



Beneath the Siren's Call: A Year in the Life of an Emergency Medical Worker in the oPt

Emergency medical workers face tremendous challenges when working in contexts of armed conflict and occupation. The situation is no different for **M.B.**, an active volunteer with the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) who has dedicated his time to providing emergency medical services to those in need. The severity of these obstacles threatens the lives of emergency medical personnel who conduct their work in dangerous and volatile environments.



M.B. has been a devoted volunteer with PRCS for twenty (20) years. Throughout his voluntary service, M.B., alongside his fellow volunteers and staff, has faced numerous International Humanitarian Law (IHL) violations committed by Israeli Occupation Forces and settlers.

In 2022 alone, M.B. experienced **14 violations** in **11** separate incidents. These breaches of IHL varied in nature, including **delay and denial of access to the sick and wounded (7 cases)**, **threats with weapons (2 cases)**, **exposure to tear gas attacks (2 cases)**, an **attempted hit-and-run (1 case)**, **detention** exceeding an hour (**1 case**), and **direct physical and verbal assault (1 case)**.

In Beit Furik (Nablus)

On October 2, 2022- Two PRCS EMS officers, including M.B., were **physically and verbally assaulted** by more than five soldiers at an Israeli occupation military checkpoint. The PRCS officers were stopped for inspection and requested that the ambulance be searched in their presence, but the soldiers refused and proceeded to use physical force against them. Both PRCS officers sustained injuries and were **transferred to a hospital**, with one of them being unable to return to work for **40 days** due to the severity of his injuries. The incident was captured on video by a bystander and went viral on social media.

"This attack had a significant impact on our mental health. We were shocked and scared, and it felt like the assault came out of nowhere, without any prior warning. We felt deeply humiliated that our work as health workers was not respected, and that our PRCS vest and ambulance, which clearly display the red crescent emblem, were brutally attacked like this. It made me wonder what was left for us to do. This had a major scar in my life, and even today, I still feel insecure and humiliated."

-M.B. on Beit Furik Assault.

"1. Civilian medical personnel shall be respected and protected."

- Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol 1, 1977), Article 15.



In Huwara (Nablus)

On October 14, 2022- during an emergency response to a family who had been beaten by Israeli settlers in Huwara, M.B. was **deliberately targeted and hit, while attending to the injured, by an Israeli settler's jeep**. Despite standing near the ambulance, the driver swerved towards M.B. with the clear intent of causing harm. The impact caused a minor injury to his shoulder, but he was fortunate enough to avoid more serious harm. This reprehensible incident highlights the extreme dangers and risks faced by emergency medical workers in the occupied Palestinian territory, where repeated violations by both Israeli occupation forces and settlers pose a threat to their safety and ability to provide essential services.



"I was alone in the street when a jeep driven by an Israeli settler came straight towards me. It was crystal clear that the driver wanted to hit me and get away with it. I consider myself lucky to have survived this terrifying incident ... It's a feeling that's hard to describe - the fear, the vulnerability. This incident is just one example of the daily risks and dangers faced by emergency medical workers like me in the oPt. Despite the threats and attacks, we remain committed to providing essential services to those in need. It's a difficult job, but the gratitude and appreciation we receive from those we help make it all worthwhile."

- M.B. on the hit and run attempt.



"The High Contracting Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for the present Convention in all circumstances."

- Common Article 1 of the four Geneva Conventions (1949).



In Nablus Governate

In **seven** separate incidents, M.B. and his colleagues were either **denied or delayed from accessing Palestinians who required medical attention**. In **two** of these incidents, they were **threatened with weapons** to force them to retreat. It is particularly concerning that some of these individuals were **critically injured** with live ammunition, making the delay in medical treatment even more critic. These incidents underscore the need for respect and protection for medical personnel, and the importance of unimpeded access to emergency medical services for all those in need, regardless of their background or circumstances, in accordance with international law.



"It is a difficult feeling knowing that at any moment, Israeli occupation soldiers could shoot you. It is a very bad feeling that stays with you, and the fear is overwhelming. No one should have to experience such feelings, especially those who are trying to provide critical humanitarian services."

- M.B.'s response when asked about how he feels when threatened with weapons.



"Civilian medical personnel shall have access to any place where their services are essential..."

- Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol 1, 1977), Article 15.

"Recognized National Red Cross (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun) Societies shall be able to pursue their activities in accordance with Red Cross Principles, as defined by the International Red Cross Conferences..."

- Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention, 1949), Article 63.

"Despite all the threats, Why do you continue your voluntary service?"

"I do what I do because I love it. Helping people and saving lives is what gives me the strength to keep going, even in the face of constant attacks. It's not easy, but knowing that I can make a difference in someone's life makes it all worth it. I won't let the continuous attacks and dangers posed by Israeli occupation forces stop me from helping those in need. I'm determined to keep volunteering and providing emergency medical services, no matter what."



"I urge the international community and other states to put pressure on the Israeli occupation authorities to comply with international law," M.B. states. "We need protection for me and my colleagues working in EMS and we deserve justice for the repeated violations and attacks that we have faced. It's a simple request and this protection is afforded by international law, it isn't something that we came up with... We just want to do our job and help those in need without the constant threat against our lives."