

Physicians heal Thyself and End Your Anti-Israeli Hysteria

Dr. Seuss, the world's favorite physician, once explained "I like nonsense; it wakes up the brain cells." Unfortunately, their own nonsensical behavior did not awaken a number of doctors and medical practitioners, mostly in Britain, when they published an immoderate and fallacious political diatribe against Israel in the British medical journal, *The Lancet*.

To the contrary, they have dishonored their professional code of conduct, betrayed the norms of medical science, and the understood ethics of impartial analysis. Dr. Richard Horton, editor in chief since 1995 of *The Lancet*, also ignored the code of conduct and the responsibilities of journal editors in publishing the diatribe.

What a difference a day makes! Dr. Horton, confessed his critical opinions of Israel had been shaped by pro-Palestinian friends and by the Western media, but after his one-day tour of the Rambam Medical Center in Haifa on September 29, 2014, he said he had completely changed his view of Israel.

Nevertheless despite his new enlightenment, Horton refused to retract or to apologize for the controversial "Open Letter for the People in Gaza" he had published on July 23, 2014 that rebuked Israel in inflammatory language for its "ruthless assault of unlimited duration, extent, and intensity" on Gaza in the summer conflict in 2014 in the Gaza Strip. The letter concluded, "we as scientists and doctors cannot keep silent while this crime against humanity continues." They did, however, keep silent about the crimes against humanity, crimes that the United Nations has recently publicly revealed,

committed by Palestinians during the conflict in Gaza.

The Open Letter asserted that Israel's IDF reaction to the incessant rocket attacks by Hamas in Gaza in summer of 2014 was in fact "the creation of an emergency to masquerade a massacre." The authors charged that only 5% of Israeli academics appealed to the Israel government to stop the military operation. The Open Letter was almost completely devoid of any reference to medical issues, the supposed concern of the practitioners of the medical profession.

Horton considered that the letter, condemning Israel's Operation Protective Edge in Gaza, was a cry of anguish, but also that it did not convey the highly complex reality of Israel's situation that he now understands, or pretends to understand, is the reality in Israel. He also expressed his realization that what he witnessed during his visit to Israel contradicted some of the claims of the Open Letter. However, he did not retract the letter, as critics suggested, or disparage its extreme egregious nature.

Dr. Horton may be a brilliant scientist, but his actions show he has not been a dispassionate editor nor a political innocent in regard to the Middle East. He has appeared as a speaker at a number of rallies to end Israeli action in Gaza. He was also appeared singularly naïve about his support of a *Lancet*-Palestine Alliance in the West Bank as well as about the five primary writers of the letter.

The anti-Israeli fulminations of the five authors was well known, and it seems strange that Dr. Horton appeared to be unaware of them. Two of them, Dr. Paola Manduca, a professor of genetics at the University of Genoa, and Dr. Swee Ang Chai, an orthopaedic surgeon, had circulated a video clip featuring the notorious anti-Semite, David Duke, the former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard. In the video, Duke declared that the "Zionist Matrix of Power controls media, politics, and banking." Duke

expressed delight that this “brave group” of medical professionals had joined the ranks of those who had “broken the chains of Zionist censorship.”

The impertinence of this self-styled brave group is extraordinary. Dr. Manduca assured everyone that she was not anti-Semitic. Dr. Ang announced she did not know who David Duke was or that he was connected to the Ku Klux Klan.

Equal in ignorance, Dr. Horton did not know that Dr. Manduca had implicitly suggested Jews were responsible for the Boston marathon bombings: “it was necessary to find the real culprits... instead of buying the Zionist spin.”

Apparently, Dr. Horton also did not know that a third author of the letter, Dr. Mads Gilbert, a member of the Red Norwegian revolutionary party, and a representative of the pro-Palestinian Norwegian Aid Committee, had stated that the 9/11 attacks were justifiable as an answer to United States foreign policy. The oppressed, Gilbert said, “has a moral right to attack the U.S.”

A fourth author, Derek Summerfield, had on July 13, 2006 called for a medical academic boycott of Israel because of its “war crimes.” He viewed the Israeli Medical Association as completely complicit in those war crimes. In an article in the British Medical Journal in 2004, Summerfield stated that the Israeli army had killed more unarmed Palestinian civilians since September 2000 than the number of people who died on September 11, 2001. On a number of occasions Summerfield wrote of the use of consistent torture as state policy in Israel.

The fifth author, Sir Ian Chalmers, who had spent two years as the chief UN medical officer in Gaza, spoke in 2007 of Israel as a country based on “racist nationalism.” Three years later, he declared that in Israel there was “a situation of apartheid at the moment.” He has often slyly referred, in what can be

seen as an implicit anti-Semitic remark, to the “six million” non-Jews whose lives Israel controls.”

Horton was surprised by the warm welcome he had received at the Rambam Hospital in Haifa where, contrary to what he had been previously told by his pro-Palestinian associates, over a quarter of the staff are Israeli Arabs and where Palestinian and Syrian patients were being treated. He also visited minority communities in Haifa, Acco, and Tel Aviv.

If they paid attention, the bigots in the United States and in Europe who call for boycotts of Israeli professionals and academics could learn the true reality from the seemingly converted Dr. Horton. He disclosed he had witnessed a group of Israeli health professionals who are devoting themselves to serving their Arab neighbors both inside and outside of Israel. He went so far as to call the academic boycott of Israel a “complete disaster.”

Dr. Horton said he intended to “set the record straight.” He was now aware of the falsehoods of the Open Letter that said that Israel aimed to terrorize, wound the soul and the body of the (Palestinian) people. On the contrary, he now realized that during the fighting in Gaza, Israel took great precautions to prevent civilian casualties. No doubt he will benefit even more from the UN Report of April 2015 which unequivocally proves that point..

Every objective commentator can see that *The Lancet* was guilty, at a minimum, of violating editorial policies of objectivity. A group headed by Sir Mark Pepys, professor of medicine at University College, London, expressed criticism of *The Lancet*. This group, naming itself Concerned Academics, numbering 751 professors and medical specialists, including five Nobel laureates, called for *The Lancet* to retract the Open Letter and apologize for its publication.

Despite Horton's own admission of the obvious errors and political basis in the Open Letter he published, a group named Hands off *the Lancet*, emerged on April 15, 2015 to criticize the Concerned Academics. They called the Pepys complaint "a smear campaign" and a personal attack on Richard Horton. Two leaders of this Hands off *the Lancet* group were Sir Ian Chalmers and Dr. Mads Gilbert.

Physicians must still heal themselves, at least politically. It is disillusioning that Dr. Horton and *The Lancet* have been linked with two solely anti-Israeli groups. One called Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), founded by Dr. Swee Ang Chai, has falsely criticized Israel. The second is the *Lancet*-Palestinian Health Alliance (LPHA), started in 2009, which includes the MAP and an Institute at Bir Zeit University.

The bias of *The Lancet* has been astonishing. Since 2009 the disputed territories of the West Bank and Gaza are referred to by LPHA as "occupied Palestinian territory." According to NGO Monitor, between 2009 and 2014, *The Lancet* published 66 items on Palestinian health care, most of them political commentary and only a few of which were concerned with medical issues.

The Hands off the *Lancet* group asked for determination of who was responsible in Gaza for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. They need look no further. The United Nations report of April 27, 2015 makes clear that the violations were committed by Palestinians, specifically by Hamas that used UN buildings and schools as launching sites to fire rockets at Israeli civilians during the Gaza operation.

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