



EFN STATEMENT

'NURSES IN CONFLICT AREAS NEED TO BE MORE PROTECTED'

There are many areas of conflict areas around the world where constant threats are faced by the population daily; Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Cameroon and Turkey, are examples where such situations reach the internal news frequently. Nurses and many other health care professionals have to continue their work in those difficult and dangerous regions under life-threatening circumstances. The EFN is very concerned about the working environment of these nurses, who sometimes even become the target of warring parties.

As a result of those conflicts, there is an ongoing refugee crisis which forces thousands of people to flee their home in order to escape this violence. The refugees' crisis, the large number of refugees arriving at the European borders, and the obligation of nurses and other healthcare professionals to follow their respective ethical code, was addressed in the [London statement by the EFN \(2015\)](#).

The European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN), in support of the [ICN statement](#) on "*the ethical principles of health care in times of armed conflict and other emergencies*", advocates for peaceful conflict resolutions and strongly opposes armed conflicts. Nurses play a crucial role in addressing the needs of people in those conflict areas or fleeing from them. The EFN believes in the importance of quality emergency care and the importance of long-term health needs of refugees and internally displaced persons. We condemn any [attacks](#) on healthcare [facilities and personnel](#), on patients and medical vehicles.

The EFN calls for:

- The protection and support of all healthcare personnel in all conflict areas in the world;
- The importance of protection of citizens, especially vulnerable groups such as women, children, disabled, and elderly;
- Respecting international law and providing healthcare and humanitarian assistance to refugees in need;
- Improve the legal protection for patients and frontline staff by ensuring proper respect for protective emblems, enhancing legal protection for practice in conformance with medical ethics including repeal of laws that criminalise the provision of impartial health care based on the affiliation or political views of the patient, and addressing violations;
- Global peace and security, which is fundamental to health, and prevention of war and armed conflict of any kind.

Even wars have limits, because wars without limits are wars without ends. Health-care personnel and facilities are the outer frontier of these limits¹.

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¹ Source: International Committee of the Red Cross (2016). *Geneva Conventions and Commentaries: Even wars have limits: Health-care workers and facilities must be protected* [Statement]. Available on the World Wide Web on 17 October 2016 via: <https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions>.