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Human Rights



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**Resources | Press Release**


# PHR Demands Protection for Medical Workers and Facilities Amid Middle East Escalation

All parties are obliged to respect the sanctity of health care during conflict

March 6, 2026 | Attacks on Health Care, Iran

As the military conflict between Iran, Israel, and the United States escalates and spreads across the Middle East, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) calls on all parties to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including by protecting medical personnel and health facilities from attack and ensuring health care can function unimpeded.

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The United States and Israel have been striking Iran since February 28, causing widespread damage across the country. Iran has responded with an ongoing campaign of indiscriminate rocket and drone attacks across the region. The attacks by all sides are killing and injuring civilians and damaging health care infrastructure. In Iran, damage to health facilities from U.S. and Israeli attacks includes **Gandhi Hospital** and an **Iranian Red Crescent facility** near Khatam al-Anbiya Hospital, both in Tehran. In Lebanon, **three paramedics were killed, and six injured** while responding to Israeli strikes launched in retaliation for Hezbollah rockets. At a briefing on Thursday, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director general, said it had verified **13 attacks on health care in Iran and one in Lebanon**.

“From **Syria and Ukraine to Gaza**, PHR has been documenting a **steady deterioration in respect for the sanctity of hospitals and medical personnel in times of conflict**. This disregard for civilians’ right to health care violates not only global norms but also binding international law. What is essential now is unimpeded access to health care for all, full protection for health care workers and facilities, and genuine accountability for these violations,” said Zarifi.

“**Iran’s violent crackdown on protesters in January** demonstrated a total disregard for the

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The conflict in the Middle East has also severely disrupted civilian access to basic health care, blocking the movement of medical supplies and interrupting patient care across the region. In Gaza, the closure of the Rafah border crossing has stranded more than 18,000 patients awaiting medical evacuation, including 4,000 children. In Dubai, the **WHO's largest logistics hub** has suspended operations due to insecurity and supply chain disruptions, **leaving \$18 million in medical supplies stranded**, including polio diagnostics, medicines for chronic diseases, and emergency kits for countries in conflict.

“When a hospital is destroyed, or a health worker killed, the ripple effects are severe, including untreated wounds, preventable deaths, and collapsed health systems that can devastate communities for years. These attacks violate international law and cause harm that extends far beyond the immediate casualties. PHR calls on all parties to uphold their obligations and immediately cease all attacks on health care,” concluded Zarifi.

*Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) is a New York-based advocacy organization that uses science and medicine to prevent mass atrocities and severe human rights violations. [Learn more here.](#)*

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