

## Letter to the Editor

### *Diving in the ocean of suffering and injustice*

Dr Safaa T Bahjat

---

## Abstract

On Sunday morning and on a particular rainy and windy late winter weekend on the Sydney Harbor Bridge I watched on tv tens of thousands of demonstrators standing under umbrellas calling for peace and aid deliveries in the war ravaged Gaza strip. In times of hardship and despair we require people who are willing to speak up fearlessly and unapologetically for the dignity and safety of innocent people. When we conjure up the strength to act our courage becomes contagious. Our push encourages others to find their voices, and together we construct a collective power to protect the well being of Gaza's people. Certainly this will diminish our agony and support others who are taking action on the front lines and the resurrection of the legacy of brave people like Dr. Marwan Sultan and Dr Adnan Al-Bursh. I want to say to them (as physicians we have sworn an oath to reduce human suffering but you have signed it with the blood). I know your devastating experience of witnessing an infant turn into merely skin and bone then dies because of malnutrition. I know you had a mother's hand while she sobbed as her toddler lay postictal from his umpteenth seizure from meningitis. I know you have intubated babies with respiratory syncytial virus whose secretions were drowning them. Also the intellectual challenges and life-and-death decisions, you tried your best to pretend outwardly that everything was just fine, tried to remind yourself each morning to just keep your head above the water until the end of the week. When you were feeling like you were being pulled under, you persistently paddled harder. You tried to keep your smile in place, offered comfort to others during their moments of struggle, and carried your own burdens in silence. I know you needed to rest. However, you could not shake the sleepless nights, the pit-in-your-stomach sensations, and the constant feeling of your heart running its own marathon within your chest. You were wondering if your vulnerable patients had glimpsed the tears you had tried to wipe away in your office and sensed the sadness in your voice during the treatment, or if they realized how exhausted you felt, clinging to your professional role simply because your patients and parents depended on you.

Finally In the 19th century, Dr. Rudolf Virchow wrote, "Medicine, as a social science, as the science of human beings, has the obligation to point out problems and to attempt their theoretical solution...."

The physicians are the natural attorneys of the poor, and social problems fall to a large extent within their jurisdiction.