18 August 2017 – Despite condemnations from WHO and health partners, attacks on health care in the Eastern Mediterranean have not decreased this year over last.

In the first 3 months of 2017, more than 152 attacks on health care were reported from 9 countries in the Region, compared to 57 attacks during the same time in 2016.

Behind these startling figures are real lives and real people. Every day, health workers in conflict settings face remarkable dangers and difficulties to provide care to those who need it most.

Thousands of health workers across the Region remain committed to the oath they took to save lives, sometimes knowingly risking their own lives as they refuse to abandon their patients.

World Humanitarian Day is time for us to stand with health workers, and show them that we are fulfilling our moral and human obligation to keep them safe.

Attacks on health care

#NotATarget

Photo gallery
Maher Hamzeh Abdul Kader is a health worker in the Syrian Emergency Medical System in rural Damascus. In 2015, Maher was shot twice in the back while on duty distributing blood bags to Eastern Ghouta residents, near Damascus.

"Luckily, I survived," says Maher. "After 22 years as an emergency worker in the national emergency services, and after being shot twice, I feel like I can do whatever I want. For the first time in my life, I am thinking about retirement."

Yasser Shokri Al-Hussain is a nurse at Al-Qamishli national hospital, Al-Hassakeh, Syria. He has been working for 8 years.

"Although I am supposed to work 8 hours per day, I sometimes work for 17 hours per day to fill shortages", added Yasser. "We have to make sure the patients receive the necessary care, despite our difficult financial situation. It's the humane thing to do."

Ibtisam Salam Alaik is a health worker in Aleppo, Syria.
“I have been vaccinating children in Aleppo for more than 15 years. I continued performing my duties in the middle of the war, facing all types of difficulties and threats. It’s not easy, but I feel that it’s my duty to continue, for the sake of the children’s health. I feel safer here now,” Ibtisam added.

Hasan Kassar is a health worker who has been displaced from Al-Bab city in eastern rural Aleppo, Syria, since 2013.

“I fled with my family due to escalating violence in the area and I now deliver vaccines in the main health district in Aleppo. This has had a positive impact on the vaccination services, but it comes at a great personal cost,” added Hassan.

Nibal Awad is a family doctor working as part of a mobile clinic team in the West Bank, occupied Palestinian territory. She is concerned about the lack of approvals from parties on the ground and the targeting of the health workers on several occasions.

Nibal cares deeply about health education and improving the public health conditions of the communities she works with.
“The work I do is very rewarding, not financially but emotionally. When I do my job, it gives satisfaction because I care about people. I have a passion for my work and the patients I treat. It’s not easy being in a health service, but we also provide the communities with a chance to discuss other problems they face as well.”

Raed Al-Shilleh from the West Bank in occupied Palestinian territory, is an ambulance worker with the Palestinian Red Cross Society. He said, “It's not easy, but I had so many happy moments in my work. My children don’t fear for my life, but at the same time, I can’t think of doing any other work either. This is a part of my identity.”
Mahmoud Almasri, from Gaza has been a volunteer paramedic at the Palestinian Red Crescent Society.

Ahmad Zia, 40, has worked for Afghanistan’s national vaccination programme for 10 years as a campaign supervisor.

“I joined the vaccination programme because I want to serve our country and to see people protected from infectious diseases.”
Zahra recently joined Afghanistan’s national vaccination programme and works as a volunteer vaccinator. “I like ... of what I do. I want to contribute to disease eradication efforts and help Afghan children grow up healthy,” she says.

Mohammad Ferdaus, 23, has worked as a volunteer vaccinator for 5 years. He goes from house to house...
“Almost everyone in my area accepts vaccines when we offer them. If someone initially refuses, we continue to

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