

Profile: Gaza Doctors and Healthcare Workers as Role Models in Islam

Ponn P Mahayosnand¹, DM Sabra²

¹*MPH. Research Scholar, National Coalition of Independent Scholars, Brattleboro, VT, USA*

²*Medical Student, Islamic University of Gaza, Faculty of Medicine*

Correspondence: Ponn Mahayosnand ponn@ncis.org

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Practicing medicine is considered a noble profession in Islam (1, 2). The ideal Muslim physician must be trustworthy, compassionate, and have the genuine desire to alleviate their patient's physical, mental, and emotional pain. They must acknowledge and value their roles as knowledgeable advisors and pure-intentioned do-gooders who are entrusted with their patient's care.

Muslim physicians must be humble and understand that they are not healers, for only Allah heals. (1, 2) With patience and steadfastness, they have the profound opportunity to positively influence their patient's lives. Optimally, a Muslim doctor should adhere to the following hadith:

A Muslim is a Muslim's brother: he does not wrong him or abandon him. If anyone cares for his brother's need, Allah will care for his need; if anyone removes a Muslim's anxiety, Allah will remove from him, on account of it, one of the anxieties of the Day of Resurrection; and if anyone conceals a Muslim's fault, Allah will conceal his fault on the Day of Resurrection. (Sunan Abi Dawud 4893, 43:121) (1, 3)

Throughout this brutal war on Gaza (4), there have been deliberate attacks on the healthcare system. (5, 6, 7, 8, 9) Yet Gazan physicians have shown they possess admirable characteristics, (10, 11) unshakable faith, (12) and an ability to be insanely resourceful. (7, 13) They work unpaid 24-hour shifts, (7, 11) are detained, (14)

shot at, (15) and killed. (6, 7, 12) They choose duty over the natural human desire to escape safely with family. (7, 12) Often, they only reunite with their families when they arrive injured or dead at the hospital. (16, 17, 18)

Their mental and religious strength is indescribable by humanitarian mission workers volunteering to assist them. (7, 11, 12, 19) This war's healthcare workers should be studied by all Muslims not just those in the healthcare profession.

Additionally, Gaza's community at large should be acknowledged for their efforts to create such aspirational leaders. It is seen as an Islamic duty upon the entire community (fard kifayah) to train and have a sufficient number of healthcare workers to serve them. (2)

All 3 of my children were medical students at the Islamic University of Gaza, (20) 2 of whom were wartime volunteers. I can attest to the fact that the entire community of extended family, friends, and neighbours, as well as the medical school and hospital system (from the north's Indonesian Hospital to the south's European Hospital) actively supported the new generation of physicians-in-training.

Living in Gaza as a non-Arab and American was challenging. However, it was a blessing to live among some of the best Muslims in this world. Having travelled to 49 States and 18 countries, I am not inexperienced.

Evacuating this war means my family and I lost and suffered much. However, we have not lost our memories, nor have we lost our experiences. As painful as it is, I feel compelled to tell the tales of and historicise Gazans. (21) It is my hope that Gazan healthcare workers can be studied and, God willing, emulated.

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