



August 13, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St., NW  
Washington, DC 20451

Dear Secretary Blinken:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, I write to reiterate our strong support for an immediate ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza and the immediate release of all hostages. This deadly conflict has already taken the lives of more than 40,000 people and both Palestinian and Israeli citizens remain under daily threat of more violence. In addition, many Palestinians, including children and other vulnerable people, are facing malnutrition, starvation, risks from various infectious diseases that easily spread under the current conditions and lack of access to critical health services. We thank you and President Biden for your ongoing efforts to end the Israel-Hamas conflict and we are hopeful all parties will work in good faith to negotiate a lasting peace in the region as soon as possible.

We are also deeply concerned that the World Health Organization has recently found traces of the polio virus in samples taken from two locations in Gaza. In the short-term, at a minimum, all parties should agree to at least a temporary vaccination ceasefire to allow WHO and its partners to administer the 1.2 million vaccines it is providing for children and other vulnerable people in Gaza. The devastation on the region's health services infrastructure and basic sanitation services puts thousands of children and others at risk.

Thank you for your attention to our views and recommendations. We are hopeful you will convey our concerns and recommendations to those negotiating on behalf of Israel and Hamas as the United States continues its efforts to achieve a lasting ceasefire. Protecting the health and safety of all people in the region, restoring essential health services, and ensuring timely delivery of humanitarian aid, including food and clean water, should be the top priority for all parties in these critical negotiations.

Sincerely,

Georges C. Benjamin, MD  
Executive Director