



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Syria - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Thursday 6 & Friday 7 February 2014

Information on the targeting of medical personnel by Government/rebels; information on the death of 4 doctors in Al-Atabeb (Atareb/Atarib) town (near Aleppo City) during 2012

A report issued in April 2013 by the *United States Department of State* commenting on events of 2012 citing another source, notes that:

“The SNHR reported that 143 medical professionals were killed and 3,000 arrested; 13 died of torture while in detention” (United States Department of State (19 April 2013) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012, Syria*, Section 1d Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention/Arbitrary arrest).

The *United Nations Human Rights Council* notes in a report published in September 2013 that:

“The deliberate targeting of hospitals, medical personnel and transports, the denial of access to medical care, and ill-treatment of the sick and wounded, has been one of the most alarming features of the Syrian conflict. According to multiple accounts collected by the Commission of Inquiry, Government forces and affiliated militias interfere with and instrumentalise medical care to further strategic and military aims. Evidence collected by the Commission leads to an overwhelming conclusion: Government forces deny medical care to those from opposition-controlled and affiliated areas as a matter of policy. The policy is implemented through attacks on medical units, by endangering hospitals, targeting medical personnel, and interfering with patients receiving treatment” (United Nations Human Rights Council (13 September 2013) *Assault on medical care in Syria*, p.1).

This report also states:

“Ambulance drivers, nurses, doctors and medical volunteers have been attacked, arrested, unlawfully detained, and disappeared” (ibid, p.5).

A publication released in October 2013 by the *UNHCR* points out that:

“Where claims of asylum-seekers who have fled Syria are considered on an individual basis in accordance with established asylum or refugee status determination procedures, UNHCR considers that persons with any of the profiles below, or a combination thereof, are likely to be in need of international protection in the sense of the 1951 Convention...IV. Professionals, in particular journalists and other media professionals, including citizen journalists and bloggers; doctors and other health professionals; academics; artists; human rights defenders; and humanitarian workers...” (UNHCR (22 October 2013) *International Protection Considerations with regard to people fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic, Update II*).

In December 2013 the *United Nations Human Rights Council* in a report states:

“In some instances, the disappearances appeared to have a punitive element, targeting family members of defectors, activists, fighters as well as those believed to be providing medical care to the opposition” (United Nations Human Rights Council (19 December 2013) *Without a trace: enforced disappearances in Syria*, p.2).

This report also notes:

“Doctors were disappeared as punishment for their perceived support of anti-Government armed groups. An employee of Zarzor hospital in an anti-Government armed group-held part of Aleppo testified about a series of disappearances targeting medical personnel carried out by the Aleppo Air Force Intelligence between June and December 2012. These disappearances appeared to be aimed at punishing doctors who provided medical services in opposition areas, and deterring others who would consider doing the same” (Ibid, p.4).

The *United Nations News Service* in December 2013 notes:

“Healthcare workers in Syria must be protected, senior United Nations humanitarian officials have said issuing a fresh call for the protection of medical facilities and for safe access to medicines, vaccines and other vital humanitarian aid in the country... the officials "strongly condemn" attacks on health and any other civilian facilities in Syria and added that they are "deeply concerned by the serious implications for patients, health personnel and provision of critical medical supplies" “ (United Nations News Service (7 December 2013) *Syria: Senior UN officials strongly condemn attacks on health personnel, facilities*).

A report issued by the *Syrian Human Rights Committee* in January 2014 states:

“Since the beginning of the revolution in Syria, the Syrian Armed Forces, the security forces, the Shabiha and its affiliated foreign and local popular militias have continuously committed systematic violations against the health sector” (Syrian Human Rights Committee (18 January 2014) *The 12th annual report On human rights in Syria 2013 (January 2013 – December 2013)*, p.17).

This report also notes the:

- Targeting [of] hospitals, health centres and field hospitals.
- Using hospitals, health centres and ambulances as military centres.
- Targeting medical staff such as doctors, nurses and volunteers.
- Controlling the medical services provided to patients in hospitals and health centres as means of torture in addition to demanding medical staff to practise torture.
- Withholding vaccinations, medicines and drinking water from certain areas and stopping waste treatment which has led to the spread of contagious diseases among civilians in areas opposing the government” (ibid, p.17).

A report published in January 2014 by *Human Rights Watch* commenting on events of 2013 states:

“Attacks on healthcare workers and facilities have significantly eroded the country's ability to protect the right to health: 32 of the country's 88 public hospitals have closed and government forces have detained, tortured, and killed hundreds of health workers and patients, and have deliberately attacked vehicles carrying patients and supplies” (Human Rights Watch (21 January 2014) *World Report 2014 – Syria*).

In February 2014 a report issued by the *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* states:

““We also express alarm at consistent reports of deliberate destruction of hospitals and medical units, and of arrests, ill-treatment, torture and killings of doctors, nurses, medical volunteers and ambulance drivers.” “ (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (6 February 2014) *"Deprivation of food, water, shelter and medical care – a method of war in Syria, and a crime against humanity"*).

No further information on this issue could be found among sources available to the RDC.

References

Human Rights Watch (21 January 2014) *World Report 2014 – Syria*

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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Electronic Immigration Network
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Freedom House
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
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IRIN News
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Minority Rights Group International
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