



73rd World Health Assembly
Agenda item 3: Covid-19 pandemic response

Over the last decade, we have seen a surge of violence against health personnel worldwide. Since the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic, this phenomenon has expanded dramatically. Every day, our medical associations report incidents: threats, insults, stigmatisation from communities and States. In some countries, physicians are victims of reprisals for denouncing undignified working conditions, the blatant lack of medical equipment, or for criticizing their government pandemic responses.

Every day, governments, the media and millions of people pay tribute to the professional dedication of health personnel working tirelessly in the context of this unprecedented health outbreak. They are at the frontline and risk their own lives for saving ours. Yet, they are subject to acts of violence in all regions of the world. This is simply intolerable.

We call on WHO and Member States to finally assess the magnitude and gravity of this scourge which undermines the very foundations of health systems and ultimately impacts critically on patient's health. Violence against health personnel constitutes an international emergency, requiring urgent actions, including:

- Adequate accountability mechanism by governments against perpetrators of violence against health personnel;
- Accurate and systematic data collection on violence incidents in relation to the pandemic to document the phenomenon across the globe;
- Effective information campaigns to keep the public informed and stop misinformation related to covid-19 contamination;
- Close cooperation between local / state authorities, health professionals' organisations and other relevant health actors as well as media organizations to denounce and prevent the problem of violence.

It is time to realize that violence against health personnel has adverse cascading impacts on the life of each of us. Physicians and other health personnel members need protection and safe working conditions in a solid health system. Member States are accountable for making this happen.
