



World Refugee Day and the Syrian Crisis

Doctors of the World condemns violence in Syria against civilians, including health workers and those already injured

On World Refugee Day, June 20th, Doctors of the World condemns the violence in Syria against civilians and health workers. Despite the Syrian government stating that it wants international aid from the United Nations and humanitarian organizations, Doctors of the World is unable to enter Syria. We continue to assist Syrians seeking refuge in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

“The crackdown continues behind closed doors with civilian casualties and human rights violations. What is particularly shocking is the lack of protection provided for those who are injured, as well as the attacks on health workers”, explains Pierre Salignon, executive director of Doctors of the World in Paris.

In Jordan, for the past few months Doctors of the World’s teams have been providing medical and psychological support to an estimated number of 15,000 Syrians who have sought refuge in the border town near Deraa. About a hundred arrive each day at the transit camp that gives them temporary shelter. The chaotic conditions under which they fled the violence in Syria and their current precarious situation make them even more vulnerable.

In the transit camp of Ramtha, Doctors of the World supports volunteer doctors who treat patients on site and ensures that supplies of essential drugs and medical equipment are available.

In Lebanon, thousands of Syrians have taken refuge in the north of the country and the Bekaa Valley. Doctors of the World supports three health centers and supplies them with medicines. Two are in Kamed El-Louz and El-Ain, where we work in partnership with the Lebanese organization Amel. One is in El-Qaa, near the Syrian border. Free consultations and primary healthcare are provided for Syrian refugees and for the most disadvantaged Lebanese.

Doctors of the World has medical kits ready to be sent into Syria as soon as they get permission to enter the country. The kits are also ready to be used in case of a mass influx of Syrian refugees over the border.

In addition to the medical and psycho-social activities being provided for individual Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, Doctors of the World is also developing medical support for organizations of Syrian doctors.

Testimony of a Syrian doctor who came to Jordan a year ago:

In Syria, I provided emergency medical aid to those injured during the clashes. After being imprisoned for two months, I decided to come to Jordan where I could go across the border legally.

Today, I work with a team of psychologists, most of whom are Syrian. We provide psychological and psychiatric care to Syrian families. We also train volunteers who would like to help these families.

Syrians suffer from psychological trauma because of their painful experiences in Syria and their escape, but there are also those who suffer because of interruptions in their treatment for chronic illnesses. 40% of children that we have seen during consultations show symptoms of post-traumatic stress, such as fear of the dark, anxiety and aggression.

More than anything, the Syrians want to regain normal daily life by going to work and sending their children to school. Syrian children are allowed to attend classes in Jordanian schools, but it is not easy for them because the curriculum is very different.

When we arrived in Jordan, we thought it would only be for two or three months. Now we have been living here for almost a year and the situation is still getting worse in Syria.

Testimony of a Syrian surgeon who came to Jordan 3 months ago

When I was in Syria, I conducted over 200 operations on the wounded. My work as a doctor has led to my imprisonment several times and I have received threats, as has my family, some of whom have been tortured. Three months ago, I decided to cross the border illegally to seek refuge in Jordan. Then I brought my family over too.

When I first arrived in Jordan, I was not sure what to do. And then I told myself that as a doctor, I could be useful and that I also had contacts inside Syria so I know what was going on and what the needs of the people were. We quickly set up a network in order to send medicines into Syria, where access to drugs has become very difficult. Many people die because they could not receive treatment in time. Medicines are like weapons: it is dangerous for those who found possessing them in Syria. If people are found with medicines or money, they may be killed, imprisoned and tortured.