Geneva, Switzerland; 17 August 2016 - The leaders of the world’s physicians and nursing associations have condemned the continuing violence against health personnel in Syria and other nations.

In a joint statement issued today, the World Medical Association (WMA) and the International Council of Nurses (ICN) said that the persistent and targeted attacks on doctors, nurses, emergency medical personnel and other health workers in Syria have reached unprecedented levels that should alarm the world. The two organisations confirmed their support of the UN resolution (2268) which calls for a cessation of hostilities in Syria, and a respect for ceasefires of sufficient periods for the provision of humanitarian aid. They stated that, “We in the international health community have an obligation to speak out to urge world leaders to enforce an immediate truce to protect the hundreds of thousands of innocent victims caught up in this carnage.”

Dr. Ardis Hoven, Chair of the WMA, said, “The daily reports of violent incidents against health-care personnel, medical infrastructure and the wounded are sickening the world community. The killing of nurses and doctors has become appalling. The shocking truth is that doctors and nurses are being specifically targeted in this armed conflict in a way that is almost beyond belief.”

Dr. Frances Hughes, ICN’s Chief Executive Officer said: “Respect for health services is one of the core values of international humanitarian law and the human right to health. The attacks on nurses, doctors and healthcare facilities in Syria and other nations in conflict must urgently stop, so they can continue to provide the care needed by their populations.”

ICN and WMA have long standing positions condemning attacks on healthcare workers. Both organisations support the ICRC Health Care in Danger project, and ICN is also a member of the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition.

Note for Editors

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.
The World Medical Association is the independent confederation of national medical associations from 112 countries and represents more than nine million physicians. Acting on behalf of patients and physicians, the WMA endeavours to achieve the highest possible standards of medical care, ethics, education and health-related human rights for all people.

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