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## Health in the occupied Palestinian territory

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The use of the word “eternal” in the title of Richard Horton’s piece “Occupied Palestine, an eternal alliance for health” (March 30, p 1084)<sup>1</sup> is apt. It fits with his evangelical intentions “to put science in the service of social justice and self-determination.”<sup>2</sup> However, Horton omits important data, leading to the spurious conclusion that President Obama, by disappointing the Palestinians, is failing to deliver peace or justice to them.

In his description of the poor living conditions for fleeing Syrian Palestinians arriving in the Lebanese refugee camp Shatila, Horton states that the only support for the camp is international aid. He does not mention, however, that since the 1990s the Lebanese Government has denied Palestinian refugees all basic human rights: access to public schools, public health care, the right to work, and home ownership. Building permits are rarely issued for the camps,<sup>3</sup> resulting in the poor living conditions Horton describes. Equally forgotten in Horton’s assessment of the situation for Palestinian Syrian refugees is that most other Arab countries, including Jordan, Egypt, and the Gulf countries, are not welcoming them.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip all receive basic human rights.<sup>4</sup> Despite slowdowns at the Gaza–Israel border crossing, 90% of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank receive travel permits to seek and receive medical services in Israel.<sup>5</sup>

Horton focuses on the emotional effects of the war in Gaza Strip, which he describes without any justification as “directed against civilians in Gaza”.<sup>1</sup> He does not mention the thousands of rockets terrorising the small Israeli town of Sderot for the past decade, which are without a doubt directed against civilians.

Horton is not doing the Palestinian cause a service by blaming the Israelis and President Obama for their difficulties.





[Full-size image \(28K\)](#) Sharif Karim/X01301/Reuters/Corbis

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We declare that we have no conflicts of interest.

## References

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