



IMHAANZ

INFANT MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Letter from the Infant Mental Health Association of Aotearoa New Zealand on behalf of pēpi and tamariki worldwide affected by war and conflict

IMHAANZ is a national charity whose mission is to collaborate, educate and advocate for infant mental health in Aotearoa - with the vision for all infants to thrive through the experience of secure, nurturing relationships.

While we are nationally focused, we are also an affiliate of the World Association of Infant Mental Health (WAIMH). We signed the *Declaration of Infants Rights* that WAIMH compiled in 2016 and we believe it is important to speak on behalf of voiceless infant/pēpi worldwide.

Pēpi are the world's most vulnerable citizens. They need our protection.

As an organisation that holds pēpi front and centre we say:

*Stop trampling on the rights of infants through
war, conflict, atrocities and oppression.*

Infants and toddlers are 'totally dependent upon the availability of consistent and responsive care from specific adults for the adequate development of their basic human capacities. There are unique considerations regarding the needs of infants during the first three years of life. Contemporary knowledge and research has demonstrated the significant impact of early experience on the formation and development of the human infant brain and mind.'¹

War and conflict affect everyone involved. But it is pēpi where the most indelible imprint will be made during these events.

We reference WAIMH's seven *Basic Principles of Infant's Rights* to highlight the destructive effect of war and conflict on pēpi especially.

According to these *Basic Principles* pēpi have the right to: *legal protection' due to their physical and mental immaturity and absolute*

'special safeguards and care, including appropriate dependence

.....
have their 'most important primary caregiver relationships recognized and understood, with the continuity of attachment valued and protected'
.....

¹ WAIMH'S Position Paper on the Rights of Infants, Edinburgh, 2014 (amended March 2016)

'be considered as a vital member of his/her family, registered as a citizen, and having the right for identity from the moment of birth' and have their status as a person 'to include equal value for life regardless of gender or any individual characteristics such as those of disability'

'to be given nurturance that includes love, physical and emotional safety, adequate nutrition and sleep, in order to promote normal development'

'to be protected from neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, including infant trafficking'

'to have access to professional help whenever exposed directly or indirectly to traumatic events'

and regarding infants with life-limiting conditions, 'access to palliative services, based on the same standards that stand in the society for older children'.

All seven *Basic Principles of Infant's Rights* are being repeatedly contravened by war, conflict, atrocities and oppression.

Babies cannot wait. Every day that passes where their unique needs are not considered or met places them more at risk.

Pēpi exposed to war and conflict need their voices to be heard so we are shouting out on their behalf.

[Become a member of IMHAANZ today and join us in ensuring infants' voices are heard.](#)