

RCoA Criteria for making a statement on Humanitarian Emergencies and other areas of Conflict

The College is occasionally asked to comment on or sign up to statements about international humanitarian emergencies and contentious societal issues.

In considering these issues, the College takes seriously the views of its members, elected leaders, patients and the public, alongside its specific responsibilities as a charity with a defined purpose as set out in section 3, paragraph 1 of its [Charter](#).

The College's default position is that it will not respond to these issues, including by making public statements, public signs of support or allegiance, or pleas to members, the public or government. On rare occasions, this position may be adjusted if:

- The issue is considered by the Board of Trustees to further or deliver the College's charitable aims and purposes and
- That by making the statement, the College anticipates that it will achieve a specific outcome not otherwise achievable. These might include the following:
 - To alert or highlight a particular aspect to our membership, if the issue is already widely publicised.
 - To offer specific support to members of the College affected by the crisis and signpost available resources.
 - To unite the College membership, or to avoid division.
 - To support members' participation in humanitarian programmes of work.

A decision to make a statement should always be taken in the light of the effect on the College's resources. That is to say, the question should be asked as to whether making a statement would consume a disproportionate amount of College resource in terms of staff and volunteer time and financial cost, and therefore impact on other areas of charitable work.

Process

There is no mandated process for evaluation of issues related to this policy, however, it is expected that consideration would ordinarily follow the pathway set out below¹:

1. Initial assessment by College Officers
2. Input and evaluation via Ethics Committee with advice from relevant senior staff as appropriate

¹ The pathway may include elements of discussion and decision-making by email or other electronic means as necessary, but in any event, a clear audit trail must be maintained.

3. Consideration at Council, working with input and advice provided by Ethics Committee
4. Consideration and decision by the Board of Trustees, working with input and advice provided by Council.

A note on previous statements

The College has in the past made statements on issues relating to humanitarian emergencies and other areas of conflict. With the approval of this policy, the College's Council and Board of Trustees has agreed to remove those previous statements in order to avoid the appearance of contravention of this policy. In those instances, statements have been removed and archived, and replaced with an explanation of the decision, including a link to this policy.

Sources of advice

In developing this criteria, the College has drawn on advice produced by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC) [1], the Charity Commission [2] and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)[3] www.icrc.org

References

1. Academy of Medical Royal Colleges. Principles to guide college statements on humanitarian emergencies August 2022
2. Charity Commission for England and Wales. Campaigning and Political Activity Guidance for Charities November 2022
3. www.icrc.org