

The WPA Cairo Declaration (September 2005)

MASS VIOLENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH

The General Assembly of the World Psychiatric Association

Emphasizing that the World Psychiatric Association, being the world's largest psychiatric association comprising 129 Societies from 114 countries, can speak on behalf of 175,000 members of the profession,

Conscious of the fact that violence is a major public health problem with important mental health implications,

Concerned by the fact that mass violence such as war, terrorism, urban violence and similar acts causes many deaths, material losses and mental health problems in the lives of the survivors and in the population at large,

Cognizant of the fact that violence does not help to solve problems but begets violence and brings with it poverty, hunger, disease and fear,

Underlining that, unless properly addressed, the psychosocial consequences of violence will negatively affect future generations and can destroy the social cohesion that allows people to live together in harmony,

Convinced that psychiatry and behavioural sciences can contribute to the understanding of the complex biological, psychological and social roots of violence and to the formulation of interventions that can prevent violence or alleviate its consequences,

Recalling previous work of the World Psychiatric Association on alleviating consequences of disasters and the prevention of mental disorders,

Recognizing that terrorism which, by itself, is not a mental illness but a phenomenon often associated with oppression and absence of opportunities for free expression or redress,

Considering that the alliance of mental health workers and leaders of religions that advocate mercy, compassion and forgiveness might help in the prevention of violence and in the alleviation of its consequences,

1. Urges the Member Societies of the World Psychiatric Association

- a. to develop and support research on the causes and consequences of violence and develop training programmes that will help in the prevention of violence and in helping its victims
- b. to urge their members to cooperate with other professionals and all those who are working for peace without any ideological or other prejudice

2. Requests the Scientific Sections of the WPA to develop collaborative and multidisciplinary research on the origins of violence

3. Requests the Executive Committee of the WPA to

- a. Find ways to effectively collaborate with governmental and other agencies in the prevention of mass violence and the alleviation of its consequences
- b. Invite the World Health Organization to strengthen its efforts to enhance the awareness of the public health importance of violence and to convey to its Member States the need for research and action in this area.
- c. Undertake whatever is necessary to ensure that the scientific knowledge stemming from psychiatry and neurosciences and behavioural sciences is used in dealing with problems of violence
- d. Create a special programme on mental health aspects of violence to facilitate the above tasks and further stimulate research and action in this area of its work
- e. Report on the steps taken in response to this declaration at the WPA General Assembly in 2008.