



International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP)

## **BRIEFING STATEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH EMINEM'S ALBUM RELEASE**

In response to the global media coverage surrounding the release of Eminem's new Album on January 17, 2020, Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE) and the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) have prepared the following statement in which we express our concern about the potential negative impact on people who are vulnerable or who have experienced grief or trauma from suicide or mass murders and those at risk of suicide and self-harm.

Every artist should have the freedom of expression to communicate their views and we fully support that. However, with an increased and ongoing attention in the entertainment industry being placed around the topic of suicide and mental health, such as Netflix's 13 Reasons Why and A Star Is Born, it is critical that those artists be careful in their expression or depiction in order to not increase risk of self-harm and/or harm to others. The contagion (copycat) effect is real and applies not only to those in the media and journalism industry, but in some ways can be even more influential when depictions come from high profile celebrities such as Eminem.

This is why SAVE and IASP raise a caution when any artist chooses to depict or describe a method of suicide. The recently released World Health Organization booklet: PREVENTING SUICIDE: A resource for filmmakers and others working on stage and screen that covers video and images presented publicly, recommends to "Avoid showing the act of suicide as this can increase imitative (copycat) behavior." In addition, the Guide also states: "Research has shown that, as with media news reports, portrayals of suicide on television, at the cinema or streamed online can have imitation effects.

Unfortunately, Eminem's new album cover, the lyrics and the video do not follow the best practice recommendations for safe messaging on suicide. They neither portray resilience and effective ways of dealing with problems, they fail to include the warning signs of suicide, display the complexity of suicide, nor do they include a content warning advisory, etc. Disseminating a graphic depiction of suicide and making references to suicide in the video increase risk that can be avoided. It is also of note that while freedom of expression is valued, use of graphic images, including images once believed benign, followed by a personal or political statement does not reduce the risk of harm or contagion.

Everyone should be aware of the need to talk with those who may have seen the album cover, watched the video or listened to the music that has just been released, and they should be encouraged to express their feelings in response to the lyrics and/or images. For young people who have engaged in self-harm behaviors, who might have a suicide plan, or who are distressed from watching the video, immediate intervention is recommended. Warning signs of suicidal ideation include talking about death or dying, expressing thoughts about being dead or harming oneself, looking for a method of suicide, expressing significant emotional distress (e.g. anger, rage, deep sadness, a sense of hopelessness). In these situations, it is crucial that parents contact their local Medical Doctor or Youth Mental Health Service.

The World Health Organization recently released a new booklet to guide the artistic expression safely and that can be found here: <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/preventing-suicide-a-resource-for-filmmakers-and-others-working-on-stage-and-screen>

SAVE/IASP are conscious of the media coverage of this issue and suicide in general, and therefore recommend that the media should use caution and sensitivity in reports. When reporting on suicide, the media should adhere to international guidelines and recommendations:

<http://www.reportingonsuicide.org>;

<http://www.samaritans.org/media-centre/media-guidelines-reporting-suicide> ;

[https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/suicide-prevention/resource\\_booklet\\_2017/en/](https://www.who.int/mental_health/suicide-prevention/resource_booklet_2017/en/)

SAVE has released best practice for media reporting on mass shootings found at: [www.reportingonmassshootings.org](http://www.reportingonmassshootings.org)

An overview of relevant helplines and support services for people in distress in different countries can be accessed via: [https://www.iasp.info/resources/Crisis\\_Centres](https://www.iasp.info/resources/Crisis_Centres).

For further information, please contact:

Dr. Dan Reidenberg, Psy.D.

Executive Director

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education

+1-952-946-7998

[dreidenberg@save.org](mailto:dreidenberg@save.org)

Professor Ella Arensman

School of Public Health, College of Medicine and Health & National Suicide Research Foundation

WHO Collaborating Centre for Surveillance and Research in Suicide Prevention

Representative IASP College of Presidents

Visiting Professor, Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention, Griffith University

4.28 Western Gateway Building

University College Cork

Cork, Ireland

T: + 353 (0) 21 420 5541; E: [ella.arensman@ucc.ie](mailto:ella.arensman@ucc.ie)

*January 2020*