

## MSF reconsiders Somali operations after fatal attack

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The murder of two senior staff members in Mogadishu last week has led the international medical aid organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to reconsider whether it can continue working in the violence prone and famine affected country.

On 29 December a disgruntled former employee entered the charity's Somalia headquarters with a gun and opened fire, killing the country director immediately and mortally wounding a senior doctor.

The country director, 53 year old Philippe Havet, was an experienced emergency coordinator from Belgium who had worked with MSF since 2000 in many countries, including Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, and South Africa. The doctor was Andrias Karel Keiluhu, better known as "Kace," who was 44 years old and had worked with MSF since 1998 in his native Indonesia and in Ethiopia, Thailand, and Somalia.

The charity said in a statement: "We will sorely miss Philippe and Kace; their energy, humour, and commitment. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to their loved ones."

An MSF director, Christopher Stokes, told the *BMJ*: "We believe the shooting was a result of the non-renewal of the individual's contract, a decision taken with clear support from the community, as he was suspected of theft."

He emphasised that "this was an act of violence by an individual, not related to any politics. Somalia is a lawless environment and every man has a gun."

The charity has worked in Somalia continuously since 1991 and currently operates 13 projects in the country, including medical activities related to the ongoing emergency, vaccination campaigns, and nutritional interventions. It also helps Somali refugees in camps in Dadaab, Kenya, and Dolo Ado, Ethiopia.

This was the second serious incident to affect the charity in the area in recent months. Last October two Spanish employees were abducted from Dadaab refugee camp on the Kenyan border. Blanca Thiebaut, aged 30, from Madrid, and Montserrat Serra, aged 40, from Girona, are still missing. It is believed that they are being held by militants inside Somalia (*BMJ* 2011;343:d6729, 17 Oct, doi:10.1136/bmj.d6729).

Mr Stokes said that MSF was now "faced with a terrible dilemma." There are "incredible rates of malnutrition in Mogadishu," he said, along with cholera cases and direct victims of the fighting. "Somalia is probably one of the hardest environments for aid to be delivered effectively, and at the same time the level of need is the highest.

"Our medical teams wish to maintain lifesaving activities in Mogadishu and [elsewhere in] Somalia but must now review levels of exposure and risk. The people of Somalia are the victims of this violence as much as MSF is. Abandoning them is the last option for us."

The charity is also currently extremely concerned for the welfare of 156 Sudanese staff members in South Sudan's Pibor county, who fled into the bush last week when Pibor hospital and two clinics in neighbouring villages were attacked by a marauding tribal militia.

*Assisting the Somali Population Affected by the Humanitarian Crisis of 2011: Overview of MSF activities in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia* is at [www.msf.org/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file\\_uid=65EDF187-6F9C-4768-9981-8E39D29A7057&siteName=msf](http://www.msf.org/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uid=65EDF187-6F9C-4768-9981-8E39D29A7057&siteName=msf).

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