

An open letter by Sabine Torgler (A German Nurse working in the UK)

We are not cannon fodder!

You usually begin a letter with a salutation. But even then I despair. How should I address those to whom I appeal?

Dear Government,

Yours faithfully, your ...

This form of address does not fit with the feelings that I currently have as a nurse. Honor and respect are earned through appropriate actions, but I do not see them.

It is difficult for me to put into words what we nurses are going through all over the world.

I am one of many thousands who have had to care for COVID patients with inadequate protective clothing in the past few weeks.

I am one of many thousands who cried bitterly at shift-end. I felt defenseless and conflicted. But these feelings would not be if we had our basic personal protective equipment (PPE):

- gowns
- gloves
- appropriate masks (FFP2 / FFP3)
- visors

In today's high-tech medicine, these 4 components are basic protection and save lives, those of patients and also my own.

Every day more and more nurses die needlessly in the world, caring for infected patients with inadequate PPE.

What are we asking for here? Nothing more than basics !!!

NO country in the world has managed to protect all of its nurses within 4 months (since the pandemic broke out). Instead, governments worldwide are discussing who - where - when and which production should start.

These are discussion processes that take time, and we don't have that! Because time is not on our side when we battle against something that is spreading rapidly. Action must be taken quickly, this is the only way we and our patients will not die.

When I chose the nursing profession 26 years ago, it was clear to me that I would care for patients suffering from highly infectious diseases. Until 4 weeks ago, I never had a problem with this. Because until now I always had everything I needed to carry out professional care safely. Since Corona, my care world looks completely different. And that affects us nurses worldwide!

As a nurse, I am not a heroine, because it is my job and my calling to care for people. The war terminology used by governments around the world towards us nurses has nothing to do with my nursing world. With the word "hero" I connect armies and soldiers.

I am not a soldier. When you choose a career, a soldier accepts going to war and the possibility of losing his or her life.

However as a nurse, I did not decide to take up my vocation in order to possibly have to pay with my life because we lack adequate protective equipment.

An army does not go to war with little or no basic defensive equipment!

We nurses don't want to pay for the failures of governments with our lives. We are not cannon fodder!

How dare you use us like this, leave us so alone! Where is your conscience? What is the use of 'COVID hazard protection funds' for us? My life is worth more than this.

We demand the basic protection of equipment that we are entitled to, so that we can care for our COVID patients safely and professionally.

We demand honesty from you and your ministries! Your so called 'evidence-based' policies regarding PPE appear to be adapted to the deficiency situation: disposable masks + gowns could now be worn repeatedly for several days or

even weeks. For us and patients, this could mean a much higher risk of infection. That must not be obscured!

ACT FOR US! If we don't get support from our governments, care will collapse worldwide, we are already at the limit!

WE NEED YOUR CARE!

Sabine Torgler (RGN)