

BIMA Support Clinic needs your support (and you may need them one day!)

Abdullah Albeyatti, MBBS, BSc, MRCS (ENT), FRCGP,

GP with special interest in ENT, Leeds

Correspondence: Abdullah.Albeyatti@gmail.com

As a Muslim doctor, I had heard about the British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) and the good work they were doing in the community. They play a crucial role in supporting Muslim healthcare professionals, advocating for a more inclusive healthcare system, promoting Islamic ethical practices in medicine, and engaging in charitable health initiatives.

What I was not aware of, is that one day I might be the very individual that is seeking their help. This is where the BIMA Support Clinic came into its own and really shone through when I needed them most.

The BIMA Support Clinic, a key initiative of BIMA, advocates against discrimination, particularly Islamophobia, within the healthcare system.

It offers confidential advice and advocacy for healthcare professionals and patients who face discrimination due to their Muslim identity. The BIMA Support Service is especially important for healthcare workers who may be experiencing threats, maligned investigations, or mistreatment because of their faith or support for causes like Palestine. By providing support, the clinic helps individuals navigate these challenges and work towards eliminating Islamophobia from healthcare settings

So how did this apply to me directly? It was one random Tuesday in April 2024. I received an email from the GMC asking if they could confirm I was Dr Abdullah Albeyatti and that this was the correct email address to engage with myself about a complaint. If you work in healthcare, you know an email from the GMC is never a welcome correspondence!

As well as replying to confirm my details, I telephoned the GMC immediately to understand what this was all about. I was told exactly this:

I am writing to let you know that we have received some information from Campaign Against Anti-semitism.

An Assistant Registrar (a senior decision maker at the GMC) has considered the information and received advice from a medically qualified colleague, and has decided that the concerns raised do not meet our threshold for investigation, therefore we have not opened a case. A copy of the complaint is enclosed. I have written to the complainant to let them know that we will not be investigating this matter.

My initial reactions were a mixed one. One of relief that the matter was closed (or so I had believed!), pride that I had been doing my moral and ethical duty not only as a doctor but as a muslim highlighting the plight of Palestinians and that I had caused enough disturbance to be picked up on someone's radar and on deeper reflection, sadness that as a muslim doctor I have been targeted to be silenced and that coming after my profession, my livelihood was how they planned to achieve this.

Unfortunately, the GMC, although closing the matter themselves, felt it was worthwhile asking NHS England for their opinion on the matter. At the time of writing, the NHS England's planned closure is already underway and I for one am pleased given my experience with them. They were so close minded to the idea that I was in fact the victim of all of this. That I was being targeted, silenced and vilified for my political views and that as a doctor, who happens to be muslim I should think twice about what I post online, regardless if it was true. That highlighting war crimes was best avoided as I might offend someone.

This is when I called upon BIMA to come to my aid. I was so impressed at how proactive they were in offering

me support. They checked in with me constantly to see how I had been affected, asked me what they could do to help me and shared with me their experience of dealing with these fictitious accusations. I realised I was not the only doctor going through this turmoil and having them in my corner gave me great confidence. The icing on the cake was the NHS England Teams Meeting call we had where I sat back and saw Dr Salman Waqar (former BIMA President) dismantle their impotent attack and lay bare the farce of even having this discussion about a manufactured complaint by an Israeli lobby group.

I benefited from BIMA who works on a broad level by gathering anonymised data on incidents of discrimination and pushing for systemic change in healthcare institutions. The BIMA Support Clinic serves as a vital tool in tackling both health inequities and systemic bias which affects us as health professionals directly.

The staff understands the unique challenges faced by marginalized individuals and works tirelessly to ensure

that each person feels valued and supported. Whether it's providing direct care, offering mental health support, or standing up against Islamophobia, BIMA ensures that no one is left behind in their pursuit of health and dignity.

Support for the BIMA Support Clinic is essential to sustaining and expanding its impact. Donations, volunteer efforts, and partnerships with local organizations are crucial in ensuring the continuation of these services.

The BIMA Support Clinic is a vital resource that provides comprehensive medical support while also advocating for justice and inclusivity in the healthcare system. Its focus on eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal access to care makes it an essential service for marginalized communities. By supporting BIMA, we can help ensure that these services continue to reach those in need, improving lives and creating a more equitable healthcare system for all.