



HEALTHCARE WORKERS 4 PALESTINE SOUTH AFRICA

25 June 2025

South African Zionist Federation's hypocritical attempt to undermine healthcare leadership

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) has issued a last-minute call urging members of the Discovery Health Medical Scheme (DHMS) to oppose the election of Dr Gonda Perez to the scheme's board, mischaracterising her candidacy and our endorsement as an "attempt to politicise DHMS." We reject this accusation as both disingenuous and hypocritical.

Healthcare Workers 4 Palestine – South Africa (HCW4P-SA) has endorsed Dr Gonda Perez not only for her principled stance on local and global health issues, but because of her exceptional leadership and healthcare governance record. Dr Perez has served with distinction in senior roles at the University of Cape Town and the National Health Laboratory Service, institutions central to South Africa's academic and public health landscape. Her career reflects integrity, competence, and deep commitment to ethical public service.

It is ironic that the SAZF, a highly politicised lobby group known for uncritical support of the Israeli state, including its ongoing genocide and repeated attacks on dozens of hospitals, accuses HCW4P-SA of politicising healthcare. Yet the SAZF is actively mobilising proxy votes and endorsing a slate of candidates. While SAZF labels Dr Perez's endorsement as ideological, it simultaneously endorses its own candidates, without transparency or commitment to transformation, revealing their double standards and fear of alternative, critical voices.

The controversy over Discovery's hosting of the 2024 Future of Health summit cannot be ignored. The summit featured prominent Israeli institutions such as the Sheba Medical Centre, an organisation with deep ties to the Israeli military, and also lists the Israeli Ministry of Health as a member organisation. Despite widespread objection, Discovery refused to distance itself from these institutions, dismissing valid concerns from civil society, healthcare workers, and the public. In doing so, it aligned itself with institutions complicit in war crimes, including the bombing of dozens of hospitals and the systematic targeting of healthcare workers and infrastructure.

An organisation that collaborates with regimes involved in crimes against humanity cannot be trusted to guide the future of healthcare in South Africa, especially in a country navigating the path to National Health Insurance while still recovering from its own history of apartheid. That is why this election matters. South Africans deserve board members like Dr Perez who will speak truth to power, defend ethical healthcare policy, and challenge alliances that compromise public trust.

We call on all DHMS members attending the AGM on 26 June 2025 to vote for Dr Gonda Perez. Vote for someone with a record of excellence in healthcare leadership and a lifelong commitment to social justice. Vote for diversity, integrity, and accountability.

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