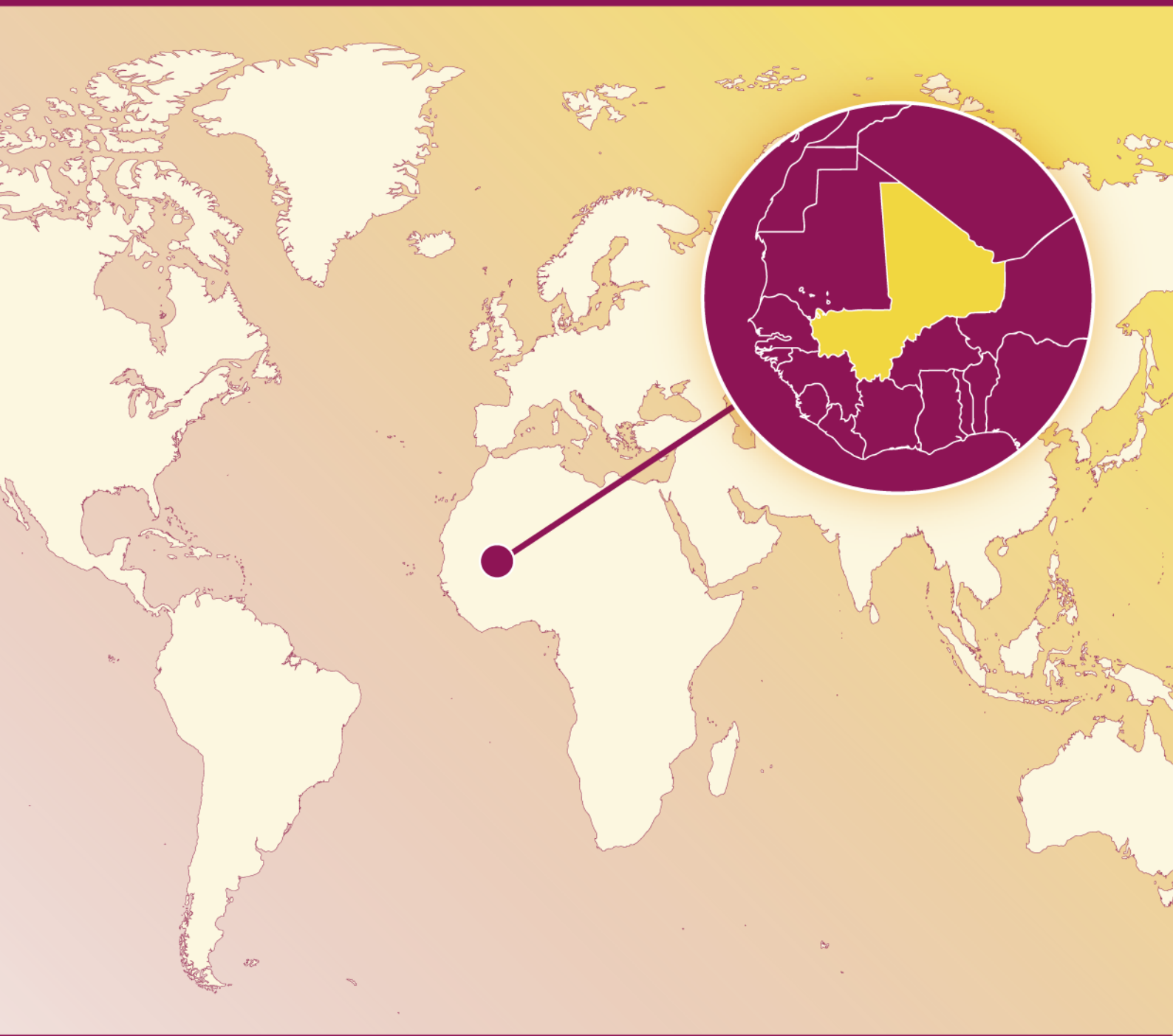


# MALI

## Violence Against Health Care in Conflict 2022



**SAFEGUARDING  
HEALTH  
IN CONFLICT**



**Insecurity  
Insight**  
Data on People in Danger

# Letter from the Chair



The more than 1,900 incidents of violence against health care in war and situations of political unrest described in this report are by far the highest number documented by the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition since it began reporting a decade ago. The more than 700 assaults by Russia on health care in Ukraine are the most committed in a single year in one country.

Russia's atrocities in Ukraine have brought global attention to assaults on health care in war, highlighting pervasive violations of long-standing humanitarian norms. But in less visible conflicts and civil strife, the numbers of acts of violence and the stories behind them are equally grim: doctors imprisoned – and sometimes killed – in Myanmar and Iran for treating people in need of care; female health workers in Afghanistan harassed and sometimes beaten as they seek to provide health care for women and children; community health workers murdered in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere as they go door to door to immunize children against polio and other infectious diseases.

In the face of the profound harms communities and health workers endure from this violence, the international community has long been passive, even ignoring commitments it has made to prevent attacks and hold perpetrators to account. Impunity for the violence has continued, and even the tracking of attacks has faltered. The World Health Organization's (WHO) system for collecting and disseminating data on attacks on health care in emergencies is plagued by inadequate reporting, lack of transparency, and resistance to reform. After being criticized for reporting zero attacks in Ethiopia despite evidence of looting or damage to hospitals and health centers during the conflict in Tigray, the WHO removed Ethiopia from its public dashboard on attacks on health care.

If we mobilize, however, the war in Ukraine could prove an inflection point. Never have calls for accountability for attacks on health care been as loud and sustained as now. We have an opportunity to press for justice for the people of Ukraine in the face of these atrocities and to extend that demand to people everywhere. The time for accountability for these devastating assaults on health care throughout the world is *now*.



Len Rubenstein  
*Chair, Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition*



## REPORTED INCIDENTS AND MOST COMMONLY REPORTED CONCERNS



**46**

REPORTED INCIDENTS



**26**

HEALTH WORKERS KIDNAPPED



Source: 2022 SHCC Health Care Mali Data

## OVERVIEW

The Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC) identified 46 incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care in Mali in 2022, an increase from 20 in 2021. At least 26 health workers were kidnapped in these incidents, undermining health care providers' ability to maintain safe staffing levels and effectively meet patient needs. This factsheet is based on the dataset [2022 SHCC Health Care Mali Data](#), which is available for download on the Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX).

## THE CONTEXT

Following a military coup in May 2021, instability persisted and violence increased in Mali in 2022. Incidents of political violence increased by over 40% in 2022 compared to the previous year, according to data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.<sup>1</sup> As in 2021, incidents of political violence were primarily concentrated in Mopti and Gao regions and mainly perpetrated by militants of the Jama'ah Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) non-state armed groups, and the Mali Armed Forces (FAMA), which scaled up its operations against Islamist groups. These developments came as Mali's government shifted its allegiance away from the West. Bases were established in central and northern Mali by mercenaries of the Russian-government-linked Wagner Group. In response, France announced the withdrawal of its 2,400 troops from Mali in February 2022, which was completed by August. In 2022, the presence of private military companies (PMCs) grew in Mali, including the Wagner Group, which has been accused of carrying out attacks on both Islamist militants and civilians in areas where JNIM is active.

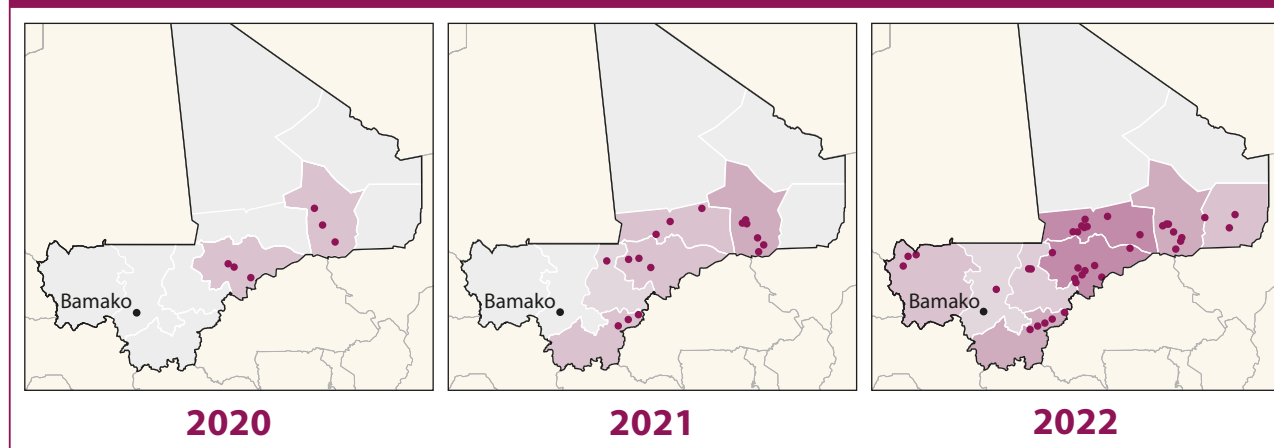
## VIOLENCE AGAINST OR OBSTRUCTION OF HEALTH CARE IN 2022

Incidents affecting health care more than doubled in 2022 compared to 2021, reflecting the broader increase in armed violence in Mali. Most incidents affected health workers working for the national health structure, while three were reported as directly affecting INGOs, and one each affecting the UN and ICRC.



Incidents were recorded throughout the year, and spread from five regions in 2021 to eight in 2022, with cases reported in Kayes, Koulikoro, and Ménaka regions. High numbers continue to be reported in Mopti and Gao regions, both areas of protracted conflict. Cases doubled in Sikasso and Tombouctou compared to 2021, and largely involved the looting of health supplies. Over 75% of health worker kidnappings took place in Mopti and were perpetrated by JNIM. Ambulance hijackings and the looting of medical supplies were more dispersed across Gao, Mopti, Sikasso, and Tombouctou.

## Known locations of reported incidents affecting health care in Mali, 2020-2022



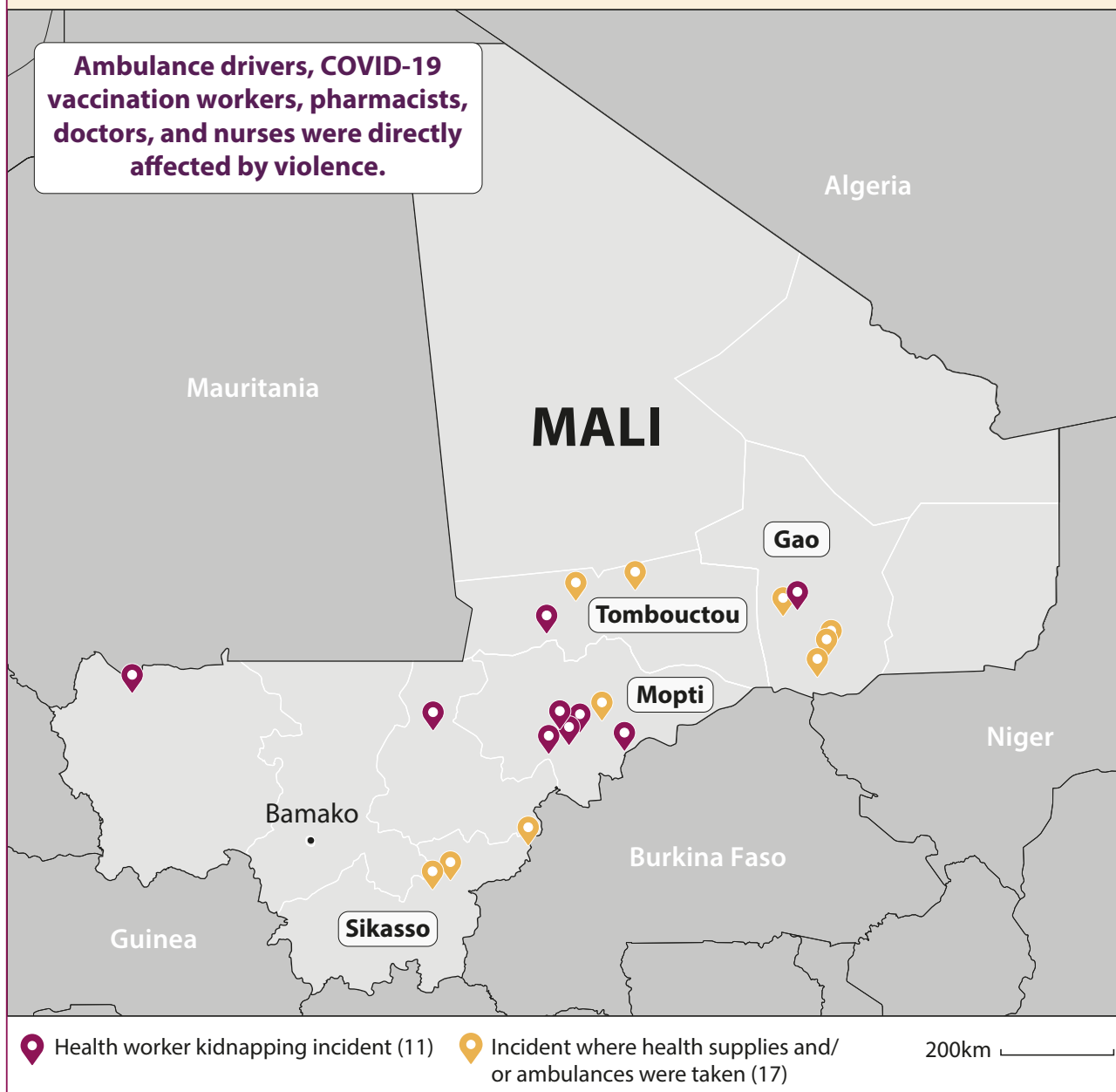
One-third of all reported incidents named JNIM as the perpetrator. JNIM was the named perpetrator of all kidnappings in Mopti region, the kidnapping of two members of a vaccination team in Tombouctou, and the ransacking of health facilities in Gao and Sikasso. Other raids and arson attacks on health facilities in Gao were attributed to ISSP. In most cases, these perpetrators were armed with firearms. In other cases, an ambulance was damaged when a JNIM-planted improvised explosive device detonated near Tombouctou in March, and a health center was set on fire during a wider ISSP attack on civilians in Gao in September.<sup>2</sup> FAMA personnel were named as the sole perpetrators of four incidents. All but one, in which a health worker was arrested on accusations of providing health care to armed groups in Ségou, were reported in Mopti.<sup>3</sup> In September, ground-launched shelling and FAMA air strikes targeting JNIM hideouts damaged two health centers.<sup>4</sup> Two incidents were attributed to FAMA and the Wagner Group in Mopti and involved a male nurse who went missing following an attack on a village in September and a health worker injured in air-to-ground operations in December.<sup>5</sup> In other attacks, the attackers remained unidentified.



## Reported incidents affecting health care in Mali, 2022

Over 75% of health worker kidnappings occurred in Mopti region. The looting of health supplies and ambulances was more dispersed across Gao, Mopti, Sikasso, and Tombouctou.

Ambulance drivers, COVID-19 vaccination workers, pharmacists, doctors, and nurses were directly affected by violence.



## HEALTH WORKERS KIDNAPPED

At least 26 health workers were kidnapped in 11 incidents while traveling to or from work, to an INGO base, or to remote areas to provide health care services. Most were taken in Mopti region by alleged JNIM members. Unidentified armed men kidnapped a single health worker in each of Gao, Kayes, and Ségou. The victims – ranging from ambulance drivers to COVID-19 vaccination workers, doctors, and nurses – all worked in the national health structure, except for an INGO health worker who was kidnapped from an INGO base



in Gao and another INGO aid worker kidnapped from their car in Mopti.<sup>6</sup> Of all those who were kidnapped, approximately half were released within 48 hours, including two female health workers abducted by an armed group in Mopti in November, who were released immediately, while their two male colleagues were held.<sup>7</sup> The fate of 12 kidnapping victims was not recorded. In other incidents affecting health workers, four were killed in hijackings and robberies in Gao and Kayes, and another in unclear circumstances in Tombouctou. Violence against health workers impacts health providers' ability to maintain staffing levels appropriate for patient needs and affects staff well-being.



## ATTACKS ON VACCINATION CAMPAIGNS IN MALI IN 2022

A shortage of health workers coupled with staff infections negatively impacted vaccination campaigns in Mali in 2022. While vaccination coverage in children rebounded slightly from a sharp drop in 2020, only 17% of the population received a dose of vaccine against COVID-19 in 2021. Concerns over and misconceptions regarding vaccines likely contributed to this. The Internews group identified 201 rumors, misconceptions, and concerns of communities concerning COVID-19, vaccinations, and other health issues on social media and via face-to-face discussions. In August 2022, JNIM fighters kidnapped two COVID-19 vaccinators in Tombouctou region.<sup>8</sup> All these factors have a detrimental effect on efforts to vaccinate Malians.

For more information on attacks on vaccination campaigns in Mali, explore the 'Attacked and Threatened' global map by selecting 'vaccinations' and zooming in on Mali. Access the data on HDX.

## VIOLENCE AGAINST HEALTH CARE INFRASTRUCTURE

Vital medicine supplies and equipment were looted from health centers and pharmacies. Lootings were frequent in Gao region, as was the case in 2021, but were also reported in Mopti, Sikasso, and Tombouctou. Armed groups stole health supplies to service fighters and communities in areas with limited health services. For example, an armed group stole medicine from a health center in Sikasso to treat its wounded fighters.<sup>9</sup> In most lootings, no staff were present, suggesting access to health supplies was an important motivation behind these incidents. The exception was when a pharmacist was injured when suspected JNIM fighters looted a health center in Sikasso.<sup>10</sup> In other cases, facilities were vandalized or damaged after being looted. The looting of medical supplies temporarily reduces access to vital medication. Repeated lootings severely affect reliable supplies and can put health workers at risk from frustrated patients and their families.

At least eight ambulances or ambulance motorcycles were stolen in 2022, a similar number as in 2021. In most cases, health workers were physically unharmed. However, a health worker was robbed and killed and his ambulance motorcycle stolen by ISSP militants in Gao in October, and two staff were kidnapped in an ambulance hijacking by JNIM fighters in Mopti in November.<sup>11</sup>



In September, two health care centers in Mopti region were damaged during shelling and air strikes by FAMA forces targeting JNIM positions, and in November, a community health center in Koulikoro was raided by JNIM fighters, who threatened to set the center on fire if it were not closed.<sup>12</sup> The reported targeting of ambulances decreases the ability of health providers to access vulnerable civilians in insecure zones.

## THE IMPACT OF ATTACKS ON HEALTH CARE

According to the [European Commission](#), in 2022, one-fifth of health centers in the northern and central regions of Mali were ‘not functioning,’ while the remaining fourth-fifths were ‘only partially’ functioning due to insecurity and lack of staff. Mali has only a [single medical school](#) for training doctors to serve a population exceeding 20 million, which plays an important role in explaining staff shortages.

Violence against health workers led an INGO to ‘suspend planned activities, including research and health surveys identifying disease prevalence.’<sup>13</sup> Difficulties in conducting research reduce the capacity to design effective public health policies addressing the needs of the country’s population.



### KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

A fieldwork-based survey [study](#) conducted in central Mali between May and September 2022 by the Carter Center’s Peace through Health Initiative in collaboration with the country’s Ministry of Health found the following:

- The majority of respondents (ranging from 53% to 95%) in four districts in Mopti and Ségou regions reported difficulty in moving ‘freely in their locality and surrounding area’ as a result of the problematic security situation.
- Similarly, some health workers in the Kokry and Kolongo health areas of Ségou experienced ‘limitations in their travel and difficulties accessing certain villages’ due to risks of violence.



- 1 Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) database attribution policy, <https://acleddata.com/privacy-policy/> (accessed February 17, 2022).
- 2 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care Mali Data. Incident numbers 34032; 34870.
- 3 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care Mali Data. Incident number 34028.
- 4 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care Mali Data. Incident numbers 35241; 36166.
- 5 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care Mali Data. Incident numbers 34574; 36182.
- 6 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care Mali Data. Incident numbers 36205; 36001.
- 7 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care Mali Data. Incident number 36339.
- 8 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care Mali Data. Incident number 34440.
- 9 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care Mali Data. Incident number 33513.
- 10 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care Mali Data. Incident number 34570.
- 11 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care Mali Data. Incident numbers 35403; 35742.
- 12 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care Mali Data. Incident numbers 35241; 36166; 36340.
- 13 In September 2022, a staff member of an international disability organization was shot while driving an NGO-branded vehicle in Mali. As a result of the attack, the organization was forced to suspend planned activities in the region, including research and health surveys identifying disease prevalence in Q4 2022.



# **SAFEGUARDING HEALTH IN CONFLICT**

The Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition is a group of more than 40 organizations working to protect health workers and services threatened by war or civil unrest. We have raised awareness of global attacks on health and pressed United Nations agencies for greater global action to protect the security of health care. We monitor attacks, strengthen universal norms of respect for the right to health, and demand accountability for perpetrators.

[www.safeguardinghealth.org](http://www.safeguardinghealth.org)

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