

7 February 2024

'The wrong kind of humanitarian crisis'

HMRC has prevented PCS reps in Leeds branch from fundraising for an established charity, providing medical aid to Palestinians in Gaza.

According to the [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA), between 7 October 2023 and 7 January 2024, at least 23,084 Palestinians were reported killed in Gaza; and during the same period, 58,926 Palestinians were reportedly injured. [According to Human Rights Watch, almost two million more have been displaced.](#)

In January, [Oxfam International reported that 250 Palestinians per day were being killed](#), with many more lives at risk from hunger, disease and cold.

Given this, it's tragic that PCS representatives in HMRC's Leeds Regional Centre have been prevented from fundraising for the charity Medical Aid for Palestinians. They have been told in no uncertain terms by local management that this is not allowed; and in the process, local management suggested such fundraising may not be "in line with HMRC's values and diversity policies", could be "of a political nature" and "supports people affected in one part of the conflict".

PCS has already made it clear to HMRC that we are particularly fascinated by the suggestion that PCS representatives fundraising for humanitarian aid for Gaza is out of line with "HMRC's values and diversity policies". If that is the case, there are a number of other organisations whose approach is not in line with HMRC's values and policies. Those organisations include:

- [The United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#)
- [The World Health Organisation](#)
- [The British Red Cross](#); and of course
- [The government of the United Kingdom.](#)

An interesting group of organisations for HMRC's "values" to be "not in line" with.

Medical Aid for Palestinians

PCS has been in correspondence with the chief executive on this issue and we followed-up the matter at our most recent meeting.

The position we consider we'd clearly reached – confirmed in writing and in person – is that providing we are careful about the organisations we support, there is no problem with the fundraising proceeding.

Let's take a look at the organisation that our reps are being prevented from supporting:

[Medical Aid for Palestinians](#) (MAP) is a London-based charity, established in 1995, and operating in Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It is fully registered with the UK's [Charity Commission](#) (Charity Number 1045315) and according to the Commission, its charity reporting is up-to-date and on-time. The Commission's website also confirms that MAP's main purposes are:

- Education/training
- The advancement of health or saving of lives
- The prevention or relief of poverty
- Overseas aid/famine relief
- Economic/community development/employment

[MAP is recognised by HMRC for Gift Aid purposes.](#)

So what's the problem?

Why HMRC are choosing to block our reps' efforts to fundraise for medical aid and poverty relief is unclear. The latest excuse Leeds management have come up with is that they didn't have time to check the credentials of the charity; which is bordering on incredulous, when you consider the reps have provided them with the charity number and it takes about thirty seconds to find it on the UK government's own website.

HMRC hasn't always been so reticent. When Russia invaded Ukraine, the UK government was quick to offer its support, including HMRC supplying Surge and Rapid Response Team members to process visa applications for refugees fleeing Ukraine. There was no mention of HMRC staff not being involved, on the grounds that "it supports people affected in one part of the conflict".

Maybe someone in HMRC just thinks that tens of thousands of Palestinian deaths, with almost two million more displaced, simply isn't the right kind of humanitarian crisis.

PCS has rightly condemned the killings and hostage-taking by Hamas on 7 October 2023; but that can't prevent us from wanting to see an end to the slaughter of what amounts to a thousand Palestinians every four days. Remember, our reps have deliberately chosen a Charity focusing on providing medical aid; HMRC on the other hand, seem to be the ones taking sides in the conflict.

Let's be clear: we intend to put as much pressure on HMRC as possible, aimed at removing what we consider to be a needless obstacle to allowing HMRC staff to try to help to relieve the suffering of others.