



## Health workers - targets or collateral of armed conflict?

Below is a link to resources mentioned during the session and on the diverse group which supported the organisation of this session. We aim for this to be the start of further work on this topic but do look at the work that the different organisations and speakers are doing.

Health Workers may be among the first to be targeted in active conflict; for example, in Syria, the provision of medical care was criminalised early in the conflict leaving many health workers subject to arrest and torture; more than 900 have been killed, mostly by the Syrian government and its allies. In Myanmar, many doctors refused to work in public hospitals (which fell under the control of the military) after the February 2021 military coup as part of a civil disobedience movement in response to the widespread human rights abuses committed by the Myanmar military and security forces; this put them at risk of arrest and targeting. In Tigray, a crisis which garners little media attention, attacks on doctors by militias (as well as the looting and destruction of health facilities) have occurred in a brutal and under-reported conflict. There have been numerous reports of SGBV (sexual and gender-based violence) with long-lasting consequences on women and communities. Health workers in Ukraine where deliberate attacks by Russia on hospitals, (including of children and maternity hospitals) have been reported since hostilities escalated on the 24th February 2022; many have been forced to remain in health facilities to respond to the influx of patients as attacks continue and escalate. Across these conflicts, health workers face the catastrophic consequences of conflict that the general population face, while also bearing the burden of responsibility for civilians as the health systems collapse around them.

April 2022 saw World Health Worker Week. In this webinar, we hear from frontline health workers and experts from these different contexts which have been affected by attacks on health workers in different ways. We hear how health workers elsewhere can support and what can be done in the face of such violations in International Humanitarian Law.

With thanks on behalf of the organising groups:

[David Nott Foundation](#)

[Health Professionals for Global Health, UK](#)

[International Child Health Group.](#)

[Physicians for Human Rights](#)

[Research for Health System Strengthening in North Syria/ King's College, London](#)

[Syrian American Medical Society](#)

[Syria Public Health Network](#)

[THET](#)

[Women in Global Health, UK](#)



21<sup>st</sup> April 2022 0800 EST/ 1300 UK

**Chair:**

[Elly Nott](#) (PhD candidate, King's College; David Nott Foundation)

**Our speakers include:**

[Professor Len Rubenstein](#) (Johns Hopkins University)

Overview and Ukraine

Author of [Perilous Medicine, the struggle to protect health care from the violence of war](#)

[Dr Hailay Gesesew](#) (Torrens University, Mekelle University)

Tigray

[Dr Thinn Thinn Hlaing](#) (THET)

Myanmar

[Dr Houssam AlNahas](#) (Syria Public Health Network, Physicians for Human Rights)

Firsthand experiences in Syria

**Key resources**

**General**

[Safeguarding Health letter to Director-General of WHO](#), March 2022

[Hospitals and healthcare workers must be protected from the waging of war](#), Al-Nahas et al. March 2022.

[The vulnerability of healthcare in conflict: Ukraine and beyond](#). Covers Ukraine, Tigray, Afghanistan among others. April 2022. Recording.

**Ukraine**

[Russia has a long, cruel history of attacking hospitals. Maybe this time its leaders will be prosecuted](#). Rubenstein. March 2022

[Attacks on healthcare in the war in Ukraine. International law and the need for accountability](#). Rubenstein. April 2022

**Syria**



Syria Public Health Network



HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR GLOBAL HEALTH



[As Putin bombs hospitals in Ukraine, I hear echoes from Syria. 'Whether a hospital is bombed in Mariupol or Aleppo, in Sana'a or in Kunduz, those responsible must be held to account.](#) al-Nahas. April 2022

[Targeting Healthcare in Syria: a military tactic or collateral damage.](#) Ekzayez et al. December 2020

[Case study of attack on Al Atareb Hospital in Syria](#) PHR, SAMS. 2021

## Tigray

[The impact of war on the health system of the Tigray region in Ethiopia: an assessment.](#) Gesesew et al. March 2022.

[The health crisis in Ethiopia's war-ravaged Tigray region in Ethiopia: an assessment.](#) Gesesew et al. November 2021

## Myanmar

[Physicians for Human Rights' work in Myanmar](#) PHR

[Statement in support of Myanmar health workers.](#) THET August 2021

[The crisis of healthcare in Myanmar.](#) Lancet. March 2021

END