Film Review

New Film, *American Doctor*, Documents Israeli Horrors Committed in Gaza

Firsthand Reports by U.S. Physicians

by Suzanne Klebe

American Doctor
Directed by Poh Si Teng
Produced by Kirstine Bardford and Reem Haddad for Watermelon Pictures
Premiered January 23, 2026; 1 hour, 33 minutes

Aug. 17—The new film *American Doctor*, about U.S. physicians volunteering in Gaza, began showing in New York City on August 14. Released earlier this year, it was entered into relevant juried documentary contests, and as of August is now widely available.

The arrival of the documentary comes none too soon, since the genocide in Gaza is no longer on front pages of the American media. Director Poh Si Teng noted in her discussion following the New York showing, that they had rushed the film into production because of the urgency of keeping the situation in Gaza in people's minds. The doctors in the film noted specifically the urgency of getting Americans to see what their tax dollars are funding.

The film follows the lives of three U.S. physicians who volunteered to save lives in Gaza during intense bombing of civilians. The Americans—Dr. Mark Perlmutter, a Jewish American orthopedic surgeon from Rocky Mount, North Carolina; Dr. Thaer Ahmad, a Palestinian-American emergency physician from Chicago; and Dr. Feroze Sidhwa, a Pakistani-Parsi trauma surgeon from California, have been put into the role of telling the story, as eyewitnesses to the brutality of the Israeli targeting of children as well as hospitals and medical personnel during the genocide in Gaza.

People Have To See the Truth

Early in the film, Dr. Perlmutter insists that the photos of the dead and maimed children be shown on camera. "Why not?" he asked, when the gruesomeness of the photos was noted. "Who would you be protecting? The parents have given their permission. People have to see the truth."

The testimony of the doctors was shown from diverse locations—wherever they could speak out—

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from international conferences, to the halls of the U.S. Congress, even to interviews on Israeli television. The theme of what American tax dollars are funding was referenced several times. Video of the bombing and killing of doctors, journalists (five killed), and patients themselves at the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis, where the doctors were practicing, was shown—one successive bomb after the other, hitting staircases where patients were being transported. The bombing occurred on August 26, 2025. Dr. Sidhwa noted that one of the patients who was blown up when the bomb hit the men's recovery room, was a young man he had just treated. The IDF, he recounted, said the bombing was necessary to kill a suspected terrorist who was thought to be a patient in the hospital. After some international uproar, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said it had a tragic mishap, which the government allegedly regretted.

Otherwise, the film shows the lives of these doctors, the challenge of entry into Gaza, and their own relationships and families.

Following the film and after the Q&A period, one of the doctors was asked, "What is happening now?" The doctor responded that there had been discussions that very day in the United Nations about that question. More than 1,800 medical personnel, transporters, and others had been killed by Israel Defense Forces' bombing. Over eighty percent of the hospitals are said to be totally destroyed, with a small number functioning.

Israeli moves indicate that Gaza is shrinking. The problems now are availability of energy, water, and nutritious food. Water has to be trucked in, which also affects its cleanliness. Food is there, but high in sugar and low in nutrients.

Take Action, Find Ways To Provide Treatment

The doctor noted the significant issue, that there are 18,500 patients, according to the World Health Organization's (WHO) count, who urgently need to be transported to other hospitals. The WHO reports that more than 10,000 Gaza patients have been transported over the past few years to over 30 countries.

A unique plan for the current situation, one of the doctors reported, is to establish a corridor to transport some of those patients to hospitals in Jerusalem to be treated by Palestinian doctors. How would this play in Israel?

In this context it was noted that a number of the hospitals that had been bombed in Gaza were actually built and manned by different religious denominations and countries. One of the doctors noted that the first hospital bombed, al-Ahli Baptist Hospital, bombed on August 17, 2023, was the only Christian hospital in Gaza, built in 1882. The hospital was being run by the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem with heavy involvement of the Catholic Church. Were there protests? Vatican representatives have been in Gaza twice, including after the July 17, 2025 bombing of the only Catholic Church in Gaza, the compound of the Holy Family.

One of the doctors noted a proposal that the Pope walk from Jerusalem to Gaza along the proposed corridor for the transport of the patients. Meetings with medical personnel will encourage this or some such action by the Pope. They said that the Catholic Church is a significant landholder in Jerusalem.

It is notable that on August 17, Pope Leo XIV issued a strong call, following the Vatican's protest of the brutalization and depopulation of one of the last Christian towns in Palestine, the town of Tayeh in the West Bank. In his statement at the Angelus on August 17, the Pope called for a major mobilization, and reiterated the Vatican's diplomatic position, calling for the urgent implementation of the two-state solution, and the need to "work for a just and lasting peace."