Special Report (Healthcare Workers and Their Repeated Targeting During the War in Rojava) October 2023 – January 2025

From October 5 to 9, 2023, Turkey carried out 508 attacks on the region, resulting in the deaths of 44 individuals. These included airstrikes and drone attacks targeting infrastructure, civilians, and internal security forces.

Eleven power stations and centers were destroyed, affecting over two million people and disrupting healthcare services that rely heavily on electricity for daily operations. Consequently, health services were significantly impacted.

Additionally, 18 water stations went out of service, harming residents' access to clean water and negatively affecting public health due to reliance on contaminated wells, which led to digestive diseases and raised the risk of epidemics such as cholera.

Two hospitals were completely destroyed, and five more went out of service. The Turkish bombardment directly targets infrastructure including grain storage facilities, power plants, oil facilities, hospitals, and residential neighborhoods, resulting in 48 deaths and more than 59 injuries. Hospitals in Derik and Kobani were completely taken out of service.

These repeated attacks violate international humanitarian law, endanger civilian lives, and destroy civilian infrastructure and medical facilities. They have exacerbated the already dire conditions in the region due to shortages of basic services such as water, medicine, food, and shelter.

In every Turkish attack, mosques serving as shelters for displaced persons are deliberately bombed, with even more dangerous targeting of hospitals and medical staff. This comes at a time when the health sector is overwhelmed and operating beyond its limited capacity, dealing with hundreds of deaths and injured.

Hospitals continue to provide services amid power outages in the besieged Autonomous Administration areas. Medical staff and hospitals in Hasakah, Derik, Kobani and Ain Issa have called on the international community to urgently stop the aggression against treatment centers and ambulances. Turkish forces are deliberately targeting ambulances.

January 2024: Within 72 hours, Turkey launched artillery and airstrikes on 80 locations, injuring 7 civilians and rendering vital infrastructure and service facilities non-operational. On the night of January 13, Turkish attacks resumed, resulting in injuries to 7 civilians.

March 31, 2024: The Kurdish Red Crescent issued a statement condemning the targeting of emergency teams and medical staff by Turkish aircraft while they were providing assistance to the injured. The statement reported that Turkish aircraft bombed many areas in northern and eastern Syria, and ambulances were targeted despite clear Red Cross and Red Crescent markings. The bombings injured 11 civilians.

The statement read: "Turkish aircraft directly bombed ambulances while they were performing their duties. This is not the first such incident. In the absence of protection guarantees, we cannot carry out our humanitarian work. We call on local and international organizations to stand against these blatant attacks on humanitarian workers."

According to reports from the Rojava Medical Association, the central oxygen station supplying regional hospitals, the dialysis center in Jazira Canton, and a health center serving 400 people in Euphrates Canton were all taken out of service. This had severe consequences for patients and led to injuries among both patients and medical staff.

One of the victims was Ahmad Abdulrahman Khadr, who had been receiving dialysis treatment in Qamishlo for two years. He lost his life when the center shut down due to the attacks. Fifteen shells landed around the dialysis center and oxygen station, which were later directly bombed and completely disabled.

The Rojava Medical Association reported that the oxygen station, established in 2021, produced 450 oxygen cylinders daily. Its total destruction alongside the nearby dialysis center rendered both facilities entirely out of service. These facilities had provided life-saving oxygen to dozens of hospitals and health centers. The dialysis center alone served around 100 patients with approximately 250 sessions weekly.

Vital components of the dialysis center, such as the water purification unit, were destroyed, shutting down all dialysis machines and putting patients' lives at extreme risk.

In Kobani, the complete destruction of a main health center halted medical services for nearly 400 patients daily. Ambulances in the area were also taken out of service.

Due to the severe blockade on Hasakah, the targeting of the Alouk water station, and the control of Ras al-Ain by Damascus-aligned factions, around 1.5 million residents of Hasakah and its countryside were deprived of water. This led to a major humanitarian crisis and the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera, digestive and urinary infections. Thousands were infected, with rising death tolls and intense pressure on the health sector due to the lack of medicine and difficulty in accessing affected areas.

January 2025: Ambulances transporting wounded individuals from the Tishreen Dam and surrounding villages to hospitals in Raqqa and Tabqa were attacked, in blatant violation of international law. Doctors Without Borders expressed deep concern over escalating violence in Rojava, especially in Manbij and around the Tishreen Dam. Reports indicated attacks on ambulances, resulting in fatal injuries to healthcare workers.