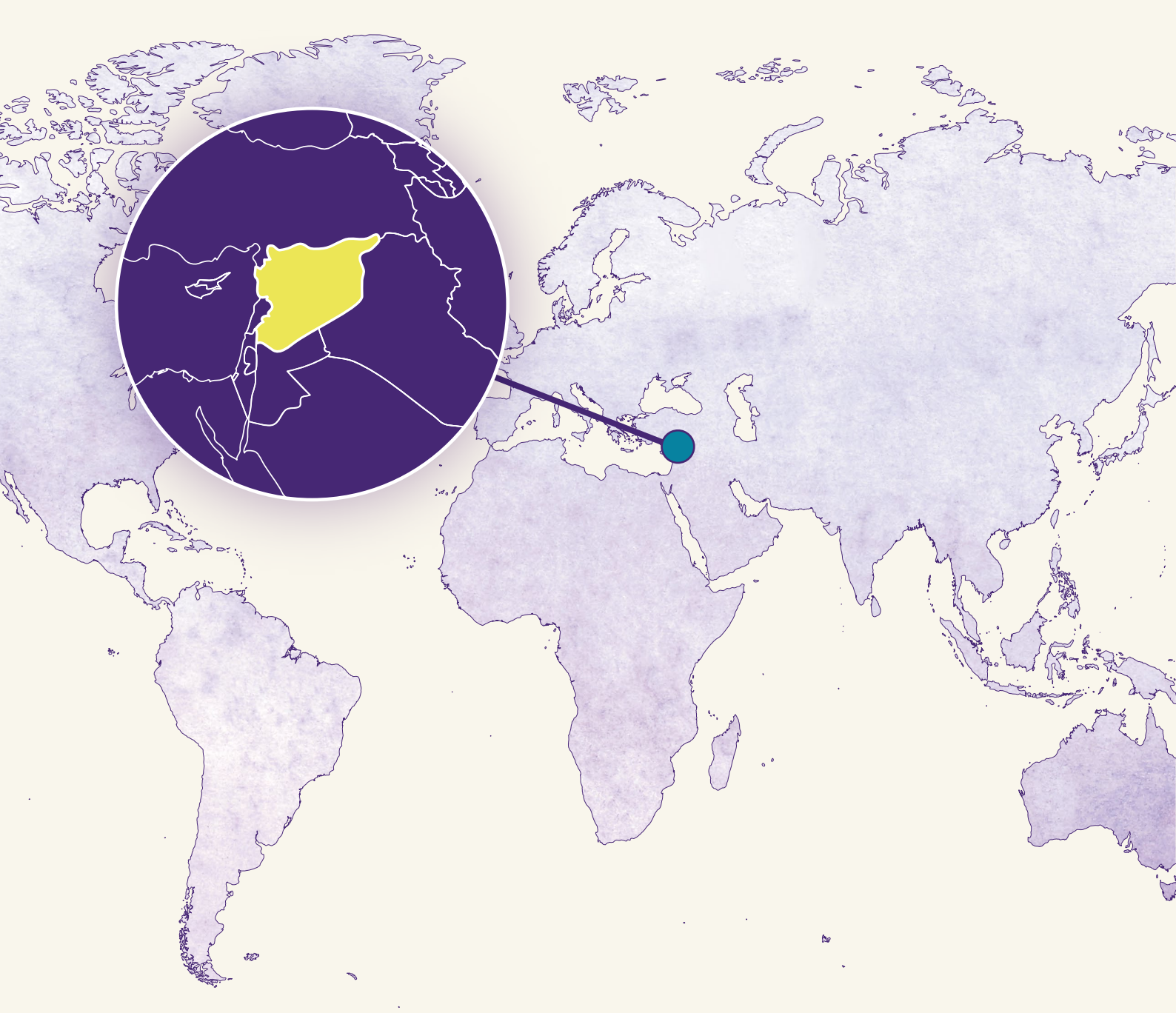
SYRIA

Violence Against Health Care in Conflict

2025



SAFEGUARDING HEALTH IN CONFLICT

Insecurity Insight
Data on People in Danger

Syria

REPORTED INCIDENTS AND MOST COMMONLY REPORTED CONCERNS			
REPORTED INCIDENTS	HEALTH WORKERS KILLED	HEALTH WORKERS ARRESTED/DETAINED	HEALTH WORKERS KIDNAPPED
2025			
74	22	21	10
2024			
67	18	6	2
2023			
61	9	12	5

Source: Insecurity Insight for the SHCC.

OVERVIEW

Using data collected by Insecurity Insight, the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC) identified 74 incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care in Syria in 2025, compared to 67 in 2024 and 61 in 2023.[1] Among incidents reported in 2025, 22 health workers were killed, 21 arrested and ten kidnapped.

The actual number of incidents and the severity of the problem are likely greater, because attacks on health care may not have been reported in some locations and conflict-related health service closures may not have been reflected in the data.

Methodology and sources

Information on incidents of violence against health care in Syria is compiled from open sources, information projects, private sources and aid agency data-sharing mechanisms. Data is continuously updated and numbers may change if new information is made publicly available. For the latest available figures, see Insecurity Insight's global map on attacks on health care. See Methodology for further information.

Syria

THE CONTEXT

Following the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime on December 8, 2024, Syria entered a period of political transition in 2025 under an interim government linked to the non-state armed group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). This process included efforts to consolidate security structures and integrate armed factions into a new national framework. Despite this, violence continued across the coastal governorates of Latakia and Tartous, and parts of north and northeast Syria, including Al-Hasakah, Ar-Raqqa, Aleppo, and Deir ez-Zor governorates, involving both interim government forces and various non-state armed actors, including Islamic State (IS); the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF); the Syrian National Army (SNA), which is a coalition of Turkish-supported Syrian rebel groups; and former government loyalists.

Health care personnel and services were attacked amid shifting territorial control, sporadic hostilities, and fragmented armed authority. Violence and tensions occurred in coastal and western-central regions of Syria (including Hama, Latakia, and Tartous governorates), in areas of the north and northeast involving SDF and interim forces, and in southern Syria, particularly Sweida governorate. These dynamics were shaped by a combination of local grievances, political contestation, and overlapping external influences. Across these areas, insecurity disrupted health facilities and the provision of medical services.

IS remained a security threat in parts of Syria, including Deir ez-Zor governorate, creating a volatile environment for the work of civilian services, including health care.

External military activity also disrupted health care access, with Turkish forces and Turkish-backed militia under the SNA shelling and conducting drone strikes in northern areas where the SDF operated, including in Aleppo and Hama governorates. Israeli forces intensified their attacks and extended their military occupation of parts of Syrian territory. Throughout 2025, Israeli forces continued to shell and carry out air strikes in Dar'aa, Quneitra, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Homs, and Hama governorates.

Humanitarian needs continued to be at high levels in 2025. Although many refugees returned home after seeking refuge from the civil war in other countries, large numbers of people remain internally displaced after the change in government, while reduced international humanitarian funding further constrained service continuity and response capacity.

VIOLENCE AGAINST OR OBSTRUCTION OF HEALTH CARE IN 2025

In 2025, reported violence against or obstruction of health care was spread over 12 governorates – four more than in 2024 – with incidents continuing in Aleppo that accounted for a third of cases, which was consistent with previous years. Other locations of incidents shifted from predominantly Al-Hasakah, Deir ez-Zor, and Idlib governorates in 2024 to a surge in Sweida, Tartous and Latakia in 2025, where ethnic conflicts were reported.

Health worker arrests and kidnappings increased, killings persisted, and damage to or the destruction of health facilities continued, but at lower levels than previous years during the civil war.

The majority of incidents affected health care providers working for national health structures, with five incidents affecting an NGO[2] and four affecting a private health care organization.[3] Two incidents affected Red Cross societies,[4] while two others affected UN agencies.[5]

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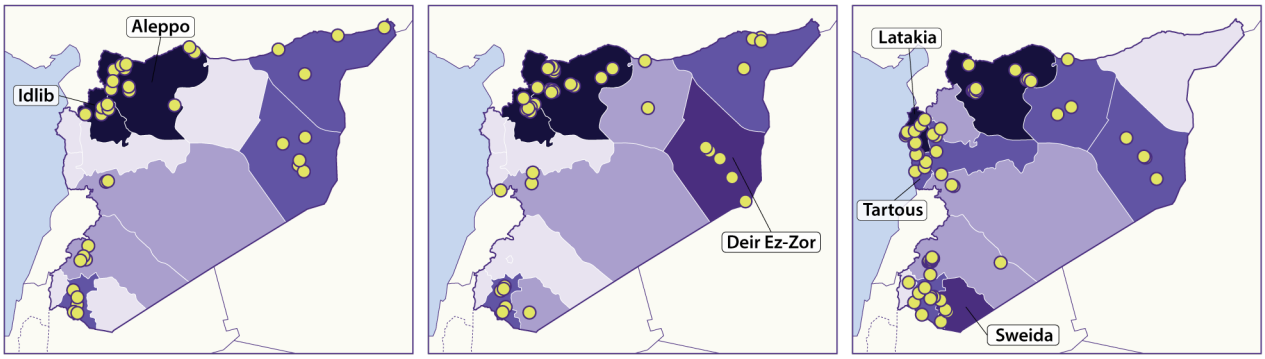
Known locations of reported incidents affecting health care in Syria, 2023-2025

Incidents persisted in Aleppo governorate in 2025, while other locations of incidents shifted from predominantly Al-Hasakah, Deir ez-Zor, and Idlib governorates in 2024 to a surge in Sweida, Tartous and Latakia in 2025, amid ethnic tensions.



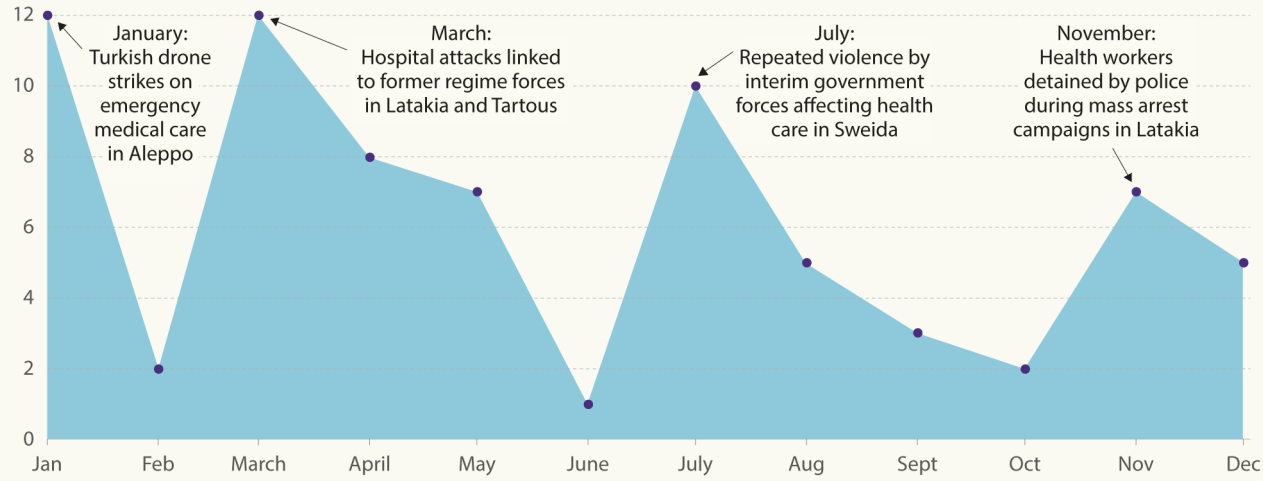
Source: Insecurity Insight for the SHCC.

Multiple conflict parties were named in recorded incidents: Turkish forces and the anti-regime SDF continued to be implicated in attacks on health care in Syria in 2025, mainly in Aleppo, while such incidents were most frequently reported in Al-Hasakah in 2024. Syrian interim government forces arrested health workers and violently raided health facilities, while former regime forces were linked to hospital attacks in Latakia and Tartous during armed violence in these areas on March 7-8. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) air strikes killed three first responders in Dar'aa, while Israeli ground forces detained four health workers providing first aid to a patient in Quneitra.[6]

Militia groups, IS and the SNA were also implicated in attacks on health care in Syria in 2025. In some incidents, the responsible conflict party remained unidentified.

Reported incidents affecting health care in Syria in 2025

Incidents were varied, geographically diverse and reportedly linked to multiple conflict parties.



Source: Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition

Syria

Health worker killings, kidnappings and arrests

Between January and October 2025, 22 health workers were reported killed in 16 incidents, compared to 18 in 13 incidents in 2024 and nine in nine incidents in 2023. Health workers were shot and killed in hospitals. Four first responders were killed in 2025, including three in IDF air strikes in Dar'aa and an ambulance driver in a Turkish artillery and drone attack in Aleppo.[7]

In 2025, 21 health workers were reported detained or arrested in 14 incidents, compared to six in six incidents in 2024 and 12 in nine incidents in 2023. Health workers were arrested during mass arrest campaigns, hospital raids and at checkpoints, sometimes on accusations of links to conflict parties. Eight of the 21 arrested health workers were released.[8] The fates of the remaining 13 remain unclear.

Between April and October 2025, ten health workers were reportedly kidnapped in seven incidents, compared to two in two incidents in 2024 and five in five incidents in 2023. Health workers were often kidnapped while traveling to and from work, including four health care volunteers who were among 18 aid workers kidnapped by around 20 Bedouin tribal militiamen and allied factions in an ambush on a humanitarian convoy in Dar'aa.[9] One of the ten kidnapped health workers was released, while a doctor kidnapped outside his clinic in Damascus was tortured and killed by his captors.[10] The fates of the other eight health workers remain unclear.

Aleppo and Idlib governorates (northern Syria)

Around a fifth of all incidents of violence against health care in Syria in 2025 were reported from Aleppo. At least 15 incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care were reported in 2025 in the opposition-controlled Aleppo, indicating an unchanged trend compared to 2024 and 2023, when, respectively, 16 and 14 incidents were reported. In January, multiple incidents involved Turkish drone strikes damaging ambulances in Ain al-Arab district, killing at least one ambulance driver and injuring numerous health workers and civilians.[11] Between April and September, unidentified gunmen shot and killed four health workers in four separate incidents inside or near medical facilities in Mount Simeon district. In December, SDF shelling and mortar fire damaged or endangered nearby health facilities.[12]

In Idlib, the former stronghold of the now governing HTS, no active violence against health care was reported. While 19 incidents had been reported in 2024 at the time when Idlib was still an opposition-held area, in 2025 a single incident affecting health care involving a remnant of war was reported when a landmine explosion on farmland injured a medical volunteer and one of his relatives.[13]

Latakia and Tartous governorates (coastal Syria)

For the first time since 2022, violence against health care was reported from the former Assad-regime heartlands of Latakia and Tartous. At least 13 incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care were reported in Latakia and five in Tartous, compared to none in previous years during the civil war. During the outbreak of armed violence in early March, alongside hospital attacks by former regime forces resulting in significant damage, Syrian interim government forces killed six health workers in two incidents in Latakia and Tartous.[14] In November, multiple health workers were detained during a police mass arrest campaign in Latakia, when individuals were taken from their homes and inside health facilities.

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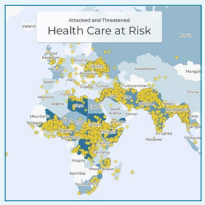
SOCIAL MEDIA REACTIONS TO THE MARCH 2025 HOSPITAL ATTACKS IN LATAKIA AND TARTOUS

Social media plays a powerful role in documenting hospital attacks, but it can also undermine the protection of health facilities. On March 6-7, 2025, during escalating clashes, pro-Assad forces attacked six hospitals in the rural areas of Latakia and Tartous, including Jableh National Hospital. These attacks resulted in significant damage to medical facilities and raised concerns about the safety of patients and health workers. Insecurity Insight analysis highlighted that, as is often the case, while violence against health care was frequently discussed on social media, references to international humanitarian law (IHL), humanitarian principles and medical ethics were largely absent.

Many social media users condemned the attacks on hospitals, characterizing them as deliberate crimes. The discussion frequently focused on assigning responsibility, with accusations directed at various factions involved in the conflict. Some comments used inflammatory language, expressing hostility toward those perceived as being responsible. Concerns about the safety of civilians, health workers and patients were prevalent; however, despite the nature of the attacks, IHL was absent from the discourse. Many comments viewed the attacks through a sectarian or ethnic lens, portraying them as part of a broader struggle between religious or political groups. These narratives suggest that humanitarian crises are being interpreted through polarized perspectives, which could influence how aid efforts are perceived. Some comments advocated for further violence, framing attacks as justified retribution. This rhetoric suggests a normalization of violence, which could escalate tensions and increase risks for humanitarian actors operating in the region.

Sweida (southern Syria)

Between July 15 and 22, reported attacks on health care spiked in Sweida city during armed violence perpetrated by suspected interim government forces. Health facilities were attacked, health workers were harmed and ambulances were prevented from reaching people in need. In one incident, a group of armed men attacked the National Hospital and forced a group of health workers to kneel. A doctor was hit on the head, and when he attempted to resist, he was shot dead with an assault rifle, followed by a second shot fired from a pistol by another gunman. An unspecified number of people were injured, including health workers. Activist media groups linked the attack to members of the Syrian army and security forces. The Ministry of the Interior condemned the attack and said it would hold the perpetrators accountable.[15]



This chapter is based on 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Download this data on the Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX).

Insecurity Insight updates data continuously and numbers may change if new information is made publicly available. For the latest available figures, see Insecurity Insight's global map on attacks on health care.

Syria

THE IMPACT OF ATTACKS ON HEALTH CARE

Syria's health care system remained constrained in 2025, with years of conflict leaving hospitals, schools and water supply systems damaged or destroyed. Many health facilities were partially functional or inactive, limiting access to care amid persistent shortages of staff, medicines and equipment. Only a small fraction of hospitals and primary health care facilities were fully functional, creating gaps in both routine and emergency services.

In 2025, violence and access constraints across Syria continued to disrupt health services, with attacks on facilities, ambulances, and supplies, and insecurity limiting safe access for patients and staff. Research on the impact of attacks on health care in Syria shows that service reductions or temporary closures have forced communities to delay care, miss follow-up appointments, or travel further to obtain care, increasing the strain on maternal health, chronic disease management, dialysis and trauma care services.

Funding shortfalls and reduced humanitarian financing in 2025 further constrained service continuity, with health facilities at risk of losing support and humanitarian partners scaling back their staffing, activities, outreach, and specialized services. Primary care and preventive and public health services, including immunization, were affected, raising the risk of disease outbreaks and preventable illnesses.

Humanitarian needs remained extensive throughout 2025, with many people still displaced. Limited access to safe water, sanitation, adequate shelter, and overcrowding increased the risk of infectious diseases and outbreaks, including cholera and respiratory diseases.

Syria

1 The SHCC's 2024 Annual Report cited 62 incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care in Syria in 2024 and 61 in 2023. Data is continuously updated and numbers can change if new information is made publicly available.
2 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident numbers 88446; 88734; 88809; 118554; 122395.
3 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident numbers 105792; 113071; 122386; 122388.
4 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident numbers 91175; 118554.
5 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident numbers 113437; 113438.
6 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident numbers 122387; 91175.
7 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident numbers 88298; 122387.
8 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident numbers 91175; 122396.
9 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident number 118554.
10 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident numbers 120413; 122391.
11 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident numbers 88297; 88298; 122382; 122384.
12 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident numbers 123151; 123627.
13 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident number 88446.
14 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident numbers 96774; 96775.
15 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2025 Report Dataset: 2023-2025 SYR SHCC Health Care Data. Incident number 112189.

SAFEGUARDING HEALTH IN CONFLICT

The Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition is a group of more than 40 organizations working to protect health workers and services threatened by war or civil unrest. We have raised awareness of global attacks on health and pressed United Nations agencies for greater global action to protect the security of health care. We monitor attacks, strengthen universal norms of respect for the right to health, and demand accountability for perpetrators. Suggested citation: Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalititon (SHCC) 2026. Care in the Crosshairs: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict, May 2026. https://shcc.pub/SHCCAnnualReport2025
https://safeguarding-health.com

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