**Health care workers in Syria**

Hospitals and other medical facilities in Syria come under frequent attack. Last Saturday, Doctors Without Borders said that their hospital in Homs was partially destroyed by barrel bombs. A recent article in the New England Journal of Medicine says that nearly 700 medical workers have been killed since the conflict in Syria began. Over 300 facilities have come under attack. NPR's Maanvi Singh reports on the constant risks that medical workers in Syria face.

MAANVI SINGH, BYLINE: It's dangerous to practice medicine in Syria. When I called up a physician based in the city of Aleppo, he said he'd have to call me back. There had just been a missile strike. Understandably, many doctors have fled. Last year, Dr. Majed Aboali made the tough decision to leave his home and his clinic in Syria behind. He moved to Turkey for his kids.

MAJED ABOALI: And it's too hard to get, like, some milk for your kids or even some food.

SINGH: Aboali now supports Syrian doctors from afar by coordinating aid and training. Many of his colleagues who stayed behind are now dead. He lists off their names.

ABOALI: Dr. Adnan Wahbie was killed in 2012 in his clinic. Dr. Osama Baroudi was tortured to death.

SINGH: Shortly after I spoke with Dr. Rami Kalazi, a neurosurgeon based in Aleppo, he emailed me to say that one of his colleagues had just been killed in a bombing. The hospitals that are still standing often lack the basics.

RAMI KALAZI: We don't have electricity. We don't have water. We don't have fuels.

SINGH: Recently, Kalazi had to treat a 10-year-old patient with a head injury. The problem was his hospital no longer had a CT scanner, so he had to make an educated guess about what was wrong.

KALAZI: I sent him to the operation room and made my surgery.

SINGH: The boy survived, but it was a close call. The authors of the New England Journal of Medicine article point out that by Bashar al-Assad's military is the only one with access to airpower. And the intensity and the types of bombs government forces are dropping from their helicopters cause incredible damage, Kalazi says. They rip off limbs and perforate bodies with shrapnel.

KALAZI: In this war, actually, we have seen injuries we haven't seen in books.

SINGH: He and his wife, who is also a doctor, have decided to stay in Syria for now. Though, their hospital has been hit 35 times since the conflicts started.

KALAZI: It's hard. It's dangerous, I know.

SINGH: Elise Baker at the Physicians for Human Rights runs a project that maps attacks on medical centers.

ELISE BAKER: Things are not improving and so it's, you know, really frustrating and upsetting to be doing this documentation and speaking with doctors who are working at these hospitals and are just asking for one thing, which is the attacks to stop.

SINGH: Of course, the government hasn't admitted to targeting doctors deliberately. The military sometimes claims that a hospital is a front for a terrorist base. Kalazi, the neurosurgeon based in Aleppo city, says he's been on the government's wanted list for years. His charge - treating and therefore helping terrorists. What the government is doing, targeting doctors and hospitals, is against international law, according to David Phillips. He's a human rights expert at Columbia University.

DAVID PHILLIPS: Unfortunately, when you're dealing with rogue regimes or terrorist groups, you know, the rules of engagement are thrown out the window.

SINGH: Similar tactics were used in the Bosnian conflict of the early '90s and in Kosovo in '98. Phillips says he's not too optimistic about the situation in Syria. Ultimately, he says, the U.S. and the international community need to pressure the Syrian government to stop the violence. The Syrian doctors I spoke with say they don't know if or when that will happen. They just want the war to end. Maanvi Singh, NPR News.

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