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31st International Conference of the Red Cross Red Crescent
Geneva, 28 November–1 December – For humanity



Health Care in Danger: Respecting and Protecting Health Care in Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence

(Commission C)

Concept note

Objectives

1. Raise awareness of how insecurity affects the access to and provision of health care services in armed conflicts and other situations of violence¹.
2. Mobilize support for and outline a process, together with National Societies and States that aims at improving security for health care services in these environments.

Rationale

Insecurity of health care in armed conflicts and other situations of violence is widespread, affects large populations and has not been systematically documented and analyzed. From 2008 to 2010, the ICRC has analyzed 655 violent events affecting health care in 16 operational contexts. The study shows patterns of insecurity that range from direct attacks on patients, health infrastructures and personnel, denial from access to care, to general insecurity, arrests, looting and kidnapping. These patterns indicate high levels of vulnerability both for the wounded and sick and for health staff.

Direct threats on health care in these environments increase the acute need for emergency and life-saving medical assistance at a moment when they are most needed. The consequences of direct attacks against health personnel and facilities are dire for local communities when hospitals or first aid posts have to close. Insecurity also deepens chronic needs when the delivery of basic health care can no longer take place, making it impossible to carry out vaccination campaigns for example. Because of its combined effects on chronic and acute needs, insecurity of health care is probably one of the biggest humanitarian problems today, in terms numbers of people affected. Yet it is a largely under-recognised issue.

As the protection of the sick and wounded lies at the **core of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's mission**, the entire Movement has a crucial role to play to achieve this, by bolstering its capacity to respond to this problem in the field and by mobilizing and engaging all major stake-holders, particularly States and the wider health community. The Conference is an opportunity to launch a Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement-wide initiative to address this pressing humanitarian issue.

Guiding questions

¹ The notion of "other situations of violence" is described in footnote 1 of the draft resolution and footnote 2 of the official background report.

In order to facilitate the debate, participants are kindly invited to address the following questions:

1. General question – In contexts affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence, what are the problems affecting the safety and delivery of health care? You may quote any experience from your NS and/or country.
2. Specific question one - What could be done to improve the situation? (what type of actions could be undertaken and by whom)
3. Specific question two - Do you have some concrete suggestions for action that could be undertaken by States, by National Societies, by the health community or other?

Practical details

The thematic commission will be held twice on Tuesday 29 November (from 09.00-11.30 and 13.30-16.00). Following 3 to 4 panel presentations by speakers that are yet to be confirmed, the Chair will introduce the debate and open the floor for statements from the participants. Expected panellists will be from a Red Cross or Red Crescent National Society, a State, a humanitarian organisation and the ICRC. The focus on these presentations would be on highlighting the problem of how insecurity affects health care in armed conflicts and other situations of violence and proposing recommendations to address this.

Delegates are invited to limit their statement to three minutes and to respond to the 3 guiding questions presented above. Delegates speaking on behalf of a group of participants may extend their statement to five minutes. At the end of each Commission Session, the Chair will make some concluding remarks.

Reference to official working documents

Draft resolution and background document on Health Care in Danger: Respecting and protecting health care in armed conflict and other situations of violence (31IC/11/5.3.1).
http://www.rcrcconference.org/docs_up/en/31IC_Health_Care_in_danger_EN.pdf