

Dr. Mads Gilbert



Photo by Oeystein Hermstad.

A tribute by the TWiP Collective

"I am not the hero. It's the people of Gaza and particularly the patients at Al-Shifa Hospital who are the heroes."

A name and a face the people of Gaza and all of Palestine have come to know very well over the past few years. A face many of them still remember, along with kind and assuring words in their hours of highest need. This man is an example of what medicine and medical professionals are about; aspiring to show the most honourable side of what a human being is supposed to be and do.

For those who don't know him, Mads Gilbert is a Norwegian doctor who has time and time again refused to stay in his safe workplace at the University of Tromsø in Norway. Instead, he has travelled back and forth several times to aid in the continuing crisis in Gaza.

Fortunately, Dr. Gilbert has not been alone all along. Until very recently, he was joined by Dr. Erik Fosse, another Norwegian doctor who worked with Dr. Gilbert in Al-Shifa Hospital in 2009. Gilbert and Fosse both arrived on emergency assignment for the Norwegian Aid Committee (NORWAC) to help at Al-Shifa Hospital during the Israeli massacres in Gaza in 2008-2009 ("Operation Cast Lead"), during which even foreign journalists were barred from entering the Gaza Strip.

They co-authored the book *Eyes on Gaza*, which was translated into eight

languages, including Arabic. The second edition, published in 2012, includes a powerful foreword by the American linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky. The book was an immediate hit and became a bestseller in Norway.

Dr. Gilbert is not just a solidarity enthusiast, he's also a brilliant physician. He once achieved what was later defined as a "medical miracle" by reviving a clinically dead patient. The patient was trapped for more than an hour in icy water and it was the dedication of Dr. Gilbert that revived her from imminent death. This shows a delicate and important link between being good at what you do and aspiring to make a difference in this world.

It's also thanks to Dr. Gilbert's political efforts—which in his opinion goes hand in hand with medicine—that Tromsø became a sister city to Gaza. This bond shows a different political perspective than Norway's role in setting the scene for the now-obsolete Oslo Accords.

Dr. Gilbert wrote a very passionate letter out of a moment of despair in one of the darkest nights in the recent horrific nights in Gaza. It has since been shared widely on social media.

Dearest friends -

The last night was extreme. The "ground invasion" of Gaza resulted in scores and carloads with maimed, torn apart, bleeding, shivering, dying - all sorts of injured Palestinians, all ages, all civilians, all innocent.

The heroes in the ambulances and in all of Gaza's hospitals are working 12-24hrs shifts, grey from fatigue and inhuman workloads (without payment all in Shifa for the last 4 months), they care, triage, try to understand the incomprehensible chaos of bodies, sizes, limbs, walking, not walking, breathing, not breathing, bleeding, not bleeding humans. HUMANS!

Now, once more treated like animals by "the most moral army in the world" (sic!).

Dr. Gilbert goes on to describe his experiences in Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza, and as difficult as it may be, he does not fail to keep his professional analysis of the situation. He provides us with numbers and facts that we can use to face the Israeli propaganda that means to undermine the Palestinian human value and distort what happens on the ground:

More than 100 cases came to Shifa last 24 hrs. enough for a large well trained hospital with everything, but here - almost nothing: electricity, water, disposables, drugs, OR-tables, instruments, monitors - all rusted and as if taken from museums of yesterdays hospitals. But they do not complain, these heroes. They get on with it, like warriors, head on, enormous resolute.

And then, just now, the orchestra of the Israeli war-machine starts its gruesome symphony again, just now: salvos of artillery from the navy boats just down on the shores, the roaring F16, the sickening drones (Arabic 'Zennanis',

the hummers), and the cluttering Apaches. So much made and paid in and by US.

What we found most devastating was when Dr. Gilbert addressed the US President Barack Obama. We know that Obama is a war criminal and his hands are definitely soaked with Gaza's children blood. Even so, Dr. Gilbert does not fail to try and reach the human side in each of us and makes a last call out for what is left of a very shattered soul—even the US President who is aiding Israel unconditionally in its on-going massacres:

Mr. Obama - do you have a heart?

I invite you - spend one night - just one night - with us in Shifa. Disguised as a cleaner, maybe.

I am convinced, 100%, it would change history.

Nobody with a heart AND power could ever walk away from a night in Shifa without being determined to end the slaughter of the Palestinian people.

But the heartless and merciless have done their calculations and planned another "dahyia" [victim] onslaught on Gaza.

The rivers of blood will keep running the coming night. I can hear they have tuned their instruments of death.

Please. Do what you can. This, THIS cannot continue.

Mads

Gaza, Occupied Palestine

At TWiP, we didn't want to miss the chance to salute the tireless commitment of Dr. Gilbert, Dr. Fosse and all the medical staff in the hospitals in Gaza. It's the work of humble and egoless souls that makes life—with all its miseries—a bit more bearable.

May our innocents in Gaza rest in peace.