Tripoli, 5 December 2020 –The World Health Organization (WHO) strongly condemns the continuing abductions of health care workers in Libya. In the latest such incident on 1 December 2020, Dr Siddiq Khalfallah Ben Della, a well-known orthopaedic surgeon and the deputy head of al-Khadra Hospital in Tripoli, was kidnapped by an armed group. His whereabouts remain unknown.

"This is the third time this year that medical staff in Libya have been abducted, arrested for no reason, or subjected to unlawful detention," said Ms Elizabeth Hoff, Head of Mission and WHO Representative in Libya. "Health workers throughout Libya must be allowed to do their jobs in a safe and secure environment. Already, they are putting their own lives at risk to care for others during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of them lack personal protection equipment and are paid only sporadically, yet they continue to come to work every day knowing they run the risk of coming under attack, being kidnapped or being exposed to COVID-19. These brave people deserve our deepest gratitude and respect."

Thus far in 2020, there have been 33 confirmed attacks on health care in the country*. Libya accounts for the second highest number of attacks on health care globally, second only to Afghanistan. Attacks on health care violate international humanitarian law and deprive vulnerable people of medical treatment at the very time they need it most.

*WHO's online Surveillance System of Attacks on Health Care tracks attacks on health facilities and personnel in Libya and worldwide. It uses a standardized methodology to allow it to identify global and context-specific trends and allow comparisons between regions and contexts.

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