A Comparison of Harm to Aid Workers in Palestine to Aid Workers in 20 Countries: A Decade in Review

Dana Mathew MD[1],Jamla Rizek[2] RN

1. Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine 2. Adventures with Nurse Jamla

INTRODUCTION

Humanitarian aid workers play a critical role in delivering essential healthcare and relief services in conflict zones. However, their safety is increasingly under threat, with a rising trend of targeted attacks, arrests, and fatalities. Over the past decade, the risk to aid workers in active war zones has escalated, undermining humanitarian efforts and jeopardizing lives. This study examines the scope of harm faced by aid workers across 20 conflict-affected countries and compares these findings to the ongoing crisis in Gaza since October 2023. By analyzing trends and incidents, this research underscores the dangers aid workers encounter and the broader implications for humanitarian response.
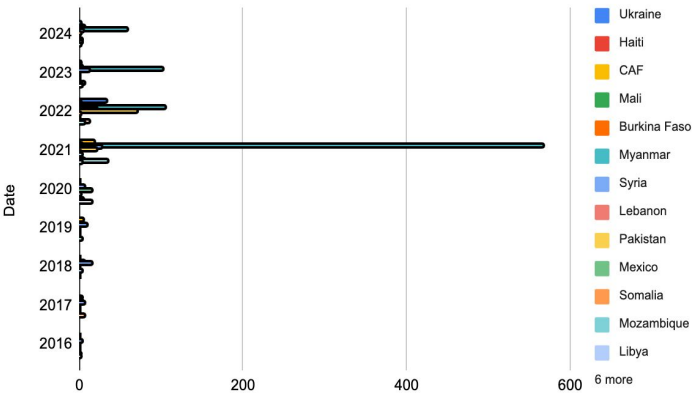
OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the risks aid workers face in active conflict zones over the past decade.
1.To compare the prevalence of aid worker casualties, arrests, and obstructions in 20 conflict-affected countries with those observed in Gaza since October 2023.
2.To highlight the impact of targeted attacks on healthcare workers and facilities.
3.To present graphical data illustrating trends in violence, arrests, and healthcare facility damages affecting aid operations.
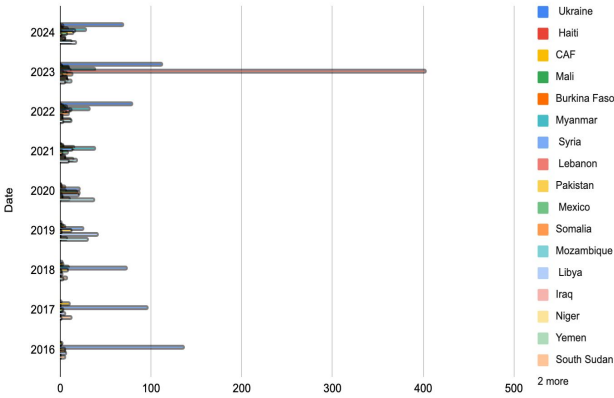
METHODS

This study utilizes a comparative analysis approach by collecting and analyzing data from the Humanitarian Data Exchange Database. The research examines recorded incidents of harm to aid workers, including killings, arrests, and obstructions, across 20 countries over the past decade. Additionally, data specific to the war in Gaza since October 2023 is reviewed to contextualize the evolving risks. Graphical evidence is employed to visualize the extent of harm, including healthcare facility damages and interference with medical aid delivery.
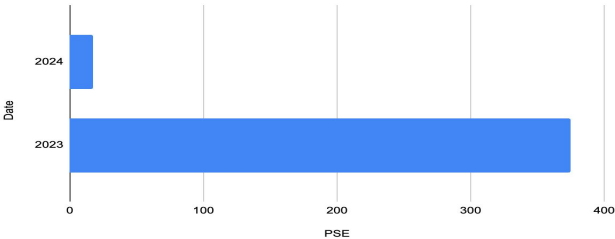

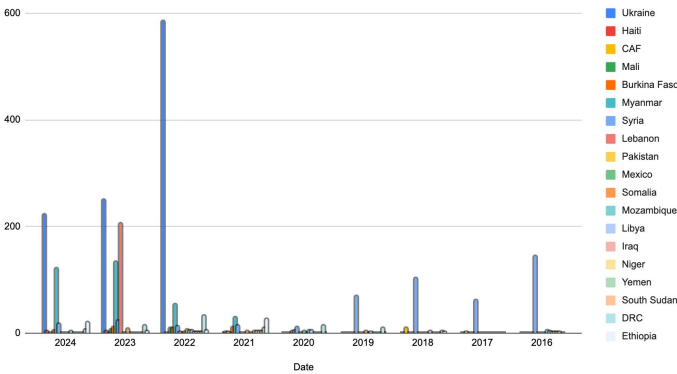HCW Arrested 19 Conflict Countries
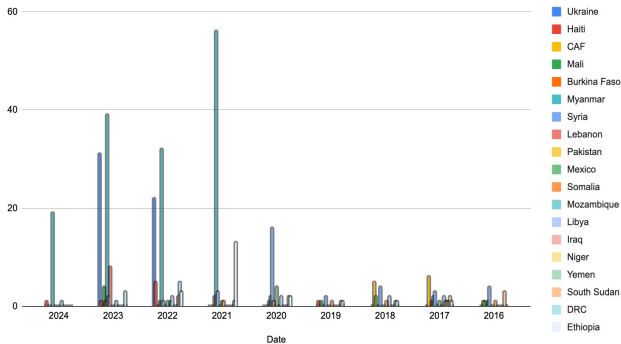

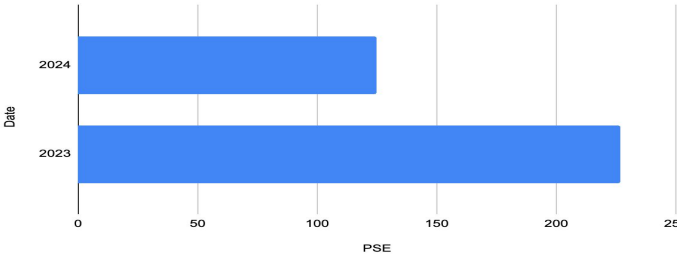Aid Workers Killed in 19 Conflict Countries

PSE Aid Workers Killed

Attacks on HealthCare Facilities with Damage or Destruction 19 Conflict Countries

Obstruction of Care 19 Conflict Zone Countries

PSE HCW Arrested

CONCLUSIONS

- In 2023, Haiti, PSE and the Ukraine collectively had more deaths of Health Care Workers in that year than all 20 countries combined in previous years.
- Myanmar has had more HCW arrested than any other country annually since 2021.
- In 2021, Myanmar peaked with more arrests than all other countries combined
- Ukraine has consistently had the highest number of attacks on health care facilities since the Russian invasion in 2022
- In 2024, PSE had 50% the number of health care facility attacks as Ukraine. However, note that PSE's population is 5% that of Ukraine.

LIMITATIONS

The Humanitarian Data Exchange relies on self-reporting for events.