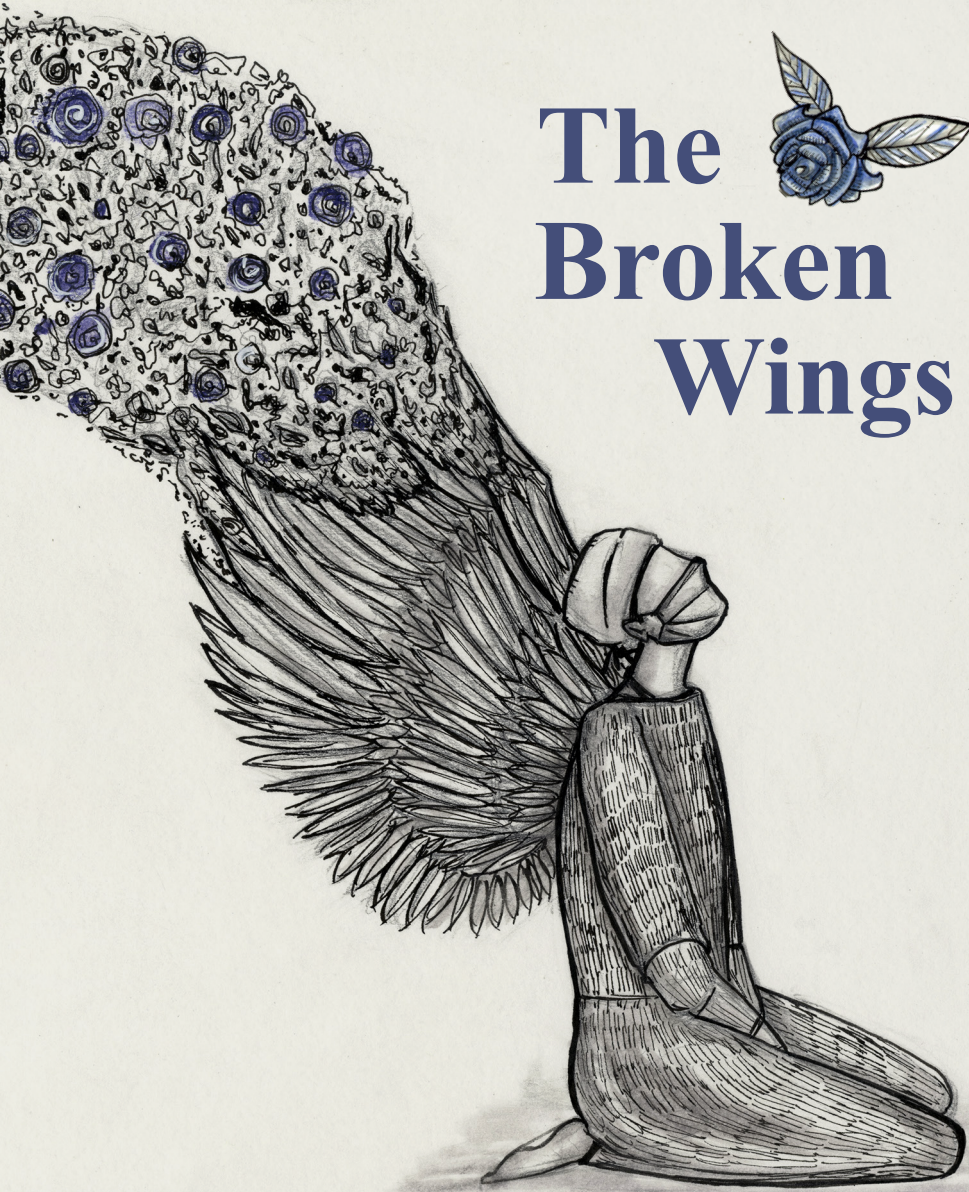


The Broken Wings



Stories of SAMS fallen health workers in Syria 2013 - 2021



The Broken Wings

Stories of SAMS' fallen health workers

December 2023

About this Booklet:

this booklet was prepared with assistance from the new media and communication consultant: Dr. Rime Hanane Abdalli

The photo art:

Dima Nashawi, a creative hand drawing artist who participated in drawing the profiles pictures and the cover photo.

About SAMS...

The Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) was founded in 1998 as a professional society to provide networking and educational opportunities to medical professionals of Syrian descent across the United States. The charitable arm of SAMS, SAMS Foundation, was launched in 2007. With the eruption of the conflict in Syria, SAMS Foundation has become one of the most active medical relief organizations working on the frontlines of crisis relief in Syria, neighboring countries, and beyond.

www.sams-usa.net



SAMS

Our Mission...

is dedicated to delivering life-saving services, revitalizing health systems during crisis, and promoting medical education via a network of humanitarians in Syria, the US, and beyond.

Our Vision...

is to strengthen the future of Syria's health care, delivering dignified medical relief where needed, fortified by a dedicated medical community.

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We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the families of the fallen workers who actively participated in our effort. Despite the tragic memories, their generous hospitality in their homes, constant support, and enthusiasm to share details about their departed loved ones demonstrate their desire for justice and accountability.

The most profound considerations also include the recognition that several health professionals have suffered from comparable disasters in other nations. Still, their stories have not been heard since there are no established response mechanisms. In addition to the health workers who survived the horrific experiences and who now struggle with mental health issues, they must also be remembered and supported, emphasizing the importance of addressing their well-being alongside seeking justice and accountability.

“

These people are all remarkable human beings who we do not want to forget. We want to draw your attention to what is happening on this earth and how people who save lives are bombed and killed. We reiterate that the perpetrators have yet to be held accountable for their crimes.

”

"Humanitarian Footprints" Initiative

Exploring the Tragic Sacrifices
of Healthcare Personnel in Syria
2013-2021

About “Humanitarian Footprints” Initiative:

The most significant impact of attacks on healthcare facilities has been the documented loss of life and injury. According to SAMS' “A Heavy Price to Pay” report, a total of 123 medical staff lost their lives in the recorded attacks on healthcare facilities. Between 2013 and 2021, SAMS documented 385 attacks on healthcare workers, resulting in the deaths of 152 individuals. Notably, 61 of these victims were dedicated SAMS' workers. Beyond SAMS' data, a study by Physicians for Human Rights revealed that at least 948 medical professionals have been killed in Syria from 2011 through March 2023. This report serves as a memorial to the lives of those heroes who sacrificed themselves to help others.

This booklet stands as a crucial component of the extensive Humanitarian Footprints initiative led by SAMS, committed to shedding light on the issue of violence against healthcare workers in the Syrian conflict. Within these pages, we chronicle the poignant stories of 11 health workers, among the 61 who lost their lives while selflessly serving at SAMS-supported facilities in Syria between 2013 and 2021.

In addition to this booklet, the campaign features visual testimonies with the families of eight healthcare workers who lost their lives and an analytical report that exclusively documents SAMS-recorded attacks on healthcare. Together, these elements aim to convey the gravity of the challenges faced by healthcare workers in the Syrian conflict. In this report, we pay tribute to these healthcare workers, recognizing their ultimate sacrifice for those they served.

Project Methodology

Since 2015, SAMS has been tracking, documenting and reporting on attacks on health. These efforts have resulted in several traditional reports on the prevalence and scale of attacks on health, with their own methodology.

This report represents a new phase in SAMS' reporting on attacks on health. Rather than focus on the attacks themselves, this report elevates the narratives of the victims of those attacks, and their loved ones. The report does so using the words and stories of these individuals themselves, and SAMS' hopes that these voices will have a greater share of the conversation going forward.

The narratives contained in this booklet are the result of months of interviews with the victims of attacks on healthcare facilities or their surviving family members/loved ones. 11 stories in particular are highlighted. This personal testimony is a crucial step in any real accountability or justice.

Summary

The interviews on the following pages unveil the courageous and brave decisions made by the fallen healthcare workers, who chose to persist in delivering healthcare services despite encountering dangers and witnessing horrifying scenes of injuries and death. SAMS' data indicates that 81% of these dedicated professionals were adversely affected while on duty, experiencing arrests, injuries, or death due to their unwavering commitment to helping others in locations under attack.

In the face of a persistent and perilous environment, the medical staff displayed extraordinary resilience and dedication. Utilizing both human and material resources, they applied their extensive cognitive skills to address crises and rescue the lives of victims. Despite the challenges, local medical practitioners demonstrated adaptability in providing medical care by reallocating tasks in the face of personnel shortages.

These fallen healthcare workers were already grappling with displacement, leading to an insecure financial situation, particularly since many of them were primary breadwinners. The interviews also disclose that 80% of them had experienced multiple forced or voluntary displacements, and 49% supported extended family members in addition to their own.

SAMS has been diligently working to maximize its efforts and donation collection to support the families of its fallen healthcare workers, alleviating their suffering until they can regain financial stability. The death compensation offered by SAMS has been privately funded through generous donations from SAMS' members. While SAMS remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting healthcare workers' families through one-time lump-sum payments and the Fallen Heroes Fund, we advocate for international and local collective efforts to continue supporting these families, honoring those who sacrificed their lives to help others.

Recommendations

Towards the realization of this goal, SAMS offers the following specific recommendations to help fallen health workers and the loved ones they leave behind:

- International governments and non-governmental institutions should increase their financial and material commitments to programming that compensates the loved ones of fallen health workers, ideally expanding support for programs like SAMS' Fallen Heroes Fund.
- Accountability efforts within international institutions should also receive greater support. This support should include ongoing material resources for efforts at the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM), but also include pooled funds of support for prosecution efforts in multiple jurisdictions.
- SAMS encourages programming that gives the victims of attacks on health and their loved ones an opportunity to document their own experience, and share in their own words the impact of their experience. We hope this report stands as an initial example of such programming.



Prologue

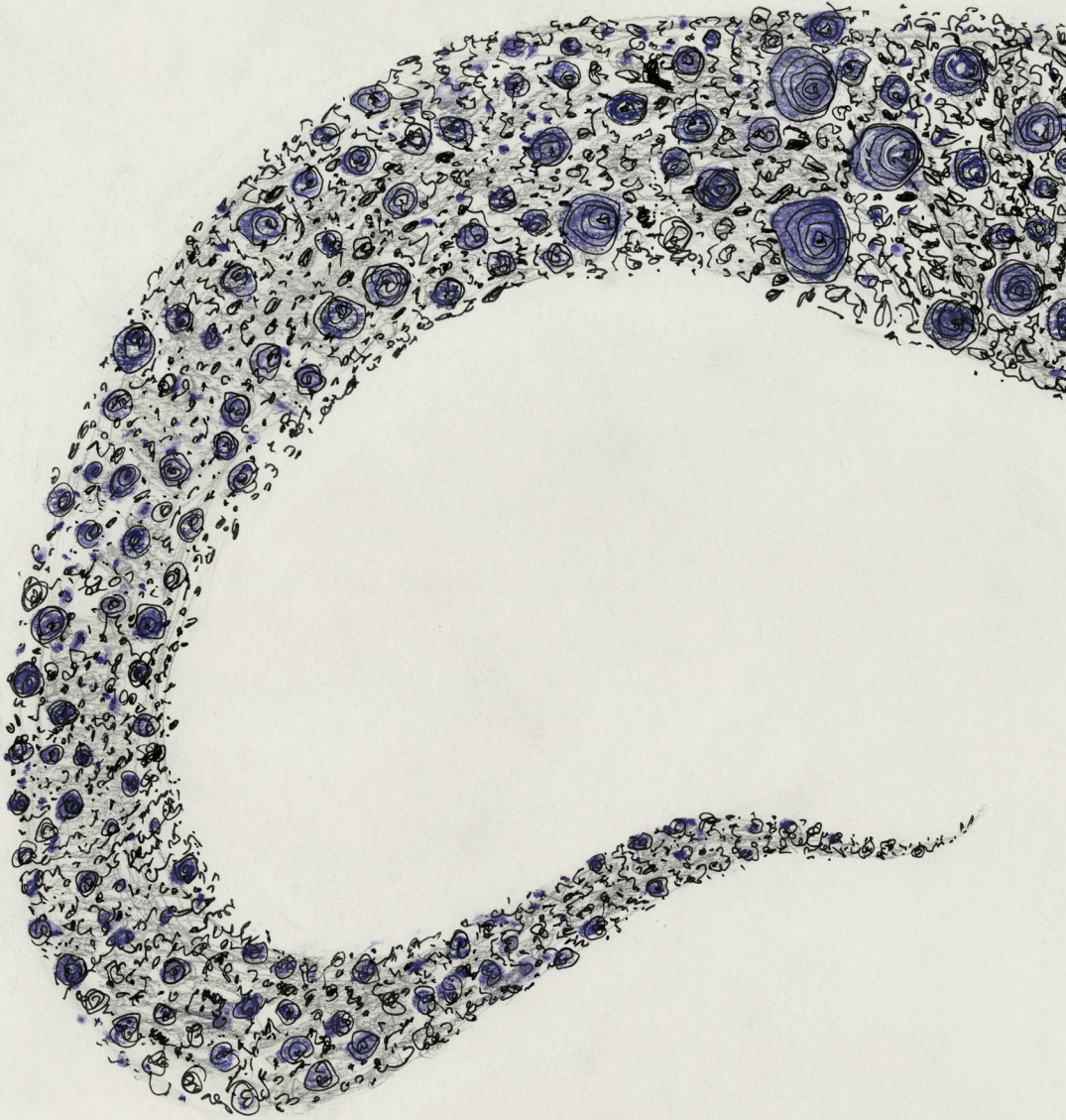
This is more than just a prologue; it is a summary of a journey that we have embarked on, a journey that is not yet finished, and one that the author has joined after it has already begun. Though long and arduous, this journey has a singular goal: to achieve accountability and justice.

At the outset, we faced the challenging decision of selecting the families of the fallen health workers. Proceeding with empathy, we entered their homes for interviews that aimed at portraying them as ordinary people—wives, fathers, sons, husbands, and friends—individuals who have families, dreams, and aspirations like everyone else. What set them apart, however, was their unwavering dedication to saving the lives of others. Among them, we encountered mothers, husbands, brothers, sisters, children, parents, cousins, friends, and colleagues, all sharing the same grief. Their pride, though, stemmed from the bravery, altruism, deep humanism, and generosity of their deceased loved ones.

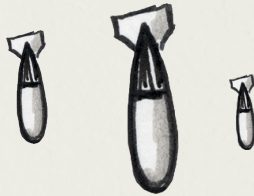
Through each interview, we gleaned insights into the cruelty of their deaths, the injustice they faced, and the ongoing impunity of the perpetrators. These brave souls had already been forced to leave their cities, abandoning their possessions, dignity, and cherished memories in search of refuge. Seeking safety for their families, they committed themselves, armed with their knowledge, to save victims' lives from the horrors of shelling, sniper fire, barrel bombs, and other violent attacks on civilians. Despite their noble goal, they were frequently targeted while performing their work in hospitals or clinics, or while carrying out their duties in ambulances or on the streets as responsible citizens.

In this booklet, we have represented their narratives in the form of short stories, employing different styles to reflect the unique inspiration each one instilled in us. They were all heroes.

Through these stories, the Syrian American Medical society (SAMS) endeavors to showcase its unwavering commitment and to help the public grasp the profound impact of their irreplaceable loss.







Die Standing!

The story of the Doctor Hassan Al-Araj

Hassan Al-Araj was killed on April 13, 2016 when a warplane affiliated with the Government of Syria targeted the entrance of the Cave Hospital in Kafr Zeita Town in rural Hama.



This is the story of a doctor who was more than just a doctor.

When Nadjwa served lunch to her children, she had no idea that her husband's car would be targeted at that moment. As the sound of an airplane bombing echoed, she never suspected it was her husband's car that had exploded. It was only after her mother-in-law came to reassure her that she sensed something was amiss.

"They say there were bombings in the village, and they say that Dr. Hassan has a wounded hand."

Nadjwa thought to herself, "What is this? Is it possible that it's his hand? It's in a dangerous place."

Dr. Hassan, a cardiology graduate, had specialized in heart diseases. When the revolution erupted, he was leading the specialized hospital in Kafr Zita, the sole medical facility in the Hama region and its surroundings that provided care to the wounded, patients, and the local community, despite the dangers that surrounded them. He was willing to sacrifice everything for their well-being.

On that day, at noon, Dr. Hassan was at Cave Hospital. He had just finished his meetings with the nurses and drivers who were to join the Hama ambulance system. He was heading towards his car, parked just 100 meters from the hospital entrance when the vehicle was targeted by an air-to-ground missile fired from a fighter jet. The doctor died instantly, precisely at 12:30 p.m.

It marked the end of his life, but it was not the end of a story.

Dr. Hassan, without any political or military affiliation, was committed to protecting and treating the sick and injured during the protests and bombings. He initially transformed his private hospital into a hospital that offered free healthcare services to those in need. In the context of war and relentless bombings, the situation was critical, and the demand for hospitals was enormous. Missiles and attacks were commonplace, creating an urgent need for medical care. The doctor mobilized by establishing numerous hospitals, including the Ibn Sina Hospital in the eastern countryside, the Cave Hospital in Kafr Zita Town, the Hazarin Hospital, and the Qalaat Al-Madiq Hospital, as well as multiple medical facilities. It was an enormous undertaking accomplished under extreme circumstances.



The area was filled with death, and reminders of it were everywhere. Every day, there were lifeless bodies, body parts scattered around, and people injured by chlorine and other weapons. It was a challenging and exhausting routine they had to face every single day.

“ ‘Die standing!’ was a phrase he frequently imparted to those around him, emphasizing the importance of not giving up and always fighting for the cause. ”

He cared more about his team and the patients than himself. When they received news that the hospital would be bombed, he consistently remained the last to leave. He ensured that patients, administrative staff, and medical personnel were evacuated to safe locations. In those critical moments, his decisions held immeasurable value as they directly impacted the lives and safety of everyone. Not everyone possesses the ability to make such determinations regarding when to evacuate, when to stay, and when to act.

Even when attending to the injured perpetrators of attacks, he adhered to his professional principles. He safeguarded them, ensured their safety, and avoided potential problems or confrontations.

Those were trying days, marked by intricate arrangements and strict constraints in the region. He consistently exhibited sound judgment and made timely decisions. In 2015, one of his hospitals was bombed, and he was present. Within a matter of days, the hospital was promptly restored and repaired, showcasing his unwavering determination. His presence served as a source of reassurance for the entire medical staff and the patients.

He firmly believed in the necessity of staying and facing hardships alongside others. Despite receiving offers with numerous benefits to work in Gulf and Maghreb countries, he categorically refused them. He stated that such propositions were unacceptable under any circumstances, especially given the current situation. His refusal was rooted in his deep conviction that he should remain in his country and homeland, considering it unreasonable to abandon them.

As a husband and father, Dr. Hassan found himself torn between the need to be close to his family and the responsibility of ensuring their safety. During the bombings, he sought to reassure them, assuring them that everything would

be fine and that the explosions were as light as feathers, with nothing to fear. Despite his comforting words, the harsh reality of incessant attacks made daily life extremely difficult. Bombings had become routine, occurring at regular intervals, and fear permeated every moment. The urgency to find a safer and more stable place grew. That's when he ultimately decided to relocate them to Turkey, hoping to provide temporary refuge and protect them from the horrors of war.

After their departure to Turkey, their family life was never the same. Dr. Hassan could only see them once a month, as he was constantly occupied managing affairs related to NGOs and ensuring that donations reached the affected areas in Syria. Even during their relocation to Turkey, his work did not pause. He had patients to treat and responsibilities to fulfill. Consequently, they never had the chance to fully live with him and enjoy a normal family life.

In the midst of his challenging life as a doctor, he always strived to be the best father he could. It was his dream, but fulfilling it proved to be difficult. The Syrian revolution erupted, and he found himself unable to fully enjoy their early years as babies due to his demanding profession. Nevertheless, he made every effort to shower them with love.

He would eagerly recount his experiences to his son, sharing intricate details of the medical procedures he performed, the surgeries he conducted, and the arteries he repaired. His son, despite not having much time with his father, cherished these stories and often accompanied him to the hospital. They spent long hours together, with the young boy closely observing his father's work. These shared moments created a unique bond, and in his son's eyes, his father was nothing short of a hero.

When it came to his daughter, he had a special nickname for her – 'the most beautiful!' With this affectionate term, he conveyed just how precious and beautiful he found her. Each time he laid eyes on her, he would address her with these sweet words, filling her heart with warmth and paternal love. His return home was eagerly anticipated by his daughter, who would excitedly open the door and ask, 'Daddy, are you back home?' Unaware of the long hours he had spent at work for days on end, her innocent enthusiasm brightened his days.

While he was in his car, dressed in his doctor's coat, and moving between hospitals, tragedy struck. Dr. Hassan's vehicle was hit by a missile, and he tragically lost his life in an instant. This sudden and devastating event left an immense void and an

overwhelming sense of loss among his family, colleagues, and all those who had benefited from his medical expertise.

The impact of Dr. Hassan's absence is profound, extending far beyond the loss of a respected individual. It is felt deeply in the vital services he can no longer provide. Dr. Hassan was the sole practitioner offering cardiac care and internal medicine treatments. Many patients depended on his guidance and care, particularly in the intensive care and advanced intensive care units. Following his tragic passing, several doctors and medical staff chose to leave the country. The sense of security he once provided vanished, leaving a gaping hole in the healthcare system. Dr. Hassan's absence left a void, and the trust and protection he had provided seemed to disappear.

Today, people have been deliberately deprived of the medical services he used to deliver. It's a loss felt throughout the community, as Dr. Hassan served thousands of individuals in a field where such services were seldom available.

“ This is the story of a doctor who was more than just a doctor.”





Monologue

Witnessing Angels Amidst Devastation

Rana Manfokh's Story

Rana Manfokh was killed on June 12, 2021 when multiple rockets that were allegedly fired by the Syrian Democratic Forces struck Al-Shifaa hospital in Afrin Town in rural Aleppo, killing 15 individuals and causing significant damage to the hospital.



My brother is calling me on the phone. I see it ringing, but I can't reach out my hand to answer.

My name is Rana, and I am a 44-year-old Syrian woman. Describing my life has never been easy, as it has been filled with challenges. To shield those I care about from my sadness and exhaustion, I rely on laughter and happiness as a protective facade. My life carries a heavy responsibility—I am the caretaker for nine people, including seven children and two sick adults—my mother and my brother, who was injured in a bombing and now has a disability. My primary goal is to ensure their safety and well-being, sparing them from additional worries or distress. Their emotional stability and happiness are my utmost priority. Consequently, I pretend to be content even when facing difficult circumstances, offering them love and support. It is a demanding role, but I willingly sacrifice my own happiness for their sake. Somehow, I find the strength to manage it all.

We are not from here; we have been displaced from our beloved hometown. Every day, my family and I yearn for the day we can return to our beautiful Maarat al-Nouman and be reunited with our loved ones. The thought of seeing our house again, tending to our little plants, and sharing coffee with our neighbors fills our hearts with hope. We left our hometown in search of safety, and now we find ourselves here.

“Choosing to work in the maternity ward has been a heartwarming decision, as it allows me to witness the miracle of birth every day. Despite the challenges, it brings me joy to be part of such precious moments.

”

I found work as a cleaning lady at the hospital in my hometown, but after being displaced, I started working at the hospital in Afrin. Choosing to work in the maternity ward has been a heartwarming decision, as it allows me to witness the miracle of birth every day. Despite the challenges, it brings me joy to be part of such precious moments. When I return home, I have the privilege of caring for my nieces and nephews, a responsibility that fills my life with love and purpose.

I don't have children of my own, so I surround myself with children to fulfill my unsatisfied maternal instinct, as you can see. The workload is incredibly heavy in this wartime situation. For thirteen years, I have been working tirelessly, five days a week, and sometimes even six. Despite the horrors I witness daily, I am deeply

committed to this job. I bear witness to the devastating aftermath of bombings, with victims arriving—some in critical condition, and others already lifeless. At the forefront of it all, I am confronted with the deep wounds and unbearable pain suffered by these innocent individuals. It is a brutal and heart-wrenching reality that I face every day.

On June 12, 2021, a summer day in Afrin, the sounds of newborns' cries were replaced by the incessant ringing of my phone. I knew it was my brother. He must have heard about the bombings. In the maternity ward, innocent lives were snatched away in an act of ruthless violence. The scene was haunting, filled with immeasurable pain and sorrow.

I witnessed the unimaginable horror as the walls shook, and complete chaos took over. The innocent babies lay in their beds, unable to comprehend the terrifying situation unfolding around them. Their gentle breaths of life were tragically cut short by the debris and explosions that ravaged our ward. I tried to carry on, but my witnessing eyes chose to close... unable to bear the unspeakable tragedy before me....

I think... I am dead

My eyes opened to a celestial vision: I saw angels appearing and carrying innocent souls to heaven. Their gentle and compassionate light enveloped me, providing momentary comfort in those moments of absolute darkness. I left behind the ruins of horror, but I know that my spirit will forever be connected to that place and to my family, who depended on me. Now that I am gone, I worry about how they will go on living without me.

I am no longer here to demand justice, and neither are my colleagues who lost their lives in this tragedy. As I depart, I wonder if those responsible for these attacks will ever be held accountable and if the truth will one day come to light.

We were human beings, doing our best to provide support and help to those in need. We became victims of senseless violence. But we are not just statistics or names on a death list. We were individuals with families, dreams, and hopes. We have already been displaced from our homes and cities, leaving behind a decent life to seek safety. But what have we gained in return?

We deserved to live and witness a better world. We deserved to see justice prevail and those responsible for these monstrous acts held accountable for their actions. Now that we are not here to seek justice and accountability, I don't know if they will ever be judged for their crimes.

“ My brother is still calling me; I can hear the phones ringing of all my colleagues. Will anyone take the call? The weight of uncertainty and loss hangs heavy in my heart.

”







Beyond the Clouds of Chlorine Dr. Ali Ahmed Darwish Sacrifice

Dr. Ali Ahmad Darwish was killed on March 25, 2016 when a helicopter affiliated with the Government of Syria forces dropped barrel bombs containing chlorine gas on the Lataminah Hospital in rural Hama.



Aicha suddenly realizes that she is alone at home, an unusual occurrence in this bustling house where the children are always running around. They must be at the neighboring aunt's, she thought.

They're at the neighboring aunt's, she thought.

Walking slowly, like any woman eight months pregnant, she made her way there. However, upon arrival, she noticed an unusual gathering, a somber atmosphere that hinted at something terrible having happened.

For the past six years, they have been in Turkey, and Aicha's children—Fatima, Ahmad, and Raghad—have struggled to learn the language and adjust to school. The absence of their father, who brought them to Turkey five years ago, compounds their challenges. He can only visit once or twice a month. The situation has grown critical, and living there with the family is no longer feasible. Ahmad's reassurances during bombardments, saying, "Don't worry; bombing is far from us," no longer offer the comfort they once did.

Now that Dr. Ali has taken his family to Turkey, he can work with the reassurance that they are safe, allowing him to dedicate himself to working tirelessly, 24/7. Despite the pleas from the inhabitants of his village to stay, he had to make the difficult decision to leave, knowing that his skills as the only orthopedic surgeon in the region are greatly needed, especially during times of war.

In conflict zones, civilians bear the brunt of indiscriminate bombardment, and hospitals become targets too. It appears that the attackers seek to prevent people from seeking treatment, aiming for only one destination: "death." Tragically, they also ensure that health workers are not spared. In the face of such attacks from both sides, doctors and medical administrators have taken extraordinary measures to protect their patients. They explore various options, such as building hospitals inside mountains and underground, all in an effort to shield medical facilities from bombings and ensure the safety of their patients. The dedication and resilience of these healthcare professionals are truly commendable in the midst of such dire circumstances.

“Despite urgent warnings from his colleagues about a chemical attack that had just occurred, he chose to remain focused on the critical surgery. Once the operation was completed, he bravely carried the patient out of the room, but the hazardous situation soon took its toll on him. Collapsing to the ground, he finally agreed to receive medical attention for himself.”

On 3/25/2016, inside the cave hospital, Dr. Ali tirelessly worked in the operating room, trying to save a patient's life who was suffering from severe bleeding. Despite urgent warnings from his colleagues about a chemical attack that had just occurred, he chose to remain focused on the critical surgery. Once the operation was completed, he bravely carried the patient out of the room, but the hazardous situation soon took its toll on him. Collapsing to the ground, he finally agreed to receive medical attention for himself. He was subsequently evacuated to Turkey, having been exposed to a significant amount of chlorine gas during the attack.

"There was a bombardment, and Dr. Ali is injured, but don't worry, he is fine," they informed Aicha.

However, she couldn't bring herself to believe their reassurances, particularly when she saw her mother-in-law faint from the devastating news. It was then that she realized the unbearable truth—he had lost his life in the tragic incident.

She was married to him for ten years, and together, they had three children, but he would never know their fourth. Throughout their entire marriage, she could recall only one instance when he left the hospital. It was during a week when he attended the annual SAMS' conference in Turkey, giving them the rare opportunity to spend time together as a family after his sessions. It was during this short period that she discovered his true character—his tenderness, kindness, benevolence, and courage. Regrettably, they never had another chance to be together, as even during his leaves, there were none.

When he wasn't at the hospital, patients were coming to their home, and he would provide them with treatment. He dedicated most of his time to tirelessly working, visiting

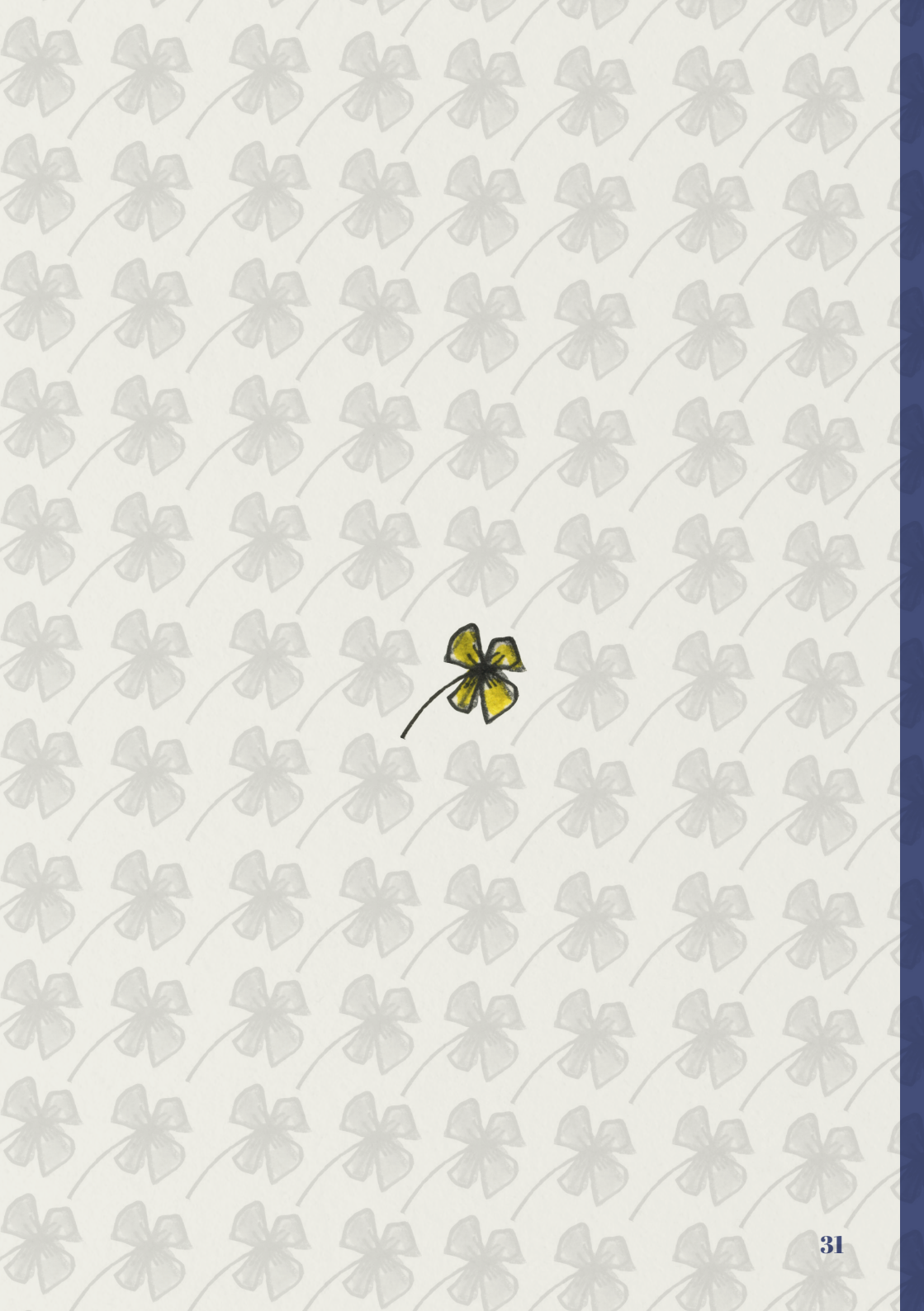


patients' houses, and offering medicine for free. She knew that a doctor's work never truly ceased, but after her husband's passing, she realized that his dedication went beyond medical duties. She learned from people that he used to care for orphans, providing them with medicine and support at no cost. He would deliver medications to patients, whether they were in Syria or Turkey, without expecting anything in return. His selflessness and compassionate nature touched the lives of countless individuals beyond the realm of medicine.

Ali was not only a father to his own family; he was also the pillar of support for his sister and her children after they lost their father. Additionally, he held a special place in his parents' hearts as their only son and was cherished as the apple of their eye.

His untimely passing left his colleagues struggling to cope with the scarcity of resources and the constant threat of bombardment. His wife found herself raising their four children alone in asylum in Turkey. Whenever they face difficult situations, the children yearn for their father's presence, believing that if he were there, facing life challenges would have been much easier.

His parents now endure the unimaginable pain of outliving their child, an agony no parent should bear. Moreover, his nephews suffer the loss of the man who tried to fill the void left by the death of their father. Ali's departure has left a void in the lives of all those he touched, a void that can never be fully filled.





Devoted and Fearless Ammar Al-Hallaq, The Hero Who Stayed

Ammar Al-Hallaq was killed on February 15, 2016 when a Russian fighter jet targeted the Maaret An-Numan hospital in rural Idleb.



She was well aware that crossing the border to the safe side was not possible, mainly because Zakaria, her son, was unable to walk due to his handicap. The temptation of illegal immigration was no longer viable by walking, and they had to accept that they should stop trying. In that moment, Ammar's words echoed in her head:

“ A stone from this wall (the family house) is worth all abroad and what it can offer me. ”

The situation we are facing is not difficult to understand; it was already predictable, and many others have experienced similar challenges, including my family. Leaving is nothing more than a survival strategy to provide our children with security and a better life. I have already witnessed the death of one of my children when our house was bombed, and I am not prepared to lose the other three; they are all I have left of their father.

We have already been forced to flee our home once, seeking refuge in Dana Town in rural Idleb. Now, the situation demands that we leave all of Syria, and it is my responsibility to make decisions. Since Ammar, my husband, was alive, he made it clear that I had to fend for myself. On one occasion, he stayed at the hospital for four consecutive days without coming home. I had called him because we needed fuel for heating, and I asked him to bring fuel and then return to work. He explicitly told me to consider him dead and to manage the house on my own.

Ammar was dedicated to his profession and managed nursing departments at the hospitals he worked at, which include the SAMS-supported National Hospital in Ma'arrat An-Numan Town, as well as the nearby Doctors Without Borders Hospital. He cared for his patients with immense love and devotion, and his competence and experience were well-known. But his commitment didn't end there; he went above and beyond his professional duties, making every effort to provide medication and care to those who couldn't afford treatment.

He would often tell me that I should consider him as good as gone, for the risk of death was always present. Hospitals were frequent targets of bombings, and Ammar experienced this firsthand when he was seriously injured in an attack on the Doctors Without Borders hospital three months before his death. Despite undergoing a delicate surgical procedure, he spent only 13 days at home before returning to the hospital. Even with his injury, his determination to continue working never wavered. He understood the weight of his responsibilities and

how many lives depended on him. Ammar surpassed all expectations, bravely facing all challenges because he believed that his work demanded sacrifice and altruism. His devotion to his work was unwavering, and even on holidays, he never hesitated to answer the call and keep working. When I pleaded with him to leave this dangerous job after his injury, he replied

“ When you see gratitude in a patient’s eyes, it surpasses all the wealth in the world. ”

Ammar used to share the difficulties he encountered during his workdays. He would recount how planes struck around him and there were wounded individuals, and he would come home covered in blood from head to toe. We also witnessed numerous bombings in our neighborhood. Yet, he remained fearless, knowing that he could face death any day.

He used to talk to me about the difficulties they faced. They were particularly afraid for the patients during bombings because the buildings were not sturdy; he described them as being like cardboard.

Now, I see the rubble, and I wonder if my father will make it out this time, just like he did three months ago. I see the debris, and I fear it’s too late, as the excavators that are lifting the rubble couldn’t arrive in time due to the bombings. I try to recall my father’s face; it was always smiling. I can’t remember any other expression on his face except that one. I reminisce about how after work, he would not just come home to rest but take us for a drive with our grandmother.

At 4 or 5 in the morning, they pulled out several doctors and nurses from under the rubble. Among them, there’s a body they say is my father’s. I don’t recognize him, and neither does anyone else. The amount of dust covering his face makes him unrecognizable. But I remember that before he left us yesterday afternoon, he asked me to take care of my siblings. So, it must be him.

Three hours ago, on the phone, he told me that several planes were in the air, and he and his colleagues were hiding under the stairs due to the high risk of bombing. Now, I’m waiting for news with our daughter Lyn in front of the door. I still hold onto hope that he is alive.

“Baba is dead,” says Lyn. Now I realize that Ammar is dead. I don’t know what to feel anymore.

Ammar is dead. He had promised us to take a day off today to have a barbecue. "I feel like eating fries; prepare 3 kilograms for us, and the day after tomorrow, we will have a barbecue. I took a day off to be with you and the children." He died as a result of a bombing by warplanes on the hospital where he worked, along with eight members of the medical staff and sixteen patients. A tragic day.

The family finally managed to leave Syria for Turkey, this time by car, as it was no longer possible to travel on foot. The cost was expensive, but life had become unbearable there. However, their arrival in Turkey brought a new set of difficulties due to the high cost of living and limited financial means. As a result, the family is currently facing severe financial difficulties. They must now confront the challenges of Zakaria's (16 years old) disabilities and Lyn's (6 years old) autism and vision difficulties. Mohammed, the eldest son, is compelled to take up odd jobs to meet their needs. He works 11 hours a day and can no longer see himself continuing his studies at university, despite receiving acceptance from renowned institutions. His father, Ammar, had dreamed of seeing both Mohammed and his brother graduate and work in the healthcare and humanitarian fields to help others. He didn't want them to struggle; he just wanted them to focus on their studies. They never lacked anything.

However, that dream now feels distant, as one of the sons died in a bombing, and Mohammed is struggling to balance work and studies. Nevertheless, he holds onto the knowledge that their father left behind a remarkable legacy of humanity and sacrifice. Ammar was a symbol of hope and strength, and his memory deserves immense appreciation and respect.





Left in the Shadows Samira Al Souqi

Samira Al-Souqi was killed on June 12, 2021 when several missiles that were allegedly fired by the Syrian Democratic Forces struck the Al-Shifaa hospital in Afrin Town in rural Aleppo.



In the small town of Harran Al-Awameed in Rural Damascus, a mother named Samira lived a life dedicated to her three children. She was known for her strong work ethic and her commitment to providing for her family. However, their lives took an unexpected turn when they were displaced from their hometown and forced to settle in Afrin.

As a displaced family, they faced numerous challenges, including the loss of their home and the struggle to find stability in their new surroundings. Samira looked for employment at Al-Shifa Hospital in Afrin, driven by her love for her children and the need to secure their future.

Working as a cleaner in the hospital, Samira became a vital part of the healthcare team, contributing to the cleanliness and hygiene of the facility. She understood the importance of her role in maintaining a safe and healthy environment for both patients and staff. However, the actual task was difficult and mentally taxing, particularly in the context of the horrors of the Syrian war.

“Daily exposure to the awful reality of death and bloodshed only reinforced Samira’s determination to help those who were suffering and provide them comfort.”

Samira’s husband was a loving and caring partner. He recognized the toll that Samira’s work took on her, both physically and emotionally. As she returned home from the hospital, Ahmed would gently urge her to rest and ask their children to be quiet, creating an atmosphere of tranquility so that Samira could find solace and relaxation after her long and challenging shifts. Ahmed’s support and consideration were a testament to their deep love and unwavering commitment to one another.

Tragically, the community faced a grim reality as healthcare facilities became targets of attacks. On a devastating day, a shell fell on Al-Shifa Hospital, causing chaos and claiming the lives of several dedicated healthcare workers, including Samira.

“Her devotion to her work and her determination to make a difference in the lives of others touched the hearts of many.”

The loss of Samira left not only her family but also the entire community in deep sorrow. Her devotion to her work and her determination to make a difference in the lives of others touched the hearts of many. The attack on the hospital highlighted the dire consequences of such violence, as it not only resulted in the loss of precious lives but also deprived the community of essential medical care.

The impact on the husband is still particularly profound. The absence of his beloved wife and the void left by her departure overwhelmed him with grief and a deep sense of loss. He longed for the sound of her voice, her warm presence, and the joy she brought to their home. He is now faced with the demanding responsibility of raising their children by himself, a duty he took on with a heavy heart but unwavering determination.

In addition to the challenges they faced, the children have been unable to attend school for the past three months due to the dire circumstances of displacement in Syria. This further compounds the difficulties they already endure as access to education and a stable learning environment becomes increasingly limited.

Samira's family represents countless others who are caught in the crossfire of conflict, where displacement and violence rob children of their right to education and a promising future.





My Father is a Hero

Story of Mohammad Hajji Ahmad

Mohamed Hajji Ahmad was killed on November 17, 2017 when a Government of Syria warplane targeted an area in close proximity to the Al-Atareb primary health center in rural Aleppo with airstrikes.



On this walk with my dad, he gave me another life lesson. I like these free lessons that my father gives me; I don't need to pay for them in experience; I take them for free. He is the one who paid for them with his own experience.

I don't know why I now remember this lesson exactly: "The visible part of the thing is completely different from its hidden part." By raising this rubble, I can see that what they cover is much more terrifying than what they show.

When I was little, I didn't have much opportunity to spend time with my father; he worked a lot, and I just remember that I often missed him. When I grew up a little, I knew that everything rested on my father. Even before we came into the world, I and my nine brothers and sisters were already taken care of by him. From a young age, around 13 years old, my father looked after his own brothers and sisters. He was loved by everyone; when I walked with him in the street, everyone greeted him warmly. I was proud to be his son, and this pride grew with age and became reciprocal when I began to accompany him on his visits to his friends, and he was told that I was doing a good job in the media.

My work in the media began at the beginning of the Syrian revolution when everyone got involved in the task that they mastered best to serve the cause. My father got involved first; the legitimacy of the revolution was indisputable, according to him, and we had to side with justice against the injustice that we saw and experienced every day in Syria. As a taxi driver, he signed up as a full-time volunteer driver, only coming home two days a week. When my young brothers asked Mom where he was, she replied, "Dad doesn't come home because he's helping sick people." His leisure time at home was constantly interrupted as his high sense of duty prompted him to leave his home, whenever airstrikes occurred, to rush and help those affected by the airstrikes. Al Atarib, our city, suffered a lot of airstrikes; the emergency was permanent. In these airstrikes, we lost two uncles on my father's side and my two brothers-in-law.

On November 13, 2017, there were airstrikes at the market. My father used to call us to make sure that we were safe, but this time he did not. I went down to the site of the airstrikes to help the rescuers. The scene is frightening. The market stalls that used to be lively and full of vibrant colors are now destroyed and covered in rubble. The ground is covered with mountains of debris, testifying to the destruction caused by the violent attacks.

“ My father is not under the rubble, my father didn't die, my father never dies. ”

While clearing the rubble, I was witnessing the embodiment of raw violence and the extent of the damage caused by the attack, and the scene was nothing but tragic. How in 50 square meters could there be so much death? I repeated to myself, "My father is not under the rubble, my father didn't die, my father never dies." I was walking towards the road when I saw an ambulance coming. It's dad; it must be dad; dad is safe. Once the ambulance has parked, I realize that he is not the driver.

"Obaida, where is my father?"

"I don't know, I didn't see him in the hospital."

My dad is neither at work nor in the ambulance. I realize now that my father was in the market at the time of the attack.

Later, I was informed that he had been evacuated to Türkiye for treatment.

I see my father as a hero, even as an adult. I consider him a hero in his work, a hero as a father, and a hero among his friends. He loved people and had humanity. He was pained by their sadness and rejoiced in their happiness. Once, I went to see him at work and was delighted with a successful operation for a child. I asked him who the child was, and if he knew, but he answered: "It doesn't matter who he belongs to, what matters is that he is healthy now." And when there were renovations at the hospital or new support came in, he was the one who rejoiced; it felt like the hospital belonged to him in some way. He saw the hospital as part of him and the patients as part of his family. Wherever he went, he left a positive impact.

My father passed away after three days, like many fathers that day. I and all my friends were orphaned in that tragic market bombing. Almost 100 people lost their lives, and everyone on my street lost someone. The city market was hit by high-explosive missiles, which led to widespread destruction of the market and civilian homes, with dozens of civilians buried under the rubble.

“ My father is dead, and nothing is like before. ”

I came to a point of no return in my life. It's a moment when everything has changed, and there is no going back. The reality of his disappearance has become undeniable, and I am faced with a huge and painful void.

I feel a deep sadness and a sense of loss that will never completely go away. My father was an essential part of my life, a rock on which I relied. Now I have to learn to live without him, to find my strength, and to carry on despite this immense pain. The responsibility is very big—bigger than any expectation. Every day I feel his absence and realize how irreplaceable he was. His death left a deep impact on me, and I am rebuilding my life with this absence that will remain forever present.





In the Shadows of Destruction The Journey of Allam Mohamed Ali

Allam Mohamed Ali was killed on May 23, 2015. when a helicopter affiliated with the Government of Syria dropped a barrel bomb onto the Kastun primary health center in rural Hama.



Yes, it was a big decision, but it wasn't difficult to make.

“ Just witnessing the suffering and horrors of the situation helped me understand where I needed to stand and with whom. ”

I can't recall the exact time I left Damascus to return to Kastun in rural Hama . The daily horrors I now witness at the hospital often blur my sense of time and the life I had before coming here. I also don't remember how I became an ambulance nurse. What I do know is that coming back home has helped me regain a sense of life. Having my children around me constantly serves as a reminder that life exists beyond the specter of death, which I encountered at the clinic and continue to face every day.

My name is Allam Mohamed Ali, and I am Syrian. I am 27 years old, married, and have two children. Additionally, my sister and her two children have been living with me since their father passed away.

Despite the demands of my work, I cherish the pleasant atmosphere at home. However, the nature of my job prevents me from being there as much as I would like to be, just like any other father. I dedicate more than twelve hours a day to the hospital and the ambulance, and even when I'm not on duty, I often get called in for emergencies. In Syria, our city is constantly under threat of bombings due to the ongoing war. Leaving Damascus and my previous job behind, I chose to join humanitarian work. I find happiness in aiding others and seeking goodness wherever it exists.

“ In my humanitarian efforts, I feel a calling to serve the people of my village and the neighboring communities, standing by their side during the most difficult times. ”

At home, I strive to teach my children—by the way, when I say “my children,” I include my nephews too because I don't see any difference—good values and morals. I try to instill humanity's norms in this brutal world that I encounter daily. By helping them realize their little dreams, I want them to understand that what they bring to me is far greater than what I could ever bring to them. They contribute so much to my life, and they bring me joy beyond measure.

For the past four and a half years, my wife and I have shared a sweet love, finding solace in the calm and simplicity of our society. Despite the difficulties of these times and the poverty we face, I do my best to support and help her. However, the challenges of these difficult days and our financial struggles cast fear in her eyes, particularly when it comes to my safety during the bombings. She worries that one day I might not come back home, and though I shield her from the things I witness at work, she is aware of the risks I face.

On May 23rd, 2015, while I was on duty, the horrors unfolded before me. Injured people were everywhere, making it hard to find anyone standing; even the patients we treated were still bleeding. The amount of blood was overwhelming, more than usual, more than ever before. The medical staff was injured, lying on the ground alongside the rubble and debris scattered everywhere. It became clear that the clinic had been bombed, and I, too, was affected. In that moment, I felt like I had left this world. The clinic was completely destroyed, its departments turned into debris, and the walls and doors were no longer visible. There was nothing left of the clinic.

The day my wife feared has come.





A Father's Heartbreak Muhannad Al-Marzouq

Muhannad Al-Marzouq was killed on February 19, 2018. when a helicopter allegedly belonging to the Government of Syria dropped three barrel bombs onto the Al-Marj hospital in the Governorate of Rural Damascus.



This is the story of a father who lost his son. We will convey it with his sorrow and the cruelty of injustice, striving to translate the father's grief into words.

He considered himself blessed to have a son like Muhannad, not only because he was his only son but also because he embodied all the qualities of a good child. Muhannad never refused any of his father's requests; he was kind to his sisters and lovingly responsible toward his own family. Moreover, he was actively engaged in humanitarian work. Muhannad provided his father not only with the companionship of a friend but also the love of a son and the protection of a father.

Their lives took an unforeseen turn as they grappled with the ongoing difficulties of their situation. The family was displaced, compelled to make heart-wrenching decisions, and forced to leave behind everything in pursuit of safety in another city. But despite the extreme challenges they faced, their bond remained unbreakable, and they persevered through the trials brought on by their new circumstances.

As an anesthetic technician, Muhannad wholeheartedly dedicated himself to his work at the hospital during the war in Syria. Confronted with a shortage of medical staff and resources, he assumed additional responsibilities, including the removal of bullets and suturing the wounds of patients injured by bombings, providing emergency care. He demonstrated exceptional courage and skill in assisting the wounded, working tirelessly to deliver essential care under incredibly challenging conditions.

“ His unwavering dedication and ability to adapt during those trying times made a significant difference in saving lives and alleviating the suffering caused by the war. ”

He never displayed any arrogance in his work. Sometimes, his father would visit him at the hospital, where the overwhelming and unsettling smell of wounds and pus lingered in the air. The father would immediately feel nauseous and wonder how his son could endure it. But Muhannad would say, 'I have grown accustomed to this smell. It's how I've found meaning in my life. When I care for someone and witness their recovery, it brings me satisfaction.' This only made the father's pride swell.

During those times of war and insecurity, the father frequently implored Muhannad to leave the country and seek a better future, especially as he traveled

to neighboring villages to treat the injured who had no access to medical care. He was putting himself in grave danger by going out in secret and often faced perilous situations. Sometimes they encountered defense patrols, a form of aerial intelligence. The father expressed his concern, saying, 'My son, please, I'm truly worried. You traverse areas where you may encounter intelligence service patrols ahead. It's highly risky. If they apprehend you with a suture needle, they might kill you. If they find a bandage on you, they might kill you. And you're aware of the precarious situation we're in!'

“ However, Muhannad consistently refused, as he deemed it his duty to care for those unfortunate victims of injustice and international indifference who were targeted in violent attacks. ”

The presence of his daughter also illuminated Muhannad's life. Despite the challenging times, he enjoyed taking her on motorbike rides and, despite their limited means, he didn't hesitate to purchase toys for her each time to bring joy to her life.

On a day when he wasn't scheduled to work, Muhannad returned home from the hospital. Two hours later, the bombing commenced in the town of Utaya in Rural Damascus. Amidst the chaos of the wounded and the deceased who kept arriving at the hospital, a doctor urgently required the assistance of an anesthesia technician for a critical surgery. They reached out to Muhannad, who responded immediately. As the operation concluded, the hospital suddenly came under attack. In the ensuing chaos and devastation, they desperately searched for each other amidst the swirling dust and scattered debris.

Tragically and heroically, Muhannad passed away, not from natural causes, but in the line of duty. While he was in the operating room, his hospital was targeted. A helicopter dropped three explosive barrels, resulting in two deaths and significant damage to the hospital.

Muhannad left this world, leaving behind a father who was his entire world, a young daughter who had only experienced two years of paternal love, and sisters who depended on his financial support to continue their studies.



From Dreams to Sacrifice The Devotion of Abdulkarim Barghout

Abdulkarim Barghout was killed on August 7, 2015, when a warplane affiliated with the Government of Syria directly targeted Al-Shifaa hospital in Saraqab Town in rural Idlib with an airstrike.





Abdulkarim Barghout, a cheerful and aspirational young man at the age of 23, had dreams of settling down and starting a family after earning his diploma from the Trade Institute. However, the challenging security situation in Syria thwarted his desires. Moved by heart-wrenching video clips depicting injured and killed children and women during the early years of the conflict in Syria, Abdulkarim felt compelled to take action and not remain idle at home.

“ Despite being fully aware that hospitals were frequent targets of attacks, Abdulkarim fearlessly chose to work there in southern Idlib, dedicating himself to helping those in need. ”

Driven by his newfound calling, Abdulkarim received extensive first aid training, leading him to pursue a career in the medical field. His intelligence and rapid learning caught the attention of others, landing him a role as an assistant surgeon in the operating room. Despite being fully aware that hospitals were frequent targets of attacks, Abdulkarim fearlessly chose to work there in southern Idlib, dedicating himself to helping those in need.

Abdulkarim witnessed many painful things throughout his years in the medical profession, yet he never lost his empathy for the suffering he encountered. The sight of orphaned assault victims and wounded children, in particular, deeply touched him, leaving him feeling emotionally burdened for days.

Despite the difficulties he faced, Abdulkarim managed to maintain a playful spirit, and he was known for his talent in bringing laughter to others. He cherished spending time with his friends, engaging in lighthearted pranks with them. However, after each gathering, uncertainty loomed, as they were unsure if they would see each other again the next day.

Being the only male among six daughters, he held a special place in his family's heart, with his mother affectionately referring to him as “the son of my heart.” Bringing joy and waves of laughter to his home, his mother eagerly looked forward to seeing him as a groom. However, this dream seemed distant as he worked in critical circumstances, spending more days in hospitals than anywhere else.

Mother: “My son, why didn't you come home? Why have you been at the hospital for two days?”

Abdulkarim: "There is a severe shortage of medical staff in this area; we are overwhelmed with patients affected by chemical attacks. I would come home for just two hours. But after those two hours, please wake me up."

Mother: "Why don't you sleep more, dear son?"

Abdulkarim: "There's still not enough staff at the hospital; we have to take care of the victims who arrive covered in chemicals, and we face heavy traffic. We haven't stopped providing first aid for two days, Mom."

On a fateful Friday, as his sisters were busy cooking and his mother was nearby, their father rushed in, his hand hitting his forehead, exclaiming, "Oh God, no! An airplane." The family sensed something was wrong, and the sisters shouted, "What is going on? What happened?" But they did not realize until a car arrived at their doorstep that the truth had become apparent. A doctor asked the mother to say, "We belong to God, and to Him, we shall return." The mother repeated automatically, "We belong to God, and to Him, we shall return."

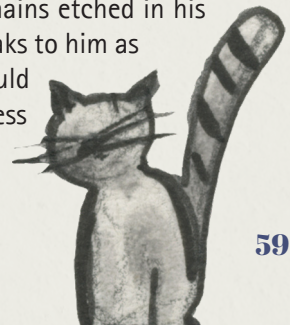
Another car followed, carrying the lifeless body of Abdulkarim.

On 7/8/2015, as a result of targeting Al-Shifa Hospital in Saraqib, an air strike directly hit the operating room where Abdulkarim, who was volunteering due to the shortage of staff, was working. It was not his shift; he had stepped in to help.

Abdulkarim left at the age of 23 years old, the cherished son of his mother's

“ A hospital, a sanctuary where lives are meant to be saved, became the target of someone else's violent intentions ”

heart; he departed without having the chance to build the family he dreamed of or experience the joy of being called "baba" (dad). Tragically, Abdulkarim's life was cut short in a place that was meant to provide safety and healing. A hospital, a sanctuary where lives are meant to be saved, became the target of someone else's violent intentions—the lives of the injured, the children, the newborn babies, the doctors, the nurses, the cleanliness technicians, and all others inside were extinguished. Years have passed, but the pain remains etched in his mother's heart as she looks at his pictures daily and speaks to him as if he were still alive. She wishes that every mother could have a son like Abdulkarim, whose virtues and politeness continue to inspire blessings upon all.





A Father's Devotion in Times of Conflict

Mohammad Al-Khalil

Mohammad Al-Khalil was killed on July 28, 2015 when a Government of Syria helicopter dropped a barrel bomb in close proximity to the Kiwan hospital in rural Idlib.



This is the story of a normal, loving family. The 55-year-old father, Mohamad Al Khalil, loves his ten kids very much. His first goal is to make sure they are pleased and safe. Like any other father, he wants his kids to succeed in school because he knows it will lead to a brighter future for them. He cherishes his kids and takes great pleasure in giving them hugs and sharing hearty laughs that are heard throughout their neighborhood.

In their happy and loving lives, even with his busy job, Mohammad always finds ways to spend time with his family. Whenever he can, he takes an hour off just to bring them out for fun meals outdoors and let them freely play on their own land. Sometimes, work interrupts their plans just as they arrive, but they laugh it off and make jokes about the canceled project as they head back home.

Mohammad has a wife who has shared a lifetime of love and laughter with him. The years they spent together are the most precious to her, almost making her forget that she lived with her parents for eighteen years. Her husband is a source of strength and comfort, providing her with a sense of security.

Fatima loves Mohammad with all her heart. She eagerly awaits his return from work and turns down offers to have coffee with neighbors because she finds solace and happiness in their time together. She can still feel the excitement when he enters the house slowly, followed by a sudden loud "Hi" that never failed to make her jump, only to dissolve into laughter together.

Mohammad was not only a dedicated father but also an invaluable member of the community as an anesthetic technician. His job became even more crucial and demanding due to the frequent airstrikes that targeted the region, including his own village. With his skills and compassion, he was devoted and loyal to his job and the people he served, providing critical medical assistance during times of crisis. Despite the constant threat and challenges posed by the bombings, he always put in his best effort and cared deeply about his community's well-being.

Fatima: Welcome back. Let me prepare some hot water and salt to soothe your tired feet. You've been working so hard. You should consider taking early retirement now that you're 55 years old. It's time for you to rest.

“ I can't stop serving in my job, and I won't stop until the day I die. I want to continue helping those in need. ”

Mohammad: (smiling gratefully) I can't stop serving in my job, and I won't stop until the day I die. I want to continue helping those in need.

On a normal day, Mohammad went shopping for his wife, who wanted to make "Ma'hashi" and go together to eat at their son's place. But the planes in the sky decided that the day in the village would not be a normal one; the village had become a target for frequent airstrikes, leaving the residents in constant fear and uncertainty. After a while, Mohammad returned from work covered in the blood of the victims. He asked his family to hide, took a shower, and left for work again, but this time he never returned.

As the wife stepped outside her home, she felt something was wrong. The streets she knew so well were now broken and ruined by the airstrikes. There was smoke in the air, and the ground was covered in debris and things people had left behind.

In the middle of all the destruction, she saw a heartbreaking sight. A young child was lying on the ground, hurt, and crying out for help, begging people around him to remove the heavy rocks that were causing him pain.

In the village devastated by bombings, the scene at the hospital was heart-wrenching and difficult to comprehend. Inside, doctors and nurses worked tirelessly to help the injured. Injured people lined the corridors, and the air smelled of medicine. Families gathered, asking about their loved ones. The hospital stood as a symbol of resilience and compassion, reminding everyone of the need for peace in a village torn apart by war.

Fatima searched for a familiar face among the victims lying on the ground, among the people standing, and among the hospital staff—a face that could offer comforting words to send her home reassured. In vain, after a while, the face of one of her sons appeared, telling her that her 11-year-old son Ahmad was injured while he was with his father. She heard that he was in the operating room. Shortly after, she received the news that her husband was also injured. She didn't know where to turn, whom to worry about, or whom to cry for. Was it time to cry? Where should she go? She forgot about her husband and focused on Ahmad.

"If Ahmad is dead, tell me," she said.

"He's fine, let's go home, Mom," her son replied.

When they arrived home, their cousin was already there. "All the



Khalils are dead," he said.

Fatima then returned to the hospital, in a state of not knowing where to turn—towards her son or her husband. She stood beside her husband's lifeless body, feeling overwhelming sadness and shock, sensing the blood of her husband still warm.

“ Her husband's profession, aimed at saving lives, made their loss even more difficult to accept. The unfairness of it all weighed heavily on her, leaving anyone questioning why such tragedy had befallen her family.

”

She didn't know what to feel; she experienced a mix of emotions in the wake of the airstrikes that claimed the lives of her husband, a dedicated healthcare worker, and her innocent 11-year-old son. She felt a profound sense of injustice and anger, as their deaths were a result of violence and cruelty. Her husband's profession, aimed at saving lives, made their loss even more difficult to accept. The unfairness of it all weighed heavily on her, leaving anyone questioning why such tragedy had befallen her family.

The loving father of the family adored the laughter and happiness of his children. He found joy in hugging them tightly and witnessing their growth and academic achievements. His presence brought a sense of comfort and security to the family, and his love for them knew no bounds. Tragically, he was taken away from them in the airstrikes, leaving behind a void that could never be filled, poverty, and an orphanage. The loss of their father was a devastating blow, shattering their world and leaving them to grapple with the pain of his absence.

Life became immensely challenging from all aspects, with the need to constantly strive for the well-being of the children. The source of their livelihood, which they used to depend on, had been disrupted by the war, as their previous work and means of sustenance had been forcefully taken.



Shattered Dreams

Fadi Al-Omar

Fadi Al-Omar was killed on August 14, 2019 when Government of Syria warplanes targeted Maar Tesin Town in rural Idleb with six airstrikes.



The reality of sorrow is there, right there, waiting for me where I left it when I fell asleep a few hours ago.

The cries of Omar (4 years old) woke me up; he is arguing with his sister. There's no need for me to go see them; they will sort it out by the time I get there, and they will start playing together again.

Sometimes I envy their ability to grow and adapt, to forget and be able to play. At the same time, I am grateful for it because I no longer know what I would have done without them and without their ability to bring some joy into my life.

Fadi left us four years ago, and I still can't get over it.

In our nine years of marriage, I took happiness for granted, and it became even more certain after the birth of each of our three children, especially as Fadi's tenderness continued to grow. There are moments in life when you feel like you have it all: three adorable, healthy kids, and a husband who everyone talks about for his kindness, generosity, intelligence, and knowledge, which my parents particularly loved.

My husband was an intellectual who studied geography and history. He was an educated and aware person. As they say, he was a brave individual who loved helping others, and he never hesitated or was afraid to do so. He would assist with things that were not required of him, always ready to lend a helping hand. Even outside of work hours, if a place was bombed, he would immediately leave home to go and assist victims. He quickly made a reputation here in the Ma'ara Countryside since we moved from our hometown. He was one of the most distinguished among the residents of his small town. He obtained a high school diploma and continued his studies at the law faculty. He joined the police force to cover the expenses of his education. When the conflict broke out and the need for workers in the health sector arose, he decided to work as an ambulance driver for the SAMS-supported ambulatory system in the Hama countryside.

Fadi left us four years ago, and I still can't get over it.

“ Why would a hospital or medical facility be the target of airstrikes? Isn't it in this place that the injured are treated? ”

My husband used to share his daily life with me, telling me about his work and the cases he encountered each day. However, he avoided talking to me about the dangers of his job. I later realized that he was trying to protect me from my fears. I wasn't aware of the danger before. When you think about it, what kind of danger does an ambulance face? Why would a rescuer be in danger? Isn't he there to save people? Why would a hospital or medical facility be the target of airstrikes? Isn't it in this place that the injured are treated? So, I saw the danger far from him, but I began to understand that danger was everywhere and that the airstrikes spared nothing. That's why the urge to cry would come over me every day when he left the house.

Fadi left us four years ago, and I still haven't been able to recover from it.

“What's going on? They say he has been injured. Nonsense! He is dead. It's what they always say before announcing a death.”

It was the third day of Eid when he went out for the last time. He called our daughter Aya and asked her to kiss him and say goodbye. She kissed him and started to cry; she was 5 years old. Somewhere inside me, I felt that it was the last time he would cross the door alive. I tried to ignore this feeling by keeping myself busy with the visitors for Eid at home. I almost forgot amidst the noise and children's waves of laughter. Gradually, this noise started to change; it's still there but in a different form. I hear Fadi's name several times. What's going on? They say he has been injured. Nonsense! He is dead. It's what they always say before announcing a death: 'He is injured,' 'He is seriously injured,' and finally, 'He did not survive.' For me, it resonates in the same way as the last sentence. It was the 14th of August. Six airstrikes targeted the city of Maarat al-Sin in the southern countryside of Idlib. strikes hit my husband's ambulance, who passed away with his colleague.

Like a shooting star, I went beyond all limits, crossing a point of no return: I had entered an entirely different world from which I could never come back.

Fadi left us four years ago, and I still haven't been able to recover from it.





Short profiles of **50** more health workers
who were notable for their selflessness
and sacrifice...

Ahmed Al-Shehad

A doctor who tragically lost his life on January 8, 2018, due to an airstrike that targeted his house. The attack also claimed the lives of his wife's mother and son, and left his sister and four of his children wounded. Ahmed had dedicated his services to Maarat Hospital, Idlib National Hospital, and Ibn Sina Hospital. As a result of the ongoing conflict, he and his family were displaced, leaving behind his wife and eight children to cope with the immense loss.

Mohamed Omar Wahiba

An anesthesia technician who initially pursued studies at the Nursing Institute. However, with the outbreak of the revolution, he returned to his hometown and devoted himself to serving the community. He worked at the Dialysis Hospital in Tal Rifaat, Haritan Hospital, and Al-Sakhour Hospital in Aleppo. Renowned among his colleagues for his calm demeanor and proactive approach in providing assistance, tragedy struck on August 10, 2014. While on his way to work at Al-Sakhour Hospital with a co-worker, they were struck by artillery shells, resulting in serious injuries that ultimately led to his untimely passing.

Mahmoud Fayez Abd Salam

A dedicated medicine student who was injured in an attack on Ghouta, rural Damascus on April 8, 2018. Shortly after he was injured and before recovering fully, he was transported on a convoy of displaced people to northern Syria and then Turkey, where he succumbed to his injuries. Mahmoud was an aspiring medical professional and actively provided medical services at several hospitals in Ghouta before his tragic fate.



Iyad Ali Zekra

A skilled maintenance technician who met his unfortunate end while en route to procure logistics for a hospital in the city of Maarat Al-Tuman on May 15, 2019. This tragedy unfolded when the city was subjected to air raids, claiming Iyad's life, along with several other civilians. In the wake of his passing, he left behind a wife and four children, now displaced.

Khaled Hammoud Al-Khalil

A devoted guard at the Kiwan Hospital who became the target of an explosive barrel attack, which occurred just 100 meters away from the building on July 28, 2015. This merciless strike resulted in the loss of two SAMS' staff members, seven civilians, and caused extensive damage to the facility, leaving behind a scene of immense destruction and heartbreak.

Qutaiba Satouf Hassan

A driver for the SAMS' Ambulance System who displayed exceptional leadership skills when he was chosen to lead the volunteer team that formed an ambulance system in Saraqib during the revolution. On June 19, 2013, while fulfilling his duties in the Ariha area, Qutaiba suffered critical injuries and was rushed to Al-Shifa Hospital in Sarqeb. Due to limited resources at the time, he was transferred to Orient Hospital in Atma, where he tragically passed away at the young age of 19.



Muhammad Nasr Al-Mustafa

A Maintenance technician at the Kiwan Hospital, exhibited extraordinary bravery during the attack on the hospital's inauguration on September 2, 2013. Despite guiding his colleagues to safety, he was struck by shrapnel in the heart at the shelter's entrance. Despite immediate efforts to save him, he tragically succumbed to his injuries at the age of 34, leaving behind a wife and two children.

Hossam Fouad Fadl

A devoted SAMS' Ambulance System driver who faced personal hardships but remained steadfast in supporting his education. He left his job to join the revolutionary efforts and provided voluntary aid to the wounded, becoming a respected driver within SAMS known for his selflessness and dedication. Tragically, while rescuing the wounded, he was fatally shot by a sniper on January 23, 2014, at the age of 41. His family now lives in an uninhabitable basement.

Riad Muhammad Aliwi

A dedicated cleaner at the Tarmila Gynecology and Obstetrics Hospital, endured a difficult life as his father was arrested at the beginning of the revolution. Despite his young age of 19, he worked diligently to support his mother and siblings, earning respect and admiration from his community for his loyalty and dedication to his work. On February 15, 2018, during an airstrike in Tarmila, he bravely responded to the hospital's call for help. Risking his life, he delivered oxygen cylinders to the injured inside a cave where people sought refuge. Tragically, he was martyred while fulfilling his duty, sacrificing his life for the sake of others. His wife now lives with her family, while his mother resides in Qah Camps.

Mohamed Hanoura

A dedicated nurse at Al Sakhour Hospital who was married and had one child. Born in the city of Mayer and educated there, he later joined the Nursing Institute in Aleppo. With the onset of the revolution, he began working at Al Sakhour Hospital in Aleppo. Tragically, he was killed as a result of an aerial bombardment in the Sakhour area on August 14, 2016.

Mahmoud Najmuddin Zuaier

A guard at Kafr Drian Primary Health Center who was married and had three children. Coming from a humble family, he worked in construction after completing his basic education to support his loved ones. When a hospital was established in his town, he joined as a guard, and he was recognized for his dedication, loyalty, and good character among his colleagues. Tragically, at the age of 34, on March 27, 2017, he was killed while going to secure logistics for the hospital during an airstrike on his town.

Muhammad Khaldoun Muhammad Abu Dan

A skilled athlete who had won several awards in karate, and was known for his cheerful spirit and strong ethics. he worked as a guard at the Sarmin Field Hospital. When the hospital came under aerial attack on October 20, 2015, he rushed to aid the wounded. However, the aircraft targeted the hospital once again, resulting in the death of Muhammad Khaldoun, along with his colleague, the physical therapist Hassan Taj al-Din, and a large number of civilians. He was just 23 years old at the time.

Ghazi Abdel Nasser Al Yousef

A devoted nurse who born in Aleppo, and left his university studies to join medical and relief work during the revolution. He volunteered to monitor patients in their homes, providing care and support. Tragically, at the age of 22, he was killed on November 11, 2016, due to artillery shelling while on his way to work at Al Sakhour Hospital. He was married and had one child.

Akram Abdel Latif Seleik

A dedicated cleaner who served as the breadwinner for his family and his deceased brother's family. He worked as a guard at the Hamdan Obstetrics Hospital in Douma and was known for his loyalty and dedication to his work. Unfortunately, at the age of 50, he was killed when a mortar shell struck his workplace at the SAMS' office in Eastern Ghouta on February 7, 2018. He was married and had four children.

Yoseph Suttle

A driver for the SAMS' Ambulance System who sacrificed his life to aid the wounded during the revolution. With a cheerful demeanor and athletic abilities, he left his nursing studies behind to serve on the frontlines. Tragically, on April 27, 2017, at 8:00 a.m., the medical facility in the town of Maarzita was targeted. Yoseph Suttle, along with the driver, Saleh Rahmoon, responded to provide aid to the wounded. However, upon their arrival, the airstrikes targeted the location again, resulting in the deaths of the medical team and several staff members at the medical facility.



Abdul Hamid Al-Deeb Jham

A dedicated anesthesia technician who left his job at the National Hospital in Hama to return to his hometown of Latmana and provide assistance during the revolution. He worked in field hospitals, including the Maghara Hospital in Kafr Zita and the Latmana Hospital, where he was admired for his ethics and commitment to his work. Tragically, at the age of 35, he was killed during an airstrike on the Latmana Hospital on October 28, 2015, while carrying out his humanitarian duties.

Hassan Saleh Al Ghazi

A social moderator who dedicated his life to serving others. He worked as a valuable member of the vaccination team at the Atareb Cave Hospital. Known for his dedication to his work, he tragically fell victim to an aerial bombardment on August 11, 2019 during a visit to his friends in the Idlib area on vacation. Bravely rushing to help the injured, he was killed by shells. He was 32 years old at the time and left behind a wife and four kids.

Samer Mahmoud Al-Qashit

An X-ray technician who left his job at Aleppo University Hospital due to his dedication to helping and treating the injured. Samer also expressed his support through poetry, including his notable poem "Al-Khitab" (The Speech), which he recited at the Cultural Center in Maarrat An Nuaman. Tragically, on December 4, 2016 while returning from work at Maarrat An Nuaman National Hospital, the Government of Syria forces carried out an aerial bombardment on the city using explosive barrels, leading to his death. This day witnessed a massacre that claimed the lives of many young individuals. Samer was one of the staff of the Maarat Al-Numan National Hospital, and he was killed in the targeting of Doctors Without Borders Hospital.



Yahya Qitaz

A labor technician, worked at the Maarrat An Nuaman National Hospital. He was married and had seven children, known for his kind heart and good treatment of others. Yahya volunteered as a laboratory technician at the Orient Hospital, Doctors Without Borders Hospital, and Maarrat An Nuaman National Hospital during the revolution. Tragically, on February 15, 2016, he was killed when Doctors Without Borders Hospital in Maarrat An Nuaman was targeted. Yahya left behind a disabled son who suffered from cerebral atrophy at the age of 5.

Mahmoud Youssef Qitaz

Mahmoud worked as a guard at the Maarrat An Nuaman National hospital alongside his brother Yahya Qitaz. On July 22, 2019, the city of Maarrat An Nuaman came under bombardment at 08:30 in the morning, tragically resulting in his death. At the age of 34, Mahmoud Youssef Qitaz died, leaving behind a wife and three children.

Abdul Rahman Muhammad Al-Khaled

Abdul Rahman, who worked as a cleaner at Al-Sakhour Hospital, was born in the Arqoub area in Aleppo City. He worked in textile factories to support his family. After the outbreak of the revolution, he worked at the Al-Sakhour Hospital. Known for his kind heart and care for his family, he would assist his colleagues at work despite battling with diabetes. He remained resilient in Aleppo City during the siege. Tragically, he was killed on November 17, 2016 due to a shell attack during the siege.

Maysir Al-Hamdo

An authenticator of incidents and data entry who worked diligently to document cases of targeted attacks on facilities. Born in the countryside of Hama, he initially worked for the Directorate of Agriculture. When the revolution broke out, he became a field paramedic, providing medical assistance to those in need. Later, he was assigned by the SAMS organization to document incidents of facility targeting. Tragically, while documenting an attack on a health center in the Atshan area, the center was hit twice. Maysir Al-Hamdo was killed on October 30, 2015. He was a married man and had five children.

Hassan Ahmed Tajuddin

A physical therapist who specialized in the rehabilitation of the wounded, Hassan was raised in the city of Homs, in the Khalidiya neighbourhood. After the outbreak of the revolution, he moved to his hometown of Sarmin to lend a helping hand and provide assistance to the injured. He was beloved by his colleagues for his dedication and devotion to his work. Hassan met his end while performing his duty at Sarmin Hospital, which was targeted by two consecutive airstrikes carried out by aircraft. The attacks occurred on October 20, 2015 around 1pm, with a ten-minute interval between them, resulting in the death of 11 individuals and leaving dozens wounded, some in critical condition.

Saleh Rahmon

Saleh was a member of the Syria Vaccination team and also worked at a medical facility in his hometown, before joining SAMS' Ambulance system. He was a dedicated individual, who was born in the Hama countryside. He pursued his education in the veterinary field and received training in various medical courses. Tragically, on April 27, 2017, the medical facility in Ma'arzita Town in Idleb was attacked. Saleh swiftly responded to provide aid to the injured but the location was targeted again, leading to his death along with several members of the ambulance team and the medical facility at which he worked. He was 32 years old at the time.

Amer Mohammed Al Bayoush

Amer was a nurse at the SAMS-supported Maarrat An Nuaman National Hospital. He was born in the city of Kafranbel in 1960, into a poor family. He obtained his basic education certificate and joined the military medical services in Latakia. Afterwards, he moved to Homs City where he acquired several nursing certificates, including ones in general nursing and radiology. After the outbreak of the revolution, he left his work at the military hospital in Homs and volunteered at a clinic in Kafranbel before working at the Maarrat An Nuaman National Hospital. Amer was killed on March 5, 2017 after responding to an airstrike on Kafranbel Town, which was followed by multiple consecutive airstrikes. He was 57 years of age at the time of his death.

Muhammad Hosni Abdul-Momen Al-Mashnan

An anesthesia technician who was single and had no children. He was a defector from military service. On August 14, 2018, the town of Maarat al-Sin in the southern Idlib countryside was targeted by six airstrikes. Tragically, this incident resulted in the death of Muhammad Hosni Al-Mashnan at the age of 32, along with the driver Fadi Al-Omar, who were both working for the SAMS' Ambulance System.

Abdel Ghafour Al-Masry

Abdel Ghafour worked as a data entry operator at the Avicenna Hospital in eastern rural Hama. He was born in Hama and obtained his education there. After the outbreak of the revolution, he started working at the Avicenna Hospital and died when the hospital was attacked on July 2, 2016.



Mohammed Al-Shawaf

Mohammed worked as a laboratory technician at the Maarrat An Nuaman National Hospital and Doctors Without Borders Hospital. On February 15, 2016, he was killed in the targeting of Doctors Without Borders Hospital in Maarrat An Nuaman. He left behind a widow.

Moustafa Mohammad Zekra

Moustafa was an administrative director at the Maarrat An Nuaman National Hospital. He was born in Maarrat An Nuaman and started work at the aforementioned hospital right shortly after his graduation. He was severely wounded on November 7, 2015, when the main market in Maarrat An Nuaman Town was targeted. He was transferred to a hospital in Turkey to receive treatment but succumbed to his wounds on November 17, 2015. He left behind a wife and seven kids.





In addition to the above-mentioned heroes, more than 950 health workers were killed during the ongoing conflict in Syria, including 21 who worked for SAMS-supported medical facilities. Their stories were not included either because SAMS was unable to reach their families or because their families chose not to include the stories of their departed loved ones for fear of persecution.

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These people are all remarkable human beings who we do not want to forget. We want to draw your attention to what is happening on this earth and how people who save lives are bombed and killed. We reiterate that the perpetrators have yet to be held accountable for their crimes.

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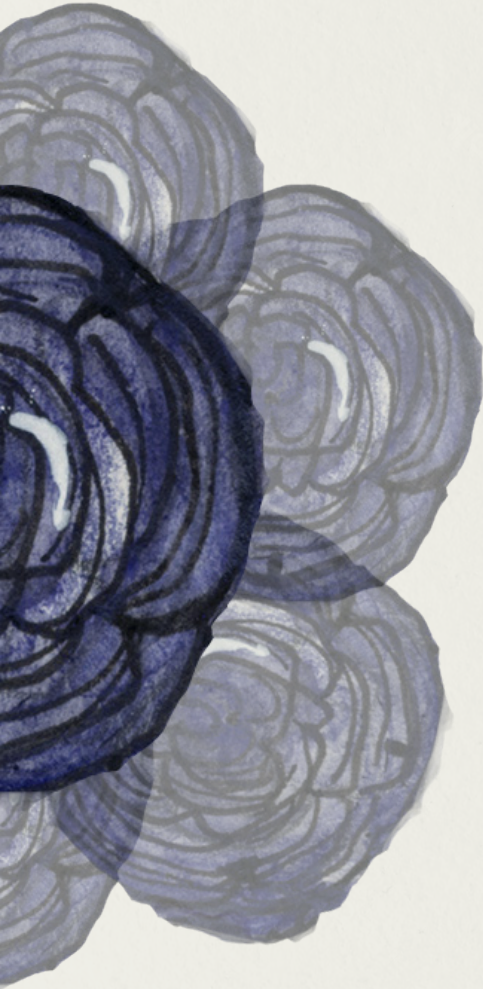
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