



Strengthening Midwifery Globally

WOMEN, CHILDREN AND MIDWIVES IN SITUATIONS OF WAR AND CIVIL UNREST

Position statement

BACKGROUND

The ICM's *International Code of Ethics for Midwives* emphasises the importance of midwives respecting the basic human rights of all people, especially full human rights for women and children. In times of war and civil unrest, violations of human rights are more frequent, and women and children, as members of the civilian population, suffer displacement, deprivation and greater risk of injury and illness, while their access to healthcare is likely to be restricted or refused.

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

The ICM believes the rights of women and children should be protected in all circumstances; that it is only in peaceful situations that families can reach their full potential to the benefit of their nations. The Confederation therefore condemns all acts of war.

POSITION

The International Confederation of Midwives

- supports the efforts of all those international agencies that are seeking to resolve conflicts and enforce peace, relieve the suffering of the women and children who are refugees and provide food to those whose food sources have been destroyed or are no longer available to them
- supports the UN Convention Against Torture, noting Article 10 which urges that 'education regarding the prohibition against torture be included in the training of medical personnel and other persons who may be involved in the treatment of any individual subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment.'
- condemns the recruitment of children into armed forces
- condemns the use of items of war that can have a long-term impact on a population, such as anti-personnel landmines
- condemns leaders of forces who fail to safeguard the rights of women and children, especially those whose armed forces physically and sexually abuse women and children
- condemns rape
- Condemns the use of women in active military service who must interrupt lactation to do so.
- Condemns any health workers or health organisations who collude with those who may cause harm to any individual
- recognises the courage of midwives who in the most difficult of circumstances continue to provide care for women and their newborn
- will support Member Associations in countries beset by war and civil unrest

The ICM also recognises with deep regret that many midwives become the victims of war and civil unrest. They are killed, raped, maimed and suffer the loss of family members.

GUIDING STATEMENT TO MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS:

Member Associations are encouraged to lobby their governments to support peace initiatives, and to provide financial support to agencies offering humanitarian assistance to those whose lives have been disrupted by war and civil unrest.

RELATED ICM DOCUMENTS

- ICM. International Code of Ethics for Midwives. ICM, 1999.
- ICM position statement. Midwives, women and human rights. ICM, 2002.

OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. UN, 1979
- Geneva Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, Switzerland: 12 August 1949.
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Hague, The Netherlands: 1 July 2002.
- UN Convention against Torture, Article 10. UN High Commission for Human Rights. Geneva, Switzerland: UNOHCHR, 27 June 1987
- UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. UN, 1948
- World Declaration on the Survival Protection and Development of Children. UNICEF, 1990

Adopted at Glasgow Council meeting, 2008

Due for next review 2014