



Statement by the ICMHD Executive Committee and General Assembly

The International Centre for Migration, Health and Development (ICMHD) is an organization dedicated to promoting and protecting the health of migrants, refugees, internally displaced people, victims of slavery and trafficked people. It believes that health is a human right to be shared by everyone, and only by being so, will global health be achievable and sustainable.

As members of the ICMHD General Assembly and Executive Committee, we wish to express our growing concern at the recent fighting between Israel and Palestinians living in occupied Palestinian territories, and what it implies for the health and wellbeing of all those involved, Palestinian and Israeli. We note this latest outbreak of violence is a long-recurring theme that has killed thousands of people on both sides, and has traumatized children and adults in dehumanizing and dangerously long-term ways. We also note that use of heavy military power over what is essentially an occupied civilian population reminds us that like all sieges, be it the siege of Warsaw in WWII, or the siege of Sarajevo in the 1990's, the 17-year long siege of Gaza will only succeed in producing resistance. Like the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto and the Bosnians in Sarajevo, the Palestinians of Gaza have dug, and will continue to dig, tunnels and find other ways of overcoming the physical, psychological and material oppression that sieges constitute. It is a natural instinct to want to survive, to see children grow up healthy and see the elderly live out their lives free of fear and the insult of violence. Health infrastructures are also being damaged or destroyed, and in doing so, are creating even further human chaos and pain as well as negating the goal of universal health coverage. It is an old horror story, a repeated betrayal of the principle of the right to health and wellbeing that all countries have signed on to. With sieges also comes a fatalism that generates a willingness to risk everything in order to achieve equality and enjoy the right to health. When there is nothing more to lose, people fight the most overwhelming forces, just as they did in Warsaw and Sarajevo. Sieges can also create the desire for retribution, and when they do, they sow the seeds of continued fragility and pass on the culture of insecurity from one generation to another. Surely in 2021, when human survival is being put daily into question by cataclysmic climate events and a global pandemic, the world must collectively say enough is enough to this and all other on-going conflicts that target civilians and erode our collective opportunity to achieve global health and wellbeing.

We the members of the ICMHD General Assembly and Executive Committee say exactly that. Enough is Enough. We call on the same United Nations that created Israel to now respect the historical, cultural and political rights of Palestinians as well as of Israelis, and work intensively towards the two-state solution the UN has so often referred to. We believe that if the UN and the larger international community is unable or unwilling to do this, we risk losing the health and human rights gains which the world has, with enormous difficulty, achieved to date.

31 May, 2021