



# THE LANCET

**SAFEGUARDING  
HEALTH  
IN CONFLICT**

## CONCEPT NOTE

High-Level Side Event During the 72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly

# PROTECTING HEALTH CARE IN ARMED CONFLICT

Friday, September 22, 2017 | 11:30 am - 1:30 pm | ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters

## BACKGROUND

Unabashed attacks on health care have been a defining feature of several recent and ongoing armed conflicts. A recent review found “staggering” attacks in 23 countries in conflict, indicating widespread violation of international law.<sup>1</sup> A study focusing on Syria, the country with the most attacks, found that “the frequency and extent of targeting of health care is not known to have occurred in any previous war.” The study described “weaponization of health care,” a strategy by which health care and workers are repeatedly and systematically targeted to shut down access to care, maim civilians, destroy infrastructure, and drive out health workers and even civilians.<sup>2</sup>

This practice has been so flagrant that it led the UN Security Council to adopt Resolution 2286 in May 2016 calling for an end to all attacks on civilian infrastructure health care and protection of health workers.<sup>3</sup> Political deadlock within the Council and lack of commitment by many parties to armed conflicts have prevented concrete action to implement the resolution and attacks on health care have continued or even intensified in some conflicts since the resolution’s adoption. Protecting health care in armed conflict is now a priority issue for the global community – a priority reflected in the theme for this year’s *World Humanitarian Day*, which reminded parties to armed conflicts that health care workers and facilities and other civilians and civilian objects are *#NotATarget*. It is important to continue high-level discussions to identify ways to enhance protection of health care in armed conflict.

<sup>1</sup> Safeguarding Health in Conflict. [Impunity Must End: Attacks on Health in 23 Countries in Conflict in 2016](#). Published 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Fouad FM, Sparrow A, Tarakji A, et al. [Health workers and the weaponisation of health care in Syria: a preliminary inquiry for The Lancet-American University of Beirut Commission on Syria](#). *The Lancet*. 14 March 2017. Access:

<sup>3</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2286. [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2286\(2016\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2286(2016))

## AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this event is to support international efforts, including those of the UN, to protect health care in conflict areas. The specific objectives are to:

- Provide an up-to-date overview of attacks on health care and related violations in armed conflicts
- Review efforts, including those of civil society internationally, to document, investigate, and respond to such violations
- Explore policy and practice options that support UN efforts to address such violations

## CO-SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

The Permanent Missions of Canada, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Spain and the United Kingdom are co-sponsors of the event which is being organized by *The Lancet*-American University of Beirut Commission on Syria: Health in Conflict (<http://www.aub.edu.lb/lcs>) and the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (<https://www.safeguardinghealth.org>). These entities have been vocal on the issue. The Commission is a global multi-disciplinary collaboration that brings together global thought-leaders, researchers and practitioners to find science-based solutions to address health needs in armed conflict with a focus on Syria. The Coalition brings together a group of international NGOs working to protect health workers, services, and infrastructure in conflicts.

## TARGET AUDIENCE AND PANELISTS

**Target audience:** The main target audience is governments, but the event is of interest to policy, practice, and academic entities concerned with the event subject.

### Panelists:

<i>Naz Modirzadeh:</i>	Professor of Practice & Director, Harvard Law School Program on International Law and Armed Conflict (HLS PILAC)
<i>Iman Nuwayhid:</i>	Professor & Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, American University of Beirut (AUB); Co-Chair, <i>The Lancet</i> -AUB Commission on Syria: Health in Conflict
<i>Leonard Rubenstein:</i>	Chair, Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition; Senior Scientist & Director, Program on Human Rights, Health and Conflict, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
<i>Ahmad Tarakji:</i>	President, Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS)
<i>Homer Venters:</i>	Director of Programs, Physicians for Human Rights (Moderator)

## MORE INFORMATION AND RSVP

**RSVP:** <https://goo.gl/forms/fVgcczYqxm2zSj22>. If you need a UN Pass, RVSP **by 19 September**.

For more information, visit: <https://www.aub.edu.lb/lcs/Pages/unga.aspx> or contact **Ms Alison Freeland**, AUB New York Office: [afreeland@aub.edu](mailto:afreeland@aub.edu), office: +1 (212) 583-7675, mobile: +1 (347) 751-8720.