United Nations
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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator
Stephen O’Brien

Statement on Afghanistan

(New York, 3 October 2015): I condemn the bombing overnight in Kunduz, Afghanistan that resulted in the death and injury of medical workers and patients at a Médecins Sans Frontières hospital. I extend my deepest sympathies to the families of those killed and injured.

Hospitals and medical personnel are explicitly protected under international humanitarian law. All parties to conflict must do everything in their power to distinguish between military and civilian targets, including medical facilities.

Hospitals and clinics should be sanctuaries where people, including women and children, go for help. Attacking a hospital not only has a devastating immediate impact but denies people the opportunity to access lifesaving healthcare in the future. I support calls for an urgent and impartial investigation to ensure accountability.

This horrific bombing demonstrates the disproportionate risk for civilians when explosive weapons are used in urban areas. I call on all parties to refrain from using explosive weapons or conducting aerial bombardments in densely-populated places.

I commend the courageous work of MSF staff in Kunduz and the dedication of all humanitarian workers, national and international, who are risking their lives to help people in need.

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