



The Cairo Declaration on the Mental Health of Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Other Populations Affected by Conflict: A Call for Action

On the occasion of the XXth World Congress of the World Federation for Mental Health on “Mental Health in Times of Crisis”, the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH), The Behman Hospital in Egypt, the Egyptian Society for the Rights of People with Mental Illness and the Gouna Technical Nursing Institute make the following Declaration on the Mental Health of Refugees:

The UNHCR reported that “worldwide close to 80 million people are currently impacted by humanitarian emergencies arising from natural disasters and armed conflicts, such as those in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, and more recently, Nepal. WHO estimates 5% to 10% of these people suffer from a mental health condition such as depression as a result of the emergency”.

The WFMH issued a Declaration of Human Rights and Mental Health in 1989 and more recently the Athens Declaration on the Mental Health Consequences of Crises and Disasters, and the WFMH Position Statement on Mental Health Consequences of the Conflict in Syria.

Promoting and protecting the mental health and the well-being of the population must be a high priority for governments. Paying attention to the mental and emotional health of a nation’s people must be given added priority during crises and disasters.

The World Health Organization’s Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020 and the World Federation for Mental Health “People’s Charter for Mental Health” have strongly endorsed the need for a comprehensive response to these disasters by Governmental and Non-Governmental organizations, including professional associations and civil society, and involving patients, service users, their families and other caregivers.

The World Federation for Mental Health, the Behman Hospital, the Egyptian Society for the Rights of People with Mental Illness and the Gouna Technical Nursing Institute call on:

- All nations involved in crises and disasters to respond specifically to these issues and to consider the serious immediate and long – term mental health consequences.

- The international mental health community, including professional associations and NGOs concerned with health, to intervene and support people affected by these crises and disasters.
- All concerned to intervene with respective Governments to insist on upholding the Geneva conventions concerned with the health consequences of war and to provide immediate financial support to the mental health services located in conflict areas.
- Those major humanitarian organizations that traditionally have not prioritized mental health, to provide the means to support established organizations working in the field of mental health to expand training and services according to the new Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings.
- All Governments and communities affected by the current economic crisis to provide support and aid to the population in order to combat the psychosocial consequences of crises and disasters.
- All concerned to endorse the Recommendations of the WFMH “Peoples’ Charter for Mental Health” particularly the Recommendation that mental health be represented on all disaster emergency committees.

Issued in Cairo, October 2015