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Attacks on Health Care More than Doubled in Niger's Tillabéri region in 2023

GENEVA – The Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC) has released a report (available in [English](#) and [French](#)) documenting [18 incidents](#) of violence against or obstruction of health care in Niger in 2023. The actual number of incidents and the severity of the problem are likely much greater because of probable under-reporting. The humanitarian crisis in 2023 worsened due to several factors: insurgencies by Islamist armed groups, a military [coup](#) in July 2023, and [sanctions](#) by ECOWAS, which disrupted essential goods and services. Nigeria cutting off [electricity](#) further hindered access to basic services like health care. The situation became more challenging for aid agencies when the military government restricted UN and NGO activities in military [zones](#). Additionally, severe flooding and a [diphtheria](#) outbreak in the Zinder region intensified the crisis. As in so many conflicts, this violence also affected health care.

The SHCC report highlights that incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care increased in 2023, affecting three of Niger's seven regions. Most incidents occurred in the first half of the year. In Tillabéri, cases more than doubled, especially in Say and Tera departments near the Burkina Faso border. Seven health workers were kidnapped in 2023, a considerable increase from 2022 when no such incidents were identified.

The latest available data from 2020 suggests there are only four doctors per 100,000 people in Niger, one of the lowest ratios of any country.

Niger faces one of the lowest ratios of medical professionals globally. Attacks on health facilities have exacerbated this crisis, limiting access to essential medical care. Insecurity has been cited as a main cause of dysfunction in [69%](#) of health facilities in 2023.

The fragile security situation hampers efforts to improve health outcomes in Niger, which suffers from high [maternal](#) mortality rates and [high numbers](#) of deaths from malaria.

Among the report's recommendations are:

- The International Criminal Court and national courts, through principles of universal jurisdiction, should, at long last, initiate prosecutions for war crimes and crimes against humanity involving attacks on the wounded and sick and on health facilities.
- Governments should cease arms transfers to parties to conflict that engage in grave breaches of international humanitarian law.
- Ministers of Health should engage with their own military and security forces and armed groups to protect health care from violence and strengthen mechanisms to mitigate the impacts of attacks on communities, health workers, and the health system.

- Regional bodies and the UN humanitarian cluster system should expand initiatives to protect health care in conflict and mitigate the impact of violence against it.

In its 11th annual report, [**Critical Condition: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict**](#), the coalition documented 2562 incidents in conflicts across 30 countries, or regions within countries, or territories in 2023, a 25% increase from 2022, representing *500 more* attacks than documented last year, and the highest ever since the [**Coalition**](#) began reporting “Violence against health care reached appalling levels in 2023, said **Leonard Rubenstein, Chair of the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC) comprising more than 40 nongovernmental organisations**. “Whether a product of recklessness, indifference, or intentional targeting, fighting forces’ contempt for the law brought catastrophic harm to those in need of care and the health workers and systems intending to aid them. The world fails to ensure accountability for this violence at its peril.”

Methodology Note: The [**data**](#) in this report is [**compiled**](#) from open sources and partner-agency contributions of information, date, time, and location of incidents of violence and obstruction of health care in 2023 and is based on the WHO definition of attacks on health care. Due to this [**methodology**](#), there are some differences between SHCC’s numbers and other reports. Explore the incidents visually on this interactive [**global**](#) map.

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[**The Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition**](#) is a group of more than 40 organisations working to protect health workers and services threatened by war and civil unrest. It has raised awareness of global attacks on health and pressed United Nations agencies for greater global action to protect the security of health care. The SHCC monitors attacks, strengthens universal norms of respect for the right to health, and demands accountability for perpetrators.