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.

"Luckily, I survived," says Maher. "After 22 years as an emergency worker in the national emergency services, I was shot twice while on duty distributing blood bags in Eastern Ghouta, near Damascus. For five months, I was away from work. But now, I am back doing what I want to do: helping the injured and the unfortunate of this ill-fated conflict."

Yasser Shokri Al-Hussain is a nurse at Al-Qamishli national hospital, Al-Hassakeh, Syria. He has been working there for 8 years. Despite the conflict, he strives to provide humanitarian care.

“Although I am supposed to work 8 hours per day, I sometimes work for 17 hours per day to fill shortages. I take medicines home for patients, despite our difficult financial situation. It's the humane thing to do,” added Yasser.

Ibtisam Salam Alaik is a health worker in Aleppo, Syria.
“I have been vaccinating children in Aleppo for more than 15 years. I continued preforming my duties in the middle of the conflict in order to save the lives of my colleagues, patients, and children who are coming from all over the city, as vaccinations are the first line of defense against the most dangerous childhood diseases,” said Ibtisam, a nurse at a mobile vaccination point in Aleppo.

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 East Damascus, as a result of the lack of approvals from parties on the ground and the targeting of the health workers on several occasions,” added Hassan.

Nibal Awad is a family doctor working as part of a mobile clinic team in the West Bank, occupied Palestinian territory. She believes that every child has the right to be healthy and she 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 saving lives. We work for the public 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 Crescent Society. He says that although he does fear for his life, he can’t think of doing any other work either. This is a part of his identity.”
Mahmoud Almasri, from Gaza has been a volunteer paramedic at the Palestinian Red Crescent Society about helping others and doing humanitarian work, and he joined the Red Crescent to make a difference in people's lives.

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,” he says. "Many provinces still suffer from conflict and insecurity, making immunization efforts more difficult," he says.
Zahra recently joined Afghanistan’s national vaccination programme and works as a volunteer vaccinator.

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 convince them of the importance of vaccination by giving them more information about the benefits of vaccination and why it’s essential for children’s health.”