After coming under siege and fire for 40 days, the city of Misurata, about 200 km east of Libya's capital Tripoli, is facing a deteriorating health situation. This has put the lives of thousands of civilians at risk and as the fighting continues the humanitarian crisis is worsening the World Health Organization (WHO) warns today.

Dr Hussein A. Gezairy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, appeals for "days of tranquility" to allow WHO and partners to evacuate the injured and sick, and provide much needed medical and humanitarian assistance to the besieged people in Misurata and other parts of Libya. "WHO calls upon the international community and donor agencies to provide immediate support to the people of Misurata to prevent further deterioration of the humanitarian crisis. Medical personnel and equipment, medicine, surgical kits, ventilators, sterilization equipment and water purification units are among the priority needs", Dr Gezairy added.

"The city's main polyclinic has become inaccessible to both doctors and the injured. Smaller and unequipped clinics are facing an influx of injured and patients who are in dire need of medical assistance. Privately owned medical facilities fall short on capacity, space, equipment and personnel to cope with the unprecedented number of casualties and regular patients", a local doctor said. "Routine vaccination programmes have been interrupted, as there is no stock of vaccines left in the city. Medicines for the treatment of communicable and chronic diseases are needed and the deployment of medical teams."

The city's water supply and sewage system have been interrupted and the roads to the nearby desalination station, as an alternative source for drinking-water, are under fire and not safe. Misurata is close to Tawrgha city, a malaria and leishmaniasis endemic zone. Lack of safe drinking-water and poor sanitation may lead to epidemics with serious public health

In addition to Misurata's local residents, a large number of immigrants from Egypt, Chad, Niger, Bangladesh and other nationalities, are under siege in makeshift camps where access to basic human and medical necessities is very limited.

Despite the efforts exerted by WHO and partners in supporting relief efforts and providing medicines and medical supplies to those affected by the violence in Libya, there are still many areas in the west and the middle of the country, which are reported to be besieged and unfortunately out of reach of aid agencies. WHO warns of increasing health threats and reiterates its call for immediate action.

Thursday 11th of April 2024 03:30:47 AM