



As casualties mount due to violence in Tripoli, WHO's emergency medical teams help hospital staff operate on the wounded Tripoli, 30 April—As the violent conflict in Libya's capital continues, WHO is deploying medical specialists to hospitals to help them cope with the mounting casualties. WHO Libya is also coordinating the distribution of medical supplies and providing other support to Tripoli health facilities that are serving thousands of people displaced by bombing and shelling.

Fighting broke out in Tripoli in early April 2019, and by the second week of the month, casualties were in the hundreds. By late April, more than 300 people were dead and more than 1600 wounded. An estimated 40 000 people fled their homes and now live with relatives or in centres for the displaced.

WHO Libya has deployed 3 teams with different specialties, including general surgeons,

orthopedic surgeons, a vascular surgeon and anaesthesiologists, to 3 hospitals receiving the wounded from the front lines.

"The hospitals are overwhelmed with injured people requiring surgery," says Dr Hussein Hassan, Health Emergencies Team Lead for WHO Libya. "WHO's emergency medical teams are helping them save lives."

In the first 3 weeks of deployment, the medical teams performed 144 major surgeries and 104 minor ones.

"Our EMTs work into the wee hours to handle complicated surgical cases," says Dr Hassan. "Some specialists, like the vascular surgeon, are travelling from one place to another to cover 2 hospitals."

Having teams in the hospitals means that people who are not war casualties, but were injured in other ways, are not overlooked. "There was a 4-year-old boy who fell," says Dr Sanad Issa, National Emergency Officer of WHO in Libya. "Because our team was on the ground and helping the hospital cope with all the war injuries, that little boy could have surgery."

Early in the crisis, WHO distributed emergency medical supplies and trauma kits to Tripoli's local health authorities. The supplies enabled field emergency teams, field hospitals and ambulance services to sustain their first- and second-line responses.

WHO is also supporting field hospitals and field ambulance services with medical supplies, including emergency kits for trauma care.

As the number of displaced families increases, WHO is coordinating partners to ensure that primary health care services are available to them.

"We want to make sure that health facilities are prepared to serve the displaced," says Dr

Hassan. "These are people who fled their homes and are now living in crowded conditions, often old schools. We need to stock the primary and secondary health facilities that are closest to them, and make sure they have enough staff and resources."

As the Tripoli conflict becomes a protracted crisis, WHO Libya will also activate its disease surveillance and rapid response system to prevent outbreaks of infectious diseases.

"We don't know how long this will last," says Dr Hassan. "But as long as people need medical care, WHO will be there."

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