

A red circular logo with the white text "PHR" inside.A full-page photograph of two medical professionals, a man and a woman, standing in front of a yellow and green emergency ambulance. The man, on the right, is wearing a red uniform with a camouflage tactical vest and a stethoscope. The woman, on the left, is wearing a red uniform with a tan tactical vest and a stethoscope. The ambulance has a blue Star of Life symbol on its side. In the background, a multi-story apartment building is visible.

PHR

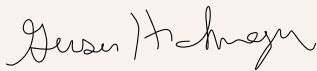
# Mobilizing Health Workers to Safeguard Rights

Physicians for Human Rights  
2022 Annual Report



Dear PHR Supporters,

Since our last annual report, I am thrilled to have become the new board chair of Physicians for Human Rights (PHR). And I am even more thrilled to tell you that we are now being led by an extraordinary senior executive team, composed of Executive Director Saman ("Sam") Zia-Zarifi and COO and Director of Development Gareth Crawford. Sam's human rights experience is vast. He comes to us after six years as the secretary-general of the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva. Prior to that, he held senior positions at both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Gareth joins us after eight years as president and CEO of the Carey Institute for Global Good and substantial on-the-ground experience in Asia and Africa for PLAN International and Save the Children. PHR is very lucky to have both Sam and Gareth on board, and I am delighted to be able to introduce you directly to Sam here.



Gerson H. Smoger, JD, PhD  
Board Chair

Dear Friends,

I am fortunate to have come to PHR at a time of exciting growth and transformation. After admiring this storied organization for so many years, I am deeply honored to have joined PHR's exceptional team of human rights professionals and change-makers.

As you will see in the following pages, PHR helped mobilize the medical community and human rights defenders on the front lines in Ukraine and Syria to investigate mass atrocities and advocate to protect health care facilities and personnel from attack. In the United States, we have joined forces with reproductive justice advocates to fight the adverse health outcomes of abortion bans. Our network of thousands of clinicians and medical students has continued to monitor and safeguard the rights and health of asylum-seekers. And our global network of health professionals, lawyers, and human rights researchers and activists continues our work to hold perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict zones accountable. From Kinshasa to Kyiv, New York to Nairobi, PHR is confronting some of the most urgent crises of our time.

None of this would be possible without your unstinting support. I want to thank you for your partnership and belief in our work. We in turn pledge to continue to provide PHR's unique combination of science and advocacy in defense of human rights.



Saman Zia-Zarifi, JD, LLM  
Executive Director



*Female nurses and police officers preparing for an International Women's Day parade in front of the Court House in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo. PHR has worked for years forging partnerships between medical, law enforcement, legal, and justice professionals to document cases of sexual violence and improve access to justice for survivors.*

*Photo: DeDe Dunevant*

*Cover: Ukrainian medical workers beside their ambulance at a hospital in Kharkiv in April 2022, during a period of intensive shelling by Russian forces attempting to surround the city, which lies 30 kilometers from the Russian border in northeastern Ukraine.*

*Photo: Alex Chan Tsz Yuk/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images*







# What We Do

For more than 35 years, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) has worked at the intersection of medicine, science, and law to end human suffering, save lives, and secure justice and universal human rights for all.

PHR mobilizes the medical community to defend rights and advance justice. Our global network of thousands of health professionals, lawyers, and human rights researchers and activists has worked across five continents to ensure accountability for attacks on health care infrastructure and personnel and for sexual violence in conflict zones, end torture and ill-treatment, speak out for the right to protest safely, halt the use of excessive force by police and security forces, and safeguard the rights and health of asylum seekers.

We train health, legal, and law enforcement professionals to document evidence of human rights abuses and to work together to bring that evidence to court, hold violators accountable, and secure justice for victims and survivors.

We investigate mass atrocities and advocate to protect health care facilities and personnel from attack.

We pioneer innovative, survivor-centered, and trauma-informed tools and are leaders in creating global standards that strengthen justice and accountability.

Our evidence is used by international and local justice mechanisms, United Nations bodies, policymakers, and journalists to bring human rights abusers to justice, prosecute war crimes, reform policies and practices that undermine human rights, secure reparations for survivors, and spur action in the face of growing rights violations.





*Actress Frances Fisher during a protest at the Georgia State Capitol against recently passed abortion ban bills.  
Photo: Elijah Nouvelage/Getty Images*



# Working to End Attacks on Health Workers and Hospitals



PHR has documented attacks on health care since our founding. We expose the persecution, torture, and killing of health professionals, the bombing of hospitals and ambulances, the obstruction of access to health care, and the blockading of medical aid to populations in conflict zones.

We use our investigations and data to spotlight violations, generate evidence to support justice processes, and advocate at the highest levels for protection of medical facilities and health professionals on the front lines. We galvanize the global medical community to act in solidarity with their colleagues under fire around the world.

*Rescue workers remove rubble after a Russian missile destroyed the maternity ward of the Vilniansk Multidisciplinary Hospital in southeastern Ukraine in November 2022. Photo: Dmytro Smolienko/Ukrinform/Future Publishing via Getty Images*



## Ukraine

With the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, PHR and our partners on the ground launched a rapid response investigation into widespread attacks by Russian forces on Ukraine's health system. Together, we documented at least 707 attacks on health care in Ukraine in 2022 alone – the most comprehensive dataset to date of these egregious violations of international law – and are sharing this crucial evidence with justice mechanisms building prosecutions of war crimes and crimes against humanity.



“These findings should be a wake-up call for the global community to act now to end impunity for wanton violence against health workers, in Ukraine and around the world.”

*Christian De Vos*  
PHR Research and Investigations Director

*Dr. Yuri Kuznetsov stands in the destroyed surgery room in Izium's hospital in November 2022, amid the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine.  
Photo: Dimitar Dilkoff/AFP via Getty Images*



# Working to End Attacks on Health Workers and Hospitals

continued



## Syria

PHR has been documenting attacks on health care in Syria since the start of the conflict there in 2011: more than 600 assaults on medical facilities and the killing of almost 1,000 health care professionals. Fully 90 percent of these illegal attacks were perpetrated by the Syrian government and/or its Russian allies. We have published more than a dozen reports on the horrific impacts of these attacks on health, most recently on how Syrian women and girls have suffered from the loss of access to sexual and reproductive health care.

“In Syria’s devastating war, women pay the highest price. The fundamental human right to health – including being able to deliver a baby safely, to bring new life to the world – has been routinely violated in northwest Syria, where bombs have rained down on hospitals, and healthcare workers have been persecuted.”

Dr. Houssam al-Nahas  
PHR Middle East and North Africa Researcher



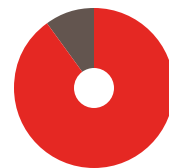
**945**

Syrian health care professionals killed.



**601**

Assaults on Syrian medical facilities.



**90%**

Attacks on health care that were perpetrated by the Syrian government and/or its Russian allies.

Above: The wheelchair of a patient who was killed in an attack on Shifaa Hospital in Afrin, Syria, in June 2021.

Photo: Abd Alrazaq Zaqzoq/Syrian American Medical Society



## Myanmar

In Myanmar, we exposed how the country's armed forces violently attacked health care facilities and arrested, tortured, and killed medical workers protesting the military coup. With Myanmar effectively closed to the outside world, PHR and our partners were one of the few go-to sources of critical data on these crimes.

*Medical staff and students in Mandalay, Myanmar take part in a protest against the military coup and crackdown by security forces.*  
Photo: STR/AFP via Getty Images



## Türkiye

### Success

PHR has long spoken out about the Turkish government's repression of medical professionals who expose the health harms of human rights violations. 2022 saw a further crackdown, when the renowned leader of the Turkish Medical Association – forensic pathologist, anti-torture activist, and PHR Advisory Council Member Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı – was again arbitrarily detained on terror-related charges. PHR led an international coalition that ultimately helped secure Dr. Fincancı's release. We stand firmly with these courageous health professionals and reiterate our call for Türkiye's government to end its campaign of intimidation, silencing, and punishment.

*Medical personnel protest outside Istanbul's courthouse during the trial of Turkish Medical Association head and longtime PHR partner Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı.*

Photo: Ozan Kose/AFP via Getty Images





# Protecting the Right to Seek Asylum

For more than three decades, PHR has worked to protect the rights of people fleeing violence and persecution. Every year, hundreds of PHR-trained clinicians conduct pro bono forensic physical and psychological evaluations of asylum seekers that support their immigration cases so they can be granted protection in the United States. We also investigate and document persecution and ill-treatment of asylum seekers and migrants on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, including the terrible harms of forced family separation by U.S. officials – and we use our data to advocate for a more **just** and humane immigration system.



“PHR’s reports on the health consequences of family separation show that all four criteria for torture were met. The trauma from these separations did not disappear when families were finally reunited. As a perpetrator of state torture, the U.S. government is obligated to provide prompt and effective redress to survivors, including psychological rehabilitative services.”

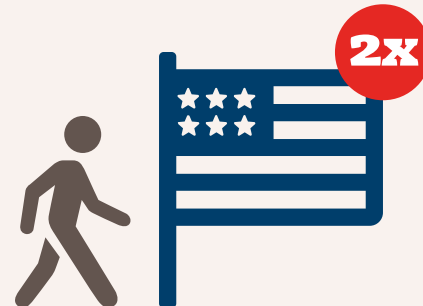
*Dr. Ranit Mishori  
PHR Senior Medical Advisor*





Asylum seekers being expelled from El Paso, Texas to Mexico in March 2021.

Photo: Pedro Pardo/AFP/Getty Images



## Success

Asylum seekers and other immigrants who obtained forensic medical evaluations from PHR volunteer clinicians between 2008 and 2018 were **twice as likely** to be granted protection in the United States as applicants who did not get evaluations.



**2,200**

Volunteer clinicians in PHR's Asylum Network



**710**

Pro bono forensic evaluations of asylum seekers conducted by PHR volunteer clinicians in 2022



**22**

PHR partner medical schools

## Success

Leveraging our growing network of more than 2,200 volunteer clinicians across the United States, PHR conducted pro bono forensic evaluations for 710 asylum seekers, a record high for the program. We increased our partner medical schools to 22, including in high-need areas and along the U.S.-Mexico border.



# Exposing Pseudoscience that Masks Police Violence

PHR's researchers and investigators use the power of science and medicine to expose police violence, state torture, and the excessive use of force by government security forces against peaceful protesters worldwide. We debunk pseudoscience that excuses police violence and advocate to stop the use of chemical and dangerous crowd-control weapons.



“This is just a tiny fraction of what the world is experiencing on a daily basis. The vast majority of injuries — even significant severe injuries — go unreported.”

*Dr. Rohini J. Haar  
PHR Medical Advisor*

*Police officers on the roof of the 3rd Police Precinct in Minneapolis, MN during a protest demanding justice for George Floyd, who died in police custody.  
Photo: Kerem Yucel/AFP/Getty Images*



# THE LANCET

“One crucial step ... towards preventing future deaths in police custody is ensuring that baseless medical diagnoses do not impede possible treatment, obscure the true cause of death, or provide cover to those responsible.”

*Dr. Altaf Saadi, PHR Asylum Network Member;  
Joanna Naples-Mitchell, PHR U.S. Research  
Advisor; Dr. Brianna da Silva Bhatia,  
PHR COVID-19 Health Strategist;  
Dr. Michele Heisler, PHR Medical Director*

Physicians for Human Rights



## “Excited Delirium” and Deaths in Police Custody

The Deadly Impact of a Baseless Diagnosis

Executive Summary March 2022



### Success

PHR produced a landmark report on the alleged syndrome “excited delirium,” which is disproportionately used in the United States in cases involving Black men to absolve police of responsibility for deaths in custody. Following our publication, the American Academy of Emergency Medicine disavowed the term, the National Association of Medical Examiners reversed its endorsement of “excited delirium,” and the Bay Area Rapid Transit Police Department in California removed the term from its policy manual. Our work has informed police oversight and reform efforts in city and state governments across the United States. We helped secure important legal victories and compensation for survivors of police violence in New York, resulting in one of the highest reparations settlements ever awarded per person in NYC, and we continue powerful advocacy so that policymakers, medical associations, and law enforcement end the use of “excited delirium.”



# Innovating to Support Survivors of Sexual Violence

Every year, tens of thousands of adults and children experience sexual violence during armed conflict. A key reason for impunity is the lack of high-quality forensic evidence and survivor-centered justice processes. Since 2011, PHR has tackled this crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Iraq, and Kenya through innovative technology, hands-on training, and forging powerful networks of health, law enforcement, and legal professionals that are helping secure justice for survivors.

**THE**  
**Nation.**

“We cannot move forward unless we reckon with the past. In this regard, the survivors of past election-related violence should be helped to obtain justice and accountability.”

*Naitore Nyamu-Mathenge  
PHR Head of the Kenya Office*

*Dr. Cathy Furaha, OB/GYN, preparing an examination room at the HEAL Africa Hospital in Goma, DRC, in August 2022. Dr. Furaha and her colleagues are pioneering the use in the DRC of PHR's award-winning MediCapt app, which helps clinicians to securely document, store, and transmit evidence of sexual violence. Photo: Hannah Dunphy, PHR*







## Success

PHR is bridging innovation and forensic evidence collection with our award-winning MediCapt app, which enables clinicians to securely document, store, and transmit evidence of sexual violence. More than twice as effective at producing high-quality data than paper-based forms, this court-admissible evidence strengthens investigations, increases prosecutions, and helps ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence can be tried and convicted for their crimes. We have continued expanding MediCapt's use in Kenya and the DRC in order to reach many more clinicians and the sexual violence survivors they serve.

## Success

In landmark cases in Kenya and the DRC, PHR and our partners have helped win significant legal victories for child and adult victims and survivors of sexual violence. We advocate tirelessly to change policies and practices and to ensure that survivors are compensated for the harms they've suffered.

## Success

PHR has strengthened capacity to document the psychological trauma of sexual violence and provide mental health care to survivors. After years of extensive work, we celebrated an important victory in June 2022 when Kenya's Senate passed a law that safeguards the rights of people with mental illnesses and promotes a holistic approach to mental health, including critical mental health services for survivors of sexual violence.

## Success

PHR has trained more than 2,000 health care professionals in the DRC, Ethiopia, Iraq, and Kenya to provide survivor-centered, trauma-informed care and to document forensic evidence of sexual violence. These PHR-trained experts have gone on to train hundreds more professionals. In partnership with Kenyan medical schools, PHR is supporting the training of thousands of new medical students in forensic documentation and survivor-centered care.

## Advocating for Reproductive Rights

In the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, PHR is stepping up our advocacy for reproductive rights and justice. We have begun new research and advocacy with partners on the health and human rights harms of abortion restrictions and the "dual loyalty" crisis clinicians face when they are forced to deviate from established standards of care, putting their patients at risk and violating clinicians' medical and ethical obligations. We're mobilizing health professionals and building networks with reproductive justice advocates to document the health and rights harms caused by abortion bans on both patients and providers, and to speak out for accountability and reform.



"I'm really optimistic that what we are going to see in the U.S. ... is positive reform and ... a stronger legal framework than we have in *Roe v. Wade* where we can really think about international human rights and we can see an abortion framework that's grounded in equality and not just privacy."

*Payal Shah, PHR Program on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones Director*



# Holding Torturers Accountable

PHR was the galvanizing force behind the team of international experts who, in 1999, created the Istanbul Protocol, UN guidelines that are the gold standard for conducting effective investigations into allegations of torture. In 2022, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published the new edition of the Istanbul Protocol, the culmination of a multiyear effort spearheaded by PHR that brought together 180 experts from 51 countries. The new edition provides critical guidance to States on how to fulfill their treaty obligations to investigate, prosecute, and punish torture under international law.



*The 2023 PHR student conference brought together more than 125 future doctors, social workers, lawyers, public health workers, and specialists from many other disciplines – from 24 institutions across 16 states – to discuss how to put their skills to work to protect human rights.*

*Photo: Keith Melong, University of Michigan*





*A “non-compliant” detainee is escorted by guards inside the U.S. military prison for “enemy combatants” in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba in October 2009. Some 779 Muslim men and boys have been held there, nearly all without charges or trial. Many were survivors of the U.S. torture program; all were exposed to the physical and psychological trauma associated with prolonged indefinite detention.*

*Photo: John Moore/Getty Images*



## Inspiring the Next Generation of Health and Human Rights Activists

PHR is deeply committed to growing the ranks of new health professional human rights activists. Our Student Program has 90 chapters at medical schools across the United States and around the world, where we connect medical and health students with the resources and skills to advocate for health and human rights locally, nationally, and globally.



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*PHR received the highest  
Charity Navigator rating for  
the eighth consecutive year.*

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Physicians for  
Human Rights

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

For more than 35 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, which shared in the Nobel Peace Prize for its work to end the scourge of landmines, 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.

Through evidence,  
change is possible.



Shared in the 1997  
Nobel Peace Prize