

Dear Colleagues,

Conflicts and wars, which are as old as human history itself, inevitably occupy our agenda today due to the geography in which we live. Despite the remarkable progress humanity has achieved in the fields of art, education, law, and science, making sense of the persistence of such a seemingly primitive act as “war” by those in power requires a profound personal struggle. This is because we are compelled to live with the consequences of wars whose legitimacy we often question.

Wars constitute a series of traumatic events that leave profound and lasting effects on the mental health of individuals and societies. Characterized by experiences such as intense violence, death or the threat of death, loss, displacement, and uncertainty, wars not only damage our individual psychological integrity but also undermine the collective psychological well-being of societies. War does not merely cause physical destruction; it also negatively affects individuals’ emotional, cognitive, and behavioral functioning.

It is evident that war does not only lead to psychological problems among those who are directly exposed to conflict environments. Conditions such as displacement, migration, and refugeehood also create significant challenges for individuals in terms of their sense of identity, belonging, and social life. Children and adolescents, in particular, are even more vulnerable to the devastating effects of war due to being in a sensitive developmental stage.

Today, witnessing acts of violence occurring in war has become possible even for individuals living in geographically distant regions through social media. Such exposure can undermine our perceptions of security and justice, weaken our ability to remain hopeful about humanity, and increase concerns about the proliferation of terror and violence. Thus, war and violence affect not only the mental health of people living in conflict zones but also that of sensitive individuals across the world.

Among individuals exposed to war environments, the most common psychological problems include post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety disorders, and adjustment difficulties. Continuous perceptions of threat, exposure to violent events, and the loss of loved ones significantly intensify feelings of fear, helplessness, and insecurity. In this context, mental health professionals are required not only to protect their own psychological well-being but also to provide treatment and rehabilitation services to individuals—and even societies—affected by war.

In conclusion, it can be stated that all wars universally affect mental health and impose severe costs on societies. Wars do not produce true winners; rather, there are only those who lose less. In this sense, perhaps our most important responsibility is to support policies that promote peace. The words of our great leader, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, “Peace at home, peace in the world,” may be regarded as a fundamental philosophical principle of preventive mental health services.

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