



Public Health Association
of New Zealand
**Kāhui Hauora Tūmatanui
o Aotearoa**

Statement on The Imperative for Peace as a Public Health emergency

In recognition of the profound impact of armed conflicts on global health, the Public Health Association of New Zealand asserts that the pursuit of peace is an urgent and imperative public health priority. Wars, with their indiscriminate nature, transcend borders and pose substantial threats to the well-being of populations, both human and environmental (1, 2).

The consequences of war extend beyond immediate violence, disrupting access to fundamental necessities crucial for sustaining life and health. This includes the interruption of access to basic health needs such as water, food, fuel, electricity, medicines, and communication infrastructure, hindering the functionality of vital health facilities like hospitals (3).

Innocent civilians, including children, women, older individuals, and those with disabilities, disproportionately bear the health impacts of war, exacerbating loss of life, malnutrition, waterborne diseases, and mental health crises due to collateral damage in conflict zones (4).

War inflicts unacceptable losses on life and health, with direct consequences like injuries, trauma and fatalities compounded by indirect effects on community infrastructure, healthcare systems, and the spread of diseases in war-torn regions (1, 4). The scale and extent of these health harms may rival or surpass the impact of epidemics, constituting a crisis of public health magnitude.

Additionally, war profoundly impacts indigenous peoples through the deliberate mass destruction of their communities, often amounting to acts of genocide, resulting in historical and ongoing hardships, including displacement, loss of cultural heritage, and disproportionate suffering (5).

While condemning war and violence unequivocally, we advocate for non-violent approaches to conflict resolution. Emphasising negotiation and alternative forms of dispute resolution that honour and respect life and health, we call for a commitment to dialogue and peaceful means in resolving conflicts (6-8).

In conclusion, as a nation committed to public health, we urgently call for an immediate ceasefire and a collective commitment from the global community to prioritise peace, human life and health (2). This crisis demands swift and collective action to address the unnecessary loss of life and health harms resulting from armed conflicts.

Public Health Association of New Zealand

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References

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