

# Doctors in Syria warn health system cannot cope with impacts of Covid-19 pandemic



PUBLISHED MAR 10, 2021  
BY [ISLAMIC RELIEF](#)

Hospitals in northwest Syria are completely overwhelmed from dealing with Covid-19 on top of a decade of violence and displacement, doctors have told Islamic Relief. Some hospitals have seen their caseloads quadruple in the past few months as the pandemic's economic impact has exacerbated poverty, malnutrition and mental health issues.

"Each doctor used to see 30 or 40 patients a day before Covid-19, but now we see 150 or 200 – not just Covid but a rise in other cases. In the last few months, we've seen an increase in stress-related illnesses as well, including depression and high blood pressure because of the situation. We're seeing a rise in malnourished children who need treatment as poverty gets worse. We have to put two children in every bed as there is simply not enough space," says Dr Ahmed Ghandour who works in a hospital in Idlib. "People are dying due to lack of medicine and equipment, and because of the border closures and movement restrictions. Before the pandemic, every day we used to transfer 30 critically ill cancer patients outside Syria for treatment – now we're only able to transfer four a day, despite having hundreds of patients waiting in need. I know many of these people will die as the treatment is not available here."

Doctors are worried that a new spike in Covid-19 will result in many more deaths.

Without urgent action, many people in Syria will not receive a safe and effective vaccine. Islamic Relief is calling on rich nations to ensure global and equitable access to Covid-19

vaccines, including the most vulnerable people such as those displaced by violence.

After 10 years of the ongoing crisis, the humanitarian situation in parts of northwest Syria is worse than ever. 60 per cent of people don't have enough food, unemployment is rising and food prices have more than doubled. There are 2.7 million people displaced in northwest Syria and tens of thousands more have lost their homes in recent months due to floods.

Although violence has decreased in the region since last year, hospitals continue to suffer the impact – at least 15 hospitals supported by Islamic Relief in northwest Syria came under attack in 2020. There is a serious shortage of essential supplies such as oxygen, ventilators and x-rays, as well as medical staff – many of whom are now unable to travel from Turkey due to the Covid-19 travel restrictions.

“After a decade of suffering in Syria, people keep thinking it cannot get any worse. Then Covid-19 came along and has compounded years of a crisis that has left millions of people destitute and homeless and pushed the health system to the point of collapsing. The whole world is struggling with the pandemic but some of the most vulnerable people in Syria are at risk of being forgotten. Doctors here are stressed and overwhelmed, working day and night and hardly ever leaving the hospital, even to sleep. They need more support from the rest of the world. We urge the international community to make sure these health facilities get the funds and support they need to save lives.”

The UN and partners' humanitarian response plan for Syria in 2020 was only around half-funded, leaving a staggering shortfall of US\$1.7 billion.

Islamic Relief is currently providing food and healthcare to people in northwest Syria. Last year we delivered food to more than 770,000 internally displaced people, supported healthcare for 1.2 million people and provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other medical equipment to 84 health facilities. In late 2020 Islamic Relief supported the

first-ever cardiology facility in northwest Syria to open.

\*Name has been changed to protect identity.

*Press release distributed by Media Pigeon on behalf of Islamic Relief, on Mar 10, 2021. For more information subscribe and [follow](#) us.*

---

## Press Contacts

### 1. **Jonaid Jilani**

Jonaid Jilani

[jonaid.jilani@islamic-relief.org.uk](mailto:jonaid.jilani@islamic-relief.org.uk)

07872 403 534

---

## Media Assets

### Embedded Media

Visit the [online press release](#) to interact with the embedded media.

<https://mediapigeon.io/newsroom/islamic-relief/releases/en/doctors-in-syria-warn-health-system-cannot-cope-with-impacts-of-covid-19-pandemic-5618>

---

## Islamic Relief

**Newsroom:** <https://mediapigeon.io/newsroom/islamic-relief>

**Website:** <https://www.islamic-relief.org/>

**Primary Email:** [info@islamic-relief.org.uk](mailto:info@islamic-relief.org.uk)

### Social Media

Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/islamicreliefuk>

Twitter - <http://twitter.com/islamicreliefuk>

Youtube - <http://www.youtube.com/islamicreliefuk>

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/islamicreliefuk/>

Linkedin - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/islamic-relief-uk/>

---