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ICN calls for immediate government action to end violence against nurses on all fronts, underlined by heinous attack in Mexico

Geneva, Switzerland, 15 June 2020 – International Council of Nurses (ICN) President Annette Kennedy implores governments to protect healthcare staff and make the health and safety of nursing staff their number one priority in tackling COVID-19 pandemic. Her remarks come after a particularly brutal attack on a group of nurses in Mexico which was brought to ICN's attention by the Colegio Nacional de Enfermeras (CNE) who have spoken to the nurses who were victims of the horrendous assaults in Mexico City.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has reported that 47 healthcare professionals have been attacked during the pandemic in Mexico, most of them nurses. Ms Kennedy has written to Mexico's President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, at the request of the CNE, asking him to do everything in his power to protect his country's nurses and other healthcare workers.

Ms Kennedy said:

"ICN condemns in the strongest possible terms the particular acts of harassment, extortion and torture of nurses that occurred in Mexico City. Such barbaric behaviour aimed at people whose only intention is to provide help to others is unforgivable.

'I find it almost incomprehensible that a group of nurses would be subjected to the appalling treatment meted out to our colleagues in Mexico City. More than a dozen nurses were held against their will, robbed and assaulted, their families were forced to pay ransoms to ensure their safe return, and they did not feel their situation had been taken seriously by the authorities.

'Such abominable treatment should not go unpunished, and we urge the Mexican authorities to immediately enforce strong action against the perpetrators of these attacks and all others aimed at nurses and other healthcare workers.'

During this pandemic, nurses are a vital source of care and compassion throughout the world, yet in many countries they have been harassed in the street, verbally abused and physically attacked. In addition to the violence that nurses are facing in Mexico and in other countries, they are struggling to access sufficient personal protective equipment to keep themselves and their patients safe.

ICN CEO Howard Catton said, "Lack of protection for nurses during the pandemic coupled with horrific personal attacks, such as those described in Mexico, give even more credence to ICN describing nursing as arguably one of the most dangerous jobs in the world and that brings shame on all of us.

'ICN continues to monitor worrying reports about high numbers of infections and deaths among nurses and other healthcare workers in Mexico and elsewhere, and we again urge governments to recognise that PPE is essential equipment that they have a duty to supply to their staff.

‘We are asking governments to keep accurate data on the number of COVID-19 infections and deaths among nurses, firstly to keep a toll of how many become ill or lose their lives, but also to learn from such tragic events in the hope of preventing further deaths in the future.

‘Governments must also do everything possible to prevent attacks on nurses, there must be zero tolerance and we must root out and address the causes of such horrendous assaults through education and changing attitudes and behaviours.’

Last week the latest annual report from the [Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition](#) spotlighted the terrible toll attacks have on healthcare staff and the patients they serve in conflict zones. The report was dedicated to the nurses and midwives who work on the front lines to promote health and save lives in this the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife. Erica Burton, ICN Senior Advisor, Nursing and Health Policy, who contributed an essay focused on nurses for the report, concluded, “Every time a nurse is taken from the health workforce due to violence against health care, communities suffer, whether that be in a conflict zone or under the shadow of COVID-19.”

ICN has two member associations in Mexico: the Colegio Nacional de Enfermeras (CNE) and the Federación Mexicana de Colegios de Enfermería, AC (FEMCE).

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Note to 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.

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