

Attacks on Health Care

Monthly News Brief

SHCC Attacks on Health Care

The section aligns with the definition of attacks on health care used by the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC).

December
2020

This monthly digest comprises threats and violence as well as protests and other events affecting the delivery of and access to health care.

It is prepared by Insecurity Insight from information available in open sources.

The incidents reported are not a complete nor a representative list of all events that affected the provision of health care and have not been independently verified

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Africa

Cameroon

As reported on 10 December 2020: In Bamenda town, Mezam department, Northwest region, the provincial government reportedly suspended partnerships between an INGO and Santa Maria Soledad Catholic Hospital Bamenda, as well as other health facilities across the region. The government stated that the reason for suspending the INGOs partnerships was that the Ministry of Public Health was awaiting “the definition of the framework of activities”. **Source:** [Mimi Mefo Info](#)

26 December 2020: In Bambui township, Tubah sub-division, Northwest region, members of the Cameroon Armed Forces stormed the Tubah District Hospital, killing a patient and bike rider who was transporting the patient to hospital. **Source:** [Mimi Mefo Info](#)

Central African Republic

27 December 2020: In Bouar town, Nana-Mambéré prefecture, armed perpetrators broke into the ICRC's premises at night, ransacked the buildings and looted equipment and veterinary products. Three guards were injured. In response, the ICRC was forced to drastically reduce its humanitarian activities in Bouar. Some staff will reportedly be redeployed elsewhere in the Central African Republic pending the return of a minimum of security in the city. **Source:** [ICRC](#)

27 December 2020: In Kaga-Bandoro town, Nana-Grébizi prefecture, an unidentified gunman entered the compound of an ICRC-supported hospital, threatened security personnel and robbed them of their personal property. **Source:** [ICRC](#)

28 December 2020: In Grimari city, Ouaka prefecture, an off-duty MSF staff member was wounded, and several civilians killed and injured when the public transport truck they were travelling in was caught in the crossfire of unidentified gunmen. The MSF staff member later died from their injuries. **Source:** [MSF](#)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

01 December 2020: In Fizi territory, South Kivu province, an INGO announced the closure of most of its activities in the territory following a number of violent attacks targeting their personnel in recent months. Only a small number of services will continue, including SIDA and tuberculosis treatment, amongst others. **Sources:** [Actualité](#) and [Radio Okapi](#)

Around 15 December 2020: In Kananga town, Kananga, Kasai-Central, at least 10 doctors and one nurse were attacked and wounded by unidentified armed men while the victims were working as members of coronavirus response teams. **Source:** [ACLED](#)¹

HEALTH WORKER SAFETY AND SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC October 2020 Update

Between January and August 2020, Insecurity Insight is compiling identified 822 incidents in 80 countries adversely affecting the delivery of health care. Incidents are classified as related to COVID-19 and/or conflict (see the summary at the bottom of page 3).

The following two pages discuss the difference in the reported conflict- and COVID-related violence against health care personnel, services, infrastructure and equipment by looking at who commits such violence, what weapons are used and what the call for is about the perpetrators' underlying motives.

In March 2020, when the WHO declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic, COVID-related violence against health care was reported from 50 countries around the world. Health workers reported threats and assaults, and demonstrations outside health care facilities impeded access to health care. Such violence was frequently reported during the lockdown periods that were imposed in many countries during the second quarter of 2020. The global scale of reported incidents of COVID-related violence against health care remained high until June until the end of August 2020. However, some countries, notably India, do not follow the global trend.

Attacks on health care (January-August 2020). Reported attacks on health care in the context of conflict or COVID-19.

**Who commits violence against health care?
What weapons are used?
What does this tell us about the perpetrators' underlying motives?
Find out [here](#)**

30 December 2020: Near Kitchanga town, Rutshuru, Nord-Kivu, a male nurse was kidnapped by unidentified militiamen (likely FDR/Nyatura and APCLS) who demanded a 1,200 USD ransom for his release. **Source:** [ACLEDD¹](#)

Ethiopia

As reported on 05 December 2020: In Tigray region, members of the Eritrean Army have taken laboratory equipment, computers, and books from an unnamed medicine production facility. **Source:** [France 24](#)

As reported on 05 December 2020: In Tigray region, in the aftermath of the conflict between the Ethiopian Federal Government and the regional ruling TPLF, fuel shortages have grounded ambulances normally used to ferry patients to hospitals. **Source:** [Reuters](#)

Kenya

30 December 2020: In Mandera county, an IED set by al Shabaab militants detonated by an ambulance ferrying a pregnant woman, setting the vehicle on fire. The husband of the expectant mother died in the attack, while a nurse and the ambulance driver were left with injuries. **Source:** [Garowe Online](#)

Nigeria

07 December 2020: In Gumasa, Geidam LGA, Yobe, large quantities of drugs were stolen from the health center and an ambulance was set ablaze when Boko Haram militants attacked the Gumasa area. Two shops were also set on fire. No casualties reported. **Source:** [ACLEDD¹](#)

10 December 2020: In Calabar City, Cross River state, a physician and his driver were kidnapped from his home by armed perpetrators. The driver was later released. **Source:** [Vanguard](#)

10 December 2020: In Garin Gabas village, Rafi LGA, Niger state, a group of 20 unidentified gunmen kidnapped a nurse and her two children during a wider attack on the village and neighbouring Yakila. **Sources:** [Nkiruka Nistoran](#) and [Independent Nigeria](#)

12 December 2020: In Ogoja town, Cross River state, two armed Fulani herdsmen attempted to abduct a physician working with the Monaya Hospital as he returned home. The physician escaped but suffered a gunshot wound. **Source:** [Vanguard](#)

As reported on 17 December 2020: Over fifty doctors have left the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital in response to the targeted kidnapping of physicians. In 2019 and 2020, 18 physicians or their family members in Cross River State have been abducted for ransom. **Sources:** [The Daily Post](#) and [the Guardian](#)

24 December 2020: In Pemi village, Borno state, Boko Haram militants killed seven villagers, looted food supplies, and stole medical supplies from a hospital before setting it on fire. **Sources:** [BBC](#) and [NZ Herald](#)

26 or 27 December 2020: In Abeokuta city, Ogun state, approximately twelve armed robbers stormed the Lekfad Hospital, stealing vehicles, medications, and valuables from patients. A physician was also beaten by the attackers. **Source:** [Daily Post](#)

Somalia

22 December 2020: In Mogadishu, an IED of unidentified origin attached to a vehicle detonated outside an unnamed hospital. **Sources:** [Garowe Online](#)

Sudan

08 December 2020: In Al Fashir city, North Darfur state, unidentified gunmen reportedly stole a Sudanese Red Crescent Society vehicle, after forcing those on board to get out of the car at gunpoint. **Source:** [Dabanga Sudan](#)

28 December 2020: Between Karnoi and El Fasher, North Darfur state, an ambulance was ambushed and hijacked by seven men in RSF uniforms and armed with Kalashnikovs after getting stuck in mud. The perpetrators threatened the driver at gunpoint and fled. The victims were rescued by a bus and brought back to Kutum town. **Source:** [Radio Dabanga](#)

Asia

Afghanistan

22 December 2020: In Doghabad neighbourhood, Kabul, a roadside bomb of unidentified origin tore through a vehicle, wounding two people and killing at least five, four of them doctors from the health department of the Pul-e-Charki Prison, who were on the way to their office. The car was almost completely destroyed in the blast. **Sources:** [Independent](#), [New Age](#), [Taiwan News](#), [VOA](#) and [Xinhua](#)

Middle East and North Africa

Islamic Republic of Iran

As reported on 09 December 2020: US sanctions against Iran have been hindering the ability of Iran to purchase medicine and health supplies, including COVID-19 vaccines, from abroad, according to Iran's President Hassan Rouhani. **Source:** [VOA](#)

Israel

26 December 2020: The office of the Public Security Minister announced that COVID-19 vaccines will be withheld from the Palestinian prisoner population of approximately 4,400 in Israeli jails until further notice. **Source:** [The New Arab](#)

Libya

01 December 2020: In Souq Al Juma district, Tripoli, unidentified gunmen on board two vehicles reportedly blocked the 11 July Street and abducted the Head of Orthopedic Surgery Department of the Al Khadra Hospital while he was on the way home. **Source:** [WHO](#)

05 December 2020: In Ajdabiya town, Al Wahat district, Cyrenaica region, an intoxicated armed man entered the Pediatric Department of the Al Mogrif Hospital with his sick child, and continuously threatened medical personnel, causing panic and fear among staff, patients and visitors. Pediatric services were temporarily halted. **Source:** [WHO](#)

Occupied Palestinian Territories

26 December 2020: In Gaza Strip, a strike by Israeli forces damaged the Al-Dorra Children's Hospital and a centre for persons with special needs, wounding two civilians, including a child. **Sources:** [Arab News](#) and [The New Arab](#)

27 December 2020: In Ramallah city, West Bank, Israeli forces stormed the courtyards of the Palestine Medical Complex, where they fired teargas canisters and rubber bullets at random. One pregnant Palestinian woman was hit by a rubber bullet on her shoulder, while a paramedic was hit in the arm. Others were left choking from gas inhalation and shocked by the assault. An ambulance also sustained partial damages from fire. **Source:** [The New Arab](#)

Saudi Arabia

08 December 2020: A Saudi court sentenced a Saudi American doctor to six years in prison on charges that include illegally obtaining US citizenship. A travel ban was renewed against the doctor, his wife and six children, all of whom are also US citizens. **Source:** [The New Arab](#)

Syrian Arab Republic

02 December 2020: In Ar-Raqqa city, a doctor was beaten by Syrian Democratic Forces in his clinic for not allowing a member of the Women's Protection Units to skip the queue. **Source:** [ACLED](#)¹

21 December 2020: In Idlib city, Idlib governorate, a displaced doctor was shot and wounded in an assassination attempt by unidentified gunmen. **Source:** [SOHR](#)

Yemen

30 December 2020: At Aden airport, three ICRC staff members were killed, and three others were injured following an explosion. The staff were transiting through the airport with other civilians when the explosion occurred. One ICRC staff member killed in the blast was a Yemeni citizen who helped coordinate ICRC's air transport activities. The second staff member was a Rwandan national who worked as an ICRC x-ray

technician, and the third was a Yemeni health officer in an ICRC-supported hospital who had been pursuing his Ph.D. in the field of medicine. **Source:** [ICRC](#)

The Americas

Brazil

28 December 2020: In Porto Nacional, Tocantins, a male patient admitted to the Porto Nacional Regional Hospital a day earlier due to an assassination attempt was shot and killed by 2 unidentified armed men who stormed into the hospital. **Source:** [G1](#)

Haiti

28 November 2020: In Port-au-Prince, unidentified perpetrators kidnapped an intern on a street near the State University of Haiti Hospital. He was freed on the eve of November 29, following a ransom payment of an unknown amount. This incident prompted staff at multiple healthcare facilities to suspend all non-urgent care activities on 30 November. **Source:** [France 24](#)

Mexico

29 December 2020: In Ciudad Juarez city, Juarez municipality, Chihuahua state, two unidentified gunmen disguised as nurses entered the hospital of the Mexican Institute of Social Services, where they fatally shot a patient who was at the time recovering from a gunshot wound. A third perpetrator remained as a lookout outside the facility. The assailants escaped in an SUV, as frightened staff sought cover. **Source:** [Mail Online](#)

Venezuela

02 December 2020: On the Mariara-Maracay road, La Guaricha sector, Maracay, Aragua state, a bus transporting health workers was fired at by armed individuals, injuring two doctors from the Hospital Central de Maracai. **Source:** [Caracota Digital](#)

Global Health Insecurity

These events go beyond the definition used by the SHCC to cover a wider range of events that affect the provision of health care including events perpetrated by patients or relatives of patients, private individuals and criminals as well as significant strike action or protests by health care personnel.

Africa

Democratic Republic of the Congo

14 December 2020: In Kananga city, Kasai-Central, the national union of medics (SYNAMED) claimed that it had recorded six cases of doctors' houses being robbed and vandalised by robbers in the space of 30 days. **Source:** [Radio Okapi](#)

Kenya

21 December 2020: Led by the Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union, doctors at government hospitals launched a countrywide strike over inadequate insurance benefits and a lack of protective equipment for COVID-19 responders. **Source:** [Al Jazeera](#)

Mali

01 December 2020: In Bafoulabe town and cercle, Kayes region, local health workers, led by their union representatives, launched a 72-hour strike over issues pertaining to their salary. **Source:** [Studio Tamani](#)

Asia and the Pacific

Bangladesh

06 December 2020: Launched on November 26, an ongoing countrywide strike by approximately 26,000 health workers to demand better salaries forced the Bangladeshi Government to postpone a nationwide measles-rubella vaccination campaign to December 12. However, with the strike ongoing at this date the programme was postponed once more. The country's vaccine storage system has come under heavy stress due to large numbers of unused vaccines being stored at a time when cold storage systems are needed for preserving COVID-19 vaccines. **Source:** [New Age](#)

India

05 December 2020: In Kalamboli township, Panvel sub-district, Raigad district, Maharashtra state, a 39-year-old doctor allegedly sexually harassed a 30-year-old nurse at an unnamed hospital, prompting the victim to file a molestation case against him, and the police to arrest him. **Source:** [Times of India](#)

New Zealand

As reported on 04 December 2020: In Wellington, several unidentified men harassed a nurse of the Wellington Regional Hospital, as she was on her way towards her parked car in the suburb of Newtown. **Source:** [Stuff](#)

Thailand

19 December 2020: In Phetchaburi town, Khlong Kra Saeng district, Phetchaburi province, an intoxicated man shot and killed the director of the Phra Chom Klao Hospital, claiming that he was overcharged for his visit. **Source:** [Bangkok Post](#)

Europe

The Netherlands

09 December 2020: In Amsterdam, unidentified cyber criminals hacked the server of the European Medicines Agency and unlawfully accessed documents relating to the regulatory submission for Pfizer and BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine candidate. **Sources:** [BBC](#) and [The Guardian](#)

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

22 December 2020: Update: In Thamesmead area, London, a teenage inmate of the Her Majesty's Prison Belmarsh was sentenced via a video-link to a further 14 weeks in prison by the Westminster Magistrates' Court for assaulting a nursing assistant and a rehabilitation therapist assistant of the Broadmoor Hospital on January 29. He was also requested to pay his victims GBP200 compensation. **Source:** [The Guardian](#)

Middle East and North Africa

Tunisia

04 December 2020: In Tunis, hundreds of doctors, health workers and medical students gathered in front of the Health Ministry, demanding the resignation of the Health Minister and other officials for negligence, after a young doctor died in a hospital elevator accident in Jendouba governorate. Similarly, on December 08, thousands of medics and hospital staff staged a protest in front of the ministry over Tunisia's long-neglected public health infrastructure. **Sources:** [The New Arab I](#) and [The New Arab II](#)

The Americas

United States of America

01 December 2020: In New Rochelle city, Westchester county, New York state, at least 200 nurses from the Montefiore New Rochelle Hospital, led by the New York State Nurses Association, launched a two-day strike, demanding better pay, staffing, and working conditions. **Sources:** [NBC](#), [New Channel 5](#), [New York Post](#) and [USA Today](#)

04 December 2020: On highway Interstate 440, Nashville city, Davidson county, Tennessee state, unidentified perpetrators fired six shots into the vehicle of an ICU nurse as she was driving to work at Saint Thomas West Hospital, one of which struck her shoulder and killed her. Police have since arrested and charged a man in connection with the murder. **Sources:** [ABC](#) and [Fox News](#)

23 December 2020: On Highway 242, Concord city, Contra Costa county, California state, unidentified perpetrators suspectedly threw a rock the size of a grapefruit from an overpass towards a moving vehicle. The rock crashed through the windshield and severely injured a nurse in the vehicle who was on her way to work. The victim was hospitalised and had to undergo three surgeries. At the time of writing, she was at risk of losing one eye. **Source:** [Live 5 News](#)

¹ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) [database attribution policy](#). Accessed 13 January 2021.

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The incidents reported are not a complete nor a representative list of all events that affected the provision of health care and have not been independently verified. All decisions made, on the basis of, or with consideration to, such information remains the responsibility of their respective organisations.

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WHO SSA reported incidents in December 2020

This table shows the number of incidents reported by the WHO Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care (SSA) in countries monitored by the Safeguarding Health Care in Conflict Coalition (SHCC). Incidents are broken down by attack type.

	# of reported incidents	Abduction, arrest, detention of health personnel or patients	Armed or violent search of health care personnel, facility or transport	Assault (without weapon)	Chemical agent	Militarization of civilian health facility	Obstruction to health care delivery	Psychological violence/of violence/intimidation	Removal of health care assets (e.g. transport, supplies, materials)	Setting fire	Sexual assault	Unknown	Violence with heavy weapons	Violence with individual weapons
Afghanistan	4								1				2	1
Libya	4	1		2										1
Nigeria	2	1		1					1	1				2
oPt	6			2		1	4	2					1	4
Total	16	2		5		1	4	2	1	1			3	8

Date period: December 2020. **Data accessed:** 14 January 2021

See [SHCC Methodology](#) for information on how the SHCC uses this data. This information may change as the WHO SSA is updated.