



PHM condemns the attacks on medical facilities and health staff in Sri Lanka

10 May 2022

The People's Health Movement (PHM) condemns the attacks on temporary medical facilities and health staff on 9th May 2022 in front of former Prime Minister Rajapaksa's official residence and the presidential secretariat in Colombo. In an unwarranted attack, mobs armed with clubs, iron tubes and other weapons violently assaulted protesters in front of the Temple Trees Residence and forced them to leave the site.

A medical facility maintained by several medical and para-medical groups was destroyed and health workers were harassed. The medical team had been providing treatment and first aid facilities, backed by ambulances with trained personnel. The violent mob pulled down and burned all temporary shelters, shades, banners and other facilities. A temporary library set up with donations was also torn down. By the afternoon about 150 wounded protesters had to be hospitalized at the National Hospital. The Police did not intervene to stop the attacks.

This attack on health facilities and health workers goes against the UN Security Council Resolution 2286, which obliges Member States to take specific actions to prevent and stop violence against health care.

The people in Sri Lanka have engaged in non-violent protests against the government during the past months, spurred by a prolonged economic and social crisis. Sri Lankans from all walks of life and status have joined this struggle in support. The majority of the protesters are educated youth who are supported and accompanied by their seniors such as legal luminaries, medical professionals, artists and representatives of universities, various professional bodies, and trade unions. This is a peaceful struggle free of political, ethnic, language or religious barriers.

PHM demands that the Sri Lankan government must take strict action against those who attacked the protesters and health workers and ensure safety and security of health facilities and personnel. PHM also urges the WHO to intervene in safeguarding the rights of health personnel during such conflicts. PHM expresses solidarity with the people of Sri Lanka and their demands for democratic resolution of the current conflict.