

## Health professionals call for protection in conflicts

**Geneva, Switzerland: 11 March 2024** – The World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA) is asking health professionals worldwide to sign an open letter calling for all parties in conflicts to safeguard health facilities and personnel, in line with international laws.

There are over 180 armed conflicts in the world today, more than twice as many as in 2010—and the trend is rising alarmingly<sup>1</sup>. Health professionals are delivering emergency medical care in these conflict areas, putting their lives at risk while they provide care to others. Tragically many have been injured or killed. The WHPA expresses its unwavering condemnation of ongoing violence targeting healthcare facilities and personnel in all regions worldwide.

Yet international humanitarian law requires the active protection of healthcare facilities and personnel, humane treatment for the wounded and sick, and prohibits the misuse of healthcare facilities and vehicles for military purposes. Healthcare facilities, ambulances, and health professionals must never be targeted. The WHPA is calling on all parties involved in conflicts to unconditionally uphold all aspects of humanitarian law.

“Thousands of healthcare professionals are now working in areas of armed conflict or war, saving lives and trying to ensure continued health care for their communities in accordance with their ethical obligation to treat the injured and unwell, without bias and despite risks to their own safety.

“Sadly, many colleagues have been killed as a result, reducing the workforce available to provide that essential health care. All five organizations that make up the World Health Professions Alliance—representing pharmacists, nurses, physicians, dentists and physiotherapists—are gravely concerned about violence directed at healthcare facilities and health workers in these areas. We urge the entire healthcare profession to unite and add their support by signing this important call,” said Dr Catherine Duggan, WHPA chair and CEO, International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP).

Access the open letter: <https://www.whpa.org/open-letter-safeguarding-healthcare-in-conflict>

### Note for Editors

The World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA) brings together the global organizations representing the world’s dentists, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists and physicians and speaks for over 41 million health care professionals in more than 130 countries. The WHPA works to improve global health and the quality of patient care and facilitates collaboration among the health professions and major stakeholders. [www.whpa.org](http://www.whpa.org)

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<sup>1</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Program: [www.ucdp.uu.se](http://www.ucdp.uu.se)

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