

Editorial

Άρθρο σύνταξης

Preservation of peace as a target of mental health promotion

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There is little need to argue for the serious consequences of War on the mental health of survivors. This painful fact has been known since time immemorial but in spite of this it has not worked in an avertive way to the desired extent.

What has the mental health community done towards this direction? Not much, unfortunately. The reasons must be sought in the notion that preservation of peace is considered as self-evident, in the fear that supporting peace may be perceived as a political action or may be just in simple inertia. It must be pointed out, however, that the World Health Organization has indeed included the preservation of peace within the targets of Mental Health Promotion. This is important because it justifies the involvement and intervention of mental health professionals in an area which (at first glance) appears unrelated to mental health and may raise suspicions of political motives.

On the basis of the above, the Society of Preventive Psychiatry, the Hellenic Psychiatric Association, the Psychiatric Association for Eastern Europe and the Balkans and the Serbian Psychiatric Association have decided to approach various mainly mental health organizations and ask them to support a Declaration for peace and against the war, the Athens Anti-War Declaration. The basis for the argumentation in favor of this Declaration lies in the fact that War has catastrophic consequences for the mental health of survivors and society as a whole. Additionally, we consider that it is linked with the waves of refugees that follow war and for the mental health consequences for them and for the citizens of the host countries, especially when they are unprepared for this role.

The response of the organizations that were asked to support the Declaration has been pleasantly surprising. More than 100 organizations have co-signed the Declaration that was subsequently sent to various international organizations, governments etc and was uploaded on the websites of the organizations that have co-signed the Declaration. There has already been a very encouraging response on behalf of the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker.

What do we expect from this Declaration? It would certainly be unrealistic to believe that due to our intervention the wars will stop here and now. Our voice is not all that strong to make us hope for such an effect. Besides, we are fully aware of the fact that in addition to the ever and everywhere present aggression and its societal enhancers there are powerful political, economic and lately religious purposes that are served by war and unfortunately move towards the opposite direction than that of our Declaration.

In spite of the above reservations, however, we believe it is a right and an obligation of the international mental health community to speak with a loud voice and towards all directions and state that mental health in our world is at risk because of War, no matter where and by whom it is produced. We also hope that with voices like ours we plant the seed that may grow and flourish in the generations to come. Time will show whether our hopes are justified.

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References

1. Athens Anti-War Declaration. www.psychiatricprevention.com
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