Statement on Protecting Health Workers and Patients in All Conflict Zones, Including Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan

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In recent global conflicts, there have been hundreds of attacks on health facilities, ambulances, and medical staff. Many hospitals have been forced to close, leaving patients without treatment, and local primary care providers risk their lives to provide even the most basic health services. Estimates say that a thousand or more health workers in Gaza alone were killed, while others face detention or displacement.[1]

Protecting healthcare personnel is not optional: it is a moral and legal obligation that transcends borders, politics, and conflicts. WONCA stands in solidarity with health personnel everywhere, particularly those operating in the most challenging and dangerous environments.

WONCA continues to join other leading civil society organizations amongst the health care community in urging all sides in conflicts to:

- **Ensure the Safety of Health Personnel:** Establish and enforce protocols that protect healthcare personnel, patients and facilities, particularly in conflict zones.
- **Respect Medical Neutrality:** Uphold the sanctity of healthcare as a nonpartisan and noncombatant activity.
- **Strengthen Support Systems:** Provide resources and psychosocial support to health personnel who risk their lives to serve communities in crisis.

The impact of these conflicts on local populations is also devastating: safe childbirth, treatment for chronic conditions, and even basic emergency care are increasingly out of reach. This is now compounded by famine conditions in several conflict zones, including Gaza and Sudan. Blockages to the delivery of medical supplies and humanitarian aid, combine with destruction of food and water supplies to push entire communities to a state of famine. With sanitation systems collapsing, waterborne diseases threaten to cause a second wave of preventable deaths. Denying people access to adequate food and clean water is a violation of international humanitarian law and a direct assault on human dignity.

In every conflict, care comes first—and so must the fundamental right to food, water, and health.

WONCA makes an urgent call to:

- **Address escalating famine and disease in conflict zones**: Rapid and unhindered delivery of medical supplies and humanitarian aid following global standards for aid distribution, including adequate food and clean water, in conflict zones is urgent.
- **Enforce international humanitarian law:** Ensure respect for civilians and protect those not actively participating in hostilities by proactively limiting the effects of armed conflict on civilian populations.
- **Prioritize ceasefires wherever and whenever possible:** Aggressively pursue humanitarian ceasefires as an initial step towards resolving all conflicts, including in Gaza, Ukraine, and Sudan.
- **Release all hostages and stop all unlawful detention and mistreatment**.

WONCA urges governments, international organizations, and humanitarian agencies to act without delay. All parties must ensure safe corridors for the delivery of food, water, and medical care. Accountability must follow for those who violate humanitarian law. The survival and dignity of millions depend on urgent global action.

[1] UN News, 23 August 2025