

Midwife on five day hunger strike calling for immediate ceasefire in Gaza

Midwife calls for Israel/Gaza ceasefire

Sharyn Lock is a healthcare professional and a writer. This week, beginning on Monday she is holding a five day fasting vigil outside The Scottish Parliament, calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

She said: "I am wearing a Palestine Red Crescent vest to represent all emergency workers and health professionals. With UNWRA, Israeli Physicians for Human Rights, and the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, I call on all parties to protect civilians, medical personnel, and health facilities and those sheltering in them.

"I am fasting in solidarity with those going hungry in Gaza, where Oxfam reports only 2% of normal food supplies have been allowed to arrive since October 9, and says starvation is being used as a weapon of war against Gaza civilians.

"I was in Gaza during 2008-2009, accompanying fishermen and farmers who regularly come under live fire from the Israeli army as part of everyday life under occupation. During the 22 days of Israel's Cast Lead attacks, I volunteered as an observer and first aider with the Red Crescent, accompanying paramedics and volunteer rescuers who were targetted by Israeli fire; 16 were killed and many more injured. I was supported during my work by Palestinian, Israeli, and international colleagues.

"I was in the Al Quds Red Crescent hospital, along with 50 patients and hundreds of civilians taking shelter there, when,

along with apartment buildings surround it, it was attacked with Israeli tank shells and white phosphorous on January 15, 2009. Various parts of the hospital began to burn, including the obstetrics department. As more civilians ran to the hospital I witnessed them come under Israeli sniper fire, and helped carry them as they fell.

“At the time the hospital had food, clean water, and some electricity. Today, a rebuilt Al Quds hospital holds approx 500 patients and over 12,000 civilians taking shelter, and has no reliable access to food, water, power, or communications. Al Quds hospital is under repeated Israeli orders to evacuate immediately and bombardment is occurring all around it, breaking the hospital’s windows. The World Health Organisation states that hospitals must never be told to evacuate; they cannot do so safely.

“All hospitals and civil services in Gaza are in a state of collapse. Life support machines and baby incubators cannot run without electricity. The sick and injured cannot be cared for without clean water and lighting. Paramedics and firefighters cannot rescue the wounded if they are fired upon, and no-one can call an ambulance or fire engine if the internet and phone networks are shut down.

“By October 23, World Health Organisation data reported 59 attacks on Gaza’s healthcare facilities, including damage to 26 hospitals and the killing of at least 16 health workers. There are approximately 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza who have no access to care and no safe place to give birth.

“As a midwife I hold the tiniest of new lives in my hands, and honour the work of those who bring them into the world. I deplore the loss of any and all life and believe violence does not bring peace closer for anyone. With Jews for Justice for Palestinians, I believe that lasting peace can only be achieved by justice, mutual recognition and respect – and by ending Israel’s illegal occupation and settlement of Palestinian land, including its illegal blockade of Gaza.”

Ms Lock set out her demands saying:

I call for:

immediate Israel/Gaza ceasefire

full and open access for humanitarian assistance

restoration of vital services

release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners

release of Gaza workers illegally detained in Israel

a halt on the forcible transfer of Palestinians in the West Bank

international pressure to address the roots of the violence

an end to the siege of Gaza and the occupation of the West Bank

a just peace for Palestinians and Israelis



Midwife Sharyn Lock on hunger strike outside Holyrood for five days calling for a ceasefire in Gaza

PHOTO Alan Simpson



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