

# Chemotherapy is for treating cancer, not ethnic cleansing

An open letter to [Genentech](#)<sup>1</sup> and [Novartis](#), developers of my chemo drugs

[Dr. Schinecker](#), [Mme Graham](#), [M. Sause](#), [Esteemed Members of the Board at the Roche Group](#) & [Chairman Reinhardt](#), [Dr. Narasimhan](#), [Dr. Aradhye](#), [Mr. Bulto](#), [Esteemed Members of the Board at Novartis](#), [Distinguished Members of the Executive Committee at Novartis](#):

My name is [Jacques Belval](#) and I am a second-time cancer patient. The following combined open letter to your companies outlines the *why* of my preparation to conscientiously reject further treatment with your drugs. I refuse to be complicit in the genocide of the Palestinian people, let alone attach my survival, in this case of cancer, to the intentional maiming and murder of innocent civilians, chiefly women and children.

Let me be clear for a moment: the Zionist project has done an excellent job of ensuring that the vast majority of people cannot differentiate between anti-Zionism, anti-Judaism, antisemitism, or anti-Israelism. There *is* a difference. Conflation is most detrimental to Palestinians under military occupation and in diaspora *and* to Jewish communities at-large. However, it works magnificently for the Zionist project, the Israeli Knesset, and the Likud Party, all of which are, under the leadership of far-right politicians like Benjamin Netanyahu and Naftali Bennett—to name but two shining examples of Israeli fascism—exterminating a civilian population with impunity. It makes room for radical politicians to cover their proverbial arses with religion and shame anyone who criticizes their racist, genocidal politics into silence—an early and indecorous iteration of cancel-culture. In sooth, they have politicized religion in furtherance of weaponizing their so-called *defense* against critics and detractors. Pardon my blatancy in highlighting that a violent, repressive, nuclear-armed power, which is illegally occupying land as per multiple United Nations resolutions—and in violation of all four Geneva Conventions, should be boycotted and sanctioned in the most severe form possible, and lose investors as well. Loss of wealth, standing, and power are incredible motivators for policy change.

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<sup>1</sup> Genentech is a member of the [Roche Group](#), a biotech company

This brings me to my point: as biomedical companies, you are manifestly in the medical field. As practitioners and marketers who peddle your drug to treatment facilities, you, too, are unarguably bound by the tenets of the Hippocratic Oath, with which you are undoubtedly familiar. The

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enter to help the sick, and I will abstain from all intentional wrongdoing and harm, especially from abusing the bodies of man or woman, bond or free.”

As luck—or rather misfortune—would have it, the Roche Company has offices located in Occupied Palestine, listed under an address identifying them as located in Israel as exemplified by the screenshot from your website (*image above*). For anyone wishing to demonstrate outside your offices, here is a [Google maps link](#) to guide them to the right location. Novartis’s information has also been screenshot (*image right*). Technology is a marvelous thing, is it not? Because your corporations hold offices in Occupied Palestine, it is self-evident that agreements were made with the occupying Israeli government; your implicit support of this occupying power’s dangerous politics, policies, and practices would indeed please the ancient Greek goddess, Até, who would celebrate having such interlocutors as yourselves—powerful groups that turn a blind eye to the criminal behaviors of a violent country and its equally brutal benefactor.

American Medical Association’s Journal of Ethics published an [article](#) by Dr. Anum Fasih; a truncated part of the quote—relevant to the argument herein—reads as follows: “Into whatsoever houses I enter, I will



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To the Roche Group's office in the Occupied Territories, the *about* section of your [LinkedIn](#) page reads that your offices do marketing as part of their many functions. While providing treatment to cancer patients is a good thing, I refer you to the earlier segment of the Hippocratic Oath. By virtue of being in agreement with an occupying, settler-colonial power, you are plainly committing gross ethics violations: in your cooperation with the Israeli government, you have a hand in harming the Palestinians—passively, you might argue, but you are nonetheless complicit.

To Novartis, your site published a [response](#) to the 7 October attacks on 13 October which shows you as standing unequivocally with Israel. Yes—condemn terrorism; but be sure to call out Israel, as well: this state's behavior is *also* terroristic. I refer you, too, to the previous segment on the Hippocratic Oath; might your motivations also be more financial than medical?

Being ill has afforded me the time for a great deal of introspection and thoughtful reflection on my personal values. While I want to live a full, long, happy life, I also fear that knowing my survival hinges on the continued genocide and forced displacement of the Palestinian people does not align with who I am. I cannot in good conscience attach my survival to the extermination of others. This is why I am penning this open letter: I formally request that your companies reevaluate their operations; nothing would make me happier than for your corporations to prove us all wrong. You can do this by demonstrating your humanity for *all*.

My oncologist and I are seeking alternative treatment options—ones that do not include receiving drugs from —and consequently funding—companies with questionable morals. Because I am aware that such decisions by companies like yours take time to reach, pending a long, evaluative process, I shall obligingly continue receiving my doses while awaiting your decision. I am assigning you a deadline of 13 January 2025 to decide which you want more: to keep the corporate profits rolling or to respect the full of the Hippocratic Oath and consequently be upstanding and in good ethics. *I personally* hope you will choose the latter.

If, for any reason, your companies respond with the resolve to continue enabling the Israeli régime—thus denying my request—at or before the prescribed deadline, thereby opting for profits over ethics, *I* shall protest *your* companies' policies by refusing further treatment with your drugs. As a biomedical company that develops cancer treatments, it is hypocritical that you supposedly “save” lives in one area while participating—indirectly or otherwise—in the extermination of

stateless individuals who are fighting, justifiably, against their oppressors. If my cancer spreads and I die as a consequence of this, I can at least die with a clear conscience: I shall have aligned my behavior with my values. In brief, I am writing a check that I am prepared to cash with my life. *Your* companies will have yet another death on record, and the general public will know you chose profits over people—profits gleaned from genocide, no less.

Since about the end of April 2018, I have been on near-continuous treatment with Afinitor, which is produced by [Novartis](#) for my first cancer, a right pelvic mass weighing 250-plus grams—of which part was identified through biopsy as a stage-3 neuro-sarcoma—the culprit of excruciating pain that nearly relegated me to a wheelchair for life. I was first treated with [Avastin](#)—produced by [Genentech](#), and by extension the [Roche Group](#)—in fall 2021 to force a retreat of tumor activity on my spine; I resumed treatment with this same drug at the end of 2022 when multiple tests revealed escaped cells from an ependymoma on my lumbar made their way into my CSF and coated my spinal cord and brain. I have better tolerated treatment this time around, owing to lower, more spaced doses, though my kidneys are suffering tremendously.

My first foray into social justice issues was as a middle schooler in 2004: I attended a talk by renowned author, [Nuruddin Farah](#), whose lecture about child-soldiers in war-torn Somalia left me aghast. I still have the signed copy of one of his books, [Links](#), which I got that day.

Growing up in areas of the country that leaned politically far to the right, I found myself regularly rebuked and met with disdain when I dared to raise issues of social injustice and the hypocrisy of American action and inaction throughout this country's short history. Criticism—even simply questioning—the United States' actions, or pointing out the injustices carried out by Israel and the Israeli Occupation Forces<sup>2</sup> against civilian populations in Occupied Palestine made me unpopular indeed. I was oft-shouted into intimidation by those in opposition who, like rabid dogs, were vicious in their attacks when they called me un-American,<sup>3</sup> and told me I was antisemitic.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> While some call them the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), I counter that an occupier cannot be a defender, unless said occupier is defending his occupying position.

<sup>3</sup> While the US government represses resistance, I counter that protest is a *very* American thing to do; it is protected by the First Amendment.

<sup>4</sup> Consider this: Palestinians are *Arab*. What language do Arabs speak? *Arabic*. To what language family does Arabic belong? *Semitic*. This would make Arabs—thereby Palestinians...? *Semitic*. I ask, then, how does defending one

As you weigh your options and come to a decision, ask yourselves whether you want to be on the right side of history or passively allow criminal and outrageous government behavior to continue in the same vein that gave way to Nazi Germany. No, I do not make this comparison lightly: many of my family, I am proud to say, were in *la Résistance*, and the alarming resurgence of ultra-right ideology serves only to fan the flames of hate. For Palestinians, existence itself is resistance: *al-wujūd muqawama*. And this? This is my contribution to the resistance.

Awaiting a humanitarian reply,



Jacques E. Belval  
3 February 2024

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semitic group from another make me antisemitic? Are you further aware that some Palestinians happen to be Jewish? As Mizrahim (Jewish Arabs), they are, at best, second-class citizens of Israel, their loyalty constantly called into question by a racist apparatus.