

Doctors demonstrate in front of the White House in July as part of PHR's "No More Watching and Waiting" campaign against U.S. immigration policies.

## We Took Your Message to Washington: "Enough Is Enough!"

Your year of advocacy against inhumane practices at the U.S.-Mexico border reached new heights this summer, when more than 60,000 of you signed on to PHR's letter demanding justice for migrant children victimized by the dangerous rhetoric and human rights-violating policies of the Trump administration. A team of PHR doctors led by Asylum Network Member Ranit Mishori, MD carried your pledge of "No More Watching and Waiting!" to

Washington, where we presented our concerns to the Department of Homeland Security and made sure the White House heard our message loud and clear. All across the country, health professionals in our Asylum Network and medical school chapters rallied their colleagues to join our call for justice for migrant children and their families. If you haven't yet, help us hit 100,000 signatures by signing here: [phr.org/border-action](http://phr.org/border-action)

### The Washington Post

"As physicians, we swear to put patients' well-being above any other consideration — to "first, do no harm." The immigration policies the administration is carrying out now would make that extremely difficult."

Ranit Mishori, MD  
PHR Asylum Network Member

# You Raised Your Voice and They Listened



Your support is amplifying the powerful voices of health professionals to change cruel and unjust U.S. immigration laws.

When Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy appealed to the Trump administration to end the harms of the so-called “remain in Mexico” policy, he relied on first-hand accounts from PHR Asylum Network doctors working with migrants at the U.S. border.

Our Network doctors also provided revisions and recommendations to a bill that could mean life-saving changes for migrants. Senator Martin Heinrich’s (NM) REMOTE Act provides monetary incentives to Border Patrol officers who undergo EMT and paramedic training – a crucial measure advocated by PHR.

We advised Congressman Raul Ruiz, MD (CA) on his Humanitarian Standards Act, which would establish basic standards of care for people in immigration custody.

And in July, our hard work and determined advocacy paid off when PHR was invited to testify at a Congressional hearing on conditions at the U.S. border and their impact on children. Child psychiatrist and PHR Asylum Network Member Amy Cohen, MD told the Senate Democratic Policy and Communications Committee: “The atrocities we are seeing in places like [detention centers] Clint and Ursula are not – as some would have us believe – the consequence of a migrant ‘surge,’ but rather of U.S. policies and procedures which result in the unnecessary, protracted, and damaging detention of children.”

Thanks to you, we’re equipping doctors with the resources they need to push back against policies that prevent them from caring for their patients and we’re giving them the tools to become human rights advocates. You’re keeping these critical medical voices front and center to end abusive practices at the border and ensure that the United States respects the rights of migrant children and their families.

*Above: Child psychiatrist and PHR Asylum Network Member Amy Cohen, MD testifies on the impact of U.S. border policies before the Senate Democratic Policy and Communications Committee.  
Photo: Senate Democratic Media Center*



# “Lives Are in the Balance, and I Need to Speak Out”

**In the face of U.S. immigration policies that are traumatizing children and threatening the health of migrant families and communities, we published two critical reports that drew widespread, global attention. “Not in My Exam Room” showed how harsh and discriminatory immigration enforcement actions along the border are violating patient rights and obstructing migrants’ access to critical medical care. Our study of trauma among child asylum seekers from Central America found that the vast majority had experienced direct physical violence, and more than three quarters were likely or diagnosed to be suffering from major mental health disorders.**

**Report author Joseph Shin, MD has been volunteering with PHR for more than 10 years, conducting forensic evaluations of asylum seekers, delivering trainings for hundreds of clinicians, and mentoring students at the Weill Cornell Center for Human Rights, where he is medical co-director. Dr. Shin’s deep expertise elevated our findings on Capitol Hill and at the United Nations – and made him a powerful national and international human rights advocate. He speaks here about those experiences.**



*PHR Asylum Network Member Joseph Shin, MD presents PHR’s findings on trauma among child asylum seekers at the Human Rights Council in Geneva in June.*

When PHR first approached me to join a team going to Geneva to advocate at the UN Human Rights Council, I hesitated. Being a hospitalist and an academic can put tough demands on personal and family life; I try to be wise about boundaries, while researching, teaching, and having a clinical practice at the hospital. International governance and UN mechanisms seemed unfamiliar and far away.

The breaking news about horrific conditions for children in detention at the U.S. border changed my mind. I realized: “This is not about me. The dangers for these kids are happening now. Lives are in the balance, and I need to speak out.”

Going to Geneva at first felt like a steep learning curve. The situation on the U.S. border is grave, but human rights are under attack all over the world and our issue is just one of many. But when I delivered my speech to a room full of representatives from permanent missions,

I knew that we had taken one step in a larger process. We documented what is happening in the United States and brought our evidence to the global stage. Governments were listening. We were holding our own government accountable in the community of nations, in order to prevent these unjust U.S. policies from setting a precedent for other nations and to maintain a moral clarity and focus on the wellbeing of children first and foremost.

Justice and service are part of finding meaning in medicine, and they have brought an even deeper meaning to my life as my career advances.

There is strength in solidarity. We cannot save everyone, whether through medicine or advocacy. But we can find strength in helping. You alone cannot fix everything, but the meaning is in the work, and the impact on each life is worth it. It has certainly impacted my life.

To read our reports, visit:  
[phr.org/child-trauma](http://phr.org/child-trauma) and  
[phr.org/sanctuary-hospitals](http://phr.org/sanctuary-hospitals).

*Justice and service are part of finding meaning in medicine, and they have brought an even deeper meaning to my life as my career advances.*

*Joseph Shin, MD  
PHR Asylum Network Member*

# You Are Championing the Rights of Traumatized Children at the U.S. Border

PHR's report "There Is No One Here to Protect You" showed the extreme violence and trauma experienced by children arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border to seek asylum in the United States. The study, which garnered widespread domestic and international attention, drew on data from 183 children evaluated by PHR Asylum Network experts between 2014 and 2018. We partnered with the advocacy group MoveOn to produce a video featuring PHR medical experts explaining the severe health harms of U.S. border policies, and more than 150,000 people saw or shared our message.

## Newsweek

"Children are being met at the U.S. border with harsh, punitive policies that both violate their rights and severely affect their wellbeing."

*Kathryn Hampton*  
PHR Network Program Officer

## Trauma Among Children Seeking Asylum in the United States

### Types of violence experienced



78%

Suffered direct physical violence



71%

Suffered threats of violence or death



18%

Suffered sexual violence



59%

Witnessed acts of violence

### Perpetrators of violence



60%

Suffered gang-related violence



24%

Faced forced conscription into gangs



47%

Faced violence within the home or perpetrated by family members

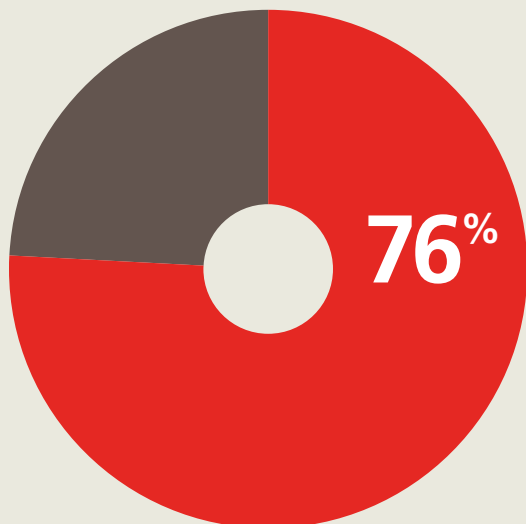
# Reaching New Audiences with MoveOn.org



## Impact of Violence against Child Asylum-Seekers

More than three quarters of children were suspected or diagnosed to have at least one major mental health disorder.

Of these, the most common were:



64%

Post-traumatic stress disorder

40%

Major depressive disorder

19%

Anxiety disorder

Source: Data from 183 children evaluated by Physicians for Human Rights Asylum Network experts between 2014 and 2018.

# You're Backing the Struggle for Freedom and Justice in Sudan

After former Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir was ousted in April following months of protests, hopes were high that decades of human rights atrocities and bloody crackdowns on protesters would end. But on June 3, Sudanese paramilitary forces opened fire on a peaceful sit-in in Khartoum, killing dozens and wounding hundreds of demonstrators calling for the installation of a civilian government.

PHR's in-depth reporting on the violent response to the protests, based on our extensive contacts with Sudanese medical networks at the heart of the movement,

have made us a go-to organization for information on the evolving Sudanese crisis. As our partners shared updates of the unfolding massacre in June, we immediately called for an urgent international investigation into the bloodshed, urged the U.S. government to press for an end to the violence, and brought a team of Sudanese doctors to Geneva to present our evidence of abuses to the UN Human Rights Council.

Thanks to you, PHR is expanding our investigation into the killings and other abuses in Sudan. The recent agreement

between the military and opposition groups that clears the way for an interim government is a positive sign, but we are closely monitoring developments to ensure that those responsible for human rights violations are held accountable for their crimes. Shaza Elmahdi, MD, a partner at the Sudanese American Physicians Association who joined PHR's delegation to the UN, told us that your support is critical to our brave medical colleagues leading the struggle for freedom and justice in Sudan.



"I can see the difference after [the publication of] your report, reflected in the media's growing attention and interest in covering Sudan medics and revolts. You are giving hope not only to me, but to those simple and dedicated doctors who work in very remote areas in Sudan and are subject to all kind of humiliations."

*Shaza Elmahdi, MD  
Sudanese American  
Physicians Association*

*Sudanese demonstrators protest outside the army complex in Khartoum in April 2019.  
Photo: Ebrahim Hamid/AFP/Getty Images*

## PHR's Agents of Change Are Ending Torture in Central Asia

PHR's decade of work to end the long-entrenched practice of torture in Central Asia has delivered groundbreaking change. With your support, we and our partners have helped improve policies and trained more than 1,000 medical and legal experts in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to investigate and document torture and

ill-treatment according to international standards known as the Istanbul Protocol. Before we began our work in 2011, there were virtually no cases of criminal punishment of torturers; today, police officers in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are behind bars for torture and ill-treatment of prisoners.

A new study of our work shows that 90 percent of our trainees feel empowered to train others and to sustain our work to put an end to torture in their countries. Thanks to you, these agents of change are transforming the landscape for torture, dismantling bad practices, and building up rights-respecting societies in Central Asia.



# Acquittal for Leading Turkish Human Rights Defender

But Turkey's Doctors Are Still Under Assault



Turkish human rights activist and PHR partner Şebnem Korur Fincancı, MD after an Istanbul court acquitted her in July of making "terror propaganda" for Kurdish militants.

Photo: Ozan Kose/AFP/Getty Images

We are happy to share that Şebnem Korur Fincancı, MD, one of Turkey's most prominent and intrepid human rights defenders and a longtime PHR partner, was acquitted in July of spurious charges of disseminating "terrorist propaganda" that were lodged against her after she guest-edited a newspaper critical of the Turkish government. When Dr. Fincancı was arrested and briefly imprisoned in 2016, you and PHR stood by her side – quite literally at her court hearings – calling global attention to her case and demanding that the charges be dropped.

But the struggle is far from over. Dr. Fincancı, whom we honored at our 2017 gala for her courageous work to end torture and ill-treatment, still faces a 30-month prison sentence for signing a peace petition in 2016. The Turkish government continues to arrest and persecute

thousands of health professionals, academics, and many others who speak out in favor of fairness, justice, and respect for human rights. Punishing them isn't just a blow against them individually, it is an attack against human rights globally.

With your help, we will continue to resist attempts to silence these brave advocates. We know it works. When a PHR team met with Dr. Fincancı and other persecuted activists this summer, she told them:

"It is the solidarity from PHR that has helped us to have these results at the courts. If I have been released from jail after only 10 days, it was because of the support of PHR that [has made] ... the government feel the solidarity from the world.... With international support and solidarity, we managed to be successful at the end."

## THE LANCET

"It is a basic duty of our profession to provide care in a non-partisan way. The Turkish Government is sending a message to civil society to undermine the idea of free expression and the delivery of medical care to protestors."

Vincent Iacopino, MD, PhD  
PHR Senior Medical Advisor

# Speaking Up for Syria on the Global Stage



PHR's Susannah Sirkin (lower right) presents PHR's findings at the United Nations Security Council on July 30, 2019. Photo: UK Mission to the UN

**PHR's documentation of crimes in the Syrian conflict catapulted onto the world stage this summer when we presented our findings and analysis of attacks on health at the United Nations Security Council – a rare opportunity for a non-governmental organization.**

From her seat in the Council room, and in front of a global audience, PHR Director of Policy Susannah Sirkin delivered an impassioned condemnation of the Syrian government's relentless strikes on medical facilities and personnel and demanded an immediate investigation into recent attacks on Syria's embattled northwest. "The ongoing assault on health care facilities and personnel has been a ... deliberate, inhumane, illegal strategy of war," she told the gathering. "Each of the attacks on a functioning health facility is a war crime. Taken together, these assaults constitute crimes against humanity."

When the representative of the Russian Federation, Syria's ally, tried to discredit her report, Sirkin struck back, refuting his criticism with the hard facts of PHR's rigorous research: 16 confirmed attacks on medical facilities since Syria and Russia escalated their campaign in the northwest in April – a flagrant violation of international law. Since the start of the conflict, PHR has documented fully 578 attacks on at least 350 separate health facilities and the killing of 910 medical personnel – more than 90 percent of them assessed to have been committed by Syrian government and allied forces.

Sirkin's statement was repeatedly praised by Security Council members and cited more than 200 times in the global media. Two days after PHR's testimony, the UN Secretary-General established a Board of Inquiry to investigate attacks on health care facilities in Syria – resounding evidence of the power of advocacy, and proof that your outrage against these heinous war crimes is being heard.



Physicians for Human Rights

For more than 30 years, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) has used science and the uniquely credible voices of medical professionals to document and call attention to severe human rights violations around the world. PHR uses its investigations and expertise to advocate for persecuted health workers and facilities under attack, prevent torture, document mass atrocities, and hold those who violate human rights accountable.



Shared in the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize

[phr.org](http://phr.org)

PHR received the highest Charity Navigator rating for the fifth consecutive year, a distinction held by only 17 percent of the 1.1 million charities that are rated annually.

