

## Declaration of Durban

### Life, Health, and Mental Health

In all human societies, adults protect the young and foster their development. Special honor has been given to those who care for the young. The protection of the child has been institutionalized in forms ranging from the tradition of giving place to women and children, to the child protection movement, to the Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

The International Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions (IACAPAP), has championed the rights of children. Declarations in Jerusalem (2001) on *Children's Rights* and in Rome (2003) on *Caring for Children Affected by Maltreatment, War, Terrorism, and Disaster* supported the protection of children and families.

Today, a new set of ominous challenges to children has arisen. These challenges come from decisions to subordinate to short-term political and military ends the deeply human obligation to protect children and foster their development. We see these challenges when organized groups or armies take children hostage, kidnap children to force them to be soldiers, bomb areas with children, use children to shield military explosives, sexually assault children and their families, or incite community hostility to refugee children. Behind these atrocities, which gather headlines, are ever-present attacks on schoolgirls, denial of education for girls and boys, exploitation of adolescents for sex and work, forced early marriage, sexual mutilation, and the filming and distribution of child pornography.

Child-jeopardizing political behavior is also seen when those working to protect children's health and mental health, like immunization workers, are assassinated. In this case, while children are not directly assaulted, the means to ensure their health is attacked. This is a deeply personal matter for IACAPAP since a pioneering child psychiatrist, Mahfoud Boucebci, was assassinated during a conflict 20 years ago.

IACAPAP endorses the December 1974 United Nations *Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflicts*. We now issue the Declaration of Durban to draw attention to these man-made, assaults on children. Thousands of children are directly affected. Millions are indirectly affected. These assaults violate one of the oldest, and most defining, parts of human nature, our inborn disposition to care and protect the young and vulnerable. They also violate emerging definitions of the universal rights of the child. They leave scars on children's mental health, not always visible, in ways that the best services can never undo.

In support of this Declaration, IACAPAP encourages the protection of children in four ways:

- We commit ourselves to use all our activities – International Congresses; regional Study Sections; the Helmut Remschmidt Research Seminars that precede Congresses; the Donald J. Cohen Fellowship Program held during our Congresses; the eTextbook available free online; and the IACAPAP Bulletin – to reflect *all* the challenges that children face, in addition to presenting progress in the assessment and treatment of individual children.

- We will provide support, as requested, including outside consultation, to national member organizations as they advocate in their own countries and regions for children.
- When individual refugee children seek asylum, we will encourage members to assist with psychiatric evaluations and develop intervention plans.
- IACAPAP will continue to work with agencies such as the World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, International Organization for Migration, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Red Cross and Red Crescent, and others who care for children and adolescents in their daily lives and amidst war, natural disaster, and other upheavals.

Adopted in Durban, South Africa, at the 21<sup>st</sup> World Congress of IACAPAP, 15 August 2014.