

MSF shuts its doors in Somalia

by Hanna Gillies
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Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) closed all operations in Somalia on Wednesday after 22 years of humanitarian aid work in the country, citing ‘unparalleled levels of risk’.

Somalia is a failed state, and despite the introduction of an internationally backed government in 2012, continuing conflict and unrest has meant that health systems are **still being built from scratch**.

According to BBC correspondent **Mark Doyle**, the implications of MSF abruptly pulling out of Somalia would be essentially the same as shutting down an entire country’s health system overnight.

In 2012 alone, MSF teams in Somalia provided more than 624,000 medical consultations, admitted 41,100 patients to hospitals, cared for 30,090 malnourished children, vaccinated 58,620 people, and delivered 7,300 babies.

The decision follows a series of threats, kidnappings and violent attacks on MSF staff. Between 1997 and 2012, 16 employees have been killed in Somalia. Just last month, two Spanish MSF staff members were **released** after being abducted and held for 21 months. A five year analysis by **Humanitarian Outcomes** places Somalia as the third most dangerous country for aid workers.

In their statement on the closure, MSF said that armed groups and civilian leaders in the area “increasingly support, tolerate and condone the killing, assaulting and abducting of humanitarian aid workers”.

“Ultimately, civilians in Somalia will pay the highest cost,” said Dr Unni Karunakara, MSF’s international president.

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