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JOINT PRESS RELEASE

World Humanitarian Day:

Humanity & Inclusion Canada, Doctors of the World Canada and Action Against Hunger Canada call for better protection of humanitarian workers to meet growing needs in the field

Montreal, August 19, 2023 – 339 million people will need humanitarian assistance, while humanitarian and health workers continue to face incredible risk while providing vital aid.

On World Humanitarian Day, Humanity & Inclusion Canada, Doctors of the World Canada and Action Against Hunger Canada are releasing a joint report entitled "[The risks we take are beyond comprehension - Better protecting humanitarian and health workers](#)", which outlines the challenges and key demands of humanitarian organizations to better protect humanitarian and health workers.

Main threat: conflicts and repeated violations of international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles

In 2022, the [Aid Worker Security Database](#) recorded at least 439 attacks against humanitarian workers. For health workers, 2022 was the most violent year in over a decade. 1,989 violent incidents against health facilities and staff were recorded, resulting in 232 deaths among health workers. Around twenty countries, including South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar and Ukraine, are dangerous for aid and health professionals.

Although international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles require governments and armed groups to guarantee safe access for populations, aid workers are constantly being placed at risk. Armed groups continue to perpetuate attacks against aid workers or introduce measures that politicize and criminalize humanitarian action and medical missions. In doing so, they increase the risk of violence and prevent humanitarian professionals from carrying out their fundamental mission: to provide vital assistance and healthcare based solely on the needs of the affected populations.

Local health and humanitarian workers are the most exposed and the least protected



90% of humanitarian and healthcare workers who fall victim to attacks are local actors. They are on the front line, where the needs are greatest, delivering assistance and healthcare in areas often inaccessible to international actors. They are the most exposed to the risk of violence but are often left with few resources. Donors and international partners must support them and ensure that sufficient resources are given to ensure their safety.

Insufficient funding to ensure safety

To ensure the safety of their staff, humanitarian organizations must put in place strategies to prevent and respond to risks to their personnel. They must be able to equip themselves with equipment, train their staff and have people dedicated to security management, ensure evacuations from high-risk areas, and provide psychological, financial or legal support to staff who are victims of attacks and their families. However, organizations are finding it challenging to have these costs financed and are sometimes forced to choose between ensuring the highest level of security protection for their staff and financing other costs required to implement projects.

Quotes

- "With the proliferation of armed conflicts, repeated natural disasters linked to climate change, and growing food insecurity, particularly in East Africa, humanitarian challenges are becoming ever greater. Faced with complex crises, humanitarian and healthcare workers are operating in increasingly dangerous environments. Attacks against them jeopardize access to aid for those who need it most - aid that is often vital. It is essential that their safety is preserved so they can continue to provide assistance to affected populations." - **Anne Delorme, Executive Director, Humanity & Inclusion Canada**
- "The safety of our teams is a daily concern. They need the best possible support to carry out their difficult mission: helping those in need. This is why we are joining forces with ACF and HI on World Humanitarian Day to call on governments, donors and the humanitarian community to continue the work that has been ongoing in the past recent years. We have made progress, but there are still major threats to humanitarian workers, especially local ones. We are increasingly concerned that health workers are also being targeted and prevented from providing quality care without impediment." - **Nadja Pollaert, Executive Director, Doctors of the World Canada**



- “There is nothing that justifies attacks on humanitarian and health workers, whose sole purpose is to help people affected by crises. As humanitarian needs continue to rise, it is clear that better protections, strategies, and funding must be in place to keep health and humanitarian workers safe. All nations, governments, and humanitarian organizations must uphold their commitments to protect the individuals striving to make the world a better place.”- **Onome Ako, Executive Director, Action Against Hunger Canada**

About us

Humanity & Inclusion (HI) is an independent and impartial international solidarity organization, working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster. HI has been helping people with disabilities and vulnerable populations for over 40 years by meeting their essential needs, improving their living conditions and promoting respect for their dignity and fundamental rights. HI teams provide services in 60 countries, and nearly 14 million people have benefited from inclusive education, rehabilitation, armed violence reduction and much more in 2022. Known for its advocacy work, it is one of the six founding organizations of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 and winner of the 2011 Conrad N. Hilton Award. In Canada, HI is based in Montreal and Ottawa for nearly 20 years. For more information, visit <https://www.hi-canada.org/en/index>

Doctors of the World's mission is to ensure and defend access to healthcare for people who are excluded and in vulnerable situations, both here and abroad. Present in Canada and more than 70 countries, Doctors of the World is an independent international voluntary movement working at home and abroad. Through innovative medical programs and evidenced-based advocacy we empower excluded people and communities to claim their right to health while fighting for universal access to healthcare. For more information: <https://doctorsoftheworld.ca>

Action Against Hunger is a nonprofit leading a global movement to end hunger in our lifetimes. It innovates solutions, advocates for change, and reaches more than 28 million people every year with proven hunger prevention and treatment programs. As a nonprofit that works across 55 countries, its 8,900 dedicated staff members partner with communities to address the root causes of hunger, including climate change, conflict, inequity, and emergencies. It strives to create a world free from hunger, for everyone, for good. For more information: <https://actionagainsthunger.ca>



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