

KUNDUZ

3 October 2015

“Time will fly, but its memory will remain.
Wounds will heal, but its stain will remain.”



INTRODUCTION

In a lifetime, there are only a handful of events that mark us so deeply, we remember exactly what we were doing when they occurred. This was the case for me when I heard about the attack on Kunduz. I was on my way back from South Sudan. I checked my phone during a stopover in Turkey, and learnt that Kunduz had been attacked overnight.

For me, the sky darkened, my breath shortened, my head swam. I was in total disbelief, scrambling about for more information, trying to understand. Earlier in 2015, I had spent several days in Kunduz, doing ward rounds with the team. I reported, on my return, that Kunduz Trauma Center was the gem of North-Eastern Afghanistan. A place where



patients felt safe and privileged to be receiving such care. I was so impressed by the quality of the care – technically, and in human terms.

My personal reading of conflicts, and the rules of engagement for the parties involved, will always be framed by a pre and post Kunduz. Although I know that conflict is increasingly detached from the rules of warfare, the sustained attack on Kunduz still seems particularly extreme.

MSF called for an independent fact-finding investigation. Several non-independent investigations took place; they raise more questions than clear answers. The entire MSF movement rose as one in protest about this attack, and a series of similar ones in its wake. We spoke in front of the United Nations Security Council in May 2016, calling on it to “stop these attacks”. A UNSC resolution was passed to this effect, but to date, nothing much has changed. We continue to urge its enforcement, driven relentlessly forward by the memory of Kunduz. For beyond the immediate, intense tragedy that every attack brings, a wider price is paid: healthcare is cut off to populations living in conflict zones.

Our journey to understanding how to halt attacks on medical facilities, patients, care-takers and medical personnel is far from over – the political stakes are high. But we will not give up. One year on from this devastating assault, today is a day of remembrance.

And I remember:

Abdul Maqsood, Abdul Nasir, Abdul Salam, Dr Abdul Satar Zaheer, Dr Aminullah Bajawri, Lal Mohammad, Dr Mohammad Ehsan Osmani, Mohibullah, Najibullah, Naseer Ahmad, Shafiqullah, Tahseel, Zabiullah, Ziaurahman.

I remember their dedication to providing medical care to hundreds of thousands of Afghans in North Eastern Afghanistan, tending to whom so ever was in need. I still mourn their loss.

I remember, as well, the courage of Kunduz Trauma Center personnel, who, on that fateful night of October 3rd, cared for each other so heroically. They were an inspiration - a symbol of what medical care and collegial solidarity is about.

I remember Kunduz Trauma Center.

With my profoundest sympathies to you all, and lifelong remembrance of those we have lost.

Dr Joanne Liu, International President of MSF

The Kunduz Trauma Centre

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from neighbouring provinces like Takhar and Baghlan, or even the towns of Faizabad and Mazar-i-Sharif.

The MSF teams treated everyone: civilians, combatants, and people from all ethnic groups. And just like in all MSF hospitals, a strict no-weapons policy was put in place. Most patients were victims of traffic or domestic accidents but bomb blasts and violence also brought waves of wounded

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In 2011 MSF decided to open a trauma hospital in the northern Afghan city of Kunduz, to provide high-quality, free surgical care to victims of all types of trauma. In that region, severely injured people were forced to make long and dangerous journeys to the capital Kabul or Pakistan to receive the care they needed.

MSF teams converted shipping containers into a functional hospital equipped with 55 beds, an emergency room, two operating theatres, an intensive care unit, as well as X-ray and laboratory facilities. The hospital was busy from the outset. Even during the first months it was often full. Most patients were Kunduz locals. But word spread about the free and high quality care provided. People started coming

people. The medical team had to learn how to quickly identify who was in most critical need of care.

Starting in 2012, massive construction work transformed the old Spinzar building into a 92 bed high-level trauma



2015 saw the heaviest fighting season in Kunduz in many years. Hundreds of war-wounded patients were treated at the hospital in May and June. Reaching the hospital became more and more difficult for people from outside Kunduz city. A normally short journey could take hours. People had to cross multiple checkpoints, risking landmines and crossfire to get the care they needed. One district, Chardara, was particularly isolated. At the end of June, MSF opened a District Advanced Post there. Severely injured patients were stabilised before they could be transported to Kunduz city.

On the 1st of July, Afghan Special Forces carried out a violent armed intrusion into the hospital. They harassed

hospital. In 2013, medical teams soon began to perform complex internal fixation procedures. In only a few years, the hospital had become a life-line for people in Kunduz and the surrounding provinces.

But in January 2014, the entire medical stock of the hospital was destroyed in a fire. Medicines and supplies were ruined and construction plans put on hold. Despite this set-back, the medical team continued to focus on improving internal fixation procedures and care for patients with severe head trauma. Physiotherapy and mental health services were also expanded.



patients and physically assaulted staff. MSF condemned this unacceptable breach of International Humanitarian Law. The hospital closed its doors for five days while MSF engaged with the Afghan security forces to emphasise the neutrality and protection of medical facilities, to make sure such an incident would not happen again. On 28 September 2015, the MSF hospital suddenly found



itself in the middle of a quickly shifting frontline when the armed opposition launched a take-over of Kunduz city. The team was overwhelmed with hundreds of wounded patients. They urgently increased the capacity of the hospital to 130 beds.

MSF staff risked their lives to ensure the hospital kept running. They managed to perform 138 surgeries and treat



376 patients in just five days. At that time, the Kunduz trauma centre became the last sanctuary for the wounded amidst the fighting. Men, women, children, civilians and combatants from both sides were all cared for with dignity. The no-weapons policy was strictly respected by everyone.

Starting at 2:08am on Saturday 3 October, a United States AC-130 gunship fired 211 shells on the main hospital building where patients were sleeping in their beds or being operated on in the operating theatre. Our surviving staff set up a makeshift operating table in the hospital kitchen to try to save their wounded friends and colleagues.

14 of our colleagues, 24 of our patients and 4 of their caretakers were killed in the attack. 37 people were injured, some of them left with life-long problems. Thousands of people were left without life-saving medical care.

Last picture of the Kunduz Trauma Center staff before the attack, taken the 1st of October 2015.



IN MEMORIAM

In memory of the MSF colleagues, patients and caretakers who lost their lives in the attack on the Kunduz Trauma Centre.



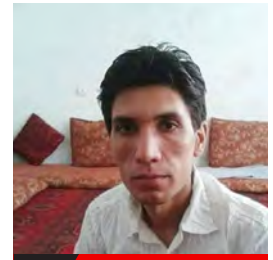
Abdul Maqsood, son of Abdul Rahim, was 22 years-old and worked as a patient information focal point. He was known to be a very good cricket player which he played with much enthusiasm. He began his career in the hospital as a daily worker, and was very proud when only a few months later he was recruited as a permanent member of the team. Maqsood showed dedication to his job and felt that working in the hospital was a great honour. His positive attitude and commitment to his work will be truly missed.

Friendly and easy going, 29 year-old **Abdul Salam**, son of Abdul Jalal, was a nurse in the operating theatre. He was one of the most passionate workers amongst the Kunduz Trauma Centre staff, and enjoyed every second of his life. As well as being an experienced OT nurse, he also possessed a diploma in pharmacy. In his free-time he liked playing cricket and Buzkashi (Afghanistan's national sport). During the heavy fighting in the week leading up to the attack, he barely slept and worked long hours to help his people and colleagues as much as he could. He thrived under challenging circumstances. He was married and leaves behind two children, of which the youngest was only 40 days old on the day Abdul Salam died.



Born in Kunduz, **Lal Mohammad**, son of Gull Ekhtayar, was 28 years-old. He always had a smile on his face, and was like a mentor to the younger nurses. He was kind-natured and always ready to help people in need. His dedication to his patients went beyond providing medical care; he would always try to give as much comfort and support to them as he could. We will always remember his smile, his eagerness to learn and his positive energy. He leaves a wife and three children behind.

22 years-old, **Abdul Nasir**, son of Abdul Karim, was a hospital cleaner. He was born in Kunduz province where he had been working for MSF since July 2013 and was described by those who knew him as a good person and incredibly hard working. He was always ready to contribute and went above and beyond what his job demanded of him. He was very polite, and known to assist both patients and their caretakers. He was often sitting or standing close to the door of the intensive care unit; whenever someone entered he was faster than anyone else to help. He offered invaluable support to many people.

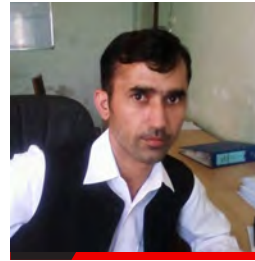




Shafiqullah, son of Ghulam Sakhi, was 39 years-old and had been working as a guard since February 2015. He was very quiet, but always had a big smile on his face. He treated everyone with kindness and was very committed to his job. Always friendly, he was much loved by his colleagues who miss him greatly.

He leaves behind four children.

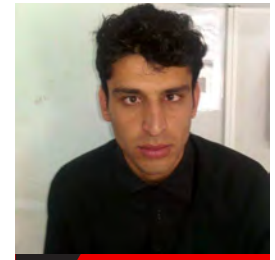
Dr. Abdul Satar Zaheer, son of Mohammad Rasool, 47 years-old, was the Deputy Medical Director at MSF's Kunduz Trauma Centre. He managed a large group of staff and was described by all who worked with him as conscientious, empathetic and respectful. He was often working until the middle of the night. If his son would ask him to work less, he would say that he was not working, but serving the Afghan people. He was always listening to suggestions made by others. He thought out of the box, and would not hesitate to change working methods where necessary, making the job of the medical teams smoother and more effective. He was known for his incredible patience and sense of humor. The night of the attack Dr. Satar decided to stay close to his patients instead of taking a rest, and was sharing jokes with the other staff on duty to try to lift their spirits. He was the proud father of eight children, often sharing stories about how smart they are.



Dr Aminullah Bajawri, son of Tor Jan, was a 32 year-old father and emergency room doctor. Like so many others, when the fighting broke out in Kunduz he decided not to leave the city in search of safety, but stayed to help his people, friends and colleagues. He worked the whole week before the attack, and felt

personally responsible for any patients that might not recover as a result of him not being on duty. Admired for his clear, rational perception of medical problems and pragmatic approach to treating patients, Dr. Amin was someone that could always be relied on in the ER, with extensive medical knowledge, a willingness to learn new things and a kind approach to his patients. It was his dream to become a neurosurgeon, at a time when the lack of neurosurgeons in Afghanistan means children are dying for lack of proper treatment. He was also a teacher at the Kunduz University and was highly respected by his students.

Najibullah, son of Mohammad Ajmal, a 27-year old father, had been working for MSF since August 2011 as cleaner in the emergency room. He was well liked by everyone as he was always talkative, happy and kind. To further his knowledge, he was studying in his free time. The ER was always clean and tidy when he was on shift. More than a cleaner, Najibullah was a caregiver to the patients in the ward.

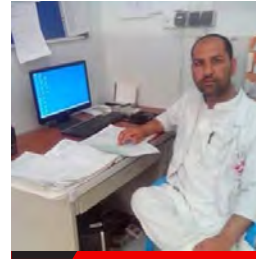




At 32 years-old, **Dr Mohammad Ehsan Osmani**, son of Mohammad Aslam, was a young intensive care unit doctor with extraordinary enthusiasm and dedication to his patients. With an everlasting smile, he would never say no to any extra work or to covering an extra shift; he would often volunteer to stay

and work in his free time when the hospital was overloaded with patients. His energy and laughter was contagious. He was the kind of person who filled a room with his joy and compassion. Dr Osmani was always willing to help others and never turned down someone in need of help. On the night of the airstrike, instead of taking a rest in the bunker with his colleagues, he continued to work and look after his patients who were in critical condition.

Ziaurahman, son of Masafar Khan, was a 23 year-old intensive care unit nurse, who had been working for MSF since December 2013. He was known to be a talented nurse with a sharp mind. He always joined the training sessions and showed an incredible eagerness to learn. He was very interested in everything and everybody and had a very caring nature. The patients he looked after were lucky to have him beside their bed. He was a good friend to all the staff and had a positive outlook on life.



Mohibullah, son of Delawar Khan, 38 years-old, was a dedicated father and an experienced emergency room nurse who joined the Kunduz Trauma Centre three years ago. He was the youngest of eight brothers, several of whom were also working in the medical field. He started working as a nurse in the outpatient department, but then decided to change to the emergency room. Mohibullah was a fast learner, and always displayed much patience with everyone. Whenever he had the time he would try to study or learn from books or from his colleagues. He would always stay late if needed. He learned from many people, and many people learned from him.

Naseer Ahmad, son of Jan Mohammad, was a 23 year-old intensive care unit nurse who began working with MSF in June 2014. He was gentle, quiet, and very eager to learn. He wanted to start an English course as soon as possible to be able to read and learn more. Because of his calm attitude he was born to be a great ICU nurse. He loved to have many people around him, to share his happiness and thoughts with them. In the ICU he often wanted to take responsibility for the critical patients by himself; it was a sign of his great commitment to his job and the care of his patients. He always wanted to help the patients who didn't have family to look after them.





Tahseel, son of Mohammad Qasim, 35 years old, was a father and a much loved and valued member of the pharmacy team at the Kunduz Trauma Centre since the opening of the project. He was very hard-working; the pharmacy was well organized and he was prepared for any emergency in the hospital. He had a great sense of humour, and always wore a big smile on his face. Proving how dedicated Tahseel was to helping others, he returned to the hospital in the last few days of his leave to assist the team when they needed him most. This commitment to others will always be remembered.

Zabiullah, son of Sakhi Gull, was 29 years-old and married. He had been working as a guard in the hospital since February 2015. He was a poet and was working on Pashto language translations of several books. He was also writing a book about the famous Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan. While he started working with MSF less than a year ago, he had already made lots of friends due to his friendly and kind manner. Here is one of his poems:



تیر به شی وختونه خو یادونه به یی وی
جور به شی زخمونه خو داغونه به یی وی

“Time will fly, but its memory will remain,
Wounds will heal, but its stain will remain.”

Patients and their caretakers

Ahmad Farhad, 16, son of Abdul Kabir
Ahmad, 7, son of Nazar Mohammad
Amina, 12, daughter of Abdul Qadir
Byanazar, 45, son of Mohammed Nazar
Fawad, 8, son of Najubullah
Hamed, 13, son of Abdul Karim
Hassan, 16, son of Mohammad Yousuf
Hussain, 13, son of Mohammad Yousuf
Isra, 5, daughter of Mohammadisa
Khair Mohammad, 73, son of Nazar Mohammad
Mahajussin, 65, son of Mohammad Rafiq
Mirzar Rahim, 27, son of Babaqul
Mohammad Yasin, 54, son of Mohammad Akbar
Mohammed Amin, 50-60, son of Mohammaddin
Muhibullah, 17, son of Ebadullah
Najibullah, 24, son of Feroz Khan
Nasimullah, 30, son of Jan Mohammad
Nooragha, 45, son of Haji Rahman
Qabir, 17, son of Quayoum
Qari Enayatullah, 38, son of Atta Mohammad
Rohullah, 25
Sayed Karim, 65, son of Gull Mohammad
Shamsuddin, 30, son of Shir Mohammad
Mohammad Khan, 27, son of Nik Mohammad
Mohammadullah, 28, son of Abdulwakil
Zahref, age unknown, son of Mohammad Hashim
Ghulam Nabi, 57, son of Mohammad Sharif
Unknown

Since the attack on the Kunduz Trauma Centre on 3 October, 2015, at least 75 other attacks have occurred on MSF and MSF-supported medical facilities.

Hospitals should not be a target!

03.10.2015	Al-Thawarah Hospital, Yemen
26.10.2015	Haydan Hospital, Saada Province, Yemen
Oct 2015	17 incidents of bombing of MSF-supported medical facilities, Syria
Nov 2015	8 incidents of bombing of MSF-supported medical facilities, Syria
02.12.2015	MSF tented Clinic in Houban, Taiz governorate, Yemen
Dec 2015	13 incidents of bombing of MSF-supported medical facilities, Syria
02.01.2016	Hama governorate, Syria
04.01.2016	Hama governorate, Syria
04.01.2016	Jebel Saman District, Aleppo Province, Syria
10.01.2016	Jebel Saman District, Aleppo Province, Syria
10.01.2016	Shiara Hospital, Razeh District, Yemen
16.01.2016	Jebel Saman District, Aleppo Province, Syria
27.01.2016	Jebel Saman District, Aleppo Province, Syria
02.02.2016	Maskan Emergency Health Centre. Azaz District, Aleppo Province, Syria
05.02.2016	Tafas field hospital, Dara'a governorate, Syria
15.02.2016	Ma'arat Al Numan, Idlib province, Syria
01.03.2016	Shiara Hospital, Razeh District, Yemen
April, 2016	East Ghouta, Syria
27.04.2016	Al Quds hospital, Aleppo, Syria
03.06.2016	Al Zarzour hospital, Aleppo, Syria
08.06.2016	Bayan hospital, Aleppo, Syria
16.06.2016	Omar Bin Abdulaziz hospital, Aleppo, Syria
16.07.2016	M2, Aleppo, Syria

19.07.2016	M10, Aleppo, Syria
23.07.2016	Al Bayan Hospital, Aleppo, Syria
23.07.2016	Al Daqaq Hospital, Aleppo, Syria
23.07.2016	Al Zahraa Hospital, Aleppo, Syria
23.07.2016	Al Hakim / Paediatrics, Aleppo, Syria
31.07.2016	Al-Redwan hospital in Jasim town, Daara Province, Syria
03.08.2016	M2, Aleppo, Syria
04.08.2016	M10, Aleppo, Syria
06.08.2016	Al Bayan Hospital, Aleppo, Syria
06.08.2016	M2, Aleppo, Syria
06.08.2016	Millis town, Idlib Governorate, Syria
13.08.2016	Al Bayan Hospital, Aleppo, Syria
14.08.2016	Al Quds hospital, Aleppo, Syria
14.08.2016	Al Zarzour hospital, Aleppo, Syria
15.08.2016	Abs hopsital, Hajjah Governorate, Yemen
06.09.2016	Al Zahraa Hospital, Aleppo, Syria



#NotATarget