

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES

# NURSES FOR PEACE

**Update – Dec 2025 · Jan 2026**



---

Dear Colleagues,

At the end of 2025, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) issued an update on its Nurses for Peace work. Since then, the number and scale of global crises affecting nurses and health systems have continued to escalate.

Over the last month, ICN has been in contact with or supporting nursing associations and partners in response to several significant developments and humanitarian situations. These events have highlighted both the challenges nurses face and their essential role in times of conflict and crisis.

In light of these developments, ICN is reissuing the Nurses for Peace update to reflect this recent work and engagement. New and updated information is presented at the beginning of this document, followed by the previously issued material for reference.

### ► **Solidarity with Iranian nurses**

ICN is deeply concerned by media reports of large numbers of people being killed in Iran, including reports of nurses affected. ICN is alarmed by the scale and seriousness of these reports and the profound pressure being placed on health systems and healthcare workers.

ICN has a longstanding relationship with the Iranian Nursing Association and has been in regular dialogue with nursing leadership in Iran over many years. Iranian nurses are an important and valued part of ICN's global membership, and ICN leadership has held direct discussions with colleagues on the significant pressures facing nurses and the health system, including economic constraints and the impact of instability on healthcare delivery. Most recently, ICN CEO Howard Catton met with representatives of the Iranian Nursing Association at the ICN Congress in Helsinki, where discussions focused on both the health and economic challenges facing nurses and the wider health system.

ICN CEO Howard Catton said:

"In times of conflict and heightened tension, health systems and human rights come under immense strain, and both the demands and risks faced by healthcare workers increase sharply. Nurses continue to provide care under exceptionally difficult conditions, often while facing risks to their own safety, professional practice, and rights. In these darkest moments, solidarity and support are vitally important. Nurses in conflict zones and crisis situations draw profound strength from the knowledge that they are not alone, and that the global community of 30 million nurses stands steadfast beside them."

Recognizing the complexity and sensitivity of the situation, ICN continues to engage carefully with partners and member associations.

ICN has also recently supported educational initiatives for nurses in Iran as part of its ICN's ongoing commitment to professional development and to strengthening nursing capacity during times of pressure. Through Nurses for Peace, ICN continues to work with member associations to support nurses in contexts of crisis, recognizing both the essential care they provide and the difficult circumstances in which that care is delivered.

ICN stands in solidarity with nurses in Iran and with nursing leaders who continue to carry responsibility for care, education, and professional support amidst profound challenges. The global nursing community recognizes their commitment, resilience, and the critical role they play in sustaining health services during periods of uncertainty.

➤ **Ethiopian Nurses Association (ENA), ICN's Nurses for Peace Humanitarian Fund, and Direct Relief**



Joint efforts by the Ethiopian Nurses Association (ENA), ICN's Nurses for Peace Humanitarian Fund, and Direct Relief have resulted in a successful humanitarian medical supply operation that demonstrates the powerful role of nursing associations in post-conflict healthcare. Two major shipments of life-saving medical supplies have now arrived at Ayder Hospital in Ethiopia's Tigray region, which is recovering from the devastating Tigray War. The shipments contain vital medications including chemotherapy drugs, antimicrobials, and anesthetics. This will enable nurses and other health professionals to address urgent medical needs including breast cancer treatments which have been unavailable in the region since 2020.

ENA facilitated the complex delivery through challenges of customs and government clearances and safe transport through mountainous regions with security risks. Additionally, ENA is facilitating support from Direct Relief focused on a referral hospital in the conflict-affected Benishangul-Gumuz region, providing critical lifelines for communities recovering from prolonged violence and displacement. These operations show how national nurses' associations serve as indispensable humanitarian actors on the ground, with their deep local knowledge of community needs and realities and their trusted relationships facilitating international humanitarian aid efforts.

#### › Solidarity with Venezuelan nurses

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) has been in contact with the Venezuelan Nursing Association to express solidarity with nurses in Venezuela following recent political developments and the ongoing crisis. ICN has reaffirmed that Venezuelan nurses have the full support of the global nursing community as they continue to provide essential care under extremely challenging conditions, and has recognized that in times of crisis nurses and other health workers are often among those most exposed, with safety, dignity and professional rights coming under increased pressure.

**ICN President Dr José Luis Cobos Serrano said:**

“Nurses in Venezuela continue to deliver essential care under extremely challenging conditions. Their safety, dignity and access to resources must be ensured, in full respect of international law protecting health workers and facilities, as well as their rights to speak and organize freely.”



#### › Solidarity in times of tragedy and crisis

In recent weeks, ICN has also responded with messages of solidarity to member nursing associations in Switzerland and Australia following tragic events, including the Crans-Montana fire and the attack at Bondi Beach. These distinct incidents resulted in the devastating loss of young lives and once again showed the importance of nurses and other health professionals during emergencies, crises, and situations of acute violence. Nurses often place themselves in harm's way to care for victims while working in health services and hospitals that become rapidly stretched, at times close to breaking point. In each case, and in others, ICN has expressed solidarity with nurses, health workers, and affected communities, recognizing their courage, professionalism, and essential role in responding to tragedy.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE ICN PRESIDENT JOSÉ LUIS COBOS SERRANO

"When the International Council of Nurses (ICN) launched **#NursesforPeace** in 2022 as a response to the start of the Ukraine conflict, it was born of urgency and conscience. ICN's **140+ national nurses associations** and the world's **30 million nurses**, asked how they could stand together—for peace, for humanity, and for those caring on the frontlines of crisis.

Since then, through ICN's **Humanitarian Fund**, the continued growth of **#NursesforPeace**, and our growing strategic partnership with **Direct Relief**, that collective resolve has been transformed into ongoing action. Nurses have been supported, voices amplified, and hope sustained in **more than ten countries, including Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Myanmar, Palestine, Somaliland, South Sudan, Sudan, and Ukraine**, affected by conflict and humanitarian emergency. This work has never been symbolic; it has been practical, principled, and often carried out under the most sobering conditions imaginable.

**#NursesforPeace** reminds us that nursing is both a profession and a moral force. As we look to **2026**, ICN pledges to build on what has already been achieved—strengthening solidarity, expanding our reach, and continuing to act in the name of nurses, health, and peace."



ICN President  
**José Luis Cobos Serrano**

Every day, ICN sees from our member associations **how nurses are at the very forefront of responding to the increased conflicts, wars, and natural disasters that create widespread suffering and devastate health care systems all around the world. Though nurses are deeply affected by these tragedies, they bravely continue to bring healing to their communities.**

Throughout 2025, ICN has **deepened and strengthened its humanitarian work and #NursesforPeace campaign** at every level. This has ranged from **global policy work to direct support for nurses and National Nursing Associations (NNAs)** faced with unimaginable challenges and includes our first ever **leadership programme for crisis recovery and response delivered in an active war zone** (Ukraine).



ICN CEO Howard Catton outside Ukraine's Health Ministry amid bullet-ridden, burnt-out ambulances.

ICN has supported new projects with NNAs in Africa and the Middle East in particular, including **collaborations between local health facilities and our partner organization Direct Relief**, which works in more than 80 countries to improve the health and lives of people affected by poverty or emergencies.

ICN extends our **deepest admiration and gratitude to all of the world's courageous nurses and NNAs who remain steadfast in their mission to provide care to the communities they serve in conflict and disaster zones**, despite perilous conditions and unacceptable risks to their own lives and wellbeing. ICN is committed to making their voices heard and to providing the most impactful aid and support possible to contribute to hope and healing, with the continued solidarity and generosity of nurses, NNAs and partners worldwide. ICN condemns violence in all forms and calls for peace.

This update highlights the resilience of nurses worldwide amid severe hardships and shows how #NursesforPeace, ICN's Humanitarian Fund, our collaboration with Direct Relief, and high-level advocacy are supporting nurses working in the most difficult situations.

## GLOBAL POLICY AND ADVOCACY

### ADVOCACY AND CALLS FOR ACTION

ICN President, Dr José Luis Cobos Serrano, wrote to United Nations Secretary General António Guterres earlier this year calling for urgent action to end humanitarian crises and attacks on health care in conflict-affected regions including the Middle East. Dr Cobos Serrano described accounts from nurses in war zones telling of the horrific impact of these continued attacks and the deep trauma of continually witnessing and treating the victims of attacks and starvation, often the most vulnerable populations including children, pregnant women, and the elderly. He reaffirmed that ICN stands ready to work with the UN to support peace and protection in health care.

This followed an emergency resolution passed by ICN's governing body strongly condemning continued and increasing attacks on health care and calling for all parties to fully comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) which mandates the protection of health personnel, patients, and facilities, as well as urging accountability for violations.

Nursing in conflict and crisis and the massive contributions nurses make to peaceful societies were core themes at **ICN's Congress this year, with several sessions dedicated to these topics which amplified the voice of nurses and NNAs affected.**



At the WHO World Health Assembly, ICN delivered strong interventions on health conditions in conflict zones including Palestine and brought strong messages on protecting nurses in conflict to major global forums including the UN General Assembly.

## UN RECOGNITION AND DOCUMENTING NURSING IN CONFLICT

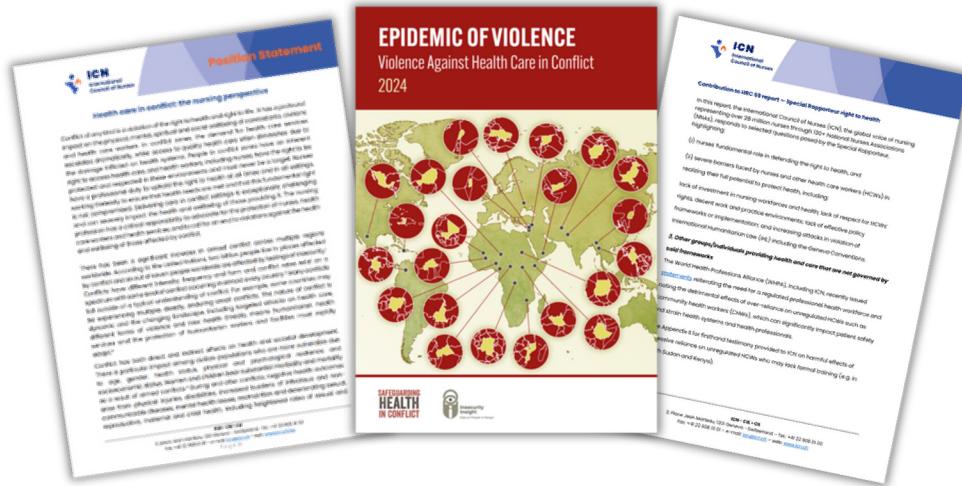


UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Health recognizes ICN's #NursesforPeace campaign.

ICN's **#NursesforPeace campaign was recognized by the UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Health** as an example of good practice in providing "essential humanitarian resources, mental health support, and emergency preparedness and leadership training". This was in the report "Health and care workers: the oath takers and defenders of the right to health" presented to the UN General Assembly.

ICN also submitted comprehensive evidence of nurses worldwide safeguarding the right to health amid the immense challenges of conflicts and crises for the Special Rapporteur's earlier 2025 report to the Human Rights Council. **ICN made nurses' experiences and voices heard with firsthand testimony from National Nursing Associations documenting nurses continuing to provide care despite horrific challenges in humanitarian crisis zones** in Lebanon, Palestine, Nigeria, Tanzania, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Sudan, Kenya, South Sudan. These included tragic stories of nurses injured and killed on duty, forced to live onsite away from their families to provide care, and experiencing devastating resource constraints.

ICN also updated its policy statement Health care in conflict this year. As a founding member of the **Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC)**, ICN contributed to its 2025 report, Epidemic of Violence, which demonstrated that last year had the **highest number of tragic attacks on health care on record (3,600)**, with the highest number of attacks on health ever recorded in a single conflict (>1,300 in Gaza) and significant attacks targeting health care in countries including Ukraine, Lebanon, Myanmar and Sudan.



This policy and evidence work **ensures that nursing voices reach the highest levels of international decision-making, advancing health, peace and the protection of health workers** and the communities they serve during the world's most challenging crises.

## RECENT MESSAGES OF SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT

ICN is in constant communication with nurses and nursing associations affected by conflicts, crises, and disasters of all kinds, everywhere that they happen. As grounded in our ethical code, nurses care for all people, regardless of religion or ethnicity, and ICN condemns all forms of violence, discrimination, and hate.

We have sent recent messages to several countries in order to show our solidarity with nurses on the frontlines and populations affected and our commitment to equitable humanitarian principles.

These include:

- Letters recognizing the devastating impacts of accidents and natural disasters, and the critical role of nurses in responding to them, including **earthquakes in Myanmar, Thailand, and Afghanistan; typhoons in the Philippines and Taiwan; flooding in Indonesia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka; Hurricane Melissa in Jamaica; fire in Hong Kong; and the tragic tram crash in Portugal**.
- A message **acknowledging the terrible shooting in Bondi Beach, Australia, this December**. The message recognized the tragic loss of life of many members of the Jewish community, expressed solidarity with nurses, victims, and communities affected, and recognized that nurses were once again at the forefront of responding to this tragedy.

- A statement marking the second **anniversary of the 7 October attacks in Israel**, acknowledging the tragic deaths of over 1,200 people and condemning the violent assault.
- A statement condemning the **horrific attacks on health workers and facilities in Sudan**.
- Statements calling for **unimpeded aid for severe humanitarian crisis and starvation risks in Gaza, condemning attacks on health care facilities**, and mourning the death of a leader of the Palestinian Nursing Association in Gaza. ICN has consistently called for lasting peace.

## | KEY NURSES FOR PEACE INITIATIVES

ICN's **#NursesforPeace campaign continues to provide direct and comprehensive support to nurses in crisis-affected regions**, thanks to the solidarity of nurses and nursing associations all around the world who have shown an outpouring of support for their colleagues.

Some examples showing the breadth and impact of current initiatives:

The **Sudanese Nurses Organization (SNO)** has taken a proactive role in addressing the severe public health challenges caused by ongoing conflict and the surge in cholera cases in White Nile state. With the support of Nurses for Peace, the SNO established Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) composed of highly qualified senior nurses who train health workers, lead community outreach, and coordinate closely with the Ministry of Health. Direct Relief is now collaborating with the SNO to provide emergency medical equipment and supplies.

Mowafag Hassan, President of SNO, presented an award to ICN President José Luis Cobos Serrano and ICN CEO Howard Catton in recognition of ICN's support through the **#NursesforPeace initiative**. ICN was deeply honored by this recognition and extended its heartfelt gratitude to SNO.



Mowafag Hassan, President of SNO, presents an award to ICN President José Luis Cobos Serrano and ICN CEO Howard Catton.

ICN is also supporting the development of the Sudan Excellency Centre, a national initiative to train nurses through advanced simulation labs and online learning platforms. Implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, **the Centre aims to strengthen nursing education and workforce capacity in a country facing grave conflict as well as a humanitarian and displacement crisis.**

The Sudanese Nurses Organization (SNO) provided harrowing testimony on the horrific killings and abductions of patients and health workers in El Fasher, North Darfur as well as ongoing and devastating attacks and atrocities on health care and civilians in Kordofan. ICN condemned these violations in the strongest possible terms, and reaffirmed its commitment to defending the safety, rights, and vital role of nurses amid the gravest danger.



In Palestine, ICN has partnered with the **Palestinian Nursing and Midwifery Association (PNMA)** and Direct Relief to launch an emergency programme providing financial assistance to nurses in Gaza and the West Bank. These nurses are currently living in makeshift shelters, struggling to secure adequate food and clean water, while continuing to work under extremely challenging conditions in hospitals without receiving their salaries. The support provided through this project enables nurses to purchase essential items such as food, drinking water, and materials to improve their shelters. This assistance helps them to maintain critical healthcare services despite the grave circumstances. Notably, despite facing their own significant challenges including unpaid salaries, nurses in the West Bank, through PNMA, have generously contributed a significant sum to this initiative, demonstrating remarkable professional solidarity. ICN has continually called for peace, ceasefire, humanitarian aid, and protection for nurses and health workers in the conflict.



From left: Jadallah Mustafa Al-Shafie, Nursing Director of the Internal Medicine Department at Al-Shifa Medical Complex, Gaza, standing in the front yard of the bombed facility; and Hanin Zahir, Midwife at Nasser Hospital, Gaza, who expressed the heartbreak of leaving her own children during long shifts in the war.

ICN has continued to support **Ukraine**. As well as financial support and emergency preparedness training, **ICN recently launched the first Nursing Leadership for Crisis Response and Recovery (NLCRR) programme, fully funded by Nurses for Peace and the first time ICN has delivered this kind of initiative in an active conflict zone.** The programme supports and develops courageous and talented nurse leaders not only to respond to the ongoing war but also to prepare for recovery efforts. Our ambition is to extend this programme in Ukraine and take it to nurses in other conflict and disaster zones as a central part of ICN's humanitarian and leadership development work.



ICN's team met with the Ukrainian Ministry of Health and various nursing associations, including participating in the National Meeting of Nursing Leadership of Ukraine, and identified further areas of support. Nurses provided **sobering updates on the daily reality of nursing in wartime**, with healthcare facilities and staff continuing to face daily attacks. The war has severely impacted care supplies and is taking a devastating toll on staff mental health as they continually deal with grief and loss from patients, neighbours and family members killed in the conflict.



## DIRECT RELIEF PARTNERSHIP



**ICN's collaboration with Direct Relief continues to grow, with ICN's Humanitarian Liaison Officer in constant communication with National Nursing Associations as important emergency response organizations on the ground in conflict-affected regions. Several new initiatives are underway.**

The **Ethiopian Nurses Association (ENA)** has facilitated **support from Direct Relief focusing on two referral hospitals in the conflict-affected regions of Tigray and Benishangul-Gumuz**. These facilities are critical lifelines for communities recovering from prolonged violence and displacement. Thanks to the efforts of the ENA, nurses in these hospitals will be in a stronger position to serve their communities with a sustainable supply of essential medicines from Direct Relief.

The **Mauritania Nursing Association (MNA)** is working with the **Ministry of Health and Direct Relief to improve the nationwide medication supply chain network**. Currently, equitable healthcare access for refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) is strongly complicated by geographic dispersion and social disparities, most acutely in remote regions. This supply chain initiative aims to overcome these barriers by improving the distribution and availability of essential medicines especially at the primary healthcare level, which empowers nurses, who are often the first point of contact in rural communities, to deliver more effective care independently, and supports the goal of ensuring that Mauritians and refugees in the country can access quality health services and move towards Universal Health Coverage.

In **Somaliland**, nurses are facing multifaceted challenges, including high maternal mortality and seasonal droughts that exacerbate malnutrition among children and strain already fragile health services. The **Somaliland Nursing and Midwifery Association (SLNMA)** is actively working with Direct Relief to address critical shortages of nursing equipment in rural health facilities serving underserved communities with limited infrastructure. A Direct Relief humanitarian shipment recently arrived in Hargeisa, delivering essential medical supplies to remote nurse-led health centres – a vital lifeline for facilities that often lack even basic tools such as blood pressure monitors and thermometers.



The **South Sudan Nurses and Midwives Association (ssNAMA)** has connected Direct Relief with the country's only paediatric referral hospital, Al Sabah Children Hospital in Juba, which is facing a grave shortage of essential medications. Direct Relief will be working towards **supporting the children's hospital with essential medications** that will help improve the service that nurses are able to give their patients.

## ICN DISASTER FUND

The **Afghanistan Nurses Association (ANA)** has been responding to the devastating **earthquake in Mazar**, which caused over 2,000 injuries and 3,000 deaths, with widespread psychological distress due to continuous aftershocks. ANA volunteers established a relief camp with 50 tents for 100 families and a medical tent providing emergency care, splints, and medication. To strengthen disaster response capacity, ANA has proposed a project, supported by ICN, to train 30 nurses in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces on first aid, trauma management, infectious disease control, psychosocial counseling, disaster preparedness, and basic life support. Partnerships with nursing schools will institutionalize the training.



In Ethiopia, the **Ethiopian Nurses Association (ENA)** and ICN are working to implement **Solidarity to Strengthen Frontline Capacity (SSFC)** project to enhance outbreak preparedness and the response to the recent Marburg Virus outbreak, with the collaboration of the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, Jinka General Hospital senior nurses, the Regional Health Bureau, Ethiopia Public Health Institute, and community representatives. The project aims to **train over 2,000 nurses** in infection prevention, early case detection, and clinical management of viral hemorrhagic fevers. The initiative will also provide personal protective equipment (PPE) and improve implementation of protocols and coordination mechanisms.



The ENA has shared the tragic account of a nurse who contracted Marburg and sadly passed away, a devastating reminder of the risks and sacrifices nurses face in high-risk environments. ENA also shared stories of hope, including a critically ill child who has now fully recovered, remarkable given Marburg's case fatality rate, which can reach as high as 88%, pictured below alongside the nursing team that cared for him.

## ICN HUMANITARIAN LIAISON



ICN's humanitarian team has also connected with many other nursing associations on the ground in environments with severe humanitarian needs.

**These included the Nursing Syndicate in Idlib (NSI), Syria**, which is working to establish strong links with professionals across the country in the face of shortages in human and medical resources, ongoing instability, heavy pressure on healthcare facilities and the damage that healthcare infrastructure has endured during the war.

ICN's humanitarian team has also met with the **National Association of Nurses of Mozambique (ANEMO)**, who shared inspiring stories of **how nurses had set up community aid networks to assist civilians who had been injured in recent incidences of political violence**. ANEMO also addressed severe challenges faced by nurses in the wake of Cyclones Chido and Jude. The association is working alongside the Ministry of Health to provide essential medical aid and support, and efforts are underway to improve working conditions for nurses.

The **Democratic Republic of Congo's Ordre National des Infirmiers de la RDC (ONIC)** provided important insights into the overwhelming challenges faced by nurses in the DRC, including **the war in the east of the country, security and infrastructure issues, large numbers of displaced people, child malnutrition and a lack of infection prevention and control equipment** during the recent Mpox outbreak. They have also shared the important role nurses play in community health promotion to prevent and treat malnutrition.

ICN has also connected with nursing associations in the Americas to understand the unique humanitarian needs and achievements of the NNAs. Many NNAs have discussed challenges related to population displacement, climate change, socioeconomic crises, health emergencies, and violence. A meeting with the **Asociación Nacional de Enfermeras de El Salvador (ANES)** highlighted the need to empower nurses and provide educational opportunities despite economic limitations and low salaries, which the NNA is working to do. In **Argentina**, nurses face stark urban-rural disparities and severe shortages in remote areas, while economic constraints and uneven recognition hinder professional development and leadership.

In **Chile**, migration and vulnerable populations pose growing challenges alongside rural health inequities and disaster risks from earthquakes and wildfires, compounded by urban violence and narcotrafficking. In **Ecuador**, nurses experience extreme workloads and mental health strain due to staff shortages and poor conditions, while indigenous communities in remote Amazon regions lack nursing programs, creating urgent needs for intercultural health initiatives. In **Honduras**, high unemployment forces many nurses to migrate or seek informal work, while climate-related disasters and political instability exacerbate vulnerability and limit disaster preparedness. Many **Panaman** nurses work under difficult conditions in remote areas and serve populations in extreme poverty, while flooding and environmental degradation strain health services and limited access to advanced education hampers professional growth. ICN will continue to support NNAs across the Americas in the coming year and beyond to meet these challenges.

## **SUSTAINING HOPE AND PEACE: OUR ENDURING COMMITMENT TO NURSES WORLDWIDE**

These harrowing experiences combined with inspiring examples of nurses' bravery and impact worldwide only reinforces the urgent importance of supporting crisis and conflict-affected nursing workforces and populations.

As we look towards 2026, ICN remains deeply committed to continuing and expanding #NursesforPeace and our humanitarian work, collaborating closely with National Nursing Associations and partners such as Direct Relief.

We are immensely grateful for the solidarity and support of the world's nurses. Without donations, none of this is possible, and ICN welcomes support for the Humanitarian Fund and #NursesforPeace campaign to fund this vital work. Every contribution supports nurses on the frontlines of crisis, whether through emergency financial assistance, essential supplies, disaster and leadership training, or mental health support.

Together, we can contribute to peace, health, and healing, even in the world's most challenging environments.

**To support ICN's #NursesforPeace  
Campaign [Donate here](#)**



#NursesforPeace

---



ICN CEO Howard Catton stood alongside nurses from around the world at the ICN Congress 2025, showing solidarity with colleagues affected by war, conflict and disaster.