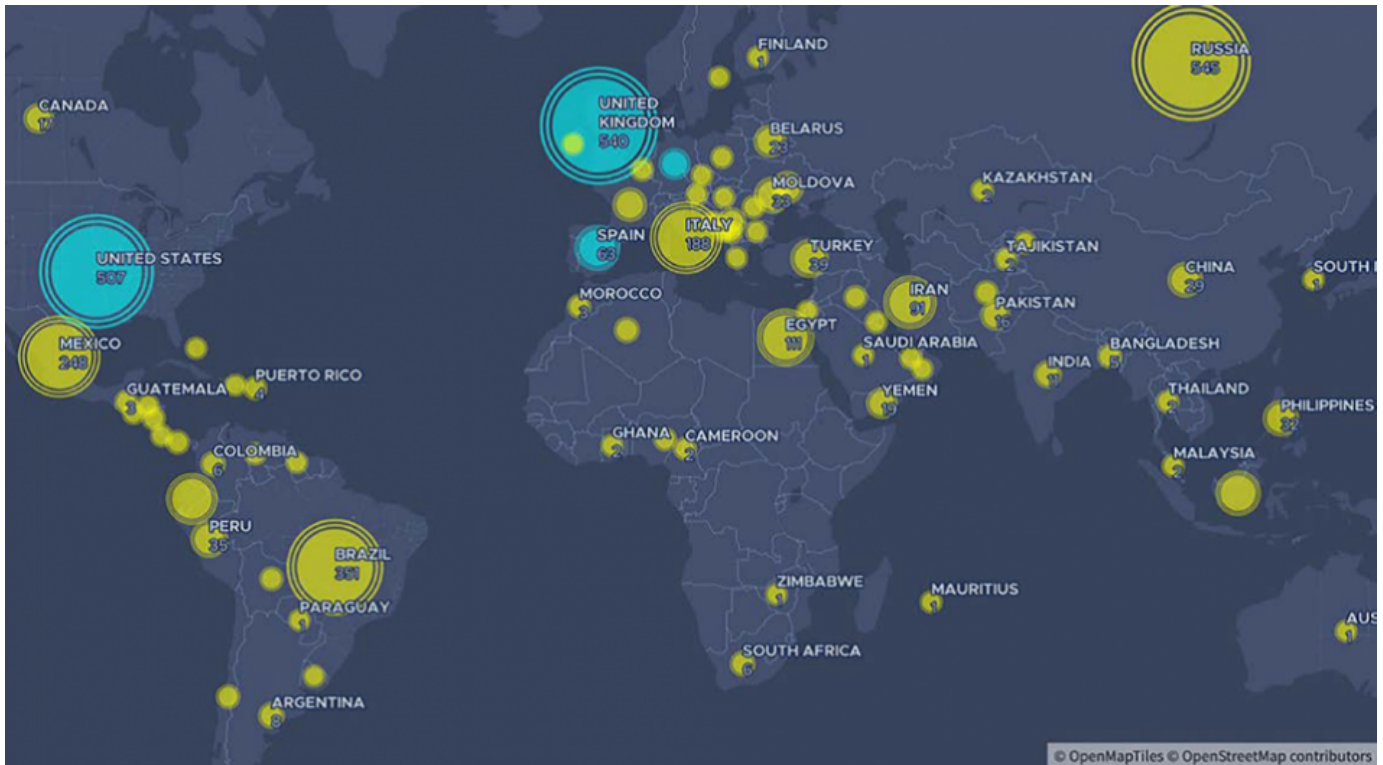


## Amnesty International report: health workers face grim death toll



(17 July 2020) A new report from the Amnesty International human rights campaigning organisation estimates that at least 3000 health workers around the world have died as a result of contracting the COVID-19 virus.

The report, [\*Exposed, silenced, attacked: Failures to protect health and essential workers during the Covid-19 pandemic\*](#), includes information from 79 countries but underlines the fact that data are not systematically collected and come from a range of different sources. Twenty-eight of the countries are in the European region and together account for just under 1100 of the 3000 fatalities. This provides an update on the 620 deaths reported to EPSU in an earlier [survey](#) that included data from only nine countries.

The Amnesty report highlights the risks faced by health workers who deal with COVID-19 patients and how these risks have been increased by the failure of governments and health employers to provide adequate personal protective equipment (PPE). Amnesty found evidence of shortages in 63 countries, reflecting

similar findings to those of a survey of 62 countries by Public Services International.

PPE shortages have been compounded by problems with agreeing and implementing safety procedures. More worryingly the Amnesty report provides examples of workers being intimidated, harassed or even threatened with fines if they speak out about the lack of proper PPE.

On top of the physical risks of COVID-19, many health workers have been facing increased stress as they try to cope with mental strain, heavy workloads and long working hours. The report also provides alarming evidence of health workers being stigmatised and even facing harassment and violence as they were responsible for spreading the disease rather than at the forefront of the fight against it.

Luca Scarpiello, EPSU's officer for health and social services, said: "The study is clear proof of the need to go beyond the stereotype of heroism and to properly recognize the value and professionalism of healthcare workers. Over the coming months, we will continue to ensure that the European Commission, employers and member states keep the promises made during the pandemic. We will continue to work to ensure the health and safety of workers in health and social care and push for increased recruitment and investment in the sector."

The report makes a number of recommendations covering:

- the importance of collecting accurate data on the workers who have been infected and died;
- ensuring provision of personal protective equipment and application of appropriate safety protocols;
- action to address the impact on mental health and workloads;
- appropriate compensation for the additional risks faced by workers and recognition of COVID-19 as an occupational disease;
- guaranteeing the right to speak out on safety issues;
- action to prevent and address stigmatisation of and even violence against health workers; and
- other general proposals including increased funding for health care services.

The country-by-country data from the Amnesty report shows, on the basis of available data, that health workers in the UK have been the worst affected with 272 deaths (not including 268 deaths of workers from the social care sector). Other high numbers have been recorded in Italy (188), Russia (101) and Spain (63).

The remaining figures from Europe are Moldova (33), France (28), Ukraine and Belarus (23 each), Germany (20), Serbia (12), Romania and Belgium (3 each). Those recording two deaths include Bosnia & Hercegovina, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ireland, Poland and Tajikistan and those with one include Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Kosovo, Montenegro and Sweden.

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