



MULTICULTURAL VETERINARY  
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

## A Message to Our Community

January 13, 2024

Over the past year, MCVMA has been in deep discussion about our work: who we are, who we serve, and how we align our actions with our values as an organization working towards a more racially equitable and inclusive veterinary profession.

Since our formation, we have spoken up about injustice and violence impacting communities of color on the national and global stage such as after the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, during the targeting and increased attacks on Asian communities during the pandemic, and during the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Often, these topics are beyond veterinary medicine but deeply impact veterinary professionals. We have often found ourselves speaking up about injustice before the general public finds it “comfortable” or deems it “appropriate” to do so.

As an organization committed to anti-racism and communities of color and for reasons described below, we choose to continue affirming our solidarity with the Palestinian people and we join the widespread, international calls for an **immediate and lasting ceasefire, an end of the blockade that restricts humanitarian aid from reaching Palestinians in Gaza, and an end to the hostilities, displacement, and violence against Palestinians in the West Bank.** We understand a ceasefire is not enough to ensure Palestinian rights and dignity, nor will it be enough to secure a safe and thriving future for Palestinians and Israelis, but it is a necessary first step. We are committed to amplifying and supporting the strategic demands of peace and justice organizers who are more closely connected to this issue.

Between [October 7 and January 11](#), at least 1,200 Israelis including at least 235 citizens from other countries, and 23,469 Palestinians in Gaza have tragically been killed. This includes [more than 10,000 Palestinian children](#). These numbers also include at least 337 healthcare workers and 117 journalists. To date, at least 59,604 people have been injured. Additionally, in November the UN humanitarian affairs office reported [that 2,700 people including 1,500 children are missing and believed buried under rubble](#), a number which has since grown. The concerns for infectious disease under these conditions are already resulting in further loss of life. Due to the Israeli destruction of healthcare infrastructure, Palestinians with chronic illnesses and disabilities are unable to access life-sustaining treatments or use their mobility devices to navigate destroyed roads. Although the number of animals killed has not been reported, we know that their needless suffering is also worthy of our concern as veterinary professionals.

These numbers do not include the [attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank](#), where at least 332 people have been killed, including 84 children, and many others have been detained as a result of Israeli military and settler violence. It behooves us all to be mindful, that these are not just numbers – *they are people with names, hopes, and dreams*. As the situation worsens, people and animals are running out of food, water, and medical supplies and care. [Over half of the civilian infrastructure in Gaza has been decimated, 60% of homes have been destroyed, 1.9 million Palestinians – over 85% of Gaza's population – have been displaced, and nearly 100% of Gaza's population is at risk of starvation](#) as a result of Israeli blockade of food and water. We fear the inevitable catastrophe and its wide-reaching impacts if the violence continues.

## Criticism of Israel's Actions is Not Antisemitic

Earlier during these events, we posted a brief [statement](#) expressing our profound grief for Israelis and Palestinians who have been killed and joining other people of conscience and social justice organizations calling for a ceasefire. We are devastated alongside the world by the Hamas attacks on civilians including those killed and taken hostage on October 7th, which has left indisputable trauma for survivors and their communities. We also share the overwhelming grief of a large and growing international community who recognize the continuous losses and generations of violence and trauma imposed upon Palestinians by Israeli occupation and apartheid long before and since October 7th. This is why we must speak up for those who are still here, those taken hostage, those detained without due process, and an entire population of civilians on the downside of power to prevent an even bigger tragedy than that which we are witnessing today and with every passing minute. **A permanent and lasting ceasefire protects all parties.**

Over multiple weeks and meetings, our organization gathered information, expressed concerns, and discussed impacts, possible strategies, and our limited organizational capacity. While we didn't want to speak before feeling informed enough or take on more than we could reasonably manage, we also understood who benefits from our silence and who is burdened by our delay, our inclination for perfection, and by our fears. We decided our values as an organization ultimately obliged us to turn away from discomfort and toward action.

We received an overwhelming amount of appreciation and support from our community and we also understand that some took issue with the words we chose, the choices we made, and the organizing [groups](#) we chose to amplify. We can argue about the definition of words and we can disagree, but we hope that we can all agree that the killing of nearly 1% of the Gazan population and the denial of basic life-sustaining necessities – like food, water, electricity, medicine, and cultural practices such as being able to bury the dead – in just 3 months is beyond tragic; it is deeply unsettling and terrifying.

Genocide scholars have been sounding the alarm for months. Omer Bartov, an Israeli historian on genocide and the Holocaust asserts the process of ethnic cleansing is occurring. He advises that [it's better to warn about the potential for genocide than wait until it happens](#). In November, [UN experts agreed](#) that genocide is a real risk and must be prevented. Just this week the world

witnessed a landmark event when [South Africa](#) brought a case before the International Court of Justice against Israel for genocide. Palestinians – experts of their own experience – have been telling and showing the world what is happening to them all along. Ultimately, we rebuff any claims that criticism of Israel's government – a nation-state that *does not* represent all Jews worldwide – can be characterized as antisemitic. Their actions are no less susceptible to criticism than those of any other country, including our own which is irrefutably complicit in the ongoing suffering of Palestinians. With increasing legislation seeking to conflate all Jews with Israel's government and military and therefore tie Jews and Judaism to the violence responsible for ongoing Palestinian suffering, we are reminded that – like BIPOC – Jewish people are not monolithic in their viewpoints and opinions; they do not all agree with Zionism or with the Israeli government's actions and racist and dehumanizing views of Palestinians. In the face of an institutional and military power capable of erasing thousands of lives every week, we felt – and still feel – compelled to speak clearly and firmly. We know that silence encourages oppression.

We take our lead from Palestinian, Muslim, Arab, Southwest Asian and North African (SWANA), and BIPOC communities as well as multiracial, cross-class, intergenerational, and anti-racist Jews who have been and continue to work shoulder-to-shoulder with Palestinians to address long-standing Palestinian suffering and offer solutions for peace. We join our voices with non-partisan professionals in the international medical community who are calling for a ceasefire and end to the blockade and occupation. We see this as an extension of our roles as professionals who look after the well-being of families. We follow the example of these groups and various religious, spiritual, and cultural leaders who are asking us to have the moral courage and love of humanity to say “Enough is enough.”

We understand that while each of us is a veterinary professional, we are also individuals with complex identities and connections to communities. These identities inform and influence the work we do every day and our safety and comfort in our workplaces. We cannot and *will not* leave those identities at the door any longer to accommodate white comfort or assimilate to a culture that doubts and diminishes our wisdom, experiences, contributions, and concerns.

## Doxxing and Threatening People is Inappropriate and Dangerous

We want to address the responses on social media and in private messages from other people in the veterinary community that we have received and witnessed since the release of our initial statement.

We know that antisemitism is a *real* and *continuous* threat to Jews and humanity. We understand this because several of us at MCVMA have long been in deep community with and organizing for equity and justice alongside Jewish people and Israelis of many races and identities. Modern conversations about justice have often excluded antisemitism, which diminishes non-Jewish people's ability to identify and denounce it when it surfaces in themselves and our communities. Ultimately, this invisibility leads to the pain and fear that Jewish people feel and express when confronted with antisemitism as well as to the continued erasure of the experiences of Jewish people of color in particular, whose identities result in

unique, intersectional experiences of discrimination and oppression. We empathize with that pain and we concurrently decry any entity, whether individual or institutional, that poses a threat to Jewish lives worldwide.

Still, what has unfolded in the comments of social media threads, in various messages we've received, posts made about us, and in in-person confrontations with individuals from our organization is the conflation of views and comments made by other people of color who are not affiliated with MCVMA with our position as an organization and with the beliefs of individuals within MCVMA. More alarmingly, examples of doxxing have come to light, exposing people of color – who are already at risk of hate crimes – to great risk of physical harm and danger. These conflations and actions are deeply racist. They are unacceptable and should be condemned.

People of color are not a monolith. Assuming that one person of color speaks for the rest of us is *racial categorization and sameness*, [a defined \(micro\)aggressive behavior](#) that assumes that all people from a particular group are alike or think alike.

Doxxing is a form of online harassment that includes publicly exposing someone's real name, address, job, or other identifying info without a victim's consent. While we understand the pain caused by some of the comments shared online, we do not believe doxxing *anyone* is appropriate.

Over the last two years, MCVMA has been [threatened with intimidation and physical harm at a public veterinary conference](#) by a veterinary colleague and witnessed another veterinarian of color in our community get cyberbullied by a white colleague this past summer. These very public experiences and the many private ones that never get reported demonstrate to us just how dangerous it is to be hypervisible as people of color who speak up about racial injustice, oppression, and discrimination, especially in a field where there are very few voices of color in public leadership.

We feel compelled to address the many vile, dehumanizing, and explicitly racist messages we have received as a result of our initial statement which has been wildly misinterpreted and willfully mischaracterized by people who are committed to misunderstanding what we stand for. **While we know that criticism will always be a risk of the beliefs we have and the actions we take, as we continue to receive harassing and racist messages including those that are escalating into threats toward individuals and our organization, be assured that we will take whatever legal action is available to us to alert authorities as to persons acting in a harassing or threatening manner toward us. We ask our community of supporters to stay vigilant and to report and denounce acts of racism, dehumanization, intimidation, doxxing, and threats.**

## [We Are Dedicated to Racial Justice](#)

We are unequivocally committed to racial equity and justice – not just diversity, inclusion, and representation as these do not address the systemic changes our profession needs. We are

committed to all oppressed people globally and as we previously stated, we oppose all forms of bigotry including the anti-Palestinian, anti-Muslim, and antisemitic violence that has spiked all over the world in recent weeks and in our profession. Additionally, we are sickened by how support and concern for Palestinian civilians are being met with harassment and intimidation – tactics that prevent people from speaking truth to power and speaking up about injustice. We will not be intimidated and bullied into silence and we are committed to being brave. We encourage our community and allies to be brave with us.

*Nobody's free until everybody's free. – [Fannie Lou Hamer](#)*

*There is no partial commitment to justice. You are either in or you're out. – [John Carlos, 1968 Olympic Medalist](#)*