



American Academy of Nursing Statement on Humanitarian Aid and International Coordination

Humanitarian Crisis in Ukraine Escalates

Washington, D.C. (March 10, 2022) – The American Academy of Nursing (Academy) remains steadfast in our commitment to supporting all measures that will protect health, patient care, and providers on the frontlines during humanitarian crises as a result of geopolitical conflict. Of utmost importance is the adherence to international humanitarian law that ensures civilians are not a target of military advances – specifically outlined in the Geneva Convention^[1] IV, Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, particularly Articles 15, 16, 27, and 29. Healthcare workers, healthcare settings, as well as the transportation and delivery of healthcare supplies must be protected during acts of violence and military action, as outlined in Articles 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 55, 56, and 57, of Convention IV.

The Academy continues to hold the position that international coordination in times of crisis is paramount, as evidenced in the organization’s past [policy recommendations](#) and [statements](#). Access to resources and protections for global health security are necessary in a humanitarian crisis affecting any population in any corner of the world. Global health diplomacy calls on us to support all individuals who are victims of conflict—regardless of ethnic background, religion, or other cultural and physical traits. The impact of war, conflict, and crimes has searing effects on mental health, development, and well-being—in addition to the inherent threats of violence individuals in war-torn countries face. In 2013, the Academy’s Expert Panel on Global Nursing and Health’s Task Force on Global Health Diplomacy published a literature review with implications of global health diplomacy noting that “...effective international health interventions are ethical and sensitive to historical, political, social, economic, and cultural differences.”^[2]

The targeting of civilians and reports of the most recent bombing of a maternity and children’s hospital in Ukraine is reprehensible and violates international humanitarian law. The Academy calls on world leaders to protect access to health and those who provide it. On March 9, the House of Representatives passed the Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2022, which encompasses critical humanitarian aid for emergency food assistance, health care, and urgent support for vulnerable populations and communities within the Ukraine and surrounding region. The Academy calls on the Senate and President Biden to pass this legislation swiftly so that the aid can reach the people in Ukraine who urgently need it.

The nursing profession must recognize, support, and call on public officials to allocate and release humanitarian aid to improve health outcomes in conflicted areas. The Academy has reinforced the need for humanitarian aid in past statements and policy actions.^{[3],[4]} Attacks on human rights hinder the Academy’s vision of *healthy lives for all people*. The Academy strongly supports individual actions taken by Fellows to improve the health and care of displaced persons, refugees, and victims of unjustified violence.

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About the American Academy of Nursing

The American Academy of Nursing serves the public by advancing health policy through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of nursing knowledge. Academy Fellows are inducted into the organization for their extraordinary contributions to improve health locally and globally. With more than 2,800 Fellows, the Academy represents nursing’s most accomplished leaders in policy, research, administration, practice, and academia.

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- [1] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention)*, 12 August 1949, 75 UNTS 287, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36d2.html>
- [2] Hunter, A., Wilson, L., Stanhope, M., Hatcher, B., Hattar, M., Hilfinger Messias, D. A. K., & Powell, D. (2013). Global health diplomacy: An integrative review of the literature and implications for nursing. *Nursing Outlook*, 61(2), 85–92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2012.07.013>
- [3] American Academy of Nursing. Support for humanitarian aid to refugee children. (2016). *Nursing Outlook*, 64(1), 94–97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2015.12.003>
- [4] Speck, P. M., Mitchell, S. A., Ekroos, R. A., Sanchez, R. V., & Messias, D. A. K. (2018). Policy brief on the nursing response to human trafficking. *Nursing Outlook*, 66(4), 407–411. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2018.06.004>