



Cairo, 2 September 2019 – WHO is gravely concerned about reported attacks on 7 health care facilities in the north west of Syria from 28 to 30 August 2019. Attacks on 4 facilities have been verified according to WHO reporting standards, and 3 are in process of verification.

The facilities include 4 hospitals and 2 primary health care centres that were functional at the time they were hit. One primary health care centre had been previously evacuated in advance of military action. At least 2 injuries were reported, and 2 facilities were destroyed.

These attacks come at a time of increased hostilities in and around Idlib province that is greatly accelerating humanitarian need. There are currently 13.7 million people in need of health assistance in Syria, including an estimated 4 million in the north-west. In August alone, more than 130 000 people were displaced from Northern Hama and Idlib governorates. Providing health services in north-west Syria is increasingly challenging and dangerous, and attacks such as these only deprive innocent civilians from lifesaving care.

This pattern of continued forced displacement, and damage or destruction of essential civilian infrastructure such as health facilities, is a deeply disturbing reality in the Syrian conflict. The reported attack on a maternity and children's hospital – that provides vital services to the most vulnerable affected by the conflict – is particularly egregious. WHO deplores all actions that put civilians in harm's way and prevent people from accessing life-saving services when they are most needed.

We remind all parties to the conflict of their obligations under international humanitarian law and to take all steps necessary to protect civilians, the most vulnerable, and health care. The principles of proportionality and distinction must be observed.

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