

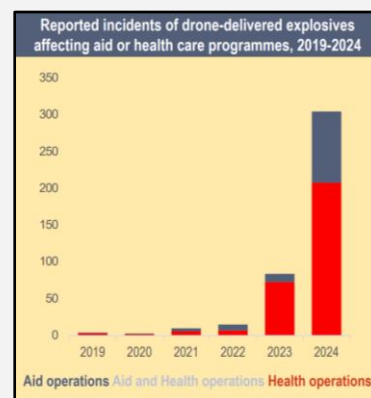
Hovering Threats The Challenges of Armed Drones in Humanitarian Contexts

Armed drones are an increasing threat to the safety of aid and health care workers, necessitating adaptations in security risk management practices. Insecurity Insight's monitoring indicates that between 2016 and 2024, at least 21 aid workers and 73 health workers, six of which worked for health NGOs, were reportedly killed in drone attacks. Aid operations or health care services in conflict zones have been directly impacted by drone-delivered explosive weapons in at least 426 documented incidents. The rising use of unpiloted or remotely controlled aircraft (drones) to deploy explosive weapons is further limiting humanitarian access. **This [document](#) discusses the impact of armed drone use on aid and health care operations, examining both the technical characteristics of these weapons and strategies to mitigate the risks associated with their use.**

Armed actors' use of drones has been a factor in conflict dynamics since 2001. Insecurity Insight recorded the first instances of drone-delivered explosives impacting health care services in 2016. Until 2022, the number of recorded incidents directly affecting aid and health care programmes remained below ten per year. By 2023, however, 84 incidents of drone use directly impacting aid operations or health services were recorded, and this figure surged to 308 incidents in 2024. Additionally, the geographic spread of drone-related incidents directly affecting aid or health services expanded from five countries or territories in 2022 to twelve in 2024. The share of drone-delivered explosives among all incidents where explosive weapons impacted aid or health care in conflict zones increased from 6% in 2023 to 12% in 2024.

This report is based on a detailed analysis of reported incidents, indicating that aid and health workers are most frequently killed by armed drones while in vehicles, such as ambulances or aid agency cars. Drone-delivered explosives are also commonly reported to impact buildings that are vital to humanitarian programmes, including hospitals, infrastructure in IDP and refugee camps, food distribution points, and aid offices or warehouses. The report further notes that many of these incidents occur in the context of so-called anti-terrorist and counter-insurgency operations carried out by state security forces, underscoring the need for tailored and context-conscious security risk management strategies. These strategies must take into account both mobile and fixed assets to ensure the safety of staff and the secure delivery of critical programmes. In addition, there is a need to engage with stakeholders to address the fact that aid and health care operations are particularly at risk when their efforts are perceived as supporting what have been labelled "terrorist" or "resistance" groups.

The report provides technical insights into drones that are essential for developing security risk strategies tailored to aid operations. It recommends creating guidance for staff on how to respond in the presence of drones, and outlines operational measures that aid agencies can implement to avoid being mistaken for military targets. Additionally, the report emphasises the importance of humanitarian diplomacy and deconfliction efforts, proposing collective advocacy to raise awareness and address these challenges through coordinated, sector-wide strategies. Because the best security risk management approach is insufficient when conflict parties are not willing to protect aid and health services in conflict, the report also proposes to support appropriate legal accountability mechanisms for individuals directly affected by these incidents to work towards the better protection of these services when international humanitarian law is no longer respected. **[Full report.](#) [Summary report.](#)**



Past editions: [25 December-07 January](#); [11-24 December](#); [27 November-10 December](#); [13-26 November](#); [All](#)

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Safety, security and access incidents

Incidents of threats and violence affecting aid workers and aid delivery.

Africa

South Sudan

15 January 2025: In Upper Nile state, Greater Upper Nile region, an MSF staff member was injured when two of their marked boats, carrying six members, were struck by unidentified gunmen. The workers were forced to jump into the river and swim to a nearby village. MSF suspended all movements for outreach activities in Nasir and Ulang counties due to the attack. **Source:** [Radio Tamazu](#)

Sudan

12 January 2025: In Omdurman, Khartoum city and state, a volunteer with the local aid group Women's Response Office was killed after RSF fighters raided her home during fighting between the group and the SAF. **Source:** [Sudan Tribune](#)

Around 13-15 January 2025: Near Dilling, South Kordofan state, relief warehouses belonging to Samaritan's Purse were looted and homes burned by the SAF. **Source:** [Sudan Tribune](#)

As reported on 19 January 2025: In Al Hasahisa city, Al Jazirah state, an unspecified number of community kitchens were forced to shut down by the RSF. A total curfew was reportedly imposed on the city preventing people from securing basic needs including food, water and health care. **Source:** [Personal Communication](#)

Asia

China

As reported on 11 January 2025: In Tingri county, Xigaze prefecture-level city, Tibet autonomous region, aid workers and Buddhist monks were banned from entering areas of the region struck by deadly earthquakes at the beginning of January by Chinese authorities. Authorities blocked off access, preventing monks, relief volunteers and aid providers from entering the affected area under the pretext of cleanup and security work. **Source:** [Radio Free Asia](#)

Myanmar

As reported on 16 January 2025: Around the country, children faced extreme shortages of food and medicine, including vaccines, in areas under Junta control. Blockades were imposed on many parts of the country, preventing vulnerable populations from getting much-needed supplies. **Source:** [Radio Free Asia](#)

Europe

Ukraine

15 January 2025: In Khersonskiyi, Kherson oblast, a female volunteer was killed by shelling fired from Russian drones. **Sources:** [ACLED](#)¹ and [Intent Press](#)

Middle East and North Africa

Occupied Palestinian Territory

Gaza

08 January 2025: Across the Gaza Strip, only five out of 15 coordinated humanitarian missions were facilitated by the Israeli authorities, while four were impeded, three were denied, and three were cancelled due to security or logistical challenges. **Source:** [OCHA News](#)

09 January 2025: Across the Gaza Strip, only 10 out of 21 UN planned humanitarian movements were facilitated by the Israeli authorities. Seven were denied outright, three were impeded, and one was cancelled due to security and logistical challenges. **Sources:** [OCHA News](#) and [Wafa](#)

10 January 2025: In Jabalia Refugee Camp, North Gaza governorate, the vicinity of the NGO-ran Al-Awda Hospital was hit by Israeli artillery. **Source:** [ACLED](#)¹

11 January 2025: In Gaza, Deir al-Balah, and Khan Yunis governorates, the Palestinian Civil Defense (PCD) reported that several firefighting and rescue vehicles stopped working due to the lack of maintenance parts and equipment needed to repair and operate them. PCD's stockpile of these supplies, along with equipment and repair parts, were destroyed. **Source:** [OCHA Update 255](#)

12 January 2025: Across the Gaza Strip, only seven out of 22 UN-planned humanitarian movements were facilitated by the Israeli authorities. Six were denied outright, five were impeded, and four were cancelled due to security and logistical challenges. **Source:** [OCHA News](#)

14 January 2025: In Nuseirat Refugee Camp 2, Deir al-Balah governorate, 20 Palestinians, including a lawyer working for the Independent Commission for Human Rights, his wife who was Chief of Nursing Staff at Al-Awda hospital (ran by NGO 'Al-Awda Health and Community Association'), and their four children, were killed when a house in which they were sheltering was hit by Israeli airstrikes. **Sources:** [ActionAid](#), [Al-Awda Health and Community Association](#), [Independent Commission for Human Rights](#), [OCHA Update 257](#) and [WAFA](#)

14 January 2025: In Jabalia Refugee Camp, North Gaza governorate, a UN mission to evacuate patients and to deliver food, water, fuel, hygiene kits, and cleaning supplies to the NGO-run Al Awda Hospital was denied by Israeli authorities. The WHO reached the hospital the following day and delivered 5,000 litres of fuel, as well as food parcels, bottled water, winter clothes and vaccines. **Source:** [OCHA News](#) and [OCHA News II](#)

14 January 2025: In North Gaza governorate, a UN mission to evacuate patients and to deliver food, water, fuel, hygiene kits, and cleaning supplies to the Indonesian Hospital was denied by Israeli authorities. **Source:** [OCHA News](#)

14 January 2025: Across the Gaza Strip, out of the 21 UN planned humanitarian missions, less than half were facilitated, seven were denied outright, and four were impeded. **Source:** [OCHA News](#)

15 January 2025: On Sea Street, Al-Shati Refugee Camp (Beach Refugee Camp), Gaza governorate, a group of people securing aid was struck by Israeli forces, killing three Palestinians and injuring an unspecified number of others. **Source:** [WAFA](#)

15 January 2025: In Rafah city and governorate, a food distribution center, Kitchen of Life, near the Kuwaiti Hospital was struck by Israeli forces. Civil defense teams recovered six bodies and rescued four injured individuals from the rubble. **Source:** [WAFA](#)

15 January 2025: In Al-Mawasi area, Khan Yunis governorate, a charitable soup kitchen was hit by an Israeli airstrike, killing three people including a journalist and injuring an unspecified number of others. **Sources:** [Ma'an News Agency](#) and [Quds News Network](#)

16 January 2025: In Al-Remal neighbourhood, Gaza city and governorate, a Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) staff member, his wife and two children were killed when the house they were sheltering in was hit by Israeli airstrikes at 2am. **Sources:** [International Federation for Human Rights](#) and [OCHA Update 257](#)

19 January 2025: In Tel Al-Hawa, Gaza city and governorate, the area surrounding the PRCS-ran Al-Quds Hospital was under fire by the Israeli forces. **Sources:** [The New Arab](#) and [WAFA](#)

19 January 2025: In Khan Yunis city and governorate, a Red Crescent ambulance en route to evacuate injured people was struck by Israeli forces, injuring a paramedic in the hand. **Sources:** [The New Arab](#) and [WAFA](#)

West Bank

As reported on 09 January 2025: In Jenin Refugee Camp, Jenin city and governorate, a power outage led to the spoilage of approximately 1,600 vials of insulin in UNRWA's health clinic, which had been non-operational since the Palestinian Authority's operation began. UNRWA offered camp residents health services five days a week at the nearby Qabatiya health center, but they were largely unable to visit it due to access difficulties. **Source:** [OCHA Update 254](#)

10 January 2025: In Qabatiya city, Jenin governorate, civil defense teams were prevented from extinguishing a fire by Israeli forces. The fire broke out at a goods store, located under a residential building, the teams were blocked from reaching the area to treat the flames. **Source:** [WAFA](#)

14 January 2025: In Jenin Refugee Camp, Jenin governorate, six Palestinians were killed, including a 15-year-old child and an UNRWA staff member, and two others were injured, including an UNRWA staff member, when an Israeli airstrike hit a home. **Sources:** [OCHA Update 256](#), [OCHA Update 258](#) and [WAFA](#)

21 January 2025: In Jenin Refugee Camp, Jenin governorate, a site near a group of Red Crescent volunteer paramedics was struck by two missiles from Israeli drones. **Source:** [WAFA](#)

Syrian Arab Republic

As reported on 16 January 2025: In Manbij city, Aleppo governorate, humanitarian access remained constrained, with NGOs operating in the region facing restrictions. OCHA reported a dire need for fuel, flour and staffing. **Source:** [OCHA News](#)

This Bi-Monthly News Brief comprises threats and incidents of violence affecting the delivery of humanitarian assistance. It is part of the Aid in Danger project, by Insecurity Insight. It is prepared from information available in local, national and international news outlets and online databases. The incidents reported are not a complete nor a representative list of all events that affected the provision of aid delivery and have not been independently verified. This document is funded and supported by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The opinions expressed in it do not reflect in any way the position of USAID or the U.S. Government who are not responsible for the content expressed in this document.

Insecurity Insight. 2025. Aid in Danger Bi-Monthly News Brief, 08-21 January 2025. Geneva: Insecurity Insight. bit.ly/08-21Jan2025Aid

¹ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) [database attribution policy](#). Accessed 25 January 2025

