

Kunduz Hospital Airstrike by US. Washington Admits they Did it. Gravest Violation of International Law. It Was Deliberate, It Wasn't "Collateral Damage"

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On Saturday 3 October 2015 the [MSF Trauma centre in Kunduz was hit several times during sustained bombing by coalition forces](#), and was very badly damaged.

Twelve staff members and at least 10 patients, including three children, were killed; 37 people were injured including 19 staff members.

US government admits their airstrike hit hospital

"Today the US government has admitted that it was their airstrike that hit our hospital in Kunduz and killed 22 patients and MSF staff. Their description of the attack keeps changing – from collateral damage, to a tragic incident, to now attempting to pass responsibility to the Afghanistan government.



Fires burn in the MSF emergency trauma hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan, after it was hit and partially destroyed by missiles 03 October 2015.

The reality is the US dropped those bombs. The US hit a huge hospital full of wounded patients and MSF staff. The US military remains responsible for the targets it hits, even though it is part of a coalition.

There can be no justification for this horrible attack. With such constant

discrepancies in the US and Afghan accounts of what happened, the need for a full transparent independent investigation is ever more critical.” – Christopher Stokes, General Director, Médecins Sans Frontières

It is with deep sadness that we confirm so far the death of twelve MSF staff during the bombing of MSF’s hospital in Kunduz. Latest update is that 37 people were seriously wounded during the bombing, of whom 19 are MSF staff. Some of the most critically injured are being transferred for stabilisation to a hospital in Puli Khumri, 2 hours’ drive away. There are many patients and staff who remain unaccounted for. The numbers keep growing as we develop a clearer picture of the aftermath of this horrific bombing.

This attack constitutes a grave violation of International Humanitarian Law.

MSF condemns in the strongest possible terms the horrific bombing of its hospital in Kunduz full of staff and patients.

All indications currently point to the bombing being carried out by international Coalition forces. [MSF demands a full and transparent account from the Coalition regarding its aerial bombing activities over Kunduz on Saturday morning.](#)

MSF had informed all fighting parties of hospital GPS coordinates.



MSF staff in shock in one of the remaining parts of MSF’s hospital in Kunduz, in the aftermath of sustained bombing 03 October 2015. Photo: ©MSF

MSF wishes to clarify that all parties to the conflict, including in Kabul and Washington, were clearly informed of the precise location (GPS Coordinates) of the MSF facilities – hospital, guest-house, office and an outreach stabilization unit in Chardara (to the north-west of Kunduz). As MSF does in all conflict contexts, these precise locations were communicated to all parties on multiple occasions over the past months, including most recently on 29 September.

The bombing continued for more than 30 minutes after American and Afghan military officials in Kabul and Washington were first informed. MSF urgently seeks clarity on exactly what took place and how this terrible event could have happened.

MSF demands an independent investigation



Surgery activities in one of the remaining parts of MSF's hospital in Kunduz. In the aftermath of the bombings on the 3rd October 2015.

“Under the clear presumption that a war crime has been committed, MSF demands that a full and transparent investigation into the event be conducted by an independent international body. Relying only on an internal investigation by a party to the conflict would be wholly insufficient.

Not a single member of our staff reported any fighting inside the MSF hospital compound prior to the US airstrike on Saturday morning. The hospital was full of MSF staff, patients and their caretakers. It is 12 MSF staff members and 10 patients, including three children, who were killed in the attack.

We reiterate that the main hospital building, where medical personnel were caring for patients, was repeatedly and very precisely hit during each aerial raid, while the rest of the compound was left mostly untouched. We condemn this attack, which constitutes a grave violation of International Humanitarian Law.” – Christopher Stokes, General Director, Médecins Sans Frontières

MSF Rejects statements by Afghanistan authorities



A destroyed areas of the MSF hospital, in Kunduz, Afghanistan is visible 03 October 2015 at first light, the morning after the facility was hit by sustained bombing.

“MSF is disgusted by the recent statements coming from some Afghanistan government authorities justifying the attack on its hospital in Kunduz. These statements imply that Afghan and US forces working together decided to raze to the ground a fully functioning hospital – with more than 180 staff and patients inside – because they claim that members of the Taliban were present.

This amounts to an admission of a war crime.

This utterly contradicts the initial attempts of the US government to minimise the attack as ‘collateral damage’. There can be no justification for this abhorrent attack on our hospital that resulted in the deaths of MSF staff as they worked and patients as they lay in their beds.

MSF reiterates its demand for a full transparent and independent international investigation.” – Christopher Stokes, General Director, Médecins Sans Frontières

Testimony from MSF nurse eyewitness to attack



Andrea Bruce/ Noor Images
Lajos Zoltan Jecs, MSF nurse, photo taken in September 2013, Afghanistan.

MSF nurse Lajos Zoltan Jecs was in Kunduz trauma hospital when the facility was struck.

“There are no words for how terrible it was. In the Intensive Care Unit six patients were burning in their beds.

We looked for some staff that were supposed to be in the operating theatre. It was awful. A patient there on the operating table, dead, in the middle of the destruction. We couldn't find our staff. Thankfully we later found that they had run out from the operating theatre and had found a safe place.”

[Read his full account here.](#)

Hospital closed. Staff evacuated

The MSF hospital in Kunduz is currently not operating, following the sustained bombing early Saturday morning. All international MSF staff members that were in Kunduz have been evacuated. All critical patients were referred to other health facilities. The MSF Afghan staff who were not killed are either being treated in health facilities in the region or have left the hospital.

On Saturday, some staff assisted to provide healthcare in other non-MSF facilities in the region, and others have joined their families at this difficult time.

No medical activities are possible now in the MSF hospital in Kunduz, at a time when the medical needs are immense. It is painful for MSF to withdraw at a time when the medical needs are so acute, but in the aftermath of being bombed, it is too early to know if it would be safe to continue running medical activities.

MSF works hard in conflict areas, as had been the case in Kunduz, to ensure all fighting parties respect the sanctity of medical facilities. At the moment, MSF has not received any explanations or assurances that give us the confidence to be able to return. This is why the organisation is demanding a full, independent and transparent investigation of what happened, and why. Without that information, there are too many unknowns to allow a return in the immediate future. MSF is committed to the people in Kunduz and will explore, as soon as key questions are answered, options to return with medical services in the Kunduz region. MSF continues to run four other health facilities in Afghanistan.

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