**“We cannot go and leave our people behind; we do not have the right to leave them alone”**

***Mustafa Karaman volunteers as a physiotherapist in one of the only eight functional hospitals in east Aleppo, where 250,000 people are now living under siege and constant bombing, and medical staff like Mustafa are fighting a daily struggle to care for the sick and the wounded.***

**What has the situation been like in east Aleppo since it became completely besieged last July?**

Life has become almost impossible in the city. The suffering is unimaginable, and people living in eastern Aleppo are trapped here, without any basic needs and at the mercy of constant bombings that target the city’s infrastructure. And on top of that, we barely have any electricity or water.

**How can healthcare facilities manage to work despite the attacks?**

We are under attack almost every day. All health facilities in the city have been affected. We do what we can and we use what we have to provide care to people trapped in the city. Some hospitals had to close, but the hospital where I work did not close despite the damage. We had to continue our activities while rehabilitation works were going on because we could not afford to stop, even for a day.

At my hospital, we receive up to 100 sick and wounded people per day, and sometimes we carry out what amounts to 30 surgical operations a day. The concept of working hours does not exist here, you need to be available around the clock.

In addition to this, it is impossible to refer patients because other facilities are overwhelmed and this part of the city is totally isolated from the rest of Aleppo.

**How are medical staff dealing with this?**

Hospitals are running under immense pressure, with very few staff who can barely address the enormous needs. Patients and wounded are inundating the few remaining hospitals, at some of which there are only one two doctors available.

We as medical staff cannot go and leave our people behind. They have suffered, they are wounded and killed and we do not have the right to leave them alone. We know them, they our relatives and our neighbours and we have to take care of them.

**Are any supplies reaching the population in this part of the city?**

East Aleppo fell under siege at the beginning of July. We had a small window when the siege was temporarily broken, but we did not manage to get enough supplies.

When the siege was temporarily broken a few weeks ago our hopes were raised that medical supplies would flow in, but unfortunately the eastern parts became besieged again soon after, and there was little time for us to get basic supplies.

**Do you still have hope for a change in the situation?**

We hope that our supporters can put pressure on the international community to put an end to the suffering. They are our lifeline, and having a safe passage into east Aleppo will help us go on and be able to do our job and treat people.

*The hospital where Mustafa works was damaged on 14 August. Including this incident, 13 attacks damaging hospitals in east Aleppo have occurred from 16 July to 24 August, in addition to these, 8 ambulances have been affected in attacks from 15 July to 15 August.*

*The interview was conducted on Wednesday, 7 September 2016.*