

June 7, 2024

Addressed to:

Dr. Trevor Arnason
Program Director, Public Health and Preventive Medicine Residency Program
Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa

Dr. Melissa Forgie
Interim Vice-Dean, Postgraduate Medical Education
Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa

Dr. Bernard Jasmin
Dean, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa

RE: Resignation from the University of Ottawa's Public Health and Preventive Medicine Residency Program due to tolerance of bullying, harassment, and intimidation, including a pattern of systemic anti-Palestinian racism

Dear Drs. Arnason, Forgie, and Jasmin,

I write to you today to share the conditions and factors that have led to my decision to resign from the residency training program in Public Health and Preventive Medicine at the University of Ottawa. I have concluded that the university tolerates bullying, harassment, and intimidation, including upholding a pattern of systemic anti-Palestinian racism.

I am grateful for the learning and growth I have had as a medical student and resident trainee within this institution, as I have learned how to be a competent clinician from the mentorship and guidance of my patients, community, faculty, staff, and medical educators. I am thankful for the opportunity to explore my interests in structural determinants of health and health equity, for the benefit of my current and future patients and communities. I have had the privilege to train alongside some incredible resident trainees in public health and preventive medicine who care about population health.

I have spent over 8 years within the institution as a medical student and resident trainee. I have held various leadership positions that have given me insight into the faculty's policies and practices, and how they affect trainees. I currently sit on the faculty of medicine's faculty council, the highest governing council for the faculty, and have previously done this as a resident member of the council back in 2020 as well. It has been an unfortunate experience bearing witness to direct and indirect anti-Palestinian racism and bias within your institution that has ultimately made me decide to leave. I have also come to understand that there is a tolerance of bullying, harassment, and intimidation of learners within your institution, especially when it is inflicted by faculty members of your institution. Even though your administration has denied that my experience of doxing by another faculty member constituted bullying or harassment, I am grateful that other people and institutions have recognized it as such including the Governor General of Canada's office as I was invited to a [symposium on online abuse](#) due to my experience in November 2023.

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You will likely recall the actions of you and your administration in early November 2023 as unilateral actions were taken to put me on an interim suspension without any previous conversation or notification about concerns related to professionalism or professional behaviour. The decision to suspend me for social media posts related to health and human rights for Palestine and Palestinians, and to frame such social media posts as antisemitic, inflammatory, or hateful is deeply troubling and wrong. This is [anti-Palestinian racism](#).

I have dedicated my academic and professional career and studies on health equity and the structural determinants of health, including the impacts of settler colonialism on health. Your institution has written articles about my work on [health equity](#) and even fundraising for [social accountability](#) using my name and face. My interests have been in Indigenous health in the context of Turtle Island and has also expanded to include Palestinian health in the context of occupied Palestine. There are interconnected systems of oppression that negatively impact health and healthcare for people who are made vulnerable by unjust policies and practices. It is the fundamental work of public health to understand and acknowledge that structural oppression anywhere is a threat to our collective humanity everywhere. Palestinian liberation is a public health issue.

As part of my training in Public Health and Preventive Medicine, I completed my Master of Public Health at Harvard University including learning from the Palestine Program at the [FXB Center for Health and Human Rights](#), and their scholarship on settler colonialism as a structural determinant of health. I studied and wrote about the realities of Palestinian health under occupation during my graduate studies, and visited historic Palestine, Jerusalem, and the occupied West Bank to further my understanding of the impacts of occupation and apartheid on health and healthcare for Palestinians. The purpose of education is to use it to do some good in this world. When we know better, we must do better. To have been unjustly dragged through an adversarial process launched by the university for the exact work and scholarship that I care deeply about in public health makes a path forward with the university feel even more difficult and perplexing.

The professionalism subcommittee that heard my case ultimately dismissed the complaint entirely and recommended immediate reinstatement without any disciplinary action. I have since learned that the professionalism subcommittee went as far as to suggest that the university should issue an apology. There were multiple calls by community for an apology, including by MPP Joel Harden in a letter dated [December 20, 2023](#), by Independent Jewish Voices Ottawa in a letter dated [February 26, 2024](#), by the University of Ottawa Students' Union in a statement dated [March 25, 2024](#), and again reiterated by MPP Joel Harden in a letter dated [April 29, 2024](#). But to this day, no apology has been issued by the university.

Furthermore, there has been no intentional restorative approach to heal and repair relationships on your part. I had to reach out to you to attempt to repair harm - the harm that you caused. I have met with all of you individually about my significant concerns related to the pattern of anti-Palestinian racism and bias within the institution. I have

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previously suggested possible remedies moving forward including a statement on anti-Palestinian racism by the faculty of medicine and a commitment to an investigation on the role that anti-Palestinian racism plays within the institution, both of which were denied. I cannot in good conscience remain in an institution that has continued to be silent on the blatant anti-Palestinian racism and bias that I have seen first-hand over these past months. People have told you for months now about these concerns. You know better now and have yet still to do better. It is never too late to apologize or to stand on the right side of history.

Not only is your institution perpetuating this racism, but you also remain silent while an ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip continues with despicable impunity where our own healthcare colleagues are being targeted and killed for simply wearing scrubs and staying in the hospitals looking after their patients. I have since worked with some incredible and inspiring Palestinian healthcare workers who demonstrate the epitome of medical professionalism. They and many others who care about humanity are helping me heal.

A student encampment at the university has been in place for over a month now demanding 1) full disclosure of all direct and indirect investments made by the university, 2) complete divestment from any and all corporations involved directly and indirectly in surveillance, occupation, and murder of Palestinians in both Gaza and the West Bank, and 3) the formal adoption of the Arab Canadian Lawyers Association definition of anti-Palestinian racism. The institution has much to learn from its students and trainees about justice and humanity. This institution and all academic institutions should not be investing in the [ongoing Nakba](#) that has manifested as occupation, apartheid, and genocide.

The tactics that you employ as an administration are incredibly racist and distracting. The interim suspension process took time, energy, and resources away from centering the Palestinian people who are experiencing unimaginable losses through human rights abuses and atrocities against humanity. Our work as doctors and healers should always center our patients and communities who are subjected to structural oppression and marginalization. This is what I will continue to do. I will continue to center the people and communities who we owe our unwavering solidarity to. I will continue to spend my time and energy with and for people and collectives who deserve my labour and work.

Earlier this year, I decided to do what I can within my power as a trained primary care doctor and public health practitioner to support the people of Gaza and the Palestinian healthcare workers who have continued to care for their patients and community despite the deplorable conditions they are living under, and all the injustices, they are subjected to. I recognize and acknowledge my privilege in visiting Palestine as a non-Palestinian, when my friends and colleagues who are Palestinian in the diaspora around the world have not had their right to return to their traditional homelands respected and granted by Israel. I worked in the Gaza Strip as a humanitarian healthcare worker and learned more about being a doctor and humanity than you or this institution could ever teach me. The Palestinian healthcare workers I met and befriended are more of a reflection of honest and dedicated healthcare workers and professionals than you ever will be in my eyes.

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My respected friends and colleagues who continue to do this work on the ground in Gaza, and all the Palestinian and international foreign healthcare workers, inspire me and give me hope in this dark moment in history that continues to unravel threads of Western imperialism, Zionist settler colonialism, white supremacy, and capitalism. These are the systems of oppression that you and your institution are entrenched in and are willfully choosing to uphold as the status quo. I hope you too can one day also learn and reflect to co-create communities of care and support that reflect the values and principles that we committed to as doctors and healers dedicated to health, human rights, and humanity.

After all, I learned during my first week of medical school here at this very institution that medicine is inherently political. To understand the conditions in which our patients and community experience disease, illness, and suffering – and to call attention to the root causes (the structural determinants of health), this is the work of the doctor as an advocate for health and healthcare. This is political work. The actions of your institution are also political, as your harmful actions and silence reinforces dehumanizing rhetoric that allows for the conditions in which the ongoing genocide in Gaza to continue with such impunity. All schools in Gaza have been shut down and all universities including the only two medical schools in Gaza have been attacked by the Israeli forces. These abhorrent attacks on education constitutes as [scholasticide](#). We must be able to speak up about these atrocities, especially in academic institutions and medical schools.

If it were not for all of you and this institution, I would not be here writing this letter with the many new experiences and insights that I have gained. I have counted my scars from these past months, and there is a moment of truth where I realize that there would not have been all of this if it had not been for all of you. I will not forget the way you made me heal. If it had not been for your racist and discriminatory actions through your abuse of institutional power, I would not have met so many more inspiring and amazing people who care, support, and love me. They are helping me heal from the wounds you and your institution caused. They care deeply for a world that is free of structural oppression, including for Palestinians. I know that the people of Palestine will be free in our lifetimes. Everyone in this world deserves the right to self-determination and equal human rights and dignity.

I look forward to seeking justice for the harms that I and others have experienced or are experiencing through this institution.

Thank you,

Yipeng Ge, MD MPH CCFP
Primary Care Doctor, and Public Health Practitioner