



**Statement from the Israeli Medical Association and
the German Medical Association on the occasion
of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of
diplomatic relations between Israel and Germany**



In 2015, Israel and Germany celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. This anniversary year is also deeply significant for the Israeli and German medical professions. Together, representatives of both of these countries would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the cooperation and friendship that have developed between the German Medical Association and the Israeli Medical Association over decades and to set a precedent for the future. With this in mind, they have adopted the following joint statement:

The relationship between the Israeli and German medical professions is rooted in an unprecedented past, marked in particular by the period of National Socialism. Recognising this history is essential to the preservation and growth of this relationship. German physicians and the organisations of the German medical profession were deeply involved in the criminal activities of the Nazis. They were responsible, among other things, for expelling Jewish colleagues from the medical profession, for corroborating Nazi ideology, for performing forced abortions and many thousands of forced sterilisations and for murdering many thousands of patients. In the concentration and extermination camps, doctors played an active role in the Holocaust and conducted criminal experiments on prisoners.

These atrocities were grounded in an inhuman ideology, a violation of human rights and the abandonment of a key pillar of medical ethics: Physicians no longer exclusively had an obligation to the health of their individual patients; they also subscribed to a perverse world view which prioritised the needs of their purported race – a destructive ideological construct – above the health of the individual. This departure from medical ethics was one force behind the criminal behaviour of physicians under National Socialism.

The Israeli Medical Association and the German Medical Association agree that the partnership between these two medical communities can only be defined by working together to remember and continually confront this past. They agree that there is an obligation to learn from this history. The current generation of physicians was not involved in these crimes; however, it is still their responsibility to preserve the history and lessons from the past. This includes demonstrating absolute forthrightness and honesty in dealing with the past.

In this context, the German Medical Association reaffirms the central tenets of the Nuremberg Declaration adopted by the 115th German Medical Assembly in 2012; the Israeli Medical Association welcomes these statements:

- “We [the 115th German Medical Assembly] acknowledge the significant shared responsibility of physicians for the injustices of National Socialist medicine and regard that which has happened as a warning for the present day and the future.
- We express our deepest regret that physicians, in contravention of their duty to treat, were complicit in multiple human rights violations. We commemorate the surviving victims and those who have already passed away, as well as their descendants, and ask for their forgiveness.
- As the German Medical Assembly, we pledge to work actively towards promoting future historical research and open evaluation by the professional bodies of the Federal Republic through direct financial and institutional support, such as ensuring unlimited access to archives.”

With this declaration, the Israeli Medical Association and the German Medical Association jointly demonstrate:

- their clear commitment to human rights,
- their clear commitment to a medical ethos focused on the individual as outlined in the World Medical Association’s Declaration of Geneva,
- their explicit rejection of racial, religious and any other forms of discrimination

To fulfil these commitments, they agree to embrace the following measures:

- to meet regularly in the spirit of enduring friendship and cooperation
- to engage in a meaningful exchange of experience and knowledge with the global medical community
- to ensure the inclusion of this subject matter in basic medical training curricula
- to work together to keep the memory of these atrocities alive in order to prevent them from happening again

Berlin,

on behalf of the Board of the German
Medical Association

on behalf of the Board of the Israeli
Medical Association