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Civilians Pay in War

Nurses, physicians, midwives, physiotherapists and dentists join in saying civilians pay the terrible price for war in death, injury and disease

Geneva, 5 February 2003 — Speaking with one voice, the international organisations representing a broad spectrum of the world's health professions* have spoken out against all armed conflict.

The terrible health consequences of even 'conventional' war are borne overwhelmingly by civilians, with especially catastrophic effects on women and children's physical and mental health. Death and debilitating injury are coupled with threatened access to safe water, sanitation and food, undermining the health of a population and creating circumstances favourable to epidemic diseases. As infrastructure, homes and communities are destroyed and people seek safety, more families are added to the already huge population of 12 million refugees and 6 million displaced persons worldwide. Precious resources, financial and human, are diverted to war – inevitably at the expense of investment in health, health systems and education.

According to the World Health Organization, about 35 people are killed every hour as a direct result of armed conflict. In the 20th century, an estimated 191 million people lost their lives directly or indirectly as a result of armed conflict, the majority civilians.

Because of the overwhelmingly negative effects on health resulting from war, these health professions oppose any armed conflict and have chosen to speak out at this time. We strongly encourage governments and ruling parties to find non-violent and democratic means to resolve conflicts and bring about peace.

*** *International Confederation of Midwives, International Council of Nurse, World Confederation for Physical Therapy, World Dental Federation, World Medical Association.***

The **International Confederation of Midwives** is a confederation of 83 national midwifery associations from 70 countries, founded in 1919. It aims to 'advance worldwide the aims and aspirations of midwives in the attainment of improved outcomes for women in their childbearing years, their newborn and their families wherever they reside.

The **International Council of Nurses** is a federation of 124 national nurses' associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses for nurses, ICN is the international voice of nursing and works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.

The **World Confederation for Physical Therapy** is a confederation of national physical therapy associations from 83 countries representing over 250,000 physical therapists around the world. WCPT aims to improve global health by representing the profession, collaborating with international organisations, encouraging high standards of education, research and practice and supporting communication and exchange of information.

The **FDI World Dental Federation** represents more than 150 national dental associations and 700,000 individual dentists worldwide and as such, its main roles are to bring together the world of dentistry, to represent the dental profession of the world and to stimulate and facilitate the exchange of information across all borders with the aim of optimal oral health for all peoples.

The **World Medical Association (WMA)** is a global federation of national medical associations, representing the millions of physicians worldwide. Acting on behalf of physicians and patients, the WMA endeavours to achieve the highest possible standards of medical science, education, ethics and health care for all people.

For further information contact Linda Carrier-Walker
Tel : (+41 22) 908 0100 - Fax : (+41 22) 908 0101
email: carrwalk@icn.ch - Web site: www.icn.ch

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