Letter From the Guest Editor

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The forensic pathologist Professor Keith Mant (1919-2000) was probably the first physician who applied forensic medicine to the investigation of genocide when he led the British army's investigation of Nazi atrocities. Professor Mant's initial work gave rise to an increased awareness of the role of forensic pathology in the quest to search for the truth after armed conflict, war, and other large-scale fatality events. The emergence of nongovernment organizations such as the Physicians for Human Rights and the creation of the United Nation's international criminal tribunals (Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia) saw the first institutionalized approaches to forensic death investigation in the international domain. In addition, the emergence of forensic anthropology, largely spearheaded internationally by the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense) has greatly contributed to humanitarian action, in the

forensic context, throughout the world. The creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague will prove to be a key step in the development of global forensic science. As the ICC finds innovative ways to narrow the impunity gap for crimes against humanity, their application of forensic science to international criminal issues will grow and develop our discipline. Similarly, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) has led the way to develop humanitarian forensic science. The efforts of the ICRC have provided real benefit to families who have lost loved ones at the time of internal armed conflict or natural disaster. The ICRC is also transforming forensic science and forensic pathology across the world.

On the backdrop of these seminal events, forensic medicine has now emerged as a key method to support international criminal and humanitarian law. In 2017,

medical examiner and coroner jurisdictions across the world are now confronted with the increasing threats of terrorism and the need to respond to mass fatality events. Indeed, both domestic terrorism and organized international terrorist attacks that target civilian populations are an ever present threat to our safety and security. Forensic pathologists play a key role in helping governments, civil society, and families to prevent and cope with the aftermath of these events. Furthermore, the threat and reality of extrajudicial execution

and torture, after arbitrary detention by hostile forces, is a recurrent threat in many countries of the Global South. Therefore, at this time, there is an urgent need for all forensic pathologists to increase their awareness and professional capacity in the areas of mass fatality management, medical aspects of terrorism and torture, and developing skills to provide sage advice to bureaucrats and politicians about global safety and security. This issue of *Academic Forensic Pathology* is a small contribution to this effort.