**Alarming rise in recent attacks on healthcare facilities revealed in new report on protecting health in armed conflict from WHO & WISH**

A new report by the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) – Qatar Foundation’s global health initiative - in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) captures the alarming rise in attacks against healthcare facilities. These attacks violate human rights and International Humanitarian Law, with the report authors calling for specific actions governments can take to help protect health in the context of armed conflict.

International Humanitarian Law protects healthcare in conflict settings, ensuring medical personnel, facilities and transportation is safeguarded to provide care without discrimination. However, in the past few years, there has been a shocking increase in the frequency, scale, and impact of attacks on healthcare systems, including infrastructure and healthcare workers, in countries like Sudan, Gaza, Lebanon, Myanmar, Ukraine, Haiti, and Sahel.

The most vulnerable people in our communities who rely heavily on health services, including children, pregnant women, people living with chronic diseases, the elderly, and disabled people, are directly affected by the attacks on healthcare, denying them access to essential and life-saving services when they need them most.

Lead report author Dr Richard Brennan, Regional Emergency Director, Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office, WHO, said: “Addressing these realities requires a bold, unified response. It is imperative that United Nations agencies, governments, and civil society, in collaboration with the healthcare community, adopt a more assertive stance against attacks that directly target or otherwise impact health services. Robust steps are required to promote and respect International Humanitarian Law, to end widespread impunity, and to mainstream protection of healthcare into health and humanitarian programs.”

**The scale of healthcare attacks**

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, as of 2024, there are over 120 armed conflicts around the world, which involve 60 states and 120 non-state armed groups. Since 2018, WHO has documented more than 7,000 incidents of attacks on health care in which more than 2,200 health workers and patients lost their lives, and more than 4,600 people were injured across 21 reporting countries and territories with complex humanitarian emergencies. During this time, there were more than 1,600 incidents of obstruction to healthcare delivery.

The report delves further into the enquiry of the scale and nature of attacks on healthcare through case studies about such attacks in distressed regions such as Republic of Congo, Occupied Palestinian territory, Gaza, Afghanistan and Pakistan, among others. The statistics from Gaza are particularly shocking, as WHO documented 516 attacks on healthcare between 7 October 2023 and 25 September 2024 which have severely impacted health facilities and constrained their ability to provide emergency services to treat more than 96,000 injuries, outbreaks of hepatitis A, diarrhoea, vaccine-derived polio and growing rates of acute malnutrition, as well as routine health services such as childhood immunizations, maternal health, and treatment of chronic diseases.

**Report recommendations**

The report authors have presented a list of recommendations, categorised by area, directed at the full range of stakeholders whose influence is needed to protect healthcare in conflict.

* Global measures:
* Convene a global alliance for the protection of healthcare in conflict
* Establish a UN Special Rapporteur on the Protection of Health in Armed Conflict
* Improve documentation on attacks on healthcare, including impact on public health
* National measures:
* Build capacities on health and humanitarian diplomacy
* Integrate International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law into educational curricula
* Address physical and psychosocial trauma among healthcare workers
* Local measures:
* Enhance emergency responsiveness and health system resilience
* Increase community engagement in protecting healthcare

**WISH’s focus on protecting health in conflict**

The WISH 2024 Summit, which is being held on 13 and 14 November at Qatar National Convention Centre in Doha, will place a focus on this report and discussions around protecting health in conflict, including:

* An opening speech from Dr Christos Christou, the international president of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), an organization providing medical assistance to people affected by conflict, epidemics, disasters, or exclusion from healthcare.
* A panel about the ‘forgotten’ war in Sudan and its crumbling health system by Rossella Miccio, president of EMERGENCY NGO, an organization providing free, high-quality care to people affected by conflict and poverty, and Suba Abdelwahab Abdalla Hassan, medical officer at the Salam Centre for Cardiac Surgery - Emergency organization, Khartoum.

**About WISH**

The theme of this year’s WISH is ‘Humanizing Health: Conflict, Equity and Resilience’ and will highlight the need for innovation in health to support everyone, leaving nobody behind and building resilience, especially among vulnerable societies and in areas of armed conflict.

For 2024, WISH has entered a strategic partnership with the WHO – a partnership that involves collaboration in the development of a series of evidence-based reports and policy papers, as well as the support of WHO in a post-summit implementation strategy.

The summit will feature more than 200 experts in health speaking about evidence-based ideas and practices in healthcare innovation to address the world’s most urgent global health challenges.