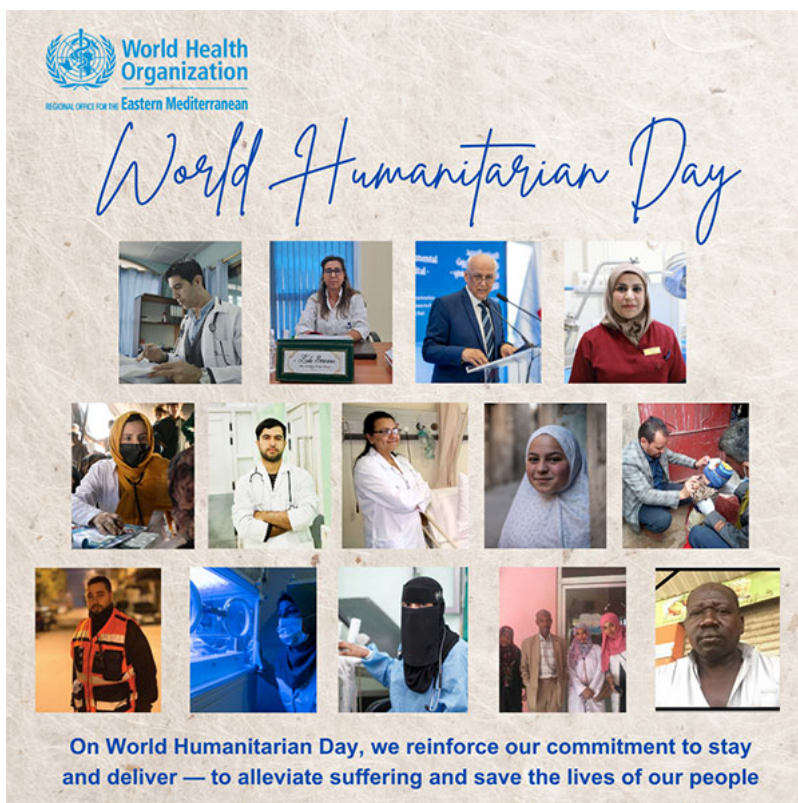


19 August 2023 – On World Humanitarian Day 2023, join us as we embark on a journey that shines a spotlight on the unwavering spirit of solidarity that unites us all. Today and everyday, we celebrate the individuals across our Region dedicated to making a positive impact in the lives of those in need. Please join us in honouring these heroes — representing many more — who inspire us to create a better tomorrow where everyone enjoys better health and well-being, and access to health care is achieved as a basic human right.

[Statement by Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day](#)

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"I heard calls to help with an injury and immediately went to respond. Five metres before reaching the guy, I was shot. I fell to the ground and lay there for a few minutes until an ambulance reached me. Health workers should never be a target."

Hamzeh, Volunteer Paramedic, occupied Palestinian territory

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"So many of our health staff live in Nablus. When they come to work or return home, they are obstructed at checkpoints. Even ambulances are obstructed. Doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians and ambulances – which should never be a target – are exposed to the violence of occupation every day."

Shadi, Emergency Doctor, occupied Palestinian territory

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“Ever since I was a child, I wanted to be a doctor. My father is a fisherman and he always used to bring us here on our summer breaks. Now, I am proud to be the only doctor here. This is the only hospital on this entire coastline that provides basic health services.”

Dr Baria Awadh, specialized obstetrician-gynecologist, Yemen

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“Low immunization rates put children in Yemen at high risk of disease, especially polio. What is heartbreaking about polio is the permanent disability and lifelong suffering it brings. There is no going back. We provide proof of the situation and a timely response...we are the eyes and ears of the polio programme on the ground.”

Dr Yasser Jomaie, acute flaccid paralysis surveillance coordinator, Yemen

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"Every day, I treat patients who are addicted to drugs. Most of them have become addicted due to unemployment, poverty and other problems. I hope I can help them return to their normal life. I hope that one day we have a peaceful, healthy, and strong Afghanistan."

Dr Abdul Ahmad Rasooli, Medical Doctor, Afghanistan

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"My work allows me to reach underserved people who are deprived of basic services. These people cannot afford to travel long distances to health facilities, so we bring medical care to them. As a woman, I can listen to the concerns of the women and provide them with health advice."

Ms Abeda Noori, Midwife, Afghanistan

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"I've done most of my work on a volunteer basis, and it has taught me that nothing is impossible. With enough will, strength, and determination, we can all help each other, and we can all help the world."

**Basma Salem, Neonatal Nurse
Specializing in Incubators, Syria**

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"I am 16 years old. Like my older sister and cousins, I am going to be a nurse. Growing up listening to their stories, I understood how many people need care in my country. I want to learn how I, too, can help them."

Fatthiya, Nursing Student, Syria

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“At the opening of a new hospital last month, I remembered the victims who died in the Beirut port blast, and those who continue to suffer physically and mentally from its consequences. People in Lebanon have a much stronger will for good than for evil, and a much stronger will for life than for death.”

Dr Michel Matar, Hospital Board Chairman, Lebanon

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“When I started working at the hospital, it was a challenge, and I wondered how long I would last. The hurdles were hard but with every challenge I got stronger. The team I led saw my enthusiasm and dedication and joined me in my efforts to make things better.”

Wahida Ghalayini, Head of Nursing Department, Lebanon

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"The emotional weight of our work is immense. Treating children with cancer means being on an emotional rollercoaster with their families: supporting them through despair, celebrating victories, and holding back tears as we witness the brave struggle of young lives against a relentless disease."

Dr Laila Hessissen, Head of Hematology and Pediatric Oncology Department, Morocco

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"We handle 25-30 labour cases daily, working long hours with little sleep to provide much-needed care. Our dedication goes beyond childbirth to include awareness on breastfeeding and general well-being. My intense desire to help women during this critical period is what keeps me going."

Salma Mohammed, Senior Midwife, Iraq

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"I wish the war in Sudan to end, our health system to recover with hospitals returning to normal function, and people's suffering to come to an end. To the world I say: help stop the suffering of the innocent people who have no hand in this war."

Dr Waly Eldin Elfaky, Paediatrician, originally from Khartoum, working in another state since the war, Sudan

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"Adil did everything he could to support the medical team. He was always ready to step up for any task that would facilitate care for the patients. He was struck on the head by a shell and was transferred to hospital for surgery. He succumbed to his wounds on the second day."

Of Adil Gamal Maragan, hospital security guard in Khartoum, Sudan, as remembered by one of his colleagues

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