

Open Letter to G7 Leaders

15 June 2026

Dear G7 leaders,

As you meet in Évian, just across Lake Geneva from the United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO), and our headquarters at the International Council of Nurses (ICN), I write to express my grave concern at continuing and escalating failures to protect nurses and health workers from violence, attacks, and harm during conflicts, crises and health emergencies. As President of ICN, representing the world's 30 million+ nurses, I call on you to take urgent collective action to protect health workers and uphold the international frameworks that exist to keep them safe.

Despite repeated international commitments, we have not moved forward at anywhere near the pace needed. In fact, there are indicators that we are moving backwards. This year marks a decade since UN Security Council Resolution 2286 recommitted to protect health care in conflict, yet that anniversary arrives amid tragic evidence that International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is being violated on a devastating and escalating scale. The latest [report](#) from the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, of which ICN is a founding member, documents horrific attacks on health care, including the abhorrent killing, kidnapping, and detention of health workers who are trying to fulfil their ethical duty, under principles of medical neutrality, to provide care to all people. Attacks on health care have [increased](#) more than eightfold since 2016, while numbers of health workers killed in conflict have risen fivefold. At the same time, nurses on the frontlines of public health emergencies, including recent Ebola outbreaks, are being [put at risk](#) due to a lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), echoing the deadly failures of the COVID-19 pandemic that cost at least 115,000 health worker lives.

Whether in conflict settings or responding to epidemics and emergencies, nurses defend human rights and protections: they keep health systems running; bring healing, hope, care, and stability to societies; protect the most vulnerable; and support response, rebuilding, and recovery. Through ICN's [#NursesforPeace](#) work and continual contact with global nursing organizations, we see daily the extraordinary courage of the world's nurses, who act as peacemakers as well as healthmakers, often while working at immense personal risk and enduring the psychological toll of witnessing atrocities and fearing for their own safety and that of their colleagues, families, and communities. We also see the devastating consequences when nurses are denied the protection, support, protective equipment and safe conditions they so urgently need and deserve, and when attacks on health care continue with impunity and a lack of accountability. Through ICN's close collaboration with WHO, regular input to UN bodies (including [recent evidence](#) presented to OHCHR), and global advocacy, we work to make the voices of frontline nurses heard and to present the clear evidence that a lack of protection does not only endanger nurses themselves: it jeopardizes access to care for populations, accelerates the collapse of already-fragile health systems, and fundamentally undermines global health security.

My watchword as ICN President is empowerment, and ICN's recent report, [Empowered Nurses Save Lives](#), brings together the evidence that when nurses are structurally empowered — including through full protection and decent work conditions — they transform health outcomes, protect populations and global health security, and support economic growth. Protecting and investing in nurses, the world's largest health workforce and a majority-women profession, is not only a question of health: it is a humanitarian issue, a gender equity issue, a global security issue, an economic issue, and a moral test of global leadership.

I urge you to place the protection and empowerment of health workers at the centre of your summit commitments. This must include full enforcement of International Humanitarian Law, the provision of protective equipment and safe working conditions for all nurses and health workers in crisis settings, and adequate and sustained investment in nursing and health workforces and health systems.

There can be no global health security without a safe, secure nursing workforce. If we fail to protect the nurses and health workers who risk their lives to provide care, we fail everyone.

ICN urges decisive action and stands ready to work with you and with all global leaders to ensure that nurses are protected, empowered, and supported to save and improve lives and bring health care to all people.

Respectfully,



Dr José Luis Cobos Serrano
President
International Council of Nurses