

Cairo, 9 May, 2013 - The World Health Organization (WHO) is gravely concerned about the deteriorating situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and its adverse impact on the provision of health care services to affected populations.

Health workers continue to face challenges in accessing their workplace; in some areas, more than 70% of health personnel are frequently unable to report for work due to irregular public transportation, blocked or unsafe roads, an increasing number of military checkpoints, snipers and the unpredictable occurrence of street fighting.

Despite strong [condemnation by WHO](#) and the international community, attacks on health care workers, hospitals and health infrastructure continue to take place in many parts of the country.

Limited access to affected areas, lack of humanitarian space and shortages in health personnel, medicines and supplies in many hospitals and health facilities throughout Syria are among the major obstacles complicating the provision of health services. Additional challenges to the delivery of health care include the continuing hostilities and massive population movements both within Syria and into neighbouring countries.

Despite these constraints, WHO is fully committed to meeting the health needs of all Syrians affected by the crisis in compliance with the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality.

To identify areas where health services and medical supplies are needed most, WHO participates in UN inter-agency missions to hospitals and health facilities in affected areas around Syria. In areas where UN access is limited, WHO partners with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and more than 22 local nongovernmental organizations around the country to identify needs and provide critically needed medicines and medical supplies.

To date, WHO has provided medicines and medical supplies for 1.3 million Syrians affected by the crisis, including those being treated for chronic diseases such as cancer and diabetes and who are no longer able to continue treatment due to shortages in life-saving medicines. In March 2013, WHO compiled an [updated list](#) of urgently-needed, life-saving medicines, cancer

medicines and medical consumables. However, in the absence of further support from the international donor community to procure these medicines and supplies, these urgent needs remain unmet.

In neighbouring countries, where an increasing number of refugees are overburdening already overstretched national health systems, WHO is working with national authorities and partners to provide Syrians with access to quality health services at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, while minimizing the negative impact on national health systems. To date, host governments have been providing health services to registered Syrians free-of-charge, but without additional support from the international community, their ability to continue doing so is limited.

To coordinate its technical and operational response for the Syria crisis on a regional level, WHO has established an Emergency Support Team in Amman, and will be further scaling up its presence on the ground through the establishing of a field office in southern Turkey to provide technical support to health partners operating in the area.

As the situation inside Syria continues to deteriorate, it is critical that health workers be protected and provided with access to deliver health services without being placed in danger.

WHO reiterates its condemnation of attacks on health care workers and health facilities, and calls on all parties to ensure safe access for the delivery of urgently-needed health services to all Syrians affected by the crisis.

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