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World Humanitarian Day: International Council of Nurses supports nurses and other #RealLifeHeroes tackling COVID-19, Beirut explosion and other humanitarian crises

Geneva, Switzerland, 19 August 2020 – On World Humanitarian Day, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) supports the United Nations’ efforts to address increased pressures and risks to staff linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. ICN salutes nurses working on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic and caring for victims of the Beirut blast.

The United Nations World Humanitarian Day commemorates humanitarian workers killed and injured in the course of their work and honours all aid workers who provide life-saving support and protection to people in the direst situations on the planet. This year, special tribute is being paid to health workers because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Around the world, many nurses are working in humanitarian situations where basic healthcare is hard to find, and even harder to deliver. With their colleagues, they face danger and uncertainty every day, and the world owes them a huge debt of gratitude for what they do for some of the most vulnerable people on the planet.

But it is not only in humanitarian situations: the pandemic poses dangers for nurses wherever they are, especially if they have inadequate supplies of personal protective equipment and are forced to work long hours without adequate breaks and time off between shifts. Many thousands of nurses have been exposed to the virus unnecessarily in the course of their work, thousands have become ill and hundreds have died.

These risks have not stopped nurses continuing to provide care for their patients, and their selfless dedication to the people they look after is a credit to the profession and the communities they serve.

ICN President Annette Kennedy said:

“World Humanitarian Day reminds us of those selfless workers who leave their families and loved ones to travel to some of the most dangerous and inhospitable places on the planet to provide help and care for the world’s most vulnerable people. Many nurses are counted among their number, and each of them faces risks from which most of us would walk away.

‘We have witnessed this in Beirut where nurses from across the city rushed to hospitals to care for the injured and dying, and we have seen this throughout this global pandemic. The best way that we can pay tribute to what they do is by supporting their work and advocating for their safety. ICN

calls on governments to do their utmost to protect and prioritise nurses and other humanitarian workers, wherever they are, and fulfil the duty of care they owe to these #RealLifeHeroes.”

#WorldHumanitarianDay was designated in memory of the bomb attack on the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, Iraq, on 19 August 2003, which killed 22 people, including United Nations staff.

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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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