Cairo, Egypt, 6 April 2015 – WHO deplores the deaths of health care workers and damages to health facilities in Yemen as a result of the ongoing conflict, and expresses concern about the serious implications of these attacks.

On 4 April, two volunteer paramedics with the Yemen Red Crescent Society in Aden were shot when their ambulance was hit by gunfire. The paramedics, who were brothers, died from their injuries on their way to hospital. On 30 March, a volunteer ambulance driver with the Yemen Red Crescent Society was killed after his vehicle was hit by gunfire in Al Dhale'e in southern Yemen. Three ambulances operated by the Ministry of Public Health and Population were taken by armed forces in Aden on 1-2 April and used for non-medical purposes.

One security guard was killed and two nurses were injured in the health centre of Al-Mazraq camp for internally displaced persons in Haradh, Hajja Governorate. The centre, which is operated by the health ministry and supported by WHO, was partially damaged. In Sana’a, the Science and Technology Hospital was hit by shrapnel on 1 April, resulting in injuries to three hospital employees and five family members of patients.

As conflict and violence escalate throughout Yemen, health care workers place their lives at risk every day to provide critical, life-saving assistance to millions of people requiring urgent health services. In times of crisis, it is vital that they be allowed to continue their work without additional risk. Health facilities and ambulances must be treated as neutral premises and should never be exploited for military purposes.

WHO emphasizes obligations under international humanitarian law and Geneva Conventions for the protection of health facilities, staff and patients in Yemen, and urgently appeals to all parties involved in the conflict to take the necessary measures to ensure that health personnel and facilities are protected, and that patients are guaranteed their basic right to health without further endangerment to their lives.