

Cairo, Egypt, 28 April 2022 – The World Health Organization (WHO) is calling for the immediate cessation of armed violence in West Darfur, Sudan, that has resulted in hundreds of civilians killed or injured, the death of 2 health care workers, and attacks on 2 health facilities in the past 6 days alone.

“We are extremely alarmed by reports of escalating violence in Kereneik Town and other areas in West Darfur,” said Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. “WHO joins the Special Representative of the Secretary General and other humanitarian agencies and partners in calling for an immediate end to these senseless and brutal attacks on civilians, health care workers and health facilities.”

Since 22 April, renewed armed clashes in and around Kereneik Town have reportedly resulted in almost 200 deaths caused by violent trauma, and forced thousands of newly displaced civilians to seek refuge within the town’s military compound.

On 23 and 24 April, 2 hospitals in the towns of Kereneik and El Geneina were attacked by armed gunmen, resulting in the death of 2 health care workers. These attacks are a major violation of international law. WHO demands that all parties to the conflict in Sudan respect the safety and neutrality of health workers, patients and health facilities. During the holy month of Ramadan and beyond, WHO urges all parties to respect the core values of mercy, respect, trust and solidarity.

“Health care workers providing life-saving care to injured civilians are already overwhelmed and should not be at risk of intimidation or attack. As acute trauma care needs increase across Sudan and fewer international humanitarian actors are able to work on the ground due to safety and security concerns, it is innocent civilians who bear the brunt of this reduced access to health care,” added Dr Al-Mandhari.

WHO continues to work with the Federal Ministry of Health in Sudan and partner agencies to ensure that hospitals and other health facilities, especially in West Darfur, remain operational by providing training for health care workers and community leaders on trauma care and first aid; delivering rapid response kits containing essential medicines and medical supplies; and providing ambulances to ensure the emergency treatment and transport of injured people to health facilities.

Note to editors

In 2019, WHO activated a surveillance and reporting system for attacks on health facilities and personnel in Sudan. Since then, a total of 55 attacks on health care have been reported, resulting in 10 deaths and 45 injuries.

WHO defines attacks on health care as any act of verbal or physical violence, obstruction or threat of violence that interferes with the availability, access and delivery of curative and/or preventive health services. Such attacks range from physical violence, psychosocial threats and intimidation, to use of heavy weaponry against health care facilities, ambulances, personnel, patients, supplies and warehouses.

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