



You Helped Us Tell the Truth about What Killed the People of Khan Sheikhoun

When the bombs descended upon the Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun in the early hours of April 4, Physicians for Human Rights' Syria team sprang into action. As hundreds of Syrian men, women, and children were overwhelmed by an apparent chemical weapons attack and hospitals were overrun with the dying, PHR's researchers quickly reached out to our network of health and emergency workers across Idlib Governorate to try to understand what was happening.

Bashar, a first responder with the Syrian Civil Defense – the White Helmets – told PHR researcher Racha Mouawieh that the attack was unlike anything he had ever encountered. “Their eyes were turning white. They were foaming from the mouth and convulsing,” Bashar said of the

victims, many of them children. “It looked like people were struggling against death. They were resisting death.”

PHR's medical experts analyzed first-hand reports from medical personnel on the ground and video and photographic documentation of victims. Within hours, PHR was able to state that the attack had all the hallmarks of an assault with a nerve agent – and we were cited again and again in the global media.

Your backing has enabled PHR to develop a deep expertise in chemical weapons, supported our extensive documentation of attacks on health care, and nurtured our wide network of partners on the ground – all of which make us the trusted authority when atrocities like the Khan Sheikhoun

chemical attack occur. We know that PHR's deep bench and known voice will have an impact – that by exposing these war crimes, by calling out the perpetrators, and by drawing the world's attention when human rights are so cruelly violated, we can help deter abuses and ensure justice in the future. Thank you for making that possible.



Your Solidarity Is Giving Turkish Doctors Hope



PHR Executive Director Donna McKay speaking outside the trial of Turkish human rights defender and longtime PHR partner Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı.

When the Turkish government unleashed the full fury of its repression following last summer's failed coup, thousands of teachers, journalists, lawyers, doctors, and members of civil society were fired from their jobs, jailed, arrested, or put on trial – including PHR's fellow-activists Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı and Dr. Serdar Küni of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey. But PHR has a decades-long history of standing by our Turkish colleagues, and you made sure we were there again this time.

"The courage of activists like Dr. Fincancı has been a huge inspiration to all of us who care about human rights, about justice and truth and decency. By standing with them, by mobilizing public outrage, and by speaking out against their oppressors, we give them strength and we show the power of our solidarity," said PHR Executive Director Donna McKay, who attended Dr. Fincancı's first trial in Istanbul for alleged terrorism after Fincancı participated in a press freedom campaign.

Cover Photo: Residents of Khan Sheikhoun during a protest condemning a suspected chemical weapons attack on the Syrian town which killed almost 100 people. Photo: Omar Haj Kadouri/AFP/Getty Images

When Dr. Küni was put on trial in the spring of 2017 for treating alleged members of anti-government Kurdish armed groups, your support sent PHR Director of International Policy and Partnerships Susannah Sirkin and Researcher Christine Mehta to Dr. Küni's first two court appearances in the southeastern city of Şırnak.

"The fact that we traveled there to attend the trial of a doctor in the crosshairs has a huge impact locally. This is a potential watershed case in which the Turkish government is targeting a doctor simply for doing his job. The whole human rights community is watching very carefully," said Mehta, who conducted an investigation and published a report last year on the Turkish government's widespread attacks on medical care in the country's southeast. Said PHR's Sirkin: "In the past year, citizens in Turkey have been arrested, human rights are under threat, and the rule of law has essentially unraveled. By standing with our colleagues around the world, we put repressive governments on notice that we see what they're doing and that human rights activists are not alone."

This kind of solidarity helps transform hardship into victory. "From the farthest part of the world people came to support our cause," Dr. Fincancı told PHR after her hearing. "It is a celebration of humanity!"



"We're all in this together. We have a common future ... and we know that when we combine our forces, whether they're non-governmental organizations or civil societies, that we do have the power to oppose these regimes – that change is possible."

Dr. Vincent Iacopino, PHR Senior Medical Advisor, on NPR's the *Takeaway*

You Are Amplifying the Fight against Sexual Violence

In Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, PHR's unique approach to reducing entrenched patterns of sexual violence is having an impressive multiplier effect. The stakeholders whom we empower – doctors and nurses, police officers, prosecutors, judges, and forensic scientists – are taking the skills they learn through PHR and training their colleagues on how to document, investigate, and bring to trial cases of sexual violence – and teaching their neighbors and communities about how to eradicate this horrifying scourge.



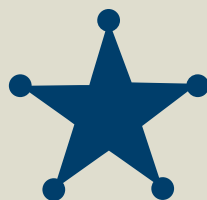
620

**Military and Government
Professionals and
Community Members**



314

**Health
Professionals**



164

**Law Enforcement
Professionals**



48

**Legal
Professionals**

This graphic shows how a small group of Kenyan professionals trained by PHR in May 2016 have reached more than 1,000 people with the skills and knowledge to help combat sexual violence in their country.

A Beacon against Injustice

Turning adversity into opportunity was the inspirational message at PHR's Annual Gala on April 18, where Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı, one of Turkey's most prominent and intrepid human rights defenders, urged guests who packed Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall to leverage the uncertainty of these times to advance human rights. "In whatever way you can, bring your strengths to the table. Fight for the rights of others ... be a beacon for others to follow," said Dr. Fincancı, who is awaiting trial in Turkey for supporting a newspaper critical of the Turkish government. PHR partner Dr. Arash Alaei, who was jailed in his native Iran and freed following an international campaign led by PHR, presented Dr. Fincancı with the 2017 Physicians for Human Rights Award, calling her "a guiding light for all in the human rights movement."

We also honored British publisher and philanthropist Sigrid Rausing for her pivotal support of the human rights movement. "Sigrid Rausing is nothing short of a lifeline to advocates on the front lines of human rights struggles," said Justice Richard J. Goldstone, a PHR board member and leading figure in ending South Africa's apartheid system and in the international prosecution of war crimes, as he presented Rausing with the 2017 Physicians for Human Rights Award. George Soros, one of the world's leading philanthropists and longtime PHR supporter, made a surprise appearance to congratulate Rausing, and the president of Soros's Open Society Foundations, Chris Stone, announced an \$8 million challenge grant to catapult PHR into a new era of human rights advocacy.

"Seeing the world's atrocities, it's easy to lose hope," PHR Executive Director Donna McKay told the gathering. "But our work on the front lines of human rights gives us cause for radical optimism We are witnessing – and helping to generate – a political awakening: an outpouring of compassion, advocacy, and activism."

*All photos unless otherwise credited:
Andrew Toth/Getty Images*



Turkish human rights activist Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı, recipient of the 2017 Physicians for Human Rights Award.



PHR Board Chair Kerry J. Sulkowicz, MD, and PHR Board Members and Gala Co-chairs Deborah D. Ascheim, MD, and Alan K. Jones.

A Beacon against Injustice

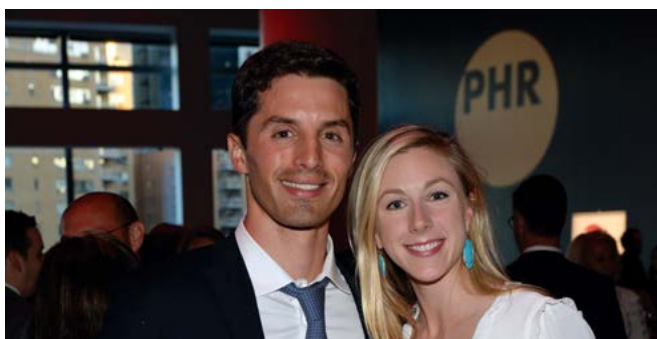
continued



British publisher and philanthropist Sigrid Rausing, recipient of the 2017 Physicians for Human Rights Award, with PHR Board Member Justice Richard J. Goldstone and philanthropist George Soros.



PHR Executive Director Donna McKay speaking to guests at the Physicians for Human Rights gala at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall on April 18, 2017 in New York City.



Chris Altchek and Kasey Grewe at the PHR 2017 gala.



Tessa Lark and Michael Thurber perform at PHR's 2017 gala. Photo: Ashley Garrett

Meeting an Extraordinary Challenge

In the earliest days of our organization – before it was even called Physicians for Human Rights – PHR co-founder Bob Lawrence approached financier George Soros for funds to investigate reports that indigenous people in the Amazon rainforest were dying by the thousands due to disease and violence brought by outsiders invading their land. Soros listened intently, said the work was important, and agreed to foot the bill.

More than 30 years later, Soros, now one of the world's most prominent philanthropists, has crowned his steadfast, generous, and far-sighted support of PHR's work with an extraordinary challenge grant of \$8 million. His Open Society Foundations (OSF) will match one dollar for every two new dollars that PHR raises to help us significantly increase our roster of donors and expand our global network of human rights activists.

OSF President Chris Stone, announcing the grant at PHR's 2017 gala, said: "When I was told that PHR is embarking on an ambitious, four-year campaign to raise \$24 million to bring many more health and scientific professionals from all over the world into the human rights movement, I was excited and wanted to put our Foundation's support behind this. We believe in the vision of the organization and the leadership to carry it out ... I ask you to help PHR in this crucial work."

Your backing has gotten PHR this far, and we look forward to partnering with you in our campaign to meet the full opportunity of OSF's transformative gift.



PHR Executive Director Donna McKay and Open Society Foundations President Chris Stone, who announced an \$8 million challenge grant to PHR. Photo: Andrew Toth/Getty Images

Investing for Impact

Sometimes, all that stands between rape and justice for its survivor is a pencil and some paper, or a motorcycle and a reliable road.

Bringing sexual violence cases to trial is notoriously difficult in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: doctors and nurses who examine survivors often submit incomplete forensic medical reports; files are lost, stolen, or tampered with; clinicians and police are targeted by perpetrators who want to suppress evidence ... but sometimes, justice is thwarted simply because the police don't have a sheet of paper and a pencil to document a case, or transportation and a decent road to collect the medical report from the local health facility.

PHR's award-winning mobile app MediCapt, which allows clinicians to document, securely store, and safely transmit evidence in sexual violence cases, was developed to overcome these challenges. Now, PHR projects like MediCapt are getting an extraordinary boost from the NoVo Foundation, which has just made a generous grant to support PHR's sexual violence work. NoVo's focus on fostering collaboration and partnership speaks directly to PHR's work.

But what makes this gift even more powerful is that the funds are unrestricted – a potent endorsement of PHR's expertise and approach in this critical area. "We believe in general operating support because we know that we are not the experts – our grantee partners are the true experts. Physicians for Human Rights demonstrates this every day," said the NoVo Foundation's Jody Myrum. "At the core of our support is a deep trust in PHR and its work, and we are deeply inspired and encouraged by PHR's innovative approach to end violence against girls and women."

Thanks to the Open Society Foundations' challenge grant, this new support from the NoVo Foundation will have even greater impact!

Homer Venters: A Physician for Human Rights

Homer Venters, MD, MS, recently joined PHR as director of programs. A physician and epidemiologist, he is an internationally recognized leader in health and human rights. Prior to joining PHR, Dr. Venters led health services in the New York City jail system as assistant commissioner and chief medical officer, and worked internationally to train physicians on the intersection of human rights and public health.

What do you, as a doctor, bring to the fight for human rights?

Doctors have a unique role to play, in part because of the credibility that we bring to almost any discussion. We have consistently been one of the most respected professions, and our ability to leverage insights around human rights and promote more humane policies is critical. Another important role is in understanding evidence, and in promoting the use of evidence-based practices – things we know work – in the areas we work on. The third critical role is the training and commitment that physicians have in ethics – there is a set of ethical norms that must guide every patient-doctor interaction, and promoting human rights is consistent with that.

How have you used your expertise around evidence since joining PHR?

The recent chemical weapons attacks in Syria are a good example. Physicians are very accustomed to working with other specialists who have different skill sets to quickly diagnose and treat problems in individual patients. So when we started receiving evidence of a possible chemical weapons attack in Khan Sheikhoun, it was then a natural pathway for me and my medical colleagues at PHR to review the information and together develop an assessment. I had seen and cared for immigrant farm workers exposed to poisoning by organophosphates, which are present in fertilizers and also in nerve agents, so I was able to contribute that knowledge to our analysis.

An important issue we encounter at PHR is dual loyalty – the potential conflict between doctors' duties to their patients and to their employers, particularly governments. We've seen it with U.S. Navy nurses being asked to force-feed detainees at Guantánamo, or Afghan government doctors being required to perform so-called "virginity testing" on women suspected of adultery. How did you tackle the problem of dual loyalty in the New York prison system?

The second you pick up a stethoscope in a jail setting, you feel the pressure of dual loyalty. It can be the most minor decision, such as whether to prescribe someone an albuterol inhaler, which requires a detainee to be front-cuffed, so he can access the device in his pocket. But security forces may tell doctors that a detainee is dangerous and that he doesn't need an inhaler, because they don't want him to be front-cuffed. As a doctor, you have to take care of the patient based on their medical needs, as you would any other.

In the jail system where I worked, 23 percent of health care staff reported that their ethics were routinely challenged – and we created the country's first and only dual loyalty training program to address that. We know this is happening everywhere, including to the health professionals who work at Guantánamo. The dual loyalty issue is prevalent all over the world, and it has a negative impact on health outcomes. We need to acknowledge its pervasiveness and reduce the harm it does.

How do you hope your expertise and training will strengthen PHR's work?

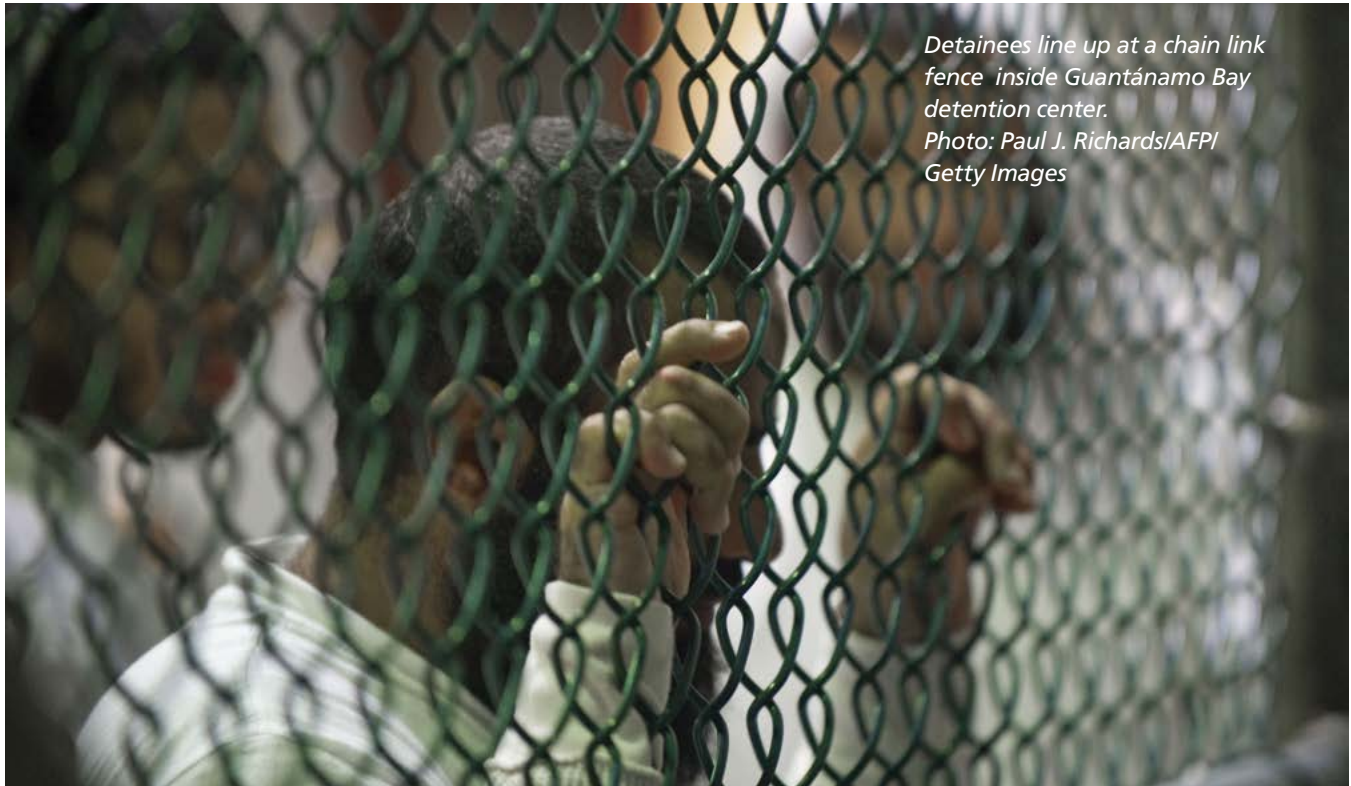
I have a strong belief in using the tools of epidemiology and public health to promote a human rights agenda, and I want to build our capacity at PHR to use these approaches. PHR did this in the 1990s in Cambodia, where we analyzed thousands of cases of landmine injuries and were able to show that one in 256 people had been maimed by those weapons – a horrifying statistic that was key to passing the



international Mine Ban Treaty. In the prison system, I used this approach to advocate against solitary confinement; by analyzing 250,000 jail admissions, we showed that people who had been in solitary confinement had an eight times greater risk of self-harm than other prisoners. Right now, PHR is working in northern Iraq to increase capacity to document torture and other war crimes. My hope is that we can strengthen the case of the brave people who have come forward to report sexual violence by training local partners to assess the incidence and prevalence of this horrific violation, as well as many other human rights abuses. Similarly, our Syria team is working every day to provide data to the entire world about the rate and location of attacks against health care facilities. In conjunction with the personal stories that we hear every day, these are very powerful tools for advancing human rights.

I also want to introduce dual loyalty trainings through health care professional organizations; I'm doing one for the American Psychological Association in November with the goal of reaching up to 5,000 American psychologists. And we could scale up this type of engagement through the hundreds of doctors in our Asylum Network who have a special insight into health issues in immigrant and other detention facilities – an area that promises to present significant human rights challenges going forward.

Betraying Nuremberg: The CIA's Secret Human Experimentation



*Detainees line up at a chain link fence inside Guantánamo Bay detention center.
Photo: Paul J. Richards/AFP/Getty Images*

Seventy years after American judges formulated the Nuremberg Code – foundational principles of research ethics which were spurred by revelations of Nazi human experimentation – PHR has uncovered new evidence confirming that the CIA illegally experimented on detainees as part of its post-9/11 torture program.

Our new report, “Nuremberg Betrayed: Human Experimentation and the CIA Torture Program,” shows how psychologists James Mitchell and Bruce

Jessen designed and tested torture techniques based on a flawed theory about how to aid interrogations. The two also set in motion a regime of biomedical research by CIA health professionals to provide legal cover for the agency’s torture program. PHR’s report bolsters claims of human experimentation raised in a civil case by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of detainees who were subjected to brutal torture by the two CIA contractors.

You have helped PHR wage a 13-year campaign to expose the CIA’s torture program and to end the complicity of

medical professionals like Mitchell and Jessen in these brutal practices. American health professionals carried out experimental work that inflicted profound, irreparable, sometimes lethal harm on their victims. Their actions violated international law and the protections for human research subjects that were first hammered out at Nuremberg. With your support, PHR is bringing the full power of medical and scientific evidence to ensure that these shameful abuses never happen again.



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 employs 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.



Nobel Peace Prize
Co-laureate

phr.org

