

Protection of medical missions during armed conflict

The Fifty-fifth World Health Assembly,

Recalling and reiterating resolution WHA46.39 entitled “Health and medical services in times of armed conflict”;

Reaffirming the need to promote and ensure respect for the principles and rules of international humanitarian law, and guided in this respect by the relevant provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977, as applicable;

Aware that, over the years, considerations based on international humanitarian and human-rights law have resulted in improved protection for medical personnel and for their recognized emblems during armed conflict;

Deeply disturbed by recent reports of increasing attacks on medical personnel, establishments and units during armed conflicts;

Alarmed by the extent to which civilian populations are being affected by the lack of medical care as a consequence of attacks directed at health and other humanitarian personnel, and health establishments, during armed conflicts;

Aware of the adverse effects of such conflicts on high-priority public health programmes, such as the Expanded Programme on Immunization and control of malaria and tuberculosis;

Recognizing the benefits of ceasefires brokered for national immunization days as appropriate;

Convinced, in accordance with international law, that it is indispensable to protect against attacks directed at health personnel, hospitals, health facilities and infrastructures, ambulances and other medical vehicles and communication systems used for humanitarian purposes,

1. CALLS on all parties to armed conflicts fully to adhere to and implement the applicable rules of international humanitarian law protecting civilians and combatants who are *hors de combat* as well as medical, nursing and other health and humanitarian personnel, and to respect provisions that regulate the use of Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems and the protective status they have under international humanitarian law;
2. URGES Member States to condemn all attacks directed at health personnel, especially those that impede ability of such personnel to carry out their humanitarian function during armed conflicts;

3. ALSO URGES Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental and nongovernmental bodies active in the humanitarian or health fields to promote actions that ensure the safety of health personnel;
4. ALSO URGES parties to conflict and humanitarian relief organizations to assure that ambulances, other medical vehicles, health facilities or other structures which facilitate the work of health personnel are utilized for humanitarian purposes only;
5. REQUESTS the Director-General:
 - (1) to promote the protection of and respect for health personnel and establishments;
 - (2) to liaise closely with the competent organizations of the United Nations system, including UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, together with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and other relevant intergovernmental and nongovernmental bodies in order to promote implementation of this resolution;
 - (3) to disseminate this resolution widely.

Ninth plenary meeting, 18 May 2002
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