

Our Children Deserve Better

I am writing this note at the American Academy of Pediatrics Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. I was reminiscing about the first AAP meeting I attended in 1987 in San Francisco as a resident. AAP has changed a lot in the last 36 years, but the AAP's members' unwavering support for children and their health has not. We pediatricians may have differing views on what is best for children, but I am confident that each of us believes that every child's life, and I mean every child, is precious and that the loss of a single child is a loss for all humanity. A child losing their life for any reason is painful, but losing their life due to violence is unconscionable. As pediatricians, we can stand together as one voice and say that a child's loss to violence is a loss for all humanity. The Academy and pediatricians, for example, have always advocated for protecting children from gun violence. Most of us probably don't care about guns as long as there are safeguards to protect children and keep children safe.

Recent events have taught us that while we have little impact on geopolitical events, we must, as one voice, demand that all children be protected against the violence of conflict. I realize that I am being naïve, wishing there were no conflicts. There will be conflicts. That should not deter us from raising our voices in unison and saying children deserve better. Children did not create reasons for conflict. Children don't participate in conflicts. They are only victims of conflict. We never hold children accountable for the actions of adults, and we certainly should not kidnap, punish, and kill our children for the acts of adults... at least not if we believe we are civilized.

I will continue to speak for all children, and I beg all of you to do the same, not just for the children who look like our children but those who do not. All children, regardless of background, are equally important. A child is simply a child. Children do not create conflicts; however, armed conflicts can devastate children. It is the worst form of adverse childhood event (ACE), and many will suffer the consequences of this experience for a lifetime, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The AAP provides guidance on "The Effects of Armed Conflict on Children."

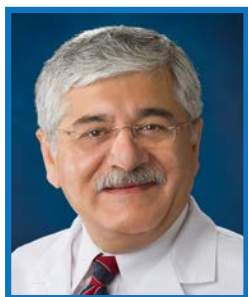
<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/142/6/e20182585/37469/The-Effects-of-Armed-Conflict-on-Children?autologincheck=redirected>

I want to thank Dr. Mu for his critical review of this note and Dr. Goldhagen for sharing important information below by the International Society for Social Pediatrics and Child Health:

<https://issop.org/2023/10/24/issop-statement-on-gaza-israel-conflict-3/>

I do not have the answer on how to avoid conflicts, but I know that if I don't raise my voice, I am equally responsible for the deaths of these children. While I cannot stop the brutal conflicts, I can at least stand up and raise my voice against the kidnapping and killing of children. That is the least I can do.

With love, prayer, and peace for all.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Rathore/MD". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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