



ICN offers condolences and support to nurses of Haiti and Afghanistan as they struggle to meet healthcare needs of their people

Geneva, 17 August 2021 - The International Council of Nurses (ICN) has been in contact with the national nursing associations of Haiti and Afghanistan and sent messages of support and condolence to their nurses as they battle the latest crises to confront them.

Nurses in Haiti are working to help save the lives of the sick and injured following the latest devastating earthquake, which struck the island on 14 August, killing more than a thousand people. ICN, and its family of national nursing associations, has offered support to the Association Nationale des Infirmières Licenciées d'Haïti, as in 2010 when it faced a similar disaster.

The Afghanistan Nurses Association has been in touch with ICN to ask for support in protecting its nurses, who are caring for the many people injured and displaced during the latest political upheavals.

Access to healthcare is a basic human right for all men and women, boys and girls, and nurses have the right to deliver their care with the support of the people who are running their country, without fear of recrimination or retaliation. ICN has always been a strong and vocal advocate of nurses' rights and has fought tirelessly to ensure their protection, whether it be physical or mental, during times of peace or in pandemics, disasters or conflict zones. ICN's ongoing work as part of the [Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition](#) and the International Committee of the Red Cross' [Healthcare in Danger](#) project aims to raise awareness of and protect nurses and other healthcare workers delivering care in dangerous situations such as these.

The United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR, has reported that 80% of the nearly 250,000 Afghans forced to flee the country since the end of May 2021, are women and children.¹ ICN is deeply concerned about the disproportionate risks to the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan and the impact on them and their healthcare systems.

When natural disasters or manmade conflicts occur, the value of nurses to the local population becomes apparent to everybody. It is immeasurable, and ICN is calling on the people in positions of power and leadership in those two countries to ensure nurses' safety and wellbeing, and to help them with any means possible to continue their humanitarian work.

ICN President Annette Kennedy said:

“Our hearts go out to the people of Haiti and Afghanistan as they face hardships and uncertain times ahead. We know that the nurses in these two countries will be working day and night to provide healthcare to their fellow citizens, in an equal and fair way, without fear or favour.

‘On behalf of ICN’s Board and the 27 million nurses of the world, I ask those in power to provide whatever it is that nurses need to continue their vital humanitarian work in these difficult times. The right to healthcare is a basic human right, and at this time we urge everyone

¹ UNHCR spokesperson Shabia Mantoo, as quoted in <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097742>, 13 August 2021.



to respect the human rights of all people, especially those of women, who make up the majority of the nursing workforce, and girls.

‘We call on the international community to ensure that the respect and recognition of human rights, particularly of women and girls, are at the heart of the political discussions in the coming days.’

ICN will be commenting further on the plight of nurses and other aid workers on 19 August, World Humanitarian Day.

* * *