

POSITION STATEMENT

YOUTH-LED MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

BACKGROUND

The WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region Youth Council (EMR Youth Council) was established in 2023 as a regional chapter of the WHO Youth Council and serves as the first platform to institutionalize meaningful youth engagement in health policy and practice in the Region. It brings together representatives of diverse youth-led organizations to amplify the voices and experiences of young people in public health efforts within the Region, contributing youth-driven, regional perspectives to WHO's technical work, policy dialogue and decision-making processes, including on mental health and psychosocial support.

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

The Eastern Mediterranean Region continues to face protracted humanitarian emergencies, displacement and socioeconomic instability, triggering increasing levels of psychological distress and significant unmet mental health needs. These crises call for integrated, inclusive and people-centred responses.

Guided by global commitments to health, well-being and human dignity – and in alignment with WHO priorities and governing body mandates, including resolution 77.3 (2024)¹ and the Regional action plan for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies, 2024–2030² endorsed by the 71st session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean in October 2024 – we affirm that mental health and psychosocial support is an essential component of emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN ADVANCING MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Young people represent a significant proportion of the population in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and are unique advocates for resilience, social cohesion and community engagement. Meaningful youth engagement is not only a strategic imperative but also a critical enabler of sustainable, locally-responsive mental health interventions.

As a regional platform for diverse youth voices, the EMR Youth Council contributes local insights, peer-driven innovation and community-based approaches that strengthen the relevance, accessibility and reach of MHPSS efforts across the Region.

¹ Resolution WHA77.3. Strengthening mental health and psychosocial support before, during and after armed conflicts, natural and human-caused disasters and health and other emergencies. In: Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly, Geneva, 27 May–1 June 2024. Resolutions and decisions, annexes. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024:7–12 (https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA77-REC1/A77_REC1_Interactive_en.pdf, accessed 4 May 2026).

² Regional action plan for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies, 2024–2030. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2024 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/382832>).

A CALL FOR ACTION

The EMR Youth Council calls for action to:

- integrate MHPSS across all levels of health and humanitarian response, ensuring accessibility, equity and continuity of care;
- institutionalize youth engagement mechanisms, enabling young people to actively contribute to policy dialogue, programme design and implementation;
- invest in youth capacity-building, particularly in community-based psychosocial support and peer-led interventions;
- protect and promote the mental health and well-being of health-care workers, recognizing their essential role in sustaining health systems during crises;
- strengthen multisectoral partnerships, fostering collaboration among governments, international organizations and youth-led networks.

OUR COMMITMENT

The EMR Youth Council, through its Mental Health – Youth in Emergencies Working Groups, is committed to advancing these priorities by mobilizing youth-led action, amplifying community voices, and supporting a coordinated, inclusive and compassionate regional response.

**THERE IS NO HEALTH WITHOUT MENTAL HEALTH,
AND NO SUSTAINABLE RESPONSE WITHOUT EMPOWERED YOUTH.**

AUTHOR

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):

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