



Position Statement: War and Conflicts

The International Association for Adolescent Health (IAAH) stands with other international health and human rights agencies in denouncing Russia's war in Ukraine; and, further, opposes all use of armed conflict for political recourse. The IAAH Council is firm in our opposition to physical warfare due to the deleterious impact it has on the health of children and adolescents (hereafter referred to as "young people"), both immediately and in the future.

Young people are negatively impacted by wars in ways beyond that of adults.¹ In addition to the impacts on civilian young people, 19-24 year olds are disproportionately represented in the worlds' armies where they are the recipients of the trauma of actively participating in war, including from fatal injuries and nonfatal disabilities, e.g., PTSD. (Note the World Health Organization definition of adolescence is ages 10-24). We are deeply concerned about the effects this war has already had, and about ways that the damage will increase significantly over time for all young people.

The Russian government's current invasion of Ukraine is a breach of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC), an international treaty specifically designed to protect vulnerable populations, including young people. Russia is a ratifying nation of the UN CRC and signed on to the optional protocol to the CRC addressing the impact of armed conflicts on young people. These treaties are legally-binding commitments to protecting young people, and the actions of the Russian government is a clear violation of these agreements.

IAAH supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In accordance with our values and principles, IAAH calls on the international community to continue to shed light on the Russian government's infractions under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child treaty and we call on Russia's government to honor its commitments to the rights of all young people.

While this conflict has sparked a high level of attention, IAAH is acutely aware of the multitude of armed conflicts and other human-caused atrocities that rage on around the world. While many have barely been addressed by the international community, ongoing conflicts in Ethiopia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria and elsewhere cause irreparable harm to young people and populations. IAAH calls on all nations to end these ongoing conflicts and their negative effects on young people. We highlight the urgent need to ensure that health care, education, and social services reach young people and their families in Ukraine and in all conflict areas, to restore and maintain health and well-being. We also advocate and seek support for the ongoing

¹ Ayesha Kadir, Sherry Shenoda, Jeffrey Goldhagen, Shelly Pitterman, SECTION ON INTERNATIONAL CHILD HEALTH, Parminder S. Suchdev, Kevin J. Chan, Cynthia R. Howard, Patrick McGann, Nicole E. St Clair, Katherine Yun, Linda D. Arnold; The Effects of Armed Conflict on Children. *Pediatrics* December 2018; 142 (6): e20182586. 10.1542/peds.2018-2586. Accessed from <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/142/6/e20182586/37464/The-Effects-of-Armed-Conflict-on-Children>

physical and mental health care needs of migrant and displaced families. We extend our gratitude to the people and Governments of bordering countries who have been generous in receiving refugees.

We encourage others, in all capacities, to actively seek non-violent resolutions and respect the rights of the young people of the world. We believe that adults worldwide are responsible for building the foundations of respect, resilience, non-violence, acceptance of differences, and care towards all humans, so that our young people are able to work towards peaceful co-existence, and a better world.