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## Preface

The Syrian civil war is now (2017) advancing into its sixth year and is widely recognized to constitute an international humanitarian catastrophe. During the course of that war, much of the Syrian medical system has been destroyed, often leaving casualties with untreated injuries and other medical conditions.

This book documents the experiences gained and the lessons learned during the course of the provision of medical and humanitarian aid by the Ziv Medical Center, a civilian and governmental hospital located in the north of Israel, in accordance with the Hippocratic oath and the ethical standards governing medical aid.

This humanitarian aid project started as a military one by the Israeli Defense Forces Medical Corps (IDF-MC) in accordance with their oath: "... to extend a helping hand to the wounded and to the sick whether common or distinguished, friend or foe."

The IDF-MC has previously gained extensive experience in the provision of humanitarian assistance in areas of disaster all over the world, including India, Armenia, Turkey, Haiti, and Japan. However, the provision of such aid within its borders to those injured in a civil war in a country with which Israel has had a war relationship represents a unique situation.

The treatment of seven Syrian casualties who abruptly arrived at the Israeli border on 16 February 2013, requesting medical aid and help, was the starting point for a much more extensive provision of assistance that represents the basis for this book. These first patients were given urgent treatment by the battalion aid station and were then transferred by military ambulances to Ziv Medical Center, which is the Israeli hospital closest to the Israeli-Syrian border in the north.

After the arrival of these first seven Syrians, an evaluation of the new situation was undertaken. Although it would have been legitimate to close the border against an enemy country, a decision was made to provide medical support to the Syrian wounded arriving at the border fence. In order to ensure the efficient provision of medical care, especially for those with life-threatening injuries, a military field hospital was constructed at the border. Subsequently, the Syrian wounded were transferred from the border to the military field hospital or to one of the other civilian hospitals located in northern Israel (Ziv, Western Galilee, Poria, and Rambam), according to their medical situation.

Between February 2013 and December 2016, more than 2,500 Syrian patients were treated in Israel. Ziv Medical Center, the first hospital to treat Syrian casualties, treated more than 800 of these patients, and the number is expected to rise further. Not all of those treated have had war-related injuries. After the return of the first successfully treated casualties to Syria, others arrived at the border seeking more routine care, including pregnant women,

cancer patients, and diabetic pediatric patients. Today, some 4 years after the first Syrian war casualties arrived at the Israeli border seeking help, assistance continues to be provided to all in need.

While, as mentioned above, the nature of the conditions treated has varied widely, many of the refugees have required urgent care for injuries incurred in the context of the conflict. This book aims to provide practitioners with new knowledge on effective ways of dealing with such emergencies. The documented case reports cover in particular the specialties of trauma and critical care, orthopedics, and surgery but also relate to internal medicine, ophthalmology, obstetrics and gynecology, and psychiatric care. Some of the cases of trauma are of a nature not previously encountered by Western medicine and include instances in which multidisciplinary care played a vital role. It is hoped that the book will be of value for all who work in emergency and military medicine and related disciplines.

Safed, Israel

Salman Zarka

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Zarka, S.; Lerner, A. (Eds.)

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