

Baghdad, 26 February 2019 – The World Health Organization (WHO) strongly condemns the recent attack on a medical practitioner who was physically assaulted while providing medical care to a critically ill 70-year old female in Azadi Teaching Hospital in the Kirkuk governorate on 18 February 2019.

“WHO calls on the authorities in Iraq to ensure the safety of health workers, health facilities, and the sanctity of health care,” said Dr Adham Rashad Ismail, acting WHO Representative in Iraq. “Such attacks constitute a serious violation of international humanitarian law and deprive the most vulnerable population of children, women and the elderly of their right to essential health services,” he added.

Health care workers and health facilities in Iraq have been under attack since the crisis escalated in June 2014. In 2018 alone, 42 attacks on health care were recorded by WHO in Iraq, of which 40% were against health workers.

As people in Iraq, including displaced populations, host communities and returnees continue to require essential, lifesaving, and trauma services, it is imperative that the Government of Iraq ensures that health workers are allowed to work at all times without risk, regardless of location, and that patients and health facilities are protected.

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For more information, please contact:

Ajyal Sultany  
WHO Communications Officer  
+964 7740 892 878  
sultanya@who.int,

Pauline Ajello

WHO Communications Officer  
+964 7510101460  
ajellopa@who.int

Gheeda Al Mayahi  
WHO Communications Officer  
+964 7827 886 765  
almayahig@who.int

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WHO works very closely with the Iraqi Ministry of Health and related sectors on a daily bases to identify priorities and guide the health sector on preparedness, effective and efficient response to health and health care requirements.

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