

“The enjoyment of the **highest attainable standard of health** is one of the fundamental rights of every human being.”

That quote from the WHO’s constitution is literally chiseled in stone on the Huntington Ave. side of the FXB building, just a few steps away from where we have gathered.

The events in Paris a few short days ago took away a fundamental right from more than 129 individuals who were killed and over 300 who were injured. 129 lights were extinguished in the City of Light.

As we remember those who died or were wounded in Paris, let us also mourn the dozens who died in bombings in Beirut a day before the Paris attacks ... the loss of those who died two weeks earlier on a civilian airliner over the Sinai that is believed to be a terrorist attack ... over a hundred peaceful protesters bombed in Ankara last month, and those who have been killed in terrorist attacks that occur almost routinely in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Let us also remember those who have died closer to where we now stand as a result of gun violence, and those, mainly young black men, who have died at the hands of police in this country. Let us remember those whose health is damaged by poverty. Let us remember those whose health is threatened by racism and discrimination.

At this school we are dedicated to uncovering the root causes of diseases and conditions that prevent individuals from enjoying the fundamental right to a long and healthy life. Poverty, discrimination, and alienation are no less threats to health than infectious diseases, chronic diseases or pollution.

As a public health community of students, faculty, staff, and students let us stand in solidarity with those in Paris, and Beirut, and Baghdad, and the many places around the world and here in the US where violence is shattering the lives of individuals and families on a growing scale. And let us rededicate ourselves to determining how the forces that lead to such violence can be overcome, so that someday everyone may enjoy their fundamental human right to the highest attainable standard of health.

I would like to thank the Student Government and the Office for Student Services for organizing this event, and all of you for coming to express our solidarity as public health professionals with people around the world affected by acts of violence.