 8th to 26th. They usually start at 8 am and finish around 7 pm. There is a noon break when politicians leave the Federal Palace and go have lunch in the nearby restaurants. Therefore, to be seen by the members of parliament as they come and go, the activists should be present on the Bundesplatz from 7.30 am to 7.30 pm (12 hours) at least.
- Ideally there should be a minimum of two activists, sitting one in front of the other, placed on the Federal Square in a location where many of the parliamentarians pass by while going to and from the Palace. The ideal place could be near to the yellow stripes crossing in front of the main entrance (see picture)



- Activists should wear a white coat (or any other recognisable professional garment) with a visible red mark suggestive of a wound. They will sit on two chairs provided with a panel summarising our requests (see picture) in the 3 main national languages. They will also be provided with flyers to be distributed to passers-by who want them. The text of the fliers contains the main message in the three national languages.



« GRÈVE DE LA FAIM » Personnel de santé solidaires avec nos collègues à Gaza

- + Gaza est une catastrophe humanitaire qui se déroule sous nos yeux. Les meurtres, la faim, la soif, les déplacements forcés et les attaques contre les établissements de santé doivent être considérés comme des crimes de guerre.
- + En tant que soignant-es, nous sommes aussi préoccupé-es par les attaques contre le personnel de santé : la mortalité de nos collègues est 2,6 fois supérieure à celle de la population générale, déjà touchée à des proportions jamais vues dans l'histoire moderne des guerres.
- + Notre Gouvernement se retranche derrière une conception passive de la neutralité : comme si un arbitre de foot « neutre » ne pouvait pas lever de carton rouge !
- + Les mots de condamnation de notre Gouvernement ne suffisent manifestement pas. **Seules des sanctions ciblées et la menace d'un isolement politique constitueraient une pression suffisante sur le gouvernement israélien.**



„HUNGERSTREIK“ Gesundheitspersonal solidarisiert sich mit unseren Kollegen in Gaza

- + Gaza ist eine humanitäre Katastrophe, die sich vor unseren Augen abspielt. Die Tötungen, der Hunger, der Durst, die Zwangsumsiedlungen und die Angriffe auf Gesundheitseinrichtungen müssen als Kriegsverbrechen betrachtet werden.
- + Als Angehörige des Gesundheitswesens sind wir auch besorgt über die Angriffe auf medizinisches Personal: Die Sterblichkeitsrate unserer Kollegen ist 2,6-mal höher als die der Gesamtbevölkerung, die bereits in einem Ausmaß betroffen ist, wie es in der modernen Kriegsgeschichte noch nie zuvor gesehen wurde.
- + Unsere Regierung versteckt sich hinter einem passiven Konzept der Neutralität: als ob ein „neutraler“ Fußballschiedsrichter keine rote Karte zeigen könnte!
- + Die Worte der Verurteilung durch unsere Regierung reichen offensichtlich nicht aus. **Nur gezielte Sanktionen und die Androhung politischer Isolation würden einen ausreichenden Druck auf die israelische Regierung ausüben.**



- Activists who will partake to the action will abstain from food from 7.30 pm of the day before to 7.30 of the next day – drinks with sugar are allowed if deemed necessary; each activist will provide for his/her own drink.

- Activists will answer questions from passers-by, journalists and politicians.

6. Rules of conduct and authorisations

- The action will be strictly non-violent. Activists will not react to possible provocations from passers-by
- According to an agreement between the Federal Assembly and the Municipality of Bern (29 September 2016) “small demonstrations with a little number of participants, not causing disturbing noise and not hampering the passage to the Federal Palace are allowed and do not necessitate a permit”. Therefore, no police intervention is foreseen. Please alert Pietro Majno-Hurst of any problems (he has been handling the issue of permissions with a Bernese lawyer)

7. Evaluation and follow-up

- A diary of the event will be written online on the website of the SHWAG (www.shwag.ch) by each participant, and a summary will be put together at the end.
- After the protest, we will meet to analyse:
 - Critical points
 - Participant's feedback
 - Media impact
- Further actions will be discussed.

8. Participation:

- The action will be in principle performed by HC and hospital workers, but sympathisers are welcome as supporters.
- If you want to participate to the action, or for further information, please contact www.shwag.ch or:
 - Prof. Dr Med Pietro Majno-Hurst [pietro \(at\) majno.ch](mailto:pietro@majno.ch) www.majno.ch
 -
 - Prof. Dr Med. Michele Ghielmini [mghielmini \(at\) ticino.com](mailto:mghielmini@ticino.com)

¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666776225002364>

² <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/editorial/2025-06-12/ty-article-opinion/sanctions-against-far-right-israeli-ministers-is-the-opposite-of-moral-confusion/00000197-609e-d34b-ad97-f0ffd80c0000>

³ <https://www.medicinademocratica.org/wp/?p=17686>