



Statement on Armed Conflict

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 armed force personnel;
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, cultural and health infrastructure which undermine the determinants of health;
5. The displacement of people from their home or region, in particular to refugee centres that are ill equipped to deal with such numbers increasing the risks of infectious diseases and malnutrition;
6. The disruption of economies, leading to poverty and food insecurity 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:

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

NZCPHM calls for:

1. Parties to armed conflict to guarantee the safety of civilians and health facilities by respecting international humanitarian law and principles 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.
2. No party to target health and humanitarian personnel, facilities and vehicles.

3. Health personnel to be guaranteed safe and adequate conditions to treat all patients requiring medicine, surgery, with humanity and in compliance with the ethical values of their professions, including medical neutrality and impartiality.
4. The collection of timely and accurate population health and epidemiological data to help inform the prioritisation of resources to support the emergency health response.
5. All parties engaged in conflict to resist the use of dehumanising language – human rights are universal and inalienable.
6. All parties to support, in good faith, a political solution for enduring peace where the rights and humanity of populations are respected.

References

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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.nzcpm.org.nz