

Description

Rising from rubble and ash; midwives are not a target

Pandora Hardtman RN, CNM, DNP, FACNM- Consultant Director of Clinical Midwifery Educational Programmes

> *"Midwifery is a humane profession – with all the meaning of humane! The midwife is the angel who guards the mother until she gives birth to a child peacefully. Every birth is a birth for a new world. Midwifery is my life that nourishes my body."* Fatima- Syrian Midwife mother of 2

On 20th-21st August, millions of followers of the prophet Mohammed celebrated Eid Al Adha. This celebration commemorates the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son on the altar as requested by God. In the end, Abrahams sacrifice was not warranted and his son survived. The festival is marked by the slaughtering of a lamb or other livestock whose meat is then portioned between the immediate, family relatives and neighbour's, and the poor and needy.

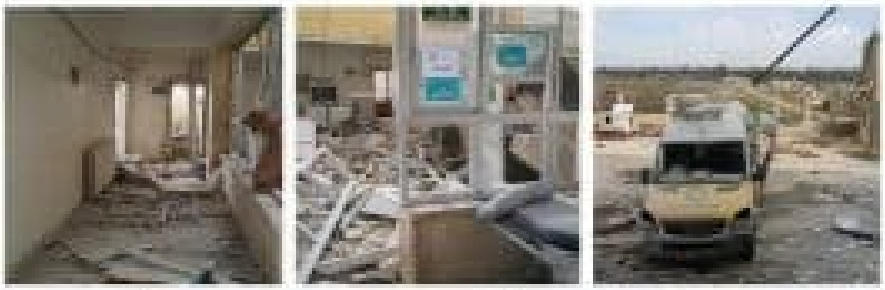
In some cities, the streets flow red with the blood of the sacrificed animals and the bleating cries are heard as the animals are slaughtered. It is ironic, that in these dark days of war and conflict in so many countries, the blood of the victims and martyrs also flow red with echoing cries heard. In this case however, the sacrifices are not livestock but health workers many of whom are midwives.



This year alone there have been over 500 deaths of health workers as the Syrian war drags on. Often, at times the maternity facilities are targeted and the workers attempt to flee to safety. One midwife remembers fleeing as the head of an infant was crowning and about to be born, the delivery completed in the bush while hiding from the airstrikes.



During the evacuation of Eastern Ghouta in their way to Idlib and the passengers



(having started the recently launched RN explosion.



This strategic tactic, using health workers as targets is not new, in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the genocidaires first attacked all of the hospitals and schools of

nursing and midwifery. In most cases hospitals and schools are in close proximity of one another. Only one school led by a heroic Nun escaped because the hospital was not nearby and she barred the gates. As there was no one in the hospital to tend to wounds, there was nowhere to run.

Today as students sit in antenatal course lectures, as they look outside the window they see the mass grave of departed but not forgotten tutors, midwives and students. I have sat by all these graves and prayed for the strength of my sisters who persevere and have raised the profession of midwifery from the ashes.

In the past few months, not a week has gone by without adding another story of ‘midwives as targets’ in the global wars. When will it end- or will it?

Training student midwives in their first term cover ‘Professional Issues in Midwifery’. As part of their coursework I asked the students and tutors to take part in a campaign to raise global awareness of the atrocities being committed upon health workers. Participation was not mandatory as with participation comes some risk. A risk that many midwives practising in settings of safety cannot identify with.








Babies are
#NotATarget

In an attempt to garner political attention and action, Syrian women were informed that their photos would be shared and be heard and the photos have flooded in. proud'. Do with/to me what you will. I stand my care.





A commitment so great that one midwife hid with her months old baby under carpets for days to attend a face to face emergency obstetrics update course that was held when she has no identification papers. Checkpoints, gun points, risk of rape and babies delivered under the rubble. In their words '*our work replaces the martyrs that have died'.*

Midwives are #notatarget, women & girls are #notatarget, babies are #notatarget. We message you all with love as you serve every day.

And in the words of Maya Angelou- "*and still they rise*…."

Dedicated to Khadija Attar First Batch Syrian RN to Midwifery student, GIZ/SAMS – 2018

May your spirit fly free.

Category

1. News & Views

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