



One of the 211 health workers injured in demonstrations since 30 March being treated at a trauma stabilisation point in Gaza

14 May 2018 – WHO is shocked and saddened to learn of the death of a health worker during demonstrations in Gaza, in addition to the dozens of civilians killed and wounded. WHO reiterates its calls for the protection of all health workers and health facilities.

Since the start of the demonstrations in Gaza on 30 March, WHO has documented an increasing number of attacks on health facilities and health personnel. As of 13 May, 211 health workers in Gaza were affected by health attacks while attending the large numbers of injured during mass demonstrations at the border fence. 9 sustained bullet wounds, 13 were injured by tear gas canisters and 189 suffered tear gas inhalation. 25 ambulances were also damaged.

Attacks on health facilities have severe consequences for health. They not only impact the health of staff and patients affected, but affect the capacity of a health system already debilitated by more than 10 years of blockade. In the immediate aftermath of a health attack, patients are deprived of potentially life-saving care at the frontline. In the longer term, the cumulative effect of attacks can lead to reduced availability of health care for the population, as well as affecting the longer-term health, including the mental health, of staff.

In May 2016, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2286, strongly condemning attacks against medical facilities and medical personnel. Medical facilities and personnel are protected under international law. The right to health incorporates protection from disproportionate uses of violence and the right to treatment in conflict situations extends without distinction to combatants and non-combatants.

Dr Gerald Rockenschaub, Head of the WHO office in the occupied Palestinian territory, stated: “Health workers and health facilities should be protected at all times. There are clear obligations to safeguard health care under international law and these have to be respected.”

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