



IPPNW Responds to the Crises in Pakistan and Kenya January 2, 2008

While people throughout the world are offering wishes for peace in the New Year, armed violence erupted in Pakistan and Kenya at the close of 2007, threatening serious regional and global repercussions. International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) joins with the rest of the world in expressing grief and outrage at the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and at the post-election violence that has caused a humanitarian crisis in Kenya with shocking rapidity.

The circumstances surrounding the assassination of such a prominent and popular opposition leader in Pakistan remain unclear, as does the eventual impact of the killing on parliamentary elections, which have now been postponed. Public anger has spilled into the streets, and the resulting chaos has led to shortages of food, fuel, and medical supplies. As a nuclear-armed nation, Pakistan has an obligation to the world to ensure that its arsenals remain secure and under responsible controls during this crisis. The longing of the Pakistani people for democracy, security, and peace has been reaffirmed in the aftermath of these events, and must be honored not only for their sake, but for the sake of the entire region of South Asia.

In Kenya, which for many of us has represented a beacon of hope in Africa, a largely incident-free general election devolved into violence following allegations of election fraud. The hasty swearing in of President Mwai Kibaki was followed by outbreaks of ethnic violence. More than 1,500 people have already been killed and several thousand more have been maimed with crude weapons; illegal orders are being issued by people without legal authority; and shortages of food, water, fuel, and medicine are affecting growing numbers of people in Nairobi and further out into the countryside. Neither Africa nor the world can afford another humanitarian catastrophe such as the 1994 Rwanda genocide, of which the current situation in Kenya is eerily reminiscent. The United Nations, the African Union and the rest of the international community must attempt to mediate in this situation and they must be prepared to intervene if the situation in Kenya continues to deteriorate.

IPPNW joins our medical colleagues in both countries in appealing for an end to the violence, for open and credible elections, and for measures to prevent the further loss of life. We stand by our affiliates—Pakistan Doctors for Peace and Development and the Kenya Association of Physicians and Medical Workers for Social Responsibility—in their efforts to mount a medical and humanitarian response to their respective crises. With them, we reassert our commitment to peace, social justice, and the resolution of conflict through dialogue and diplomacy, which are the only sure and sustainable paths to security and development.

Gunnar Westberg
Ime John
Co-Presidents
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