



A Call for Courage: declaration on human rights and health – statement of solidarity with the civilians of Israel and Palestine and with all those affected by war, armed conflict, forced displacement, occupation, and violence globally

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The International Network for Epidemiology in Policy (INEP) is an international organization that promotes the use of epidemiology to develop Evidence-Based policies to improve equity, health, and wellbeing for the global population. In public health, we are focused on the well-being of human lives locally and globally, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, nationality, faith, or political affiliation, all of which are being seriously impacted by the current conflict in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas. As the leadership of a consortium of 24 epidemiological societies across the globe, we are deeply concerned about the well-being of all those impacted, especially the innocent lives needlessly lost and harmed.

With this Declaration, and due to the imposed violence upon civilians by state and non-state actors, INEP joins other health organizations in condemning the terror attacks and taking of hostages by Hamas on 7th October 2023; condemning the subsequent prolonged widespread, disproportionate, and indiscriminate attacks in Gaza and elsewhere in the Palestinian territories; and condemning the blockade of humanitarian aid, food, water, energy, internet, and movement by any entity. We also note that physical, mental, and emotional health harms in war and armed conflict are not limited to civilians, and so raise our concern for all affected.

In 2022, INEP adopted the “INEP Declaration on human rights and health in war, armed conflict, forced displacement, occupation, and violence: statement of solidarity with the peoples of Ukraine and around the globe,” noting the “concern that similar suffering is happening and has been happening in other countries, with less adamant, or even absent, the condemnation or compassion now expressed with the current Ukrainian conflict.” We are concerned that this difference in concern is happening again, and so we feel that it is even more-so our responsibility *to continue to* stand in solidarity with victims of war, armed conflict, forced displacement, occupation, and violence – wherever they are located and whomever the aggressor may be.

INEP stands for global justice, equity, ethics, transparency, and most importantly, the interest of health everywhere, over and above any other interest. INEP leadership therefore extends our support to all those suffering worldwide from imposed violence, including our fellow epidemiologists and other health scientists, noting that the censorship, erasure, manipulation, and disruption of their voice or work adds to the negative health impact of terrorism, military aggression, and violence.

Terror, occupation, and war is at the heart of this crisis, and we understand that this is the most recent stage of terrorism, military aggression, and harm between Israel and Palestine, marked by both acute and long-term violence. Our focus as an epidemiological organization, rooted in equity, is on the harms to civilians and all those affected by war and conflict, and the responsibility of state, non-state actors, and domestic and

44 international law to limit those harms. This declaration is rooted in calls to protect populations against the
45 harms of war and occupation, and through peaceful solutions.

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47 **DECLARATION**

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49 *The leadership of the International Network for Epidemiology in Policy*

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51 GUIDED by our mission as “an international non-profit organization that brings together national and
52 international volunteer societies and associations of epidemiologists” that “promote integrity, equity, and
53 evidence in policies impacting health to inform rational policy development by governments and non-
54 governmental organizations” to “better protect the health of the whole community of life”; and

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56 UNDERSTANDING that law and policy rooted in human rights and principles of democratic governance help
57 realize our mission; and

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59 MOVED to action by the recent acts of terrorism by Hamas, an entity that has called for the annihilation of
60 Israel and is designated a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union, on civilian
61 populations in Israel on 7 October 2023, and the subsequent military response by Israel in Gaza, impacting the
62 civilian population and resulting a growing humanitarian crisis;

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64 NOTING the “INEP Declaration on human rights and health in war, armed conflict, forced displacement,
65 occupation, and violence: statement of solidarity with the peoples of Ukraine and around the globe,” adopted
66 by INEP in 2022, bringing attention to “violations of human rights and humanitarian law around the world, by
67 state and non-state actors, including but not limited to the current human rights situations (as noted in UN
68 Human Rights Council Resolutions) in Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Ethiopia, Sudan, Myanmar, China, and the
69 Palestinian territories”; and recognizing

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- 71 – “...the right of all people to be free from harm and the threat of harm, and their rights to life, liberty,
72 opportunity, and human development, as well as their right to a healthy environment;” and
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 - 74 – “...the primary importance of states to promote and protect human rights, as a function of their duty to
75 promote and protect public health and human development;” and
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 - 77 – “...the fundamental duty of the state to promote and protect public health that allows for the people under
78 their care or, in the case of occupation, control, the ability to fully realize their human rights to life, liberty,
79 opportunity, and human development, as well as their right to a healthy environment;”

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81 NOTING ALSO the “Recife Declaration on Racism as a Global Public Health Crisis,” a project of INEP launched
82 31 October 2023 in Recife, Brazil, which highlights the historic, present-day, and systemic harms of colonialism
83 and occupation, as well as the concern over the racial underpinnings, and resultant terror and harm to
84 marginalized people, in global responses to crises;

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86 NOTING ALSO INEP’s continued work on “Child Inclusion in Policy” and that acts of violence against children
87 by both sides, and that the extreme toll of death and suffering of children in Gaza have prompted UN officials

88 to call this “a war against children,”;

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90 NOTING that the attack by Hamas on the civilian population in Israel rightly led to widespread statements of
91 condemnation and outrage by private and public entities from around the world, expressing solidarity against
92 the harm and terror inflicted on the Israeli civilian population by Hamas; and

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94 CONCERNED that initially following the Hamas attack, there was a lack of widespread statements of
95 condemnation and outrage by private and public entities, with reports of silence or denial;

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97 APPRECIATING that there is a growing consensus by human rights and public health organizations expressing
98 outrage against the harm and terror inflicted on the Palestinian civilian population by Israel, and showing
99 support of critical inquiry of actions against any state;

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101 NOTING that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 26 January 2024 ordered provisional measures to
102 “protect against further, severe and irreparable harm to the rights of the Palestinian people under the
103 Genocide Convention” and “to ensure Israel’s compliance with its obligations under the Genocide Convention
104 not to engage in genocide, and to prevent and to punish genocide”; and

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106 UNDERSTANDING that nations have a right to self-defense, but all state and non-state actors must act within
107 the confines of international law, human rights law, and humanitarian law, proportionate to the attack, and
108 precisely targeted on the actor which targeted them, and includes not using unlawful methods of warfare, such
109 the targeting of hospitals and civilian centers unless used by military forces; and

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111 UNDERSTANDING that the widespread, disproportionate, and indiscriminate attacks by a nation, and in an
112 urban center, and in a place where civilians cannot safely flee, brings great harm to the life and well-being of
113 civilians, and violates international law, human rights law, and humanitarian law; and

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115 UNDERSTANDING that the blockade of food, water, energy, communication, and humanitarian aid brings great
116 harm to the life and well-being of civilians and is a form of collective punishment that may violate international
117 law, human rights law, and humanitarian law;

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119 UNDERSTANDING that Israel has the responsibility under international law, human rights law, and
120 humanitarian law to prioritize civilian life, including through humanitarian corridors, humanitarian pauses,
121 humanitarian truces, and ceasefires, similar to such prioritization in Ukraine and other wars, and noting the
122 numerous United Nations General Assembly and United Nations Security Council resolutions put forward
123 requesting such actions since 7 October 2023;

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125 CONCERNED for the apparent general disregard for the dignity and welfare of all life by Hamas and Israel, most
126 evident by the use of civilians and civilian areas as part of military tactics and targets;

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128 CONCERNED about reports of gender based violence;

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130 CONCERNED that almost half of the population in Gaza are children, and SADDENED by the death and suffering
131 of thousands of children since hostilities began;

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CONCERNED of the life and well-being of the remaining hostages taken by Hamas, and of Palestinians by Israeli forces, particularly the young and the elderly and those needing healthcare and medication, as well as reports of family separation;

CONCERNED that healthcare facilities and healthcare professionals in Gaza have been directly targeted and SADDENED by the deaths of large numbers of patients and health care workers;

CONCERNED of reports of the continued harms to the life and well-being of Palestinian civilians in Gaza due to the continued bombardments by Israel, causing loss of life and limb, mental and physical health impairments, the build-up of corpses in civilian areas, and the permanent destruction of infrastructure vital to the life and well-being of civilians, including but not limited to homes, hospitals, schools, refugee camps, churches, and mosques; and

CONCERNED of reports of the lack of preventative, long-term, and emergency healthcare in Gaza, including limited or no access to energy to run hospital equipment, sterile equipment, pain medication, and anesthesia, limited to no access to clean water, and the particular impacts on children, the elderly, and the disabled;

CONCERNED of reports of the lack of telecommunications and internet access, preventing or delaying the communication of critical information that aids in collective action to respond to harms to human life and well-being; and

CONCERNED also of the continued missile attacks from Hamas into Israel, and the terror and harm to the Israeli civilian population; and

THEREFORE, we, the leadership of the International Network for Epidemiology in Policy, do hereby:

UNEQUIVOCALLY CONDEMN terrorism and violence against civilians in all its forms, by state and non-state actors;

UNNEQUIVOCALLY CONDEMN the taking of civilian hostages and the mass detention of civilians;

UNEQUIVOCALLY CONDEMN any abuse of humanitarian aid to cause further harm, starvation, the spread of disease, and the loss of life; and

UNEQUIVOCALLY CONDEMN anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in language and actions, including acute and systemic acts; and so

DECLARE that all parties to a conflict must abide by international law, human rights law, and humanitarian law; and

DECLARE that the lives of civilians are all equally valuable, and to claim or act otherwise is a form of racism and social injustice that has no place in democratic societies, public health, and academia; and so

176 CALL for an immediate ceasefire;
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178 CALL for the cessation of all acts that are leading to a mass humanitarian crisis for civilians;
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180 CALL for the urgent, unconditional release of all civilian hostages and detainees not afforded due process
181 rights;
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183 CALL UPON state and non-state actors to stop supporting the violence through military, financial, and political
184 support, and instead revert to diplomatic solutions;
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186 CALL UPON all states in their domestic and foreign policy to advocate for human health and well-being in times
187 of conflict, including abiding by the Geneva Conventions concerning civilians and prisoners of war, and
188 supporting the investigation and prosecution of violations of international law, human rights law, and
189 humanitarian law;
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191 CALL UPON all state and non-state actors to prioritize giving adequate access of the International Committee
192 of the Red Cross to hostages, prisoners, and communities affected by the violence, as the mandate-holder of
193 the Geneva Conventions; and so
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195 JOIN our voices in solidarity with those condemning the attack by Hamas that killed and harmed innocent
196 civilians and captured civilian hostages;
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198 JOIN our voices in solidarity with those condemning the military response by Israel in Gaza due to its
199 disproportionate and unacceptable impact on civilians, of which the majority are women and children; and
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201 JOIN our voices in solidarity for the health, life, and well-being of all civilians in Israel, Gaza, and the wider
202 Palestinian territories.