**Covid-19: MSF provides support with response in second worst affected province in Iran**

*MSF has sent a 50-bed inflatable treatment unit and an emergency team of nine people to Isfahan, the second worst affected province in Iran, to increase hospital capacity for treating the critically ill.*

*Paris/Tehran, 23 March 2020* – International medical humanitarian organisation Doctors Without Borders (MSF) is in the process of setting up a treatment unit in Isfahan, Iran to treat patients critically ill with Covid-19.

The 50-bed inflatable treatment unit has been shipped by air from MSF’s logistics hub in Bordeaux, France and is to be set up in the compound of Amin Hospital in Isfahan. The unit is equipped to treat critically ill patients requiring constant strict medical supervision and care.

An MSF emergency team comprised of nine emergency and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) medical doctors and logisticians are to run the unit. The team will work with local medical staff and in close coordination with the Iranian health authorities.

*“Iran is by far the hardest hit country in the region, and Isfahan the second worst affected province. We hope our assistance will relieve at least some of the pressure on the local health system,”* says Julie Reversé, MSF’s representative in Iran. “*We heard the Iranian authorities’ calls for more support to help them cope with the outbreak and, as a medical organisation already present in the country, we offered to help with what we believe can provide the most value: assisting with treating the most severe cases”.*

The scale of the Covid-19 outbreak in Iran is a cause for concern. According to official figures, as of 21 March, there were 20,610 cases and 1,556 people had died - the sixth highest number of cases worldwide. On the same day, the number of infections in Isfahan province rose to 1,892.

MSF began working in Iran in 1991 and, since that time, has responded to several emergencies. For example, in 2003 after the earthquake that struck Bam, and in 2019 when flooding hit several of the country’s provinces, which included Lorestan, Golestan and Khuzestan.

Alongside the provision of emergency assistance, MSF continues to run routine activities for refugees and other vulnerable people in Tehran and Mashhad although, due to the outbreak of Covid-19, some of these have had to be cut back. MSF has been providing primary health care—medical and midwife consultations, infectious diseases screening, hepatitis C treatment and nursing and mental health care services—to vulnerable populations, facing exclusion from healthcare provision, in South Tehran since 2012 and Mashhad since 2018.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, MSF teams currently intervene in Italy, supporting three hospitals in the most affected areas in the North of the country. In France and Belgium, the organisation is supporting efforts to detect and manage Covid-19 cases among vulnerable populations such as homeless people, migrants and unaccompanied minors. In Spain, MSF is collaborating with authorities in order to increase case management capacities.

In countries where MSF is already running medical programmes, teams are reviewing activities to adapt to the current Covid-19 crisis, and are coordinating with local health authorities to see how they could help in detection and management of Covid-19.

*MSF is an international medical humanitarian organisation running activities in over 70 countries.*

*For its deployment in Iran, MSF has chosen to rely solely on private donations. The organisation does not receive funding from any government.*