



SAMS



Assessing the Impact of Attacks on Healthcare and Strategies for Recovery in the Syrian Conflict

Date: June 12th, 2023 at 10 AM

Venue: Wetstraat 155, Residence palace, The Maelbeek conference room

Language: English

Background:

For more than 11 years, the Syrian conflict has been characterized by intentional and frequent attacks on the healthcare sector as a form of punishment and warfare. The objective of these attacks is to prevent local communities from accessing essential health services and to force displacement. Although civil society organizations such as SAMS and PHR have made significant strides in documenting these attacks, the long-term consequences of these attacks have not been thoroughly studied.

After the catastrophic earthquake that struck southern Turkey and northwest Syria on February 6th, 2023, the deficiencies in the healthcare system in Northwest Syria became evident. However, these shortcomings are not recent and are the result of multiple factors, including depleted funds, politicized humanitarian aid, sieges, and economic deterioration. Attacks on health have been identified as the most severe cause, with civil society organizations such as SAMS and PHR jointly reporting over 1070 attacks on the health system and more than 930 health workers killed. Nevertheless, the impact of such attacks on health outcomes, health systems, and health workers has not been adequately studied.

To address this knowledge gap, civil society partners, including SAMS and ACU, and academic partners, such as the University of California, Berkeley, and Johns Hopkins University, have collaborated to investigate how different types of attacks on health facilities, both direct and indirect, impact healthcare providers, health services, and key health outcomes. The focus of this research is on the Idlib governorate due to the extensive attacks on this region.

The findings of this research will provide a model for monitoring public health vulnerabilities resulting from attacks on health in other contexts. Ultimately, this research aims to shift the discourse surrounding attacks on health by emphasizing their impact on both health systems and health workers, thereby informing discussions on accountability, advocacy, and programming to better safeguard health and reduce harm in settings of prolonged conflict.

The side event

This side event is based on the findings of a 36-month research project, during which a team of researchers conducted an investigation into the impact of attacks on healthcare in Syria. At the event, a few members of the research team will share the main findings and recommendations of their research through two presentations. The first presentation will cover the quantitative analysis, while the second will focus on the qualitative dimensions of the work. The presentations will highlight the costs of attacks on healthcare in both



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the short and long term, as well as the required actions to maintain the health system in Syria. The event will also discuss the importance of keeping mitigation strategies as an integral part of the health system's efforts in early recovery and later in the reconstruction phase to maintain healthcare services as long as the risk of attacks on healthcare remains high, particularly after the recent earthquakes that affected northwestern Syria in February 2023.

This event will provide valuable insights into the current state of healthcare in the region and offer actionable recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders to improve the situation.

Objectives:

- Present findings on the direct and indirect impacts of attacks on health in conflict-affected regions of Syria, specifically on health service delivery, utilization, and health outcomes
- Raise awareness among stakeholders of the mid-term and long-term consequences of attacks on health based on research findings and recommendations
- Convene relevant stakeholders to review methodologies for assessing the impact of attacks on healthcare and discuss recommendations for use by humanitarian partners, donors, and human rights groups.
- Discuss strategies for early recovery and reconstruction of the healthcare system in Syria, with a focus on maintaining healthcare services despite the risk of attacks on healthcare.

Targeted stakeholders:

Donor groups, UN agencies, NGOs, human rights groups. And state representatives.

Panelists':

1. **Aula Abbara** MBBS BSc MD(Res) DTMH Consultant in Clinical Infectious Diseases/ General Internal Medicine, London Honorary Senior Clinical Lecturer in Infectious Diseases, Imperial College Chair of SAMS research committee
2. **Rohini J. Haar** MD MPH , Adjunct Professor, Epidemiology, School of Public Health Research Fellow, Human Rights Center, School of Law University of California, Berkeley
3. **Mohamad Katoob** DDS, project manager at IMPACT for civil society research Research Fellow, Human Rights Center, School of Law Member, advisory group of the Researching the Impact of Attacks on Healthcare in Countries of Conflict (RIAH)