ADHERENCE TO INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW NON-NEGOTIABLE IN GAZA

19 October 2023

The SA Medical Association (SAMA) is deeply concerned about the recent escalation of violence and tensions in the Gaza region and stands in solidarity with the World Medical Association (WMA) and World Health Organisation in calling for adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

IHL serves as a crucial framework designed to mitigate the impact of armed conflicts on civilians, ensuring their protection during times of strife. With the situation in Gaza deteriorating rapidly, it is essential that all parties involved uphold the principles enshrined in IHL. This includes ensuring the safety and well-being of civilians, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, or political affiliation.

For SAMA and the WMA this entails inter alia not using health facilities as military depots, and not targeting health personnel, facilities, infrastructure and vehicles. IHL involves providing health personnel an adequate environment to treat patients with humanity and in adherence to ethical values of the health practitioners’ profession, including medical neutrality. Additionally, SAMA calls on humanitarian corridors that will permit safe provision of health equipment and humanitarian supplies in Gaza. Our mandate as SAMA is to preserve life. Health practitioners on both sides of the conflict must be permitted to treat the victims of this violence.

The Association is hopeful that the international community, regional actors, and all parties involved in the conflict will prioritise the safety and well-being of civilians, particularly the most vulnerable, including women, children, and the elderly. Strict adherence to IHL is not only a legal obligation but a moral imperative. SAMA calls upon governments and humanitarian organisations to work together to ensure the provision of immediate humanitarian assistance.
to those affected in Gaza, and to support diplomatic efforts aimed at finding a peaceful and just resolution to the conflict.

(ENDS)

Notes to Editors
About SAMA: The South African Medical Association (“SAMA”) was established in 1927 and became known as it is today through the unification of a variety of doctors' groups on 21 May 1998 that had represented a diversity of interests. SAMA is a non-statutory, professional association for public and private sector medical practitioners. SAMA is registered a non-profit company in terms of the Companies Act. SAMA is a voluntary membership association, existing to serve the best interests and needs of its members in all healthcare-related matters.

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