



At its Board meeting in Warsaw on 17 March 2007, the CPME adopted the following resolution: **The medical profession and armed conflict** (referring to CPME 2007/026 Final EN/FR)

The medical profession and armed conflict

The CPME¹ fully endorses the World Medical Association's "Regulations in times of Armed Conflict" (revised May 2006), and notes that:

- throughout history the purpose of medicine has been to promote the highest attainable levels of human health and welfare;
- this has been achieved by doctors using their skills and knowledge to improve the physical and mental health of individuals and populations;
- the practice of medicine is underpinned by the fundamental human values of compassion, respect for others and concern for the vulnerable;
- these core values have been reflected in all professional codes pertaining to medicine, regardless of historical, geographic, cultural or religious context;
- the ethos of the medical profession therefore imposes strong moral obligations on doctors.

The CPME regards it as inevitable that the humanitarian purpose and values of medicine make its practice diametrically opposed to the rationale for warfare, terrorism, and other forms of armed conflict. War generates violence, terror and destruction, all of which are the antithesis of what medicine stands for. In modern warfare, civilian deaths often far exceed military casualties. Women, children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to the deprivations and brutality which war brings; they are also groups for whom doctors, as supportive figures in society, have a special responsibility. In particular, individual doctors must be mindful of their ethical responsibilities to care for patients, irrespective of their allegiances.

¹ *The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) is the representative body of about 2 million physicians in Europe.*

Its aims are:

- *to promote the highest standards of medical training and medical practice, through advocating:* - *public health,*
- *the relationship between patients and doctors*
- *the free movement of doctors and patients within the European Union*
- *to achieve the highest quality of health care in Europe.*

It is composed of the most representative non-governmental national medical organisations in EU/EEA countries, that is to say 28 National Medical Associations. It also unites associated members, observers and associated organisations (specialised European medical organisations).

While recognising that some doctors working in armed conflict situations have dual responsibility, impartial and ethical care of their patients should be their primary concern. The CPME believes that doctors should do all that they reasonably can to minimise the damage wreaked on individuals and societies by armed conflict. The CPME therefore urges doctors, individually, and collectively through their professional organisations, to use their influence to that end.

Such actions may include the encouragement of diplomatic solutions (thus reducing the likelihood of armed conflict) and the care of patients injured through warfare, provided regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, or any factor that may be considered as identifying them with any of the warring factions. The CPME calls on all warring parties to recognise their own obligations, under international law, not to impede doctors from fulfilling these ethical responsibilities.