

**JOINT STATEMENT – WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY  
10 October 2025**

**A collective commitment to strengthening protection, mental health and  
psychosocial support for humanitarian workers**

We, the undersigned mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) practitioners, humanitarian organizations, and allied stakeholders, commit to protect, support and advocate for humanitarian workers worldwide. We recognize that the mental health, psychosocial wellbeing and comprehensive staff care of humanitarian staff and volunteers is not only a moral imperative but essential for an effective humanitarian response and for the communities we serve.

**The current context**

Humanitarian staff and volunteers are affected by unprecedented levels of violence, trauma, and chronic stress, rooted in the overall increase of humanitarian needs and dramatic reduction of resources, and in the increased disregard and impunity for International Humanitarian Law by parties to the conflict.

2024 marked the deadliest year on record for humanitarian personnel, with at least 861 individuals killed, wounded, kidnapped or arbitrarily detained. Alarming trends continue into 2025, showing no signs of improvement. 2025 shows no sign of change. With over 95% of humanitarian casualties being national staff and volunteers, we acknowledge that:

- **Local and national humanitarian workers** bear disproportionate risks and lack adequate protection and support mechanisms.
- **Chronic exposure to stress and traumatic situations** can lead to mental health difficulties such as burnout and depression, which affect the quality of essential services they provide.
- Humanitarian organisations as well as individual workers often **prioritize the operational needs of the communities they serve** over staff care, protection and support.
- While models of **sustainable MHPSS services** for occupational exposure to stress and trauma exist, they need to be adapted to the reality and cultural context of frontline humanitarian personnel.

**Our collective commitment**

As Mental Health and Psychosocial practitioners and humanitarian actors, we commit to:

**1. Promoting minimum standards of care for humanitarian personnel**

- Develop and implement evidence-based minimum standards for Staff Care and MHPSS support to humanitarian personnel.
- Ensure humanitarian workers have increased access to preventive, supportive, and treatment interventions.

- Promote peer support within humanitarian organizations to reduce access barriers and complement formal MHPSS support options.
- Advocate for organizational policies that prioritize Duty of Care, mental health and psychosocial support of their staff.

## **2. Prioritizing local and national staff**

- Address the protection gap facing local humanitarian workers through targeted MHPSS programmes.
- Develop or build upon existing culturally appropriate and locally-led support mechanisms.
- Invest in capacity strengthening for national MHPSS practitioners and peer support networks.

## **3. Strengthening survivor support and integrating lived experiences**

- Involve survivors with lived experience of incidents in the design, delivery, and evaluation of Staff Care and MHPSS programmes.
- Establish dedicated programmes tailored to their specific MHPSS needs, ensuring accessible, survivor-centred, and trauma-informed care that supports access to justice as a core element of recovery and empowerment.
- Recognise their expertise as essential for shaping responsive, inclusive, and sustainable care systems.

## **4. Advancing evidence-based practice and accountability**

- Contribute to research on effective MHPSS interventions in humanitarian contexts.
- Share knowledge, tools, and best practices to protect, care and support humanitarian personnel through Protect Humanitarians' Community of Practice.
- Adapt interventions based on emerging evidence and field experience.
- Establish monitoring mechanisms to track progress on our collective commitments.
- Develop shared indicators and reporting frameworks for implementation.

## **5. Building sustainable systems**

- Integrate Duty of Care and MHPSS into organizational structures, not only emergency responses.
- Challenge stigma around mental health needs of frontline responders.
- Develop long-term funding strategies for Duty of Care and MHPSS programmes.
- Create referral pathways and continuity of care mechanisms.
- Advocate for policy changes that protect humanitarian workers' rights to protection and MHPSS.

## **Our call to action**

We call on:

- **Humanitarian organizations** to prioritize Duty of Care by investing in comprehensive MHPSS programmes, setting minimum protection standards, and fostering supportive and inclusive organizational cultures.

- **Donors and funders** to recognize the essential nature of Duty of Care, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support by providing dedicated, flexible, long-term funding for staff care and MHPSS programmes and institutional capacity-building.
- **Governments and international bodies** to respect, implement and strengthen legal frameworks protecting humanitarian workers, to ensure the implementation of Duty of Care standards, and guarantee adequate access to MHPSS for all humanitarian workers.
- **Parties to armed conflicts** to respect and ensure respect for International Humanitarian Law in all circumstances, including the principle of distinction. Civilians and humanitarian personnel must be respected and protected and may not be targeted. **Humanitarian workers are not a target.**

## Moving forward together

Through the establishment of the Protect Humanitarians' Community of Practice, we commit to:

- Regular knowledge-sharing and collaborative learning;
- Joint advocacy for systemic improvements;
- Coordinated responses to emerging MHPSS needs in humanitarian crises;
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of our collective impact on the protection, mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of humanitarian personnel.

## Our promise

Humanitarian workers dedicate their lives to alleviating suffering in the most challenging and often dangerous circumstances. They deserve our unwavering commitment for strengthened protection, Duty of Care and access to comprehensive mental health and psychosocial services.

Together, we aim to transform the humanitarian sector into one that truly values and protects the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of all its humanitarian workers.

## Signatories:

CRASSH Healthcare in Conflict (University of Cambridge)

Médecins du Monde Belgium

Nonviolent Peaceforce

PsychoLab Conseil

