



ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL
OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR FOR THE SYRIA CRISIS

Statement by Panos Moutzidis, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, on Attacks on Health Services and Staff in northern Syria

Amman, 30 January 2018

I am appalled by the ongoing attacks on hospitals and other medical facilities in northwestern Syria, depriving hundreds of thousands of people of their basic right to health.

On the morning of 29 January, the Owdai Hospital in Saraqab City in Idlib Governorate was damaged by two airstrikes, which destroyed part of the hospital building and rendered the hospital inoperable. The 18-bed hospital, supported by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), is the only public hospital in Saraqab District in eastern Idlib serving a population of 50,000.

The attack is reported to have occurred as the hospital was receiving injured people from another airstrike that occurred an hour earlier on Saraqab's main market. Prior to the attack, the hospital had an emergency room and outpatient department, and provided general and trauma surgery, as well as 3,800 consultations on average per month.

This brutal attack is the fourth time within 10 days, a hospital in Saraqab was impacted by an airstrike resulting in major structural damage. Initial reports received showed at least five people were killed, including a child, and injuries to at least six people, including three medical staff.

In a separate incident the same day, a medical centre in Jazraya village in southern Aleppo Governorate was reportedly destroyed by an airstrike. The facility is the only medical service provider in the area serving at least 10,000 people in the village and surrounding communities with primary health care services.

The loss of the provision of these medical services, including surgical and reproductive health services, will have a staggering effect on vulnerable communities affected by this conflict.

There have been at least 13 verifiable attacks on health facilities recorded in Syria this month, including in besieged Eastern Ghouta, which has witnessed several reported attacks on health facilities since the beginning of January.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there were 112 verified attacks on health facilities in 2017, resulting in 72 persons killed and 153 injured. As of December that year, 51 per cent of public hospitals across Syria were either partially functional or closed, while 27 health workers had been killed.

I condemn the destruction of facilities critical to communities' health, education and well-being and which particularly affect women, children and those being treated in hospital. Attacks on such facilities and the people working to save lives is completely unacceptable.

The United Nations demands an end to attacks on medical units and health staff, and calls on all parties to the conflict to take all measures to protect civilians, particularly in adhering to International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law, including, the prohibition of launching indiscriminate attacks and the principles of proportionality and precaution.