

The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean is following closely and with deep concern the developments in regard to the popular movements calling for basic freedoms in a number of countries in the Region. These events have resulted in reactions of varying intensity, some of which have entailed unacceptable levels of violence and excessive and unjustified use of force, causing a large number of deaths and injuries. In some countries this has reached a level which cannot be ignored considering the potential for humanitarian disaster, particularly with the prevailing media blackout and in the absence of neutral fact-finding sources that can follow up the situation on the ground, and report these unacceptable incidents.

WHO calls on the authorities in all countries facing the current challenges to urgently shoulder the responsibilities prescribed by religious tenets and international agreements, to stop the bloodshed, loss of life and threats to the health status of people. The rights to life and to health are basic rights of all citizens and any practices that violate human rights constitute a violation of all international conventions, including the WHO Constitution which all WHO's Member States have endorsed.

WHO, through its Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean calls on the authorities in these countries to urgently investigate the alleged reports regarding the victims of protests, and to take necessary measures to guarantee the safety of citizens and their legitimate right to peaceful protest, without intimidation or threat to their safety in any way. WHO also calls on countries to ensure the necessary protection for health workers and freedom of access to ambulances. WHO emphasizes its constant readiness to provide any assistance necessary to the peoples of the Region, to serve the objectives of health protection, respect for human rights and guarantee of public safety, to serve the best interest of the citizens and to fulfil their aspiration to live in a climate in which peace, freedom, social justice, and respect for human dignity prevail.

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