

Mr. António Guterres  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
405 East 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10017,  
United States of America

29 July 2024

Dear Secretary-General Guterres,

As President of the International Council of Nurses (ICN), I am writing to bring to your attention the dire circumstances faced by nurses who are subjected to vicious and sometimes fatal attacks in conflict zones around the world.

Nurses are at the forefront of responding to conflicts whenever and wherever they occur. ICN, through our National Nursing Association members globally, supports these courageous individuals. Additionally, our #NursesforPeace campaign, initially established to support nurses in Ukraine, now extends financial and humanitarian assistance to nurses in numerous conflict areas worldwide.

Our members have witnessed the frequent and systematic targeting of nurses, other healthcare personnel, and the facilities in which they work. These attacks not only endanger their lives but also the lives of their patients, placing all at risk of severe injury and death and causing serious disruption of health services.

We appreciate your expressions of concern and condemnation of such attacks. However, these heinous acts persist, blatantly violating the Geneva Conventions, which remain unenforced. The International Committee of the Red Cross's Healthcare in Danger report underscores the urgent need to protect healthcare staff and their workplaces. We are eager to learn what additional measures the United Nations can implement to address this urgent global issue.

Nursing is a noble profession, dedicated to addressing the needs of patients, their families, and communities unconditionally. Nurses' commitment to the well-being of others is unwavering, despite lack of resources and often being under-valued and under-paid. They should not, however, be expected to put their lives at risk. ICN has extended support to nurses working in both Israel and Palestine, and we are deeply concerned about the ongoing death and destruction that persist daily in that region.

The passing of a United Nations General Assembly resolution proposing a comprehensive three-phase ceasefire deal to end the war in Gaza is a welcome development and represents our best chance for peace. Ensuring hostage releases and efforts to promote a ceasefire are crucial, but there is also an urgent and growing need to increase humanitarian aid and improve the medical supply chain to meet the many healthcare needs of the Palestinian people.

The invaluable work of nurses should be accessible to everyone, regardless of nationality, race, color, creed, sexual orientation, or political persuasion, whenever they are in need. Therefore, I urge you to utilize the powers of your office to reiterate your condemnation of the barbaric attacks we have witnessed globally and to restate the protections that nurses, and other healthcare workers should be afforded under international law. No one engaged in humanitarian work should fear for their safety or their lives.

Your expression of support for the world's nurses will undoubtedly serve as a beacon for others to follow.

Yours sincerely,

*Pamela F. Cipriano*

Dr Pamela F. Cipriano,  
President  
International Council of Nurses