 Preventing the Erosion
of a Longstanding Norm:
Protecting Health in
Conflict

phr.org Physicians for Human Rights Dodd Center 2



Leaders of Chilean Medical Association Arrested: 1986



phr.org

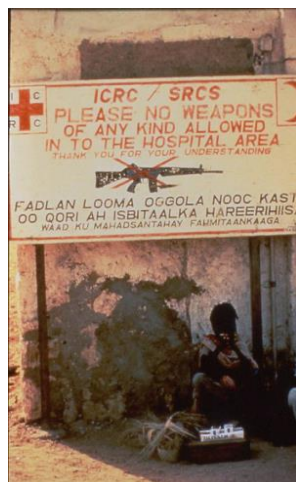
Physicians for
Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

3



Violations of Medical Neutrality are not new: Somalia and El Salvador 1980s



phr.org

Physicians for
Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

4



Kosovo – more than 100 health facilities destroyed



Chechnya – at least 24 medical facilities damaged by federal forces; >20 doctors arrested

Iraq – kidnapping, murder of health workers, destruction of facilities; 50-75% leave



Geneva Conventions

“The wounded and sick, as well as the infirm, and expectant mothers, **shall be the object of particular protection and respect.**”

Extended to all medical functions in midst of war, e.g., ambulances, hospitals, health workers, hospital administrators, including civilians civilian facilities



2017 Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition Report

- Bombing, shelling, looting
- Killing of health workers
- Intimidation, assault, arrest
- Obstruction of access to care
- Takeover of facilities by military
- Attacks and blockage of aid workers



phr.org

Physicians for Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

7



Yemen



phr.org

Physicians for Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

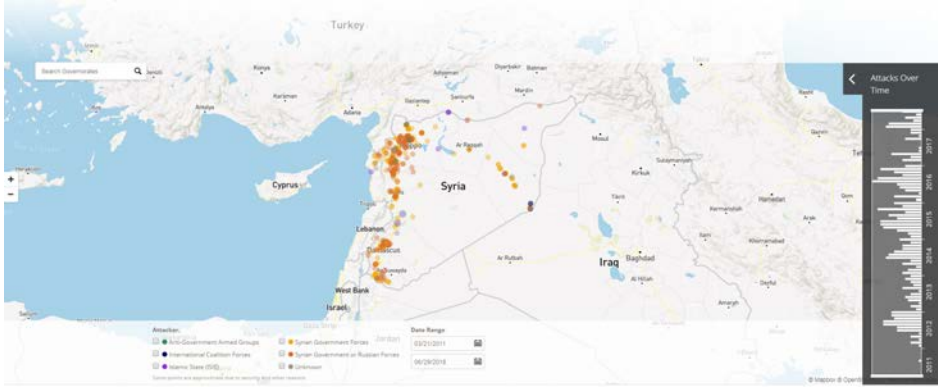
8

PHR Syria




phr.org Physicians for Human Rights Healthcare Under Attack 9

PHR Syria
PHR online map of attacks in Syria

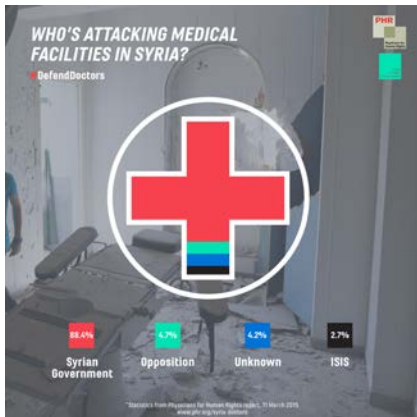


phr.org Physicians for Human Rights Healthcare Under Attack 10




Toll in Syria

- 537 attacks on 348 medical facilities
- 321 by Syrian government forces
- 161 by Syrian or Russian forces
- 32 by non-state armed groups
- 3 by international coalition forces
- 18 by unknown forces

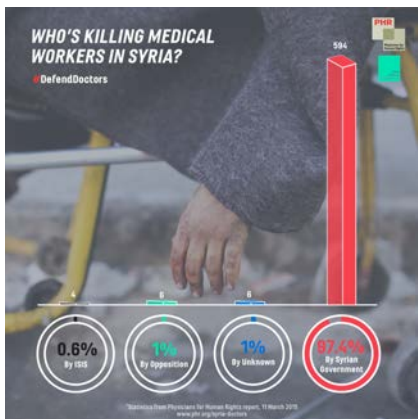


phr.org
Physicians for Human Rights
Healthcare Under Attack
11



Toll in Syria

- 886 deaths of medical personnel
- At least 168 (20%) of these health professionals were detained and extra-judicially executed.
- The remaining cases are attributed to bombing or shelling (58%) and gunfire (22%).
- Syrian government forces are identified as perpetrators in 90% of these cases.



phr.org
Physicians for Human Rights
Healthcare Under Attack
12



phr.org

Physicians for
Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

13



Dar Al-Shifa hospital in Aleppo bombed by government aircraft in Nov 2012



phr.org

Physicians for
Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

14



phr.org

Physicians for
Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

15


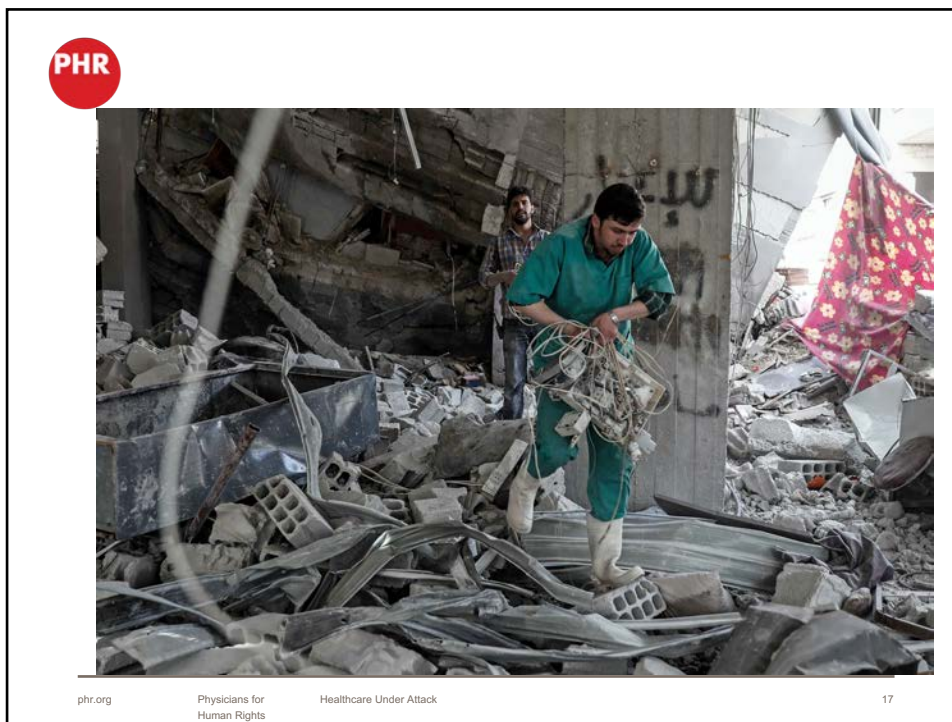


phr.org

Physicians for
Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

16



Health Consequences

- Direct effect on civilian populations, medical personnel and health facilities.
- Compounding effect on access and mortality and morbidity among civilians
- Targeting of medical infrastructure and its destruction disproportionately affects the vulnerable, including children, mothers, elderly
- Reductions in health care capacity due to the flight of medical personnel and destruction of services undermine short and long-term capacity to deliver health care.

phr.org Physicians for Human Rights Healthcare Under Attack 18



Indirect Consequences of Attacks



Psychological scarring



Eroded mental health treatment



Spread of infectious diseases



Pharmaceutical costs



Maternal health care



Treatment of chronic diseases



What Motivates Attackers?

- Health care services to an enemy or alleged terrorist considered an act against the state
- Predominance of strategic or tactical military considerations over respect for health
- Lack of knowledge of/interest in the requirements of the Geneva Conventions
- Perpetrators get away with attacks -- Impunity for violations




The Criminalization of Healthcare

SAFEGUARDING
HEALTH
IN CONFLICT

JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMSBURY
INSTITUTE
OF GLOBAL HEALTH
Center for Public Health
and Human Rights

University of Essex

phr.org Physicians for
Human Rights Healthcare Under Attack 21



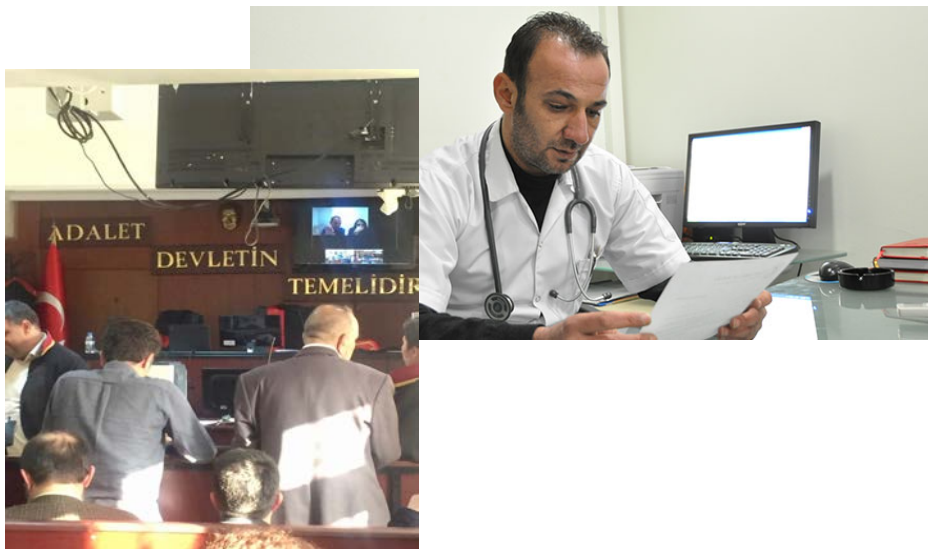
The Criminalization of Health Care June 2018

- Punitive measures against health care workers as a result of their health care provision
- Complex situations where Geneva Conventions are insufficient
- Laws criminalizing support to terrorists “inappropriately applied to provision of medical care”
- General laws used to punish health providers
- Administrative sanctions: suspension, harassment, or intimidation for fulfilling duty to provide care
- WMA Medical Regulations in Times of Armed Conflict 2012: duty to provide impartial care without discrimination, “including whether they are the enemy.”
- 10 country survey; good examples: New Zealand, Colombia

phr.org Physicians for
Human Rights Innovative cross-sectoral curriculum to improve collection, documentation and preservation of
sexual violence evidence in conflict and post-conflict zones 22



Dr. Sarder Kuni: Imprisoned in Turkey



phr.org

Physicians for
Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

23



Turkey: 2013

- Government did not provide care, so volunteers stepped in
- Hospitals tear-gassed
- Attacks on medical personnel
- Laws passed to make unauthorized emergency care a criminal act
- Medical colleagues arrested for providing care
- PHR observes trials, advocates



phr.org

Physicians for
Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

24



Bahrain: 2009-2011

- Ambulances shot at by security forces
- Doctors and nurses, arrested, tortured and jailed for crimes against the state
- Arrests and interrogation in main hospital



What can WMA & Associations do?

- Document and report incidents; collect data
- Stay informed and stay connected
- Speak out individually and collectively;
- Raise concerns diplomatically at every opportunity
- Send delegations to the field; visit threatened colleagues
- Raise publicly at conferences
- Honor doctors who do the right thing
- Invite threatened colleagues to study in your country; award fellowships, scholarships
- Work to change laws that violate ethics
- Supports distance learning and provide equipment



2018 PHR honors US doctors Hanna-Attisha, Norma Price and nurse Alex Wubbels



phr.org

Physicians for Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

27



phr.org

Physicians for Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

28



phr.org

Physicians for
Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

29



phr.org

Physicians for
Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

30



phr.org

Physicians for
Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

31



phr.org

Physicians for
Human Rights

Healthcare Under Attack

32

PHR



phr.org Physicians for Human Rights Healthcare Under Attack 33

PHR



phr.org Physicians for Human Rights Healthcare Under Attack 34



Yesterday at Panzi Hospital, Bukavu, DRC – Nobel Prize to Dr. Denis Mukwege

