

Six years into the war in Syria, more than 300 000 people have been tragically killed and more than 1.5 million people injured. As the violence continues, a staggering 30 000 people sustain war-related injuries every month.

Overwhelming numbers of critically wounded patients, acute shortages of staff, and damaged or destroyed health facilities have strained functioning health facilities to the limit. With more than half of all public hospitals closed or only partially functioning, those that remain functional, especially in hard-to-reach and opposition-controlled areas, face shortages of life-saving medicines and surgical supplies.

People who have been injured as a result of the conflict have seen treatable injuries turn into permanent impairments that require long-term rehabilitation and care due to lack of functional and/or accessible health care facilities and acute shortages of physiotherapy and rehabilitation services.

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45-year-old Fatima was sitting at home with her family in Aleppo when a mortar ripped through the building, seriously injuring her and her family. She was admitted to Aleppo University Hospital following a severe injury to her left thigh and treated by doctors using trauma medicines and supplies provided by WHO.

Fatima is one of thousands of complicated surgical cases who have been successfully treated in health facilities through support from WHO. Since the start of the crisis, WHO has distributed more than 10 million trauma care treatments and surgical interventions to all governorates, including cross-border from Turkey, to besieged and hard-to-reach areas.{/besps_c}

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WHO also supports the provision of emergency services by rehabilitating emergency departments and operating theatres in hospitals across Syria.

WHO has provided medical equipment such as portable X-ray machines, defibrillators, beds for intensive care units, portable ventilators, stretchers, medical examination tables and operating theatre equipment to almost all functioning public health hospitals across Syria.

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As the number of people injured in the fighting increase, it is important that emergency referral services continue to function uninterrupted. Since the onset of the crisis, almost two thirds of all ambulances in Syria have been damaged, leading to critical gaps in referral services.

WHO has provided 20 high-standard and fully equipped ambulance cars, in areas where needs are urgent, including Aleppo and Dara'a.

In 2016, WHO in Gaziantep also supported the procurement and shipment of 66 ambulances from Turkey to northern Syria.

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To fill gaps in specialized medical staff resulting from the exodus, displacement and/or deaths of large numbers of Syrian health care professionals, WHO has conducted comprehensive training courses to strengthen the capacity of trauma specialists and health workers to respond to emergencies. Since the beginning of the conflict, more than 3786 health workers across the country have been trained on trauma care management including burn management. This includes 450 technicians and physiotherapists trained on several areas of physical rehabilitation care provision.

Cross-border from Turkey, WHO has trained more than 200 Syrian health care workers in trauma care. Courses have included burn management, chemical exposure treatment, and crush injuries.

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To address shortages in prosthetic and orthotic devices, WHO collaborates with the Directorate of Physical Rehabilitation to increase the local production and maintenance of fitted devices.

WHO has provided 5341 disabled people across Syria with prosthetic/assistive devices and donated manufacturing equipment, artificial limbs and accessories for prosthetic devices to national health authorities.

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To gain access to people in hard-to-reach areas, WHO has established strategic partnerships with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, more than 70 local nongovernmental organizations, and increased participation in interagency convoys to deliver health assistance across frontlines and to besieged areas. WHO has partnered with an additional 45 health partners working cross-border from Turkey and 11 from Jordan.

WHO engages in continuous advocacy for access to health and humanitarian assistance for all people, regardless of location and regularly reports to the United Nations Security Council on the removal of surgical items and other health supplies from interagency convoys.

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The use of chemical agents on civilians occurs with disturbing frequency in Syria. Since 2012, when the first reports emerged of the use of chemicals in Syria, WHO has been engaged in public health preparedness for the management of patients exposed to chemical or toxic gas. These actions have included issuing new clinical management protocols, preparing hospitals to receive and treat patients, distributing protective equipment to hospitals, and raising awareness among Syrians on how they can protect themselves against exposure and when to seek treatment.

Since the beginning of 2016, WHO has trained 438 clinicians on the initial management of chemical weapons cases, including pre-hospital decontamination, referral, triage and treatment. An additional 99 doctors in northern Syria have been trained by WHO's field office in Gaziantep, southern Turkey.

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In 2017, WHO is scaling up its response in the area of trauma care management in Syria, based on the following priorities:

Strengthen trauma preparedness, care and management by building capacities, providing medicines, medical supplies, blood products and equipment across the country;

Expand partnerships with nongovernmental organizations, especially in hard-to-reach and opposition controlled areas, to strengthen trauma care management, including referrals;

Pre-position medical supplies near areas of intense conflict;

Develop and conduct “training of trainers” courses on trauma care in conflicts.

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