

**HEALTH IT'S A
CARE MATTER
IN OF LIFE
DANGER & DEATH**



Press Information . Communiqué de presse . Comunicado de prensa

Everyone, wounded or sick during an armed conflict, has the right to health care

***The International Council of Nurses joins call
for the end of violence against health care.***

Geneva, Switzerland, 12 December 2016 – The International Council of Nurses (ICN) has renewed a joint call for access to healthcare of wounded and sick during an armed conflict to be respected and protected, and for attacks on health personnel and facilities to stop.

As part of the “Health Care in Danger” project, led by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, ICN, has signed a joint statement reinstating the initiative’s strong commitment to the protection of the wounded and sick, health-care personnel, facilities, and medical transports. The declaration underscores the commitment expressed by Member States of the UN Security Council in Resolution 4, “Health Care in Danger: continuing to protect the delivery of health care together”. It also recalls that in May 2016 the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2286 on the protection of health services in times of armed conflict.

Despite these commitments, attacks on health care continue relentlessly.

In Yemen: since the current conflict began in 2015, over 160 attacks on hospitals, clinics and medical personnel have been reported to the ICRC. Less than half of the country’s healthcare facilities remain functional. On average, 20 people, women, children, men, die every day, many from treatable wounds and curable illnesses which meet with unavailable drugs and lack of operating hospitals.

In Syria: in 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) has already recorded over 120 attacks on health facilities. They add to the 135 recorded in 2015 and 93 in 2014. In spite of ongoing escalations and desperate needs, only one out of eastern Aleppo’s nine hospitals remains fully functional, while four are completely out of service. Medical staff are exhausted and stocks severely depleted. Western Aleppo has also not been spared from the indiscriminate violence and hospitals there struggle to cope with the ongoing influx of patients.

In Iraq: during the past year, hospitals and health facilities have been damaged, destroyed and looted preventing civilians to access medical services in the provinces severely affected by the conflict. In some areas more than 45% of health professionals have fled since 2014. Medical transports have been blocked and delayed on their way to health facilities or misused by attackers. Symbols of medical protection and assistance have been outraged.

The list is longer: Afghanistan, Libya, South Sudan... Attacks against patients and health-care workers caring for wounded and sick during an armed conflict are one of the most appalling acts of annihilations of our common humanity. As a result of this violence, countless lives are lost or are maimed: pregnant women in labour cannot get to a hospital in time because the ambulances going to collect them are targeted on the way; old men suffering from chronic diseases cannot receive treatment; children cannot be vaccinated. Premature babies are removed from the incubators of hospitals reduced in rubble, doctors watch their patients die because they have no more medicines to treat them. Patients and health care workers, their families and entire communities are affected. This must end. Wars have rules.

States must act on their commitments now and stop this violence. We must protect the sanctity of care.

The joint statement urges those involved in current conflicts to respect and protect hospitals and other civilian objects from hostilities. External governments with influence should pressure the warring parties to meet their obligations under international humanitarian law. Parties to the conflict must respect the sanctuary of medical facilities.

They must also allow medical supplies to reach their destination and medical evacuations to take place as needed. They should carry out full, prompt, impartial and independent investigations into any incidents preventing the safe delivery of health care. They should urge their military forces to incorporate precautionary measures to protect wounded and sick people and health-care personnel, facilities and vehicles when planning and carrying out military operations. They should promote awareness of and compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law and disseminate the ethical principles of health care, in collaboration with relevant institutions, among the general public and the armed forces.

There are limits to how wars are fought. Everyone, wounded or sick, has the right to health care. Even in conflict.

"Health Care in Danger" is an ICRC-led project of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement aimed at improving the efficiency and delivery of impartial health care in armed conflict and other emergencies.

In addition to supporting the Health Care in Danger initiative, ICN is a founding member of the [Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition](#), which promotes respect for international humanitarian and human rights laws that relate to the safety and security of health facilities, health workers, ambulances and patients ensuring they are safe and secure during periods of armed conflict or civil violence.

Note for Editors

The **International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.

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