VOSH/International Statement for Humanitarian Values in a World of War

We work towards a vision of peace for all.

Every year, VOSH/International and its chapters provide the gift of vision and eye health to thousands of people worldwide, independent of their race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, age, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, political beliefs, or the work they do. Our mission is to improve everyone's vision and eye health everywhere. We believe that quality eye health should not be a privilege but a right.

In 2020, when we developed our statement on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, we expressed deep concern about the challenges and impact that discrimination and racism have on people's health. In that statement, we made a clear stand against racism everywhere. We committed ourselves to strengthening the implementation of our vision so that we could contribute to a more just and equitable society for the benefit of all. In our eyes, every life has equal value.

As a global organization, VOSH/International represents a diversity of views and experiences from a perspective of common humanity. This humanity that is easily practiced when we serve patients in our humanitarian vision clinics or support the education of future optometrists cannot shield us from recognizing the devastating impact of war and conflict on patients and health providers.

Conflict and war have devastating consequences on access to healthcare, health infrastructure, the sustainability of healthcare systems, and the availability of healthcare professionals. Decades of hard work and investment in building, equipping, training, and educating local health professionals to serve a population can easily be destroyed during war and conflict. Rebuilding it can be immensely difficult.

War not only causes death but also widespread trauma and suffering for the civilian population. VOSH/International is concerned with the extreme degree of violence and genocide in current wars, which has seen thousands of innocent civilians lose their lives, families, homes, and livelihoods and hundreds of health, education, and humanitarian workers displaced, killed, or injured.

VOSH/International stands in solidarity with all people, especially fellow optometrists and students of optometry, who have been severely affected by current wars and conflict and supports the calls for peace and respect for international humanitarian law made by other international aid organizations and humanitarian agencies.

Approved by the VOSH/International Board of Directors on July 2nd, 2024