

ARCHIVED: WMA RESOLUTION ON GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS

Adopted by the 66th General Assembly, Moscow, Russia, October 2015

and rescinded and archived by the 72nd WMA General Assembly (online), London, United Kingdom, October 2021

The WMA recognises that mass movement of people often follows disasters that flow from armed conflict or natural phenomena as populations seek to escape danger and deprivation. The current mass movement of the populations, to escape the effects of armed conflict including bombing, lack of access to utilities, clean water, and the destruction of homes, schools and hospitals, has been numerically larger than any mass movement of populations in over 70 years.

While the WMA recognises that countries may have concerns about their ability to absorb significant numbers of new migrants, we recognise that people fleeing warfare, or natural phenomena are doing so because they are desperate and often face life-threatening conditions. They are afraid for their health, safety and welfare, and that of the family members who accompany them.

Most countries have signed international treaties giving them binding obligations to offer aid and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers. The WMA believes that, when there are events, including on-going events such as conflict, which generate refugee crises, governments must increase their efforts to provide assistance to those in need.

This should include ensuring safe passage for refugees, and appropriate support after they enter countries offering refuge. Recognising that the disaster from which they have fled, and the vicissitudes of the journey, may have led to health problems it is essential that receiving countries establish systems to provide health care to refugees.

Governments should seek to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are able to live in dignity within their country of refuge and make all efforts to enable their integration into their new society. The international community should seek to obtain a peaceful solution in Syria under which the population can either stay at home safely or, if they have already left, safely return home.

The WMA recognises that mass population movement cause significant stress on existing populations of countries as well on those who become refugees. We believe that governments and international agencies including the United Nations must make more concerted efforts to reduce the pressures that lead to such movements, including rapidly providing extensive relief after natural phenomena, and making more efforts to avert or stop armed conflict. Re-establishing security of food, water, housing, sewerage, education and health care, and improving public safety, should make a significant impact and reduce the numbers of refugees.

The WMA:

- Recognises that the process of becoming a refugee is damaging to physical and mental health;
- Commends those countries that have welcomed and cared for refugees, especially those currently fleeing Syria;
- Calls on other countries to improve their willingness to receive refugees and asylum seekers;
- Calls on national governments to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are enabled to live in dignity by providing access to essential services;
- Calls on all governments to work together to seek to end local, regional, and international conflicts, and to protect the health, safety and welfare of populations;
- Calls on all governments to cooperate in providing immediate help to countries facing the effects of natural phenomena, remembering that those already the most socio-economically disadvantaged will face the most challenges;
- Calls upon global media to report on the refugee crisis in a manner that respects the dignity of refugees and displaced persons, and to avoid bigotry and racial or other bias in reporting.