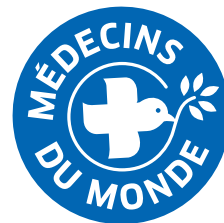


RS VAN DE WERELD MÉDIC
DER WELT दुनिया के डॉक्टर
ÄRZTE DER WELT ÄRZTI
DICOS DEL MUNDO 世界

**PRESS
KIT**
DÉCEMBER 2012

IS DEL MUNDO 世界の医療団 ÄRZTE DER WELT दुनिया के
世界医生组织 DOCTORS OF THE WORLD منظمة أطباء العالم
क्टर MÉDECINS DU MONDE 世界医生组织 DOCTORS OF
.T दुनिया के डॉक्टर MÉDECINS DU MONDE 世界医生组织



GIVING CARE **IN SYRIA AND ITS BORDERS** BEARING WITNESS **TO SUFFERING**



Doctors of the World alongside displaced populations in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon

EDITORIAL



More than a year and a half after the start of the conflict in Syria, the death toll is quite simply tragic. More than 40,000 dead, according to the SOHR*, tens of thousands wounded, more than one million internally displaced and hundreds of thousands of refugees in neighbouring countries. And everything suggests that the future will be even bleaker.

International diplomacy has failed, hesitating between negotiating and sanctioning, essentially show support for the armed opposition, calling for an end to violence, perfunctory humanitarian response.

In such circumstances, the humanitarian finds himself trapped, reduced to helping refugees in the neighbouring countries that host them without actually giving them any status, nor being able to negotiate safe access to civilians and wounded trapped in the violence. Support networks in Syria are mostly the Syrian, organised catch as catch can by groups of local physicians or their colleagues abroad. Humanitarian aid remains at the margin of a lasting and extremely deadly conflict, putting rescuers to the test of devising all possible ways to act, even remotely, to help those who need it.

It is good for us, Doctors of the World, to treat civilians and wounded, without discrimination, and to refuse the unacceptable, in a conflict that in many ways recalls the relentless violence against civilians seen elsewhere in Bosnia or Chechnya.

It is our responsibility to try despite the risks to come to the aid of those who are caught in the spiral of violence that characterizes this filthy war. And to again and again remind the government forces just as much as the armed groups in Syria, as in other theatres of confrontation, that not everything is permitted. No, you do not finish off the wounded and you do not execute doctors and staff because they seek to help them. No, you do not bomb hospitals and healthcare facilities. No, hospitals cannot become places of torture and summary executions. No, you must not bomb residential neighbourhoods with impunity or impose a murderous blockade on them. And finally to remind all the more or less influential UN Member States in the region that the right to flee the country when we are in danger of death exists, and that it is therefore their responsibility to be able to receive those who decide to flee to preserve their lives and those of their families.

Dr Thierry Brigaud, President of Doctors of the World France
Pierre Salignon, General Director of Doctors of the World France

* Syrian Observatory for Human Rights



The camp in Qah, in northern Syria

IN SYRIA, WITH THE DISPLACED IN QAH, IN THE NORTH OF THE COUNTRY



“LEILA IS 21 YEARS OLD.

IN MARCH 2012, AFTER BEING ARRESTED

while protesting against the regime in a peaceful demonstration, she was tortured for several days by a man who told her he was welcoming her on behalf of Bashar al-Assad. «The cup of coffee» is offered by the men of the regime, as they are sometimes call the torture to which they subject Syrians. Finally released after paying a fine, she decided to become a rescuer to help the wounded in the Aleppo region. «I was working in the Dar al Shifa hospital which was bombed a week ago. The regime's forces were using ambulances to attack the field hospitals. They were also picking up the rebels wounded during the fighting to finish them off». Forced into hiding to continue to help the victims, she is a witness to the fury of the regime against healthcare facilities and medical personnel. «Three nurses were arrested because they were carrying first aid kits. Their partly burned bodies were returned to their families seven days later». In Aleppo, in Salaheddine district, while she was transporting one of the wounded to another rescuer, a sniper aimed and finished off the already unconscious man. Outraged, she nevertheless continued to help the wounded despite the risks. One of her nurse friends was arrested and raped. «They wrote horrible things on her body with a knife». Leila continues to work and risk her life for, as she says, «all the people who are being tortured in Syria, all the women who are being raped, all the wounded who do not have access to healthcare facilities while the West and the Arab countries do nothing to help them».

21 months after the start of the Syrian revolution, violence against civilians continues inside the country. Deraa, Homs, Aleppo, Damascus and other Syrian cities are experiencing regular bombings and are the theatres of clashes between the insurgency and the regime. Faced with increasing violence affecting the civilian population and medical and health facility staff, the Syrians have no other choice but to flee. According to the UN, there are more than 1.2 million displaced people within the country alone.

«At Lattakia, I saw military doctors finishing off the wounded on the operating table. After that, I decided to join the revolution as a caregiver.»

Abdullah, 35, a doctor and former officer of the regime.

In this context and to assist displaced populations, Doctors of the World opened a primary healthcare centre in the camp of Qah, in October. Located in a camp with a capacity of 5,000 people, near the Turkish border, the health facility receives nearly 100 patients a day, mostly women and children. «The main pathologies encountered by our teams are ailments related to the living conditions of these people during their many displacements. They have often left in haste, leaving behind everything they owned, which makes them even more vulnerable», says Joel Weiler, general coordinator of the programme in Syria and of the on-site team consisting of a doctor, a nurse, an interpreter, a guard and a medical secretary. The intensification of violence and fighting is leading to a constant influx of people into the camp, which currently has more than 600 tents and is accommodating almost five thousand Syrians. With the approach of winter, the Doctors of the World teams are also providing distribution of blankets, soap and plastic sheeting to ensure sealing of tents and better living conditions for the winter. A system of water supply and wastewater disposal and the distribution of hygiene kits are currently being implemented to reduce



In Syria, near the Turkish border

the risk of infectious diseases in the camp. To date, nearly 1,500 consultations have been carried out in the centre.

Near the camp, to meet the demand of local Syrian communities, Doctors of the World teams are currently installing a centre for post-partum women living in the regional camps and who have recently given birth. The centre has ten beds and can accommodate mother and child for five days to provide them with decent living conditions and a little warmth and comfort. Postnatal care will also be provided by three nurses who will strengthen the team. Despite the extremely tense security situation, the centre should be up and running in the coming days.

COMING TO THE ASSISTANCE OF THE CIVILIAN POPULATION: A VICTIM OF SHELLING

At the Syrian border, Doctors of the World is providing technical support to a post-operative and rehabilitation centre. Open for six months, it has received more than 1,200 patients who had been operated on in Syrian hospitals or clinics but whose postoperative follow-up and rehabilitation were not ensured. Currently, 77 patients are being treated there. Most come from Aleppo, Homs, Hama and Idlib, and are civilians injured in the regime's bombings or shooting. An Doctors of the World nurse and a physiotherapist are helping to organise the centre and provide every day support to local teams, composed of seven doctors and several volunteers. The majority of patients are suffering from neurological and spinal cord injuries, with multiple fractures, amputations and paraplegia. The team will quickly be reinforced by a second physiotherapist, a doctor in functional rehabilitation and a doctor of infectious diseases. The activities of Doctors of the World in northern Syria came to complete the support project to the networks of Syrian doctors who have come to the medical assistance within the country, in partnership with UOSSM (Union of Syrian Medical Relief Organizations).

“KHALED IS TWENTY YEARS OLD AND COMES FROM THE BAB EL AMR NEIGHBOURHOOD OF HOMS.

On his way to university, he was caught in the bombing and received several shrapnel fragments to his head. This has affected his brain, and he now has motor difficulties and has trouble walking. «I lost consciousness and I did not know until afterwards that a car had stopped to pick me up.» Transported to a local hospital, his evacuation to Turkey was organized by the Syrian Liberation Army.

«I hadn't had any surgery, just a dressing for time enough to reach the border. It took us 8 hours to go from Homs to Hama and then to Idlib. There, I had to stay in intensive care for 25 days. My condition did not allow me to move and I was still unconscious.

Once stabilized, Khaled was transported to the other side of the border. Today, he still needs to undergo an operation to fully close his skull. He has already undergone a decompression craniotomy to prevent a brain oedema. For him, the future is not in Syria and he has no desire to return. «There is nothing left of Bab el Amr; all the people have fled».

PROVIDING MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AND DRUGS: MEDECINS DU MONDE SUPPORTING NETWORKS OF SYRIAN DOCTORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Since April 2012, Doctors of the World has materially support networks of Syrian physicians supported by teams of volunteers coming to help the people throughout the Syrian territory. Faced with violence and widespread shelling, medical needs keep growing. Medical personnel and health facilities remain the target of government forces and have already paid a heavy price since the beginning of the events. In this context, networks of doctors were set up within a few months in major cities in Syria, be it in Deraa, Homs, Aleppo or Damascus, to try to cope with the emergency medical needs.

Significant needs have been clearly identified for medical treatment and emergency care related to the massive shelling, and those chronic medical conditions affecting part of the population (e.g. asthma, diabetes and heart failure). If the drugs to treat such diseases are still available in the field, they are beginning to run out. The transport and supplying of drugs are essentially one of the weapons of repression used by the regime. In addition, in a state of lawlessness, where the violence of the regime is planned and systematic (widespread torture, rape, blockading neighbourhoods that have risen up against it, cutting off of water and electricity), the mental health of the population lies at the heart of medical priorities. If for the moment a drug response is provided, quick solutions must be put in place to deal with posttraumatic shock and to deal with the consequences of the brutalisation of the society that could jeopardize the country's reconstruction.

Organized in coordination, support networks are helping people streamline the procurement and distribution of drugs throughout Syria via pharmacies located in the affected areas and through smuggling networks on the border. Deliveries of drugs, money and medical supplies from neighbouring countries are done several times a week when a passage is possible. If this system reduces the medical needs of the population and helps the injured, it remains fragile and is subject to the sharply deteriorated security situation currently prevailing in Syria.

“ARRESTED BY GOVERNMENT FORCES, OMAR AND HIS BROTHER WERE TORTURED FOR SEVERAL DAYS

in the airport itself at Hama, transformed into a torture centre. «I had no political affiliation nor did my brother; I just participated in protests at the beginning of the revolution». Stripped and beaten by several men at the same time, electrocuted and drowned, whipped with metal cables and drugged, Omar lost consciousness several times, always revived by his torturers in order to beat him again. If the wounds on his back have healed over, the flesh on his feet is still painful and his toenails are barely growing back. His brother, sicklier, did not survive. He was finally released after four days of torture and for a penalty of 15,000 euros paid by his family. «I just want these people to go away and live in peace in my country. For my brother, it's too late, may God look after him now».

The camp in Qah, in northern Syria





Doctors of the World centre in the camp in Zataari, Jordan

IN JORDAN AND LEBANON, SYRIAN REFUGEES LIVING IN LIMBO AND UNCERTAINTY

Moved many times within their country, fleeing combat zones, hundreds of thousands of Syrians have taken refuge in the neighbouring countries of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq. Currently estimated at 408,000 and 720,000 by the end of the year*, the influx has not let up since the beginning of the revolution. In Jordan and Lebanon since the beginning of the year, Doctors of the World has been providing vulnerable populations with quality primary healthcare and mental health for free.

IN JORDAN, AT RAMTHA, ZAATARI AND KING ABDULLAH PARK

For several months, Doctors of the World teams have been contributing to the medical and psychological care for Syrians who have taken refuge in Jordan. Before the opening of the camp in Zaatari, near the Syrian border, most refugees unofficially entering Jordanian territory were received in transit camps and gradually transferred to the host communities located in Ramtha and Mafraq for most of them, and in Zarqa, Amman and the southern govern-

rates for the rest. Syrians refugees in Jordan are mainly from Daraa, one of the cradles of the Syrian revolution, and Homs, a city long besieged and bombarded at the centre of the country.

Near the Syrian border, and Deraa, Ramtha was one of the first cities to see the Syrians flock, fleeing the fighting. The economic and social connections between the two cities helped the hosting of refugees into Jordanian families or in rented accommodations in the city. Last July, Doctors of the World opened primary healthcare centre in the city centre, where 1,300 patients were seen in October. Medical consultations are provided by Doctors of the World teams (one doctor, two nurses and a pharmacist), which also provide monitoring of pregnant women and people with chronic diseases, and immunizations when they are needed. Doctors of the World ensures the provision of drugs and medical equipment. Not far from Ramtha, in King Abdullah Park, a camp was set up mid-year. There are nearly 1,500 Syrians now living there in prefabricated habitats. Doctors of the World is present there and helps the Jordanian Ministry of Health staff that provide primary healthcare. In October, nearly 1,400 consultations were carried out by the teams.

* Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

“I WAS THINKING ABOUT LEAVING SYRIA FOR A MONTH, WHEN THE REGIME FELL”.

At almost 50 years of age, Ahmed reached Zaatari in September. He was working as a construction worker in Deraa when he fled Syria. Frightened by the violence and the abuses of the regime, Ahmed decided to send his family to Jordan in early July to protect them. His wife and ten children crossed the Jordanian border with the help of the Free Syrian Army and he joined them when his house was completely destroyed by shelling.

«Life in the camp is difficult because of the lack of food, disruptions in the supply of water and electricity outages.

Last week, we did not have power for two days,» says Ahmed. Like all Syrians in the camp, his family is allowed two food rations per month, prepared by the World Food Programme: lentils, flour and six cans of tuna. With the approach of winter, they lack warm clothing. They left Syria in mid-summer during the rains, taking only the bare minimum. «There are no good quality blankets or heating or hot water for showers. My son caught a cold and my daughter of 11 months has no shoes with which to walk outside. Most of the time, when one of the members of the family falls ill, Ahmed takes him/her to the Doctors of the World health facility. «There are proper medical services and we can have access to healthcare and medicines when we need them».

Two of his sisters and his father remain in Syria, as well as his brothers and several nephews. Ahmed is able to reach them by phone daily for news. «We know that we will be staying here for a long time yet; the situation in Syria is not improving and I'm not optimistic.» For him, the more refugees there are in the camp, the fewer services and support for his family there will be. «A significant part of the aid distributed by the NGOs does not get to people who need it most.»

When Ahmed came to Zaatari in September, he had 1,000 Jordanian dinars (1,100 euros). Today, he has spent nearly all of it for food and receives no other financial assistance. Living in a prefabricated shelter whose roof lets in the cold and the rain, he knows that without money and without the right to leave the camp or to work, he will not be able to provide for his family. «If my house had not been destroyed in the shelling and if I still had a car and my tools, I would return to Syria.»



Consultations in the Doctors of the World centre in the camp in Zaatari, Jordan

ZAATARI: OVER 30,000 REFUGEES AS WINTER APPROACHES

In August last year, Doctors of the World opened a primary healthcare centre in the camp in Zaatari, which now hosts more than 30,000 Syrians. Doctors of the World teams (doctors, nurses, pharmacists) provide medical care for refugees, sometimes up to a thousand joining the camp daily. Respiratory infections, skin diseases, wounds and diarrhoea are the various pathologies encountered the most in Zaatari. They are related to poor living conditions and to the long journey before arriving in Jordan. With the approach of winter, most of the refugees are still housed in tents, without means of heat or warm clothes, with inadequate amounts of blankets. The first cold days have seen an increase in the number of consultations for respiratory infections in particular. Teams of caregiver staff have been educated by a referent Doctors of the World psychologist in the detection of mental health problems and trained in referring patients who need psychological counselling. The referrals are made to a network of Syrian and Jordanian psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers specially trained by Doctors of the World in treating cases of post-traumatic stress.

IN LEBANON IN THE VALLEY OF THE BEKAA

«We went through the mountains to get to Lebanon. I had to walk for 10 hours, at night, with my baby daughter in my arms. We left our village in Syria, located a few kilometres from the border, at 7 pm, and reached Lebanon at dawn. The official border has been closed for five months. Cars and trucks are blocked and the Syrian army officers refused to let us through.»

Haya, a refugee in El Qaa, Lebanon



In the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, Syrian refugees are very isolated, divided into camps next to the villages

In Lebanon at the end of October 2012, the number of Syrians registered or pending registration with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees exceeded the threshold of 100,000. The Bekaa region is the one that takes in the most of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, most of which coming from the city of Homs, located 50 kilometres from the Lebanese border. These people, mostly women and children, were taken in by relatives who had been working in Lebanon for many years or by Lebanese, many of whom had taken refuge in Syria during the 2006 conflict. Although they are not in camps, living conditions remain extremely precarious: housed in makeshift tents, abandoned or half-built buildings, the arrival of winter is a real threat, especially for their health. Located in many villages throughout the valley, they are also very isolated. Doctors of the World supports and supplies drugs to two health facilities in the Bekaa Valley, and to El-Ain and El-Qaa, the latter being 8 kilometres from the Syrian border. Doctors of the World is working closely with local organizations. The El-Ain centre is thus part of a network of 23 community health centres created and managed by Amel, a Lebanese Doctors of the World partner association for over thirty years.

In both the centres supported by Doctors of the World, Syrian refugees and the poorest Lebanese have access to free primary healthcare as well as to specialist consultations, gynaecology for example. Health education and detection of malnutrition activities have also been performed. Nearly 1,000 consultations are carried out each month at each of the centres. In addition, a first-aid training was conducted in the five villages of the Bekaa.

In the event of an opening by Syria to NGOs, Doctors of the World has developed significant emergency stocks at the Syrian border, consisting of first aid kits and primary health kits and surgical equipment for logistics, transport and communication.

“BASEM, HANAN AND RASHA ARE ALL THREE SIBLINGS.

They were living near the Lebanese border, in a rural area of Syrian, when 15 members of the family fled together, across the mountain to reach Lebanon. A long trek to avoid the border posts, and during which they were shot at several times. When arrived to El Qaa in October, they first lived in a half-built house, without doors or windows. They ended up buying a large tent on credit and are registered directly with the UNHCR in El Qaa. So far, the family has received no assistance or even vouchers from the UN to buy food, or for clothing handouts to which they went nonetheless. «We don't even have anything to keep ourselves warm, just a few blankets, and no money.» Basem has eight children; Hanan, four. Their mother also came with them; she has knee problems and cannot walk. Hanan has a sharp pain in the chest, which is why she came in for a consultation at the El Qaa centre. She hoped that the doctors would give her the drugs that would give her relief. Recently, Rasha was wounded by shrapnel in the shoulder and Basem by a stray bullet in the leg.

Two family members have remained in Syria to keep watch over their homes and farming tools. They have lost several shops and three family houses have been destroyed. «In Syria, the crisis has developed over the months. At first, the military arrived and set up checkpoints. They started checking papers. The checks became routine; they stopped people who were wanted. Sometimes they killed them right there at the checkpoints. The shelling of villages known to be against the regime became regular. First with artillery and then helicopters. Entire neighbourhoods were destroyed and we had to flee.» Unable to even move about to find food, the family decided to leave for Lebanon.



After a shelling near the camp in Qah, Syria



Care of a patient wounded by shrapnel, Syrian border

A CALL TO SYRIA

Faced with the tragic situation in Syria, Doctors of the World has launched a call last August to reaffirm that, in this country, as elsewhere, there are rules of international law that all parties to the conflict must respect. Since its launch, the call has reached over one million Shares on social networks.

WE, DOCTORS OF THE WORLD, REFUSE...

In Syria, the resurgence of violence is affecting the population and targeting wounded people, medical staff and health structures.

We, Doctors of the World, are calling for all parties to respect the rules of international law in times of war, including respecting medical care providers and their ethical obligation to provide care.

Health professionals are murdered and tortured; hospitals are inaccessible to the wounded who fear reprisals and there are constant barriers to receiving medical care in hospitals and in bombed and besieged areas. Secretly carrying medicines is now a crime. Today, violence toward civilians knows no bounds: there are an estimated 40,000 dead, in addition to thousands of prison detainees, hundreds of thousands of displaced people or refugees, and how many wounded with no medical care? As shocking as it may sound, this is the real face of this conflict.

In light of this terrible reality, and even while access to victims is still limited, it is our duty to forcefully speak out against this situation and to hold the belligerents to account.

We feel it is important to recall some obvious facts, which so far seem to have been forgotten:

✎ We, Doctors of the World, reject the bombing and killing of civilians, including women and children. During times of war, civilians must be protected.

✎ We, Doctors of the World, reject the execution and torture of doctors simply because they treat the wounded. During times of war, doctors and medical staff must be protected.

✎ We, Doctors of the World, reject the targeting of hospitals and their use as places of torture and repression. During times of war, the wounded must be protected, hospitals must be safe havens and doctors have a duty to heal all patients.

✎ We, Doctors of the World, reject the hampering of medical action and subjecting relief staff to violence or attacks. During times of war, access to the wounded and civilians must be facilitated for health professionals.

✎ We, Doctors of the World, remind all parties that every person has the right to receive medical care under any circumstances and anywhere, without prejudice.

The third article common to the four Geneva conventions applicable to non-international armed conflicts sets out what constitutes a minimum of humane treatment.

In Syria, as elsewhere, there are rules of international law that all actors in the conflict must respect.

Pass on our call!

This file is based on interviews conducted in November 2012 among displaced Syrians and refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. The first names of these individuals have been changed to respect anonymity.

Photo report : Agnès Varraine Leca

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Zaatari camp in Jordan