



# Statement on Armed Conflict

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## New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine (NZCPHM) recognises that peace is a critical determinant of health.

Armed conflict leads to:

1. The premature loss of human lives including civilians, health workers, and combatants;
2. Injuries and disabilities with many enduring long-term physical, psychological and social consequences;
3. Psychological trauma including the loss of family and community which risks long-term mental health impacts across generations;
4. The destruction of communities, families, homes, businesses and other places of work, educational institutions, recreational settings, and cultural and health infrastructure and systems which undermines the determinants of health;
5. The displacement of people from their home or region, in particular to internally displaced people (IDP) or refugee centres that are ill equipped to deal with such numbers, resulting in increased risks of infectious diseases and malnutrition;
6. The disruption of economies, leading to poverty and food insecurity, and hindering access to essential necessities crucial for sustaining life and health; and
7. Damage to the environment through the destruction of infrastructure and contamination of water sources, land, air and sea.

The NZCPHM acknowledges the violence and armed conflict that has occurred in Aotearoa New Zealand. This includes recognition of the historical violence that was part of the process of colonisation and that has occurred as recently as 2007<sup>i</sup>. The health inequities experienced by Māori in New Zealand are a direct and ongoing result of this violence. The NZCPHM supports actions to avoid future conflict, and to allow for healing (rongoā) for the harm caused.

In addition, the NZCPHM:

1. Expresses concern over the growing number of fatalities in armed conflicts in different geographic areas around the world;
2. Acknowledges the devastating consequences of armed conflict on regional and global health and security;
3. Acknowledges that armed conflict is often occurring in the wider context of decades of conflict in certain regions;

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<sup>i</sup> In the Ureweras on Ngāi Tūhoe land, see for example, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/page/anti-terror-raids-urewera>

4. Recognises that international humanitarian law and principles are intended to ensure the right to health of all people living in these areas and, if adhered to, help avoid humanitarian disasters, health inequities and public health catastrophes; and
5. Appreciates the humanitarian efforts of those local and international organisations and nations who are providing emergency and ongoing care to those affected.

NZCPHM calls for:

1. Recognition that the process of colonisation is at the root of many armed conflicts and that Indigenous people around the world have been disproportionately impacted as a result of this violence.
2. All parties engaged in armed conflict to support, in good faith, political solutions for enduring peace where the rights and humanity of populations are respected.
3. All parties engaged in armed conflict to adhere to international humanitarian law, notably the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, to guarantee the safety of civilians and health facilities. This includes by allowing prompt and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid including food, clean water, sanitation, shelter, fuel and electricity, medical supplies, medicines, vaccines, and medical, surgical, mental health and psychosocial care to those in need.
4. No party to target health and humanitarian personnel, facilities and vehicles.
5. Health personnel to be guaranteed safe and adequate conditions to treat all patients requiring medicine or surgery with humanity and in compliance with the ethical values of their professions, including medical neutrality and impartiality.
6. The collection of timely and accurate population health and epidemiological data to help inform the prioritisation of resources to support the emergency health response.
7. All parties engaged in armed conflict to ensure the safety and rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups, including women and children, and to protect access to education.
8. All parties engaged in conflict to resist the use of dehumanising language – human rights are universal and inalienable.
9. Strengthened efforts to promote the resolution of armed conflicts and prevent the onset of future armed conflicts.
10. Intensified efforts to promote nuclear disarmament and the abolition of other weapons of mass destruction.

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**The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine** is the professional body representing the medical specialty of public health medicine in Aotearoa New Zealand. Public Health Medicine is the branch of medicine concerned with the assessment of population health and health care needs, the development of policy and strategy, health promotion, the control and prevention of disease, and the organisation of services. For information about our mahi, members or purpose visit our website [www.nzcphm.org.nz](http://www.nzcphm.org.nz)