



ACTION PACK: Medics under fire in Syria

The medical community is under attack. Syrian doctors, nurses and paramedics are working around the clock to save lives in the most dangerous place on earth. All the while, they are hunted down and tortured because of their work. They are the targets of snipers. But most of all, they are the victims of government bombings.

Hospitals are deliberately targeted. Every major field hospital in the province of Aleppo has been bombed at least once.¹ Despite this, these medical workers remain on the front lines, treating some of the most horrific injuries the world has ever seen. They operate by the light of their cell phones, saving lives in makeshift hospitals in basements, caves and abandoned buildings.

On average, a medical worker is killed every other day. Those remaining have issued an urgent call-to-action. **Medical workers in Syria are asking every member of the medical community around the world to join their call to the UN Security Council: clear the skies over Syria - stop the bombs, with a no-fly zone if necessary.** The collective pressure of the most trusted people in our societies can get leaders' attention and pressure them to act.

The job begins here. The medical community around the world can amplify Syrian medics' call-to-action, and use that solidarity to get decision-makers to act.

I am a medical worker, and I want to help.

Great. Syrian medics and the civilians they treat need support from around the world to gain the protection of the international community. The goal is to reach decision-makers with a loud message to clear the skies of bombs and help stop the atrocities. You'll find ideas below for things you can do with others or individually to make this campaign a success.

1. Recruitment

Our number one priority is solidarity from medical workers worldwide. If you are a nurse, doctor, paramedic, or other health worker, sign the petition to the UN Security Council to stop the bombs here:

www.medicsunderfire.org

¹ 'In the Aleppo governorate, every major field hospital has been bombed multiple times' (Source: Syrian American Medical Society)
https://www.sams-usa.net/foundation/images/PDFs/Syrian%20Medical%20Voices%20from%20the%20Ground_F.pdf



After signing up, **share the link above with your medical networks**. This can include:

- Your hospital's email list,
 - Medical forums you belong to,
 - Your union,
 - ... Or any other ways you can think of to reach colleagues in the medical community.
- We need thousands to join.**

2. Lobbying

Meet with your local representative (Or most powerful decision-maker you know)

Set up a face-to-face meeting - take along any colleagues in the medical field that also support the campaign. Print the fact sheet below and take it with you - use it for talking points. Tell your decision-maker why you, as a member of the medical community, believe they should stand with this call from Syrian medics and take action to stop the bombs.

Here are some talking points to help you make your case to colleagues in the medical community and decision-makers you are meeting:

FACT SHEET: The Medical Community Under Fire in Syria

- Syria is the most dangerous place in the world to be a doctor.² Medics are systematically hunted down, arrested and tortured for doing their work.³ (Source: SAMS, PHR)
- As of December 31, 2014, 599 medical personnel had been killed since the conflict began, including 195 doctors, 117 nurses, 114 medics, and 56 pharmacists, among others. In 2014, a medical worker was killed every other day on average.⁴ The real figures are expected to be much higher. (Source: PHR)

²

https://www.sams-usa.net/foundation/images/PDFs/Syrian%20Medical%20Voices%20from%20the%20Ground_F.pdf p. 9

³ One doctor interviewed by SAMS said: "They told me that if I didn't admit to working in a field hospital they would torture me more." Another said: "The most important thing was not to reveal my role in medical work." They knew, and were told by interrogators, that doctors were tortured worse than other prisoners.

https://www.sams-usa.net/foundation/images/PDFs/Syrian%20Medical%20Voices%20from%20the%20Ground_F.pdf p. 8

⁴ https://s3.amazonaws.com/PHR_other/Syria%27s-Medical-Community-Under-Assault-February-2015.pdf

- 97% of medics killed in Syria have been killed by the Syrian government.⁵ (Source: PHR)
- Field hospitals are deliberately attacked.⁶ Doctors interviewed by SAMS reported attacks with barrel bombs, cluster munitions, missile strikes and cannons in hospitals all over Syria. One attack in 2014 in the Zibdine area killed the entire medical staff of a hospital - a doctor and seven nurses.⁷ (Source: SAMS, PHR)
- Surgeons are dealing with an unprecedented number of horrific injuries as a result of the surge in use of improvised weapons, like the barrel bomb. Injuries include limb amputation and the penetration of large pieces of shrapnel in internal organs. (Source: SAMS)
- Barrel bombs are old containers filled with scrap metal, TNT and sometimes even axes. They are designed to inflict maximum damage to humans and infrastructure.
- Medics are treating these injuries in unbelievable circumstances. Field hospitals are set up in caves, abandoned farms and factories and apartments. With no electricity and generators, they sometimes conduct surgeries by the light of a cell phone.
- Medics are also treating chemical attack patients with little supplies and no adequate training to deal with poison gas symptoms.
- Medics are treating patients in areas under siege where medical supplies cannot come in, and patients cannot be transported out. One doctor in an MSF-supported hospital spoke of operating on two people at once, with no sleep for days on end.⁸ Medical staff made homemade gauze to help treat injuries.⁹ (Source: MSF)
- When doctors interviewed by SAMS were asked what help they needed, every doctor almost without exception said: “Stop the bombing”.¹⁰ (Source: SAMS)

⁵ https://s3.amazonaws.com/PHR_syria_map/web/index.html

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<http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/press/press-releases/new-map-shows-government-forces-deliberately-attacking-syrias-medical-system.html>

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https://www.sams-usa.net/foundation/images/PDFs/Syrian%20Medical%20Voices%20from%20the%20Ground_F.pdf p. 7

⁸ <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/article/syria-surgery-under-siege>

⁹ <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/article/syria-endless-night-getting-darker-and-darker>

¹⁰

https://www.sams-usa.net/foundation/images/PDFs/Syrian%20Medical%20Voices%20from%20the%20Ground_F.pdf p. 25



- Syrian medics are calling for solidarity from their colleagues around the world. They want them to join their call to the UN Security Council to stop the bombing of civilians, medics and hospitals by implementing a no-fly zone if necessary.
- The UN Security Council has banned the use of indiscriminate weapons in civilian areas and chemical attacks, but has not acted to stop them.
- Medics are some of the most respected members of our society around the world. They have moral authority and could convince decision-makers to act on the Syrian medics' demands to clear the skies.
- We want over 1,000 medics around the world to sign Dr Tennari's petition to the UN Security Council to stop the bombs.

For more information, read the following reports:

Syrian Medical Voices from the Ground: The Ordeal of Syria's Healthcare Professionals
(A joint report between The Center for Public Health and Human Rights of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Syrian American Medical Society)

https://www.sams-usa.net/foundation/images/PDFs/Syrian%20Medical%20Voices%20from%20the%20Ground_F.pdf

Syria's Medical Community Under Assault (*Physicians for Human Rights*)

https://s3.amazonaws.com/PHR_other/Syria%27s-Medical-Community-Under-Assault-February-2015.pdf

Syria: Surgery Under Siege (*MSF*)

<http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/article/syria-surgery-under-siege>

3. Organise and get the word out

Put up a poster on your notice board

Print and put up this poster in your hospital, medical school or clinic:

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.thesyriacampaign.org/images/MedicalPoster.jpg>

Email info@thesyriacampaign.org if you need it translated into your language.



The medical community in the press

Write a letter to your editor or place an op-ed in your local paper or any other media outlet. Use the factsheet above to write about why the UN Security Council should take action to stop the bombs. Write something from the heart - from your perspective as a medical worker. Write to shed light on what's happening to medical workers and their patients in Syria as a result of barrel bombs. This is crucial - the number of people that have never heard of barrel bombs might be in the billions. We cannot get action without awareness.

Make your support visible

Take a picture in your uniform with a message of solidarity for Syria's medics - the more of you there are, the more powerful it will be. Share it on social media using the hashtag #medicsunderfire

Organise with others

Find other medical workers who care as deeply as you do. Together, **brainstorm ways you can get medical workers from your community and beyond to join the campaign.**

Thank you for standing with Syria's medics. Your support is everything.

To get in touch email with campaign organisers, or if you're interested in doing even more, email info@thesyriacampaign.org