

Update 5: ICN #NursesforPeace Campaign July 2024

ICN calls on United Nations to do more to stop the targeting of health care staff and facilities in war zones



ICN President Dr Pamela Cipriano has written to the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) asking for firm and decisive action to be taken to prevent the continuing illegal attacks on nurses and health care facilities in war zones around the globe.

In her letter Dr Cipriano also referred to the International Committee of the Red Cross's [Healthcare in Danger](#) report, and the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA) [letter](#), which both highlight the urgent need to protect health care staff and the facilities they work in.



Dr Cipriano wrote: "I am asking you to use the powers of your office to express again your condemnation of the barbaric attacks we have seen around the world, and to restate the protections that nurses and other health care workers should be afforded under international law."

In this latest update, we report some of the situations where #NursesforPeace is supporting nurses, including the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and Sudan, where deliberate attacks on health facilities continue as a result of the absence of accountability or retribution. ICN has called attention to this despicable practice, including with an intervention at the World Health Assembly in May, the signing of the open letter from the WHPA and the letter to UN Secretary General António Guterres.

The WHPA letter, published in March 2024, urged health professionals worldwide to sign an open letter calling for all parties in conflicts to safeguard health facilities and personnel, in line with international laws. The WHPA expressed its unwavering condemnation of ongoing violence targeting health care facilities and personnel in all regions worldwide, and called on all parties involved in conflicts to unconditionally uphold all aspects of humanitarian law.

ICN intervention on World Health Organization's health and peace initiative at the World Health Assembly

During the 77th World Health Assembly in May, ICN intervened on agenda Item 14.3 on the Global Health and Peace Initiative, offering its support for WHO's commitment to addressing

underlying drivers of health needs in fragile, conflict-affected and vulnerable settings, and recognizing the associated contribution of health programmes. ICN's statement highlighted its #NursesforPeace campaign, saying that "Nurses' holistic approach to address root causes of ill health brings people together, building partnerships and relationships that are the foundations of health, community cohesion and peace." It also highlighted ICN's strong condemnation of violence against health care and urged "Member States under international humanitarian law to take immediate action to protect health personnel and infrastructure in conflict settings."



This intervention is part of ICN's advocacy work underlying its belief that peace and health are intimately linked and that it is impossible to have one without the other.

Israel and Palestine

ICN continues its efforts to contact the National Nurses Associations in both Israel and Palestine, providing support to both where possible. It has proven difficult to speak to nurses in Palestine because of the damage to health care facilities and the disruption to important infrastructure.

ICN has repeated its call, made in conjunction with the WHPA – which ICN is a member of – for all parties in the Israel and Gaza conflict to respect and protect access to health care, and ensure the safety of civilians and health workers.

WHPA members unanimously support the provision of care without risk to any health personnel. It calls for immediate cessation of any acts that risk the lives of civilians or health workers, and states that access to health is a human right and that any attack on health workers and the patients they serve is abhorrent and unacceptable.

ICN is concerned that there seems to be no easing in the conflict and little evidence that the situation will be resolved any time soon: meanwhile innocents continue to be killed on both sides. Because of the risk of further expansion of hostilities, we continue to call on warring parties to stop all military action and negotiate a ceasefire as soon as possible.

(If we get a message from the Palestinian NNA it goes here)

Dr Tamar Vechter Chairwoman of Education Division, Israeli Nursing Association has reported on an ICN-funded mental health workshop for nurses whose adult children were killed in the terrorist attack that marked the beginning of the current war. She thanked ICN for its support and contribution to the nurses in Israel. The video [\[LINK\]](#) shows a short interview with a nurse whose daughter was killed,

talking about an event for nurses who were also bereaved in the 7 October 2023 attack on the Tamar music festival.

ICN and Ukraine

ICN continues to stay in close contact with the Nursing Association of Ukraine and is



Rescue service workers, volunteers and medical personnel work together to clear debris and search for survivors after a Russian missile hit the Ohmatdyt Children's Hospital in Kyiv, Ukraine. Photo: OCHA/Viktoriiia Andriievska.

providing financial aid for specific humanitarian and educational initiatives as the war claims more innocent lives, including children and health workers.

Bombing of Ohmatdyt Children’s Hospital in Kyiv

ICN has sent condolences to the Nursing Association of Ukraine following the bombing of Ohmatdyt Children’s Hospital in Kyiv, that reportedly killed two people, one of whom was a health care worker. As a member of the Health Care in Danger Initiative and the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, ICN believes that nurses and other health care workers must be allowed to deliver care and treatment to all patients without fear or threat. They must be allowed to do their work protected from violence, and the health care facilities they work in must be shielded from harm. International regulations and the Geneva Convention protecting health facilities and health workers must be respected and enforced.



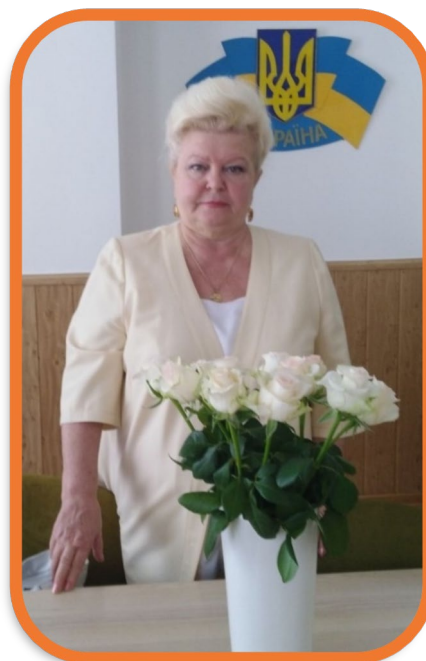
ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton said:

“Safeguarding health workers from attacks and violence is of paramount importance to ensure the civilian population, already enduring the horrors of war, is not subjected to additional suffering. It is all the more shocking when it involves innocent children.”

Update from the President of the Nursing Association of Ukraine, Tetyana Chernyshenko

“Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine continues and this, of course, manifests itself in the horrors that occur daily in the lives of Ukrainians. The war takes the lives of our soldiers, children and the adult population; causes serious injuries; destroys homes and institutions of education, health care and infrastructure facilities, including energy supplies.

‘Given this situation, the Nursing Association of Ukraine has not collected membership fees from nurses, but continues its activities as much as possible, holding online educational seminars for nurses so that they maintain their professional qualifications. One seminar,



on choosing disinfectants for areas of medical facilities taking into account modern conditions, attracted more than 750 nurses from all regions of Ukraine.”

In Ms Chernyshenko’s most recent message she said funding from ICN’s #NursesforPeace campaign had enabled hundreds of nurses to attend an online seminar on the difficult topic of Preparing for Mobilization During War Time.

President Chernyshenko said: “The webinar, which was run by the Ukraine Nurses Association, was essential after our President Volodymyr Zelensky issued a decree on the procedure for mobilization in our country. All nurses and doctors are being conscripted and this, first of all, concerns them. 497 nurses from all regions of Ukraine participated in the seminar.”

President Chernyshenko has also requested help from ICN to tackle a desperate shortage of nurses’ uniforms in Ukraine.



ICN continues support for Project Keshet

ICN continues its support for an innovative e-bike transport scheme in Ukraine, which is having a dramatic effect on the ability of nurses to reach patients in their communities in the Donetsk region of Ukraine. In Kramatorsk, a frontline city significantly affected by military operations, there is one city hospital, 12 outpatient clinics, 12 paramedic and midwife stations, and 50 out-of-town doctors who need a way to navigate hard-to-reach areas more effectively. This network serves an

area of 156.5 square miles, encompassing 15 remote villages with poor transport connections. With 75 doctors, 152 nurses, and 46 junior nurses, the center provides critical home-based medical services to elderly and disabled patients. The e-bike project has expanded to support 45,000 home visits per month, with an anticipated increase to 60,000 visits by the end of the summer. This growth has only been possible with ICN's support. This improvement is especially crucial given that the centre's current fleet of four ambulances and two buses, all over 55 years old, requires major repairs.



ICN and Sudan

ICN is continuing its commitment to supporting the Sudanese Nurses Association (SNO), with funds being used to strengthen SNO's capacity-building program during the conflict, which has now entered its third year. ICN

funding is also being directed to support SNO's Emergency Response Team, which is operating in three affected cities.

ICN funds are being used to build the capacity of the nursing and midwifery workforce in Sudan including:

- The training 45 of nurses from three cities for SNO's emergency response team (ERT). The ERT will be able to respond quickly to situations as they arise and be deployed quickly to wherever they are needed most.
- Capacity building for health workers, including nurses, midwives, community health workers and medical students in conflict areas, when and where it is safe to do so.



Situational report from Mowafag Hassan, President of the Sudanese Nurses Organization (SNO)

SNO President Mowafag Hassan sent us this recent report on the situation in Sudan and the importance of ICN funding for capacity building in the nursing workforce and Emergency Response Team.

“On 15 April 2024, Sudan entered its second year of war with poor access to humanitarian services and a collapsed health system. Since then, intense fighting has been taking place between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF – the military forces of the Republic of the Sudan) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF – a powerful paramilitary group) in the capital Khartoum and other parts of Sudan.

The Sudanese health system faces intense pressure, with damaged facilities and shortages of supplies and staff. Between 70 and 80% of health facilities in the larger Darfur states are no longer functioning due to a lack of critical supplies and the human resources to run the facilities.

More than 7.9 million people have been forcibly displaced since April 2023, adding to the 3.8 million who were displaced prior to the escalation of conflict. According to the United Nations high Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) around 1.72 million people have crossed the borders into neighbouring countries.

Patients are dying due to violence-related injuries and preventable illnesses; children are perishing due to malnutrition. Vaccines are running out, and there have already been outbreaks of deadly diseases, including cholera and measles.

From April 2023 to April 2024, SNO trained 1,268 health care workers – nurses, midwives, nursing and midwifery students, medical practitioners, medical students, pharmacists. SNO also built Sudan’s capacity in emergency response, including psychological first aid, basic life support, first aid, report writing, team building, infection prevention and control, and health care provider ethics in Northern Kordfan, Northern state and Khartoum. A gender-based violence awareness campaign was conducted in Um Dorman and Northern state.”

Below is case study from a recently qualified registered nurse in Sudan, which underlines the harrowing situation nurses and other health professionals are facing because of the conflict, but equally their dedication and commitment to their patients, despite fears for the safety of the families and themselves.

Case Study

Testimonial from a frontline nurse in Sudan (translated from the local Dargy language and edited)

My name is Ghadeer Khalil Othman Ali. In 2023, I started as a junior nurse at Ahmed Qasem hospital [in Khartoum]. I spent three beautiful months there where the senior nurses taught us how to be a good nurse.

In March 2023, I was one of the first people to start an internship at the Sudan National Services and Ministry of Health at Al-Hodari Complex internal medicine department. My group would arrive very early, receive our patients and arrange our affairs to be ready for the medical round. [One day], my colleague, Mathaba, suddenly says "Ghadeer, they're saying there is shooting in the central market and the Rapid Support Forces and the army are clashing!"

The sound of fighting becomes very close, and the patients and staff are afraid, but we stand firm.

Mathaba says "Ghadeer the doctors can't come, we will continue with the old plan."

I reply: "Yes, let's write down the missing things and get them quickly from the pharmacy, we don't know what will happen!"

We reassure our families and go to treat our patients, but we are still scared and terrified!

The ER department calls for help; the A&E is full of blood and shooting! The electricity and water are cut off. It is Ramadan and it is time to break our fasting (iftar time); the shops are empty, people are in a panic, there is no more drinking water, nothing is there.

Suddenly, the water and electricity come on and we have a small celebration in all the chaos to overcome the situation. We clean our rest room and try as much as possible to adjust the mood. We reassure our families and lie to them that we are fine and there has been no shooting.

The crying of our mothers and aunts and the call of our brothers is enough to make us try to hold together and even to reassure them! My father calls from far

away telling me, "Do not try to move anywhere, stay with your friends, you will be fine!"

From time to time, a missile blows open the doors of the balconies, breaking the walls, windows and doors and shells come in to where we are. People are running. My companions and I are exhausted and scared, running and panicking in that moment. We hold each other's hands, crying and screaming. At sunset, there is the call to break our fast. We distribute dates to the patients as we go down to the first floor, the intensive care unit. Here, the electricity is out, oxygen is cut off, water is scarce, and all the ventilators are running out of power. The staff is using manual ventilation for the patients.

In all of this, I can only think of my mother. What will happen to her? What about her worries? If anything happens to me, will she be okay? Then she calls! I have no choice but to lie and reassure her. I crawl under the chairs to be able to talk to her.

Suddenly, we hear that we have to evacuate the hospital! Where will we go? My friend Mathab calls her family and they come and evacuate us.

On the fourth day, we decide that we are going out, but to an unknown fate! The next day, we return to our homes and families, and we see they are all in good health. In my nature, I cry and panic during the day, but the fear that entered me has passed, thank God, I'm just afraid of hospital work. I've been at home for two and a half months, unable to work.

But by the power of the Almighty, I manage to get through and stay focused on my paperwork for national service. I spend two months in the nursery department at Al-Hasaheesa Hospital and three months in the police hospital in the internal medicine and surgery departments. On the day of the attack on Madani by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), I am on duty, but thankfully, in the evening, I am home, inside the house, away from the gunfire. The first thing I think is, is this war again? Does this mean chaos in Gezira state? Will the same scenario be repeated? And it all repeats, the same panic, the same dread.

With God's power, we are able to get out of the island and reach the city of Port Sudan safely. The first place we arrive is the police hospital Port Sudan. I think to myself: if I did not die in the police hospital, I will not die soon!

I have now taken the permanent residency exam which I passed, I become a registered nurse!

If I could go back in time a thousand times, I would still choose nursing and continue with it without hesitation Because for us nurses, it's a calling.

I pray may God remove the sorrow, and our country and hospitals return, along with all the health facilities, so we can rebuild and start a new era.

ICN supports the #Nurses_talk_about_Sudan campaign

The Sudanese Nurses Association has launched a storytelling, media campaign to share the commitments of Sudanese nurses, their sacrifices, courage and the challenges they are facing in conflict areas and during their work with internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in from conflict areas. The campaign will include testimonials from nurses sharing how they continue to provide health care services in the most difficult circumstances.

How to contribute to #NursesforPeace campaign

ICN launched the #NursesforPeace campaign to raise funds for nurses working on the frontlines of emergency situations and to draw public attention to the associated threats to public health care systems. To support ICN's #NursesforPeace Campaign [Donate now](#).