



Syria's displaced health workforce: Policy opportunities and challenges

Policy briefing and panel discussion

Organised by the Syria Public Health Network in collaboration with R4HC: [Research for Health in Conflict project](#) at King's College London, American University of Beirut and the University of Cambridge

Wednesday January 27th, 1700 UK, 1800 Geneva, 1900 Syria

Registration via: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_t7-bMNs2T-SUI49NaSzDdw

Follow us @HealthSyria

Context

The health of Syrians and the healthcare system in Syria have been overwhelmed after nearly ten years of conflict. Healthcare workers (HCWs) and healthcare facilities have been criminalized and systematically attacked, with approximately 1,000 HCWs killed¹. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Syrian Ministry of Health (MoH) indicate that only 52 percent of public hospitals within the country are still operational^{2,3}.

According to a 2020 United Nations (UN) report, it is estimated that thousands of HCWs have been forcibly displaced from the country as refugees or migrants. The exact numbers who remain in Syria and those who have left is unknown due to insufficient data and monitoring. However, it is likely that the majority of Syria's HCWs now reside in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and further afield in Germany. In their host countries, HCWs face numerous personal, professional and policy challenges to finding employment.⁴ The forced displacement and migration of professional groups from Syria and increasingly from the region – something which is increasingly typical of protracted humanitarian crises in middle-income and largely urban settings – also presents challenges for the future reconstruction of Syria's health system and for the social protection systems of the main refugee hosting countries.

In this policy briefing, our speakers present the latest data and information on the situation of HCWs within Syria, neighbouring frontline countries as well as Europe. Case studies and policy options for host community governments are outlined. These demonstrate how displaced HCWs can be supported which not only helps displaced individuals and their families but can also benefit the health and social welfare systems of host countries.

¹ Physicians for Human Rights. 2020. Physicians for Human Rights' Findings of Attacks on healthcare in Syria.

² United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). 2020. Syria Anniversary Press Release.

³ World Health Organization (WHO). 2018. Public Hospitals in the Syrian Arab Republic, HeRAMS Annual Report January – December 2018.

⁴ Abbara A, Rayes D, Omar M, et al Overcoming obstacles along the pathway to integration for Syrian healthcare professionals in Germany BMJ Global Health 2019;4:e001534.



Details:

Programme:

Chair: [Rita Dayoub, Chatham House](#)
Opening statement and introductions

Speakers

- 1) **Ibadat Dhillon, World Health Organization, Department for Health Workforce.**
Health Worker Mobility and Migration.

- 2) **[Diana Rayes](#), Syria Public Health Network and PhD candidate at Johns Hopkins University.**
Overview and context – key findings from research

Short Documentary Film (10 minutes) Introduction by Lincolnshire Refugee Doctor Programme
[“Syria’s health workers can help Europe respond to COVID-19”](#)

- 3) **[Houssam Alnahhas](#), Syria Public Health Network, Physicians for Human Rights.**
Personal experiences and update on situation in Turkey

- 4) **[Fouad M. Fouad](#), Syria Public Health Network and American University of Beirut.**
Policy recommendations and future prospects

- 5) **Panel discussion and Q & A**

For further information please contact: syriahealthnetwork@gmail.com or visit our website on www.syriahealthnetwork.org.

Speaker bios

Rita Dayoub is a Public health professional with a focus on the intersection between health and security in conflict zones, Syrian dentist and periodontologist, public speaker with more than five-year experience in humanitarian response to conflicts. Associate at the Centre on Global health Security at Chatham House, member of Global Women Leaders Network, and nominee for the Women’s Forum “Rising Talents” initiative.



Ibadat Dhillon is a technical officer in the Department of Health Workforce at the World Health Organization. Ibadat has worked on human resources for health and health systems at the national and global levels for over two decades. He has previously served as a health advisor for the Danish government, the Irish government, and the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Ibadat has graduate level training in international law and public health.

Diana Rayes is a Nonresident Fellow at TIMEP focusing on regional public health trends and refugee issues. She is a PhD candidate in International Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, specializing in the impact of conflict and displacement on refugee and migrant health. She has previously worked with the World Health Organization, the Syrian American Medical Society, the Migration Policy Institute, and consulted on projects for the Lancet Commission on Syria, E.U. Delegation to Syria, the World Refugee Council, and the Federation of American Scientists. Ms. Rayes has published widely on humanitarian health trends in Syria in peer-reviewed journals including the British Medical Journal, PLOS Medicine, and the International Journal of Infectious Diseases, and is a steering committee member of the Syria Public Health Network. A recipient of the Fulbright Research Fellowship, Ms. Rayes holds a master's in public mental health and a certificate in humanitarian assistance from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and a BS in psychology from Arizona State University. You can follow her on Twitter at [@diana_r7](https://twitter.com/diana_r7).

Dr Fouad M. Fouad is an Associate Professor of Public Health Practice at the Faculty of Health and Sciences at AUB and Co-Director of the Refugee Health Program at Global Health Institute. His current research focuses on the forced displaced population with a special interest in the Syrian refugee crisis, as well as the impact of this crisis on the health and the well-being of the Syrian population. Fouad has extensive research work on health workforces in humanitarian settings and the weaponization of healthcare in armed conflicts. Dr. Fouad is also Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator on several projects related to health in protracted and armed conflicts. He served as a commissioner in two Lancet Commissions: the AUB-Lancet Commission on Syria and the crises in global governance, health, and aid and the UCL-Lancet Commission on Migration and Health. Dr. Fouad is the author of more than 70 articles, Op-eds, and reports published in top journals including the Lancet, PLoS, BMJ, Conflict and Health, Social Science & Medicine.

Dr Houssam Alnahhas started his medical studies at Aleppo University's Faculty of Medicine in 2006 but transferred to Istanbul University in 2015, where he received his medical degree. The recipient of the joint MPH Syrian Scholarship and Sommer Scholar Award from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. He has Over eight years of experience in the field of humanitarian health, and he is a public health researcher with strong skill sets on information management and focus towards studying health systems in conflicts. Extensive experience with data collection, data analysis, and program implementation. Fluent in Arabic, English, and Turkish. He supported many types of research related to public and global health and his work in this area has appeared in the European Journal of Public Health, JAMA Surgery, Diabetes & Metabolism and Annals of Global Health. He also joined FXB Center for Health and Human Rights as a research collaborator to support the data and information needs of the Lancet-AUB Commission on Syria and to support the technical work related to the development of platform prototypes for a Burden of War analysis."



The documentary film was made with the [Centre for Global Human Movement](#), Edith Champagne and funding from UKRI 2019-20 QR Strategic Priorities Fund (QR = Quality Related).

About SPHN: The Syria Public Health Network was established in 2015 to provide a space where academics, humanitarian and international organisations, policy makers and Syrian public health professionals can discuss, analyse and generate policy proposals for the types of health interventions and research that can support the current and future health needs in Syria and Syrian refugee hosting countries.