

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK of Academies & Scholarly Societies



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June 26, 2025

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We, members of the Executive Committee of the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies (IHRN) have long worked to highlight the problem of violence against health professionals, including in conflict zones. Such violence endangers those individuals delivering needed health care and severely impairs health services, compounding the suffering of civilians and depriving them of access to care. Despite a unanimously adopted [UN Security Council Resolution \(Resolution 2286\)](#) demanding that all parties to armed conflicts prevent and address attacks on health care providers in accordance with international law, the problem is escalating. This escalation is part of a wider flouting of international legal standards, with severely damaging consequences for human rights and the rule of law.

According to the recently released [Annual Report \(2024\)](#) of the [Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition \(SHCC\)](#), a group of more than 40 organizations working to protect health workers and services threatened by war or civil unrest:

Never before has the [SHCC] recorded such a high number of reported incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care in conflict as in 2024. The SHCC identified 3,623 incidents in 2024, marking a 15% increase from 2023 and a 62% rise from 2022.

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The SHCC report indicates that “(b)y far the largest number of attacks on health care – more than 1,300 – took place in Gaza and the West Bank, far more than [SHCC has] ever reported in one conflict in one year, including more than double the number of health workers killed.” The horrific conditions in Gaza, including for health care providers, have prompted the unprecedented statement from the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that the situation has become “hell on Earth”. ICRC’s head has stressed that conditions in Gaza are “surpassing any acceptable, legal, moral, and humane standard”.¹

(*Nobel Laureate)

But this problem is widespread; the report details attacks in 23 countries and territories, including hundreds of attacks in each of Lebanon, Myanmar, Sudan, and Ukraine. On average, health care workers and facilities came under attack ten times per day in 2024. The ICRC President reminds us that humanity is failing under our collective watch.

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvgq0gy82wjo>

We once again call on all parties to armed conflicts to safeguard the rights of health professionals, as part of the parties' wider obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, and we reject arguments that attacks on individuals delivering health care are an inevitable outcome of conflict. Violence against health professionals in conflict does not result from an absence of agreed legal rules; it results from a *disregard* of those rules.

At the same time, we recognize that much wider support is needed to address this growing problem, including from the global research and health communities of which we are a part. We strongly urge national academies, and others within the research and health communities, to:

- unambiguously condemn attacks on health professionals performing their duties, often in the face of significant danger;
- support the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2286, which provides a roadmap for protecting health professionals in conflict zones;
- call upon their governments to take a firm stand against violence against health professionals and to support actions aimed at holding the perpetrators of such violence to account;
- take steps to raise awareness of this global problem and its impact on access to health care, a fundamental human right, through events and other activities. The research and health communities have an important role to play in countering the lack of understanding of this problem, which contributes to silence in the face of atrocities.

Finally, in a time of growing international instability and uncertainty, we urge researchers and health professionals within and beyond our network to emphasize the value of international human rights and the rule of law as an essential framework for global society.

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