

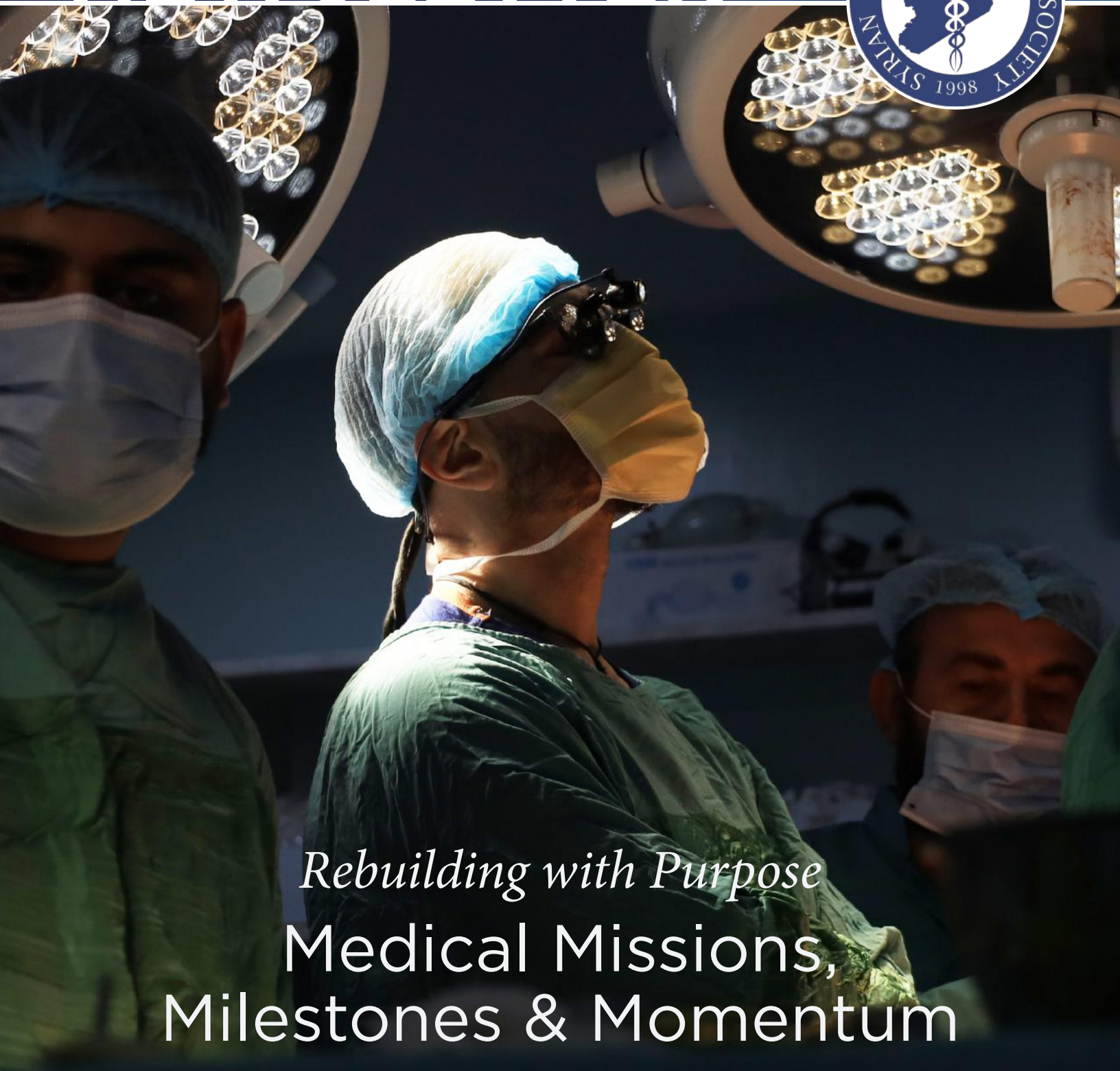


SAMS

Vol 3 | July 2025

MONTHLY

NEWSLETTER



Rebuilding with Purpose
Medical Missions,
Milestones & Momentum

SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

Dear Friends,

Today, as thousands of patients receive the most advanced, life-saving treatments in Syria, and as countless healthcare professionals gain new knowledge and master new technologies, something even more powerful is unfolding.

They are also learning a culture of selflessness, humility, kindness, and ethics. They are learning what it means to serve others with compassion, to lead with integrity, and to build a better future together.

Nothing makes me more proud of this extraordinary organization than knowing the impact we are having on the lives of the Syrian people.

Since the liberation of Syria, SAMS has not paused for a moment. Our board has gone into overdrive, working tirelessly, staying focused, and pushing forward with clarity and purpose.

As my current term comes to an end, I want to take a moment to express my deepest appreciation to each member of the SAMS Board. Your dedication has been nothing short of phenomenal. You have set the bar high, not just through your accomplishments but through your unwavering commitment to our mission.

There is still important work ahead. At the top of our list is completing the preparation for what will be the most significant and historic SAMS conference in Damascus, in what is now a free Syria. This moment matters, and your leadership has brought us to the threshold of something truly transformative.



To president-elect Dr. Aref Rifai, vice president Dr. Ammar Ghanem, past president Dr. Amjad Rass, Dr. Nidal El-Wiher, Dr. Hazar Jaber, and Dr. Samer Al Khoudari, thank you. You have set a powerful example for the next board, and I am honored to have served alongside each of you.

What we have built together has laid the foundation for a better future for Syria. You have paved the way for the next generation of leaders to carry this work forward and bring us closer to our ultimate goal: a stronger healthcare system that preserves the dignity of the Syrian people. Together, we are building an enduring legacy for SAMS - one that will inspire and serve future generations.

With sincere gratitude,

Mufaddal Hamadeh

Dr. Mufaddal Hamadeh
Past President, Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS)



EVENTS & CONFERENCES

23rd International Conference in Free Syria: Advancing Healthcare and Educational Excellence

From July 4 to 6, SAMS held its 23rd International Conference—marking the first time this historic gathering took place in Free Syria, hosted at Damascus University’s Rida Said Conference Center.

Under the patronage of the Syrian Ministries of Health and Higher Education, and in the presence of senior government and university officials, this landmark event brought together over 600 medical professionals and experts from across Syria, the U.S., Europe, and beyond.

This year’s theme, “Healing Syria Together: Advancing Healthcare and Educational Excellence,” reflected our collective vision to heal and transform Syria’s healthcare system through collaboration, innovation, and shared knowledge.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Aref Rifai, SAMS President, emphasized the powerful symbolism of holding this conference in Damascus:

“This is more than just a scientific gathering. It is a message of hope — to every doctor, student, and healthcare worker who dreams of a better future for Syria. Together, we are writing a new chapter — one rooted in science, service, and solidarity.”



A Night of Hope and Honor in the Heart of Damascus

In a truly unforgettable evening attended by over 900 guests, SAMS proudly hosted its Gala Dinner as part of the 23rd International Conference marking a historic moment as our first-ever gathering in Free Syria.

With heartfelt depth and humanity, renowned journalist Ahmad Fakhouri guided the evening, taking us on a moving journey filled with powerful words, shared memories, and deep appreciation.

During the event, we celebrated a significant milestone — the official announcement of Dr. Aref Rifai as the new President of the Syrian American Medical Society.

In his speech, he reminded us:

“Who are SAMS doctors? They are your sons, your daughters, your siblings — in America and inside Syria. Their mission has never been just about surgery or clinics... they stood with our people during bombardment, under siege, among the rubble and tents, after the earthquake, and through the pandemic.”

The evening continued with a moving tribute to SAMS’ fallen heroes — medical professionals who gave their lives in service.

As the night drew to a close, we presented the SAMS Staff Appreciation Award in Syria to Dr. Mazen Kewara, SAMS Regional Director, in recognition of his tireless dedication and compassionate leadership on the ground.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all those who made this event possible.

It was more than a gala — it was a moment of unity, a message of resilience, and a reminder that together, we are building a better tomorrow.

Become A Member
society.sams-usa.net





MEDICAL MISSIONS

A Historic First: Our Largest Medical Mission Yet

As the leading medical NGO in Syria, SAMS launched its largest medical mission to date in late June and early July, with teams of doctors, surgeons, nurses, dentists, and medical students on the ground delivering dignified, specialized care across all of Syria — from Daraa and Zabadani to Damascus, Homs, Hama, Idlib, Aleppo, and Deir ez-Zor.

For millions of Syrians, access to dignified healthcare has remained out of reach. After 14 years of crisis, over 70% of the country's healthcare professionals have been displaced. SAMS volunteers are stepping in to fill these critical gaps — not only by treating patients, but by strengthening the system through mentorship, clinical training, and long-term partnership.

Our teams are offering care in areas that have gone years without it — from oncology and cardiology to pediatrics, surgery, emergency medicine, and dental care.



This unprecedented mission is also timed with a historic milestone: SAMS' first-ever Damascus Conference in a free Syria, which took place between July 4 and July 6. This monumental gathering brought together global experts, frontline practitioners, and the next generation of Syrian healthcare leaders — uniting to rebuild and reimagine healthcare across Syria.

These are more than missions — they're part of a movement.

Every consultation. Every surgery. Every training session. Your support makes it possible.

If you've ever wondered how to make a direct, life-changing impact for the people of Syria — this is the moment to act.

Help us build on this momentum. Support our teams on the ground and ensure that expert, compassionate care reaches those who need it most. **Learn more at sams-usa.net.**



SAMS Responds to Latakia Wildfires with Urgent Medical Aid

Devastating wildfires are spreading rapidly across the coastal province of Latakia, Syria, affecting more than 25,000 acres, forcing thousands to flee their homes, and overwhelming local resources.

High temperatures, strong coastal winds, and prolonged drought have fueled the spread of these catastrophic fires in a region already burdened by post-conflict challenges.

SAMS is responding with emergency relief, including the delivery of urgent medical supplies and support for displaced families.

Your donation today can help save lives. Thank you for standing with the people of Syria through their most challenging times.

Donate now:
bit.ly/sams-Aid4Latakia



Photo Credit: SANA.sy



SPECIAL UPDATES

SAMS Recognized for Excellence in Financial Stewardship

We're honored to share that SAMS has once again been officially designated a low-risk organization following the conclusion of our 2024 audited financial statement, conducted by independent auditors at Rubino.

This marks the fifth consecutive year that SAMS has received a clean audit opinion under Uniform Guidance Audit requirements - affirming not only our compliance, but our steadfast commitment to transparency, accountability, and excellence. In short, the audit reinforces the core strengths that define our organization:

- ▶ Strong financial footing grounded in sound management
- ▶ Rapidly diversified revenue that enhances sustainability
- ▶ Efficient use of resources guided by disciplined leadership
- ▶ Reliable internal controls ensuring compliance and accountability
- ▶ Unmatched adaptability in delivering care across conflict zones

This recognition is more than just an accounting milestone, it's a reflection of the trust you've placed in us.

Together, we've built a system where every dollar is accounted for, every mission is responsibly managed, and every life we touch is treated with dignity and care.

From the frontlines in Syria to clinics across the region, your support makes this possible.

Thank you for being part of the SAMS family, and for standing with us as we build a legacy rooted in impact, compassion, and responsible stewardship.

Save Lives with SAMS at
sams-usa.net/donate





SITUATION REPORT

Syria: Humanitarian Challenges and SAMS' Expanding Medical Response

Syria continues to face a deepening humanitarian crisis. Since November, nearly 674,000 individuals have been newly displaced, while over 1 million people have returned to their areas of origin. Despite this, returns remain difficult due to damaged infrastructure, limited services, and the threat of unexploded ordnance. As of April 2025, over 16.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, including 7.4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Within this challenging context, the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) has continued to scale its operations across Syria, with significant achievements across health service delivery, medical education, and emergency response.

Strengthening Healthcare Infrastructure

SAMS' Damascus office is now the central hub for coordinating operations across Syria. In Damascus and its suburbs, SAMS signed a new agreement to support Al-Tal Hospital and two PHCCs, expanded mental health support for former detainees, and delivered lab consumables to hospitals in need. In Daraa, SAMS is renovating an Oncology Medication Center and preparing emergency medical shipments to local facilities.

In Aleppo, SAMS-supported Emirates Hospital expanded inpatient capacity, despite ongoing shortages in oncology medications. Meanwhile, Omar Bin Abdulaziz Hospital received new diagnostic equipment and launched infrastructure upgrades, including solar installations.

In Idlib, SAMS is managing 19 operational health facilities. However, several hospitals and PHCs face potential closure by July due to funding gaps—prompting an urgent search for additional donor support.



Expanding Services in the East and South

In eastern Syria, facilities in Deir ez-Zor and Al Bukamal resumed critical services, serving thousands of beneficiaries through multidisciplinary teams. Notably, Mayadeen Hospital and Al-Madina Hospital received vital equipment and funding for sustained operations. In Ar-Raqqa, SAMS conducted focus groups on sustainable healthcare financing and continued psychosocial programming. In Al-Hasakah, PHCs in Qahtaniya and Qamishli remain active with partial operations.



Medical Missions and Specialized Care

In April, SAMS deployed a team of 38 volunteer physicians for its medical mission, delivering care across 23 facilities. The team provided 1,093 consultations and 369 procedures, including complex cardiac surgeries, GI interventions, oncology care, and minimally invasive gynecological surgeries.



Medical Education and Capacity Building

Education remains a core pillar of SAMS' strategy. In April, SAMS organized 59 training sessions, reaching 1,199 healthcare providers. This included an anatomic pathology conference, hands-on workshops, and a four-day scientific conference that attracted 446 participants. SAMS also graduated 20 midwives and continued training 36 physicians in residency and fellowship programs. Simulation labs in Homs and Hama delivered BLS and ACLS training to 76 medical students.



Mental Health Training and Innovation

SAMS is leading efforts to rebuild Syria's mental health infrastructure through capacity-building programs, strategic partnerships, and hands-on training. In Raqqa, SAMS implemented pre-service psychiatry training programs through its AQL and QAMAR initiatives. A regional steering committee was also formed to align mental health efforts with local needs and priorities.

One of the most powerful examples of this work — funded by the European Union — is unfolding in northwest Syria, where SAMS recently celebrated a major milestone: the graduation of the first-ever cohort of its Psychiatric Nursing Diploma Program. This achievement marks a turning point in building Syrian-led, sustainable mental health care — and highlights what's possible when innovation, expertise, and compassion come together.

**Read SAMS' Syria
Situation Report at
sams-usa.net/reports**





PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Healing What Can't Be Seen: A Milestone in Syria's Future

Syria has endured over a decade of conflict that has left deep scars, not only on homes and communities but on the minds and hearts of millions. Trauma, displacement, and loss have created urgent mental health needs that often go unseen and untreated.

Thanks to your support, and funding from the European Union, SAMS has just celebrated a major milestone in responding to this crisis - the graduation of the first-ever cohort of our Psychiatric Nursing Diploma Program in northwest Syria.

This groundbreaking program, launched in collaboration with experts from the Hashemite University and hosted by Free Aleppo University, is part of our long-term commitment to strengthening mental health care where it's needed most.

Over the past year, 20 students received in-depth training in psychiatric care, clinical leadership, and community-based service. Now, they're ready to make an immediate impact across local medical institutions, helping build a mental health system rooted in Syrian expertise, sustainability, and compassion.

These graduates represent more than just a successful pilot, they are the future of mental health care in Syria.

Thank you for making programs like this possible. Your generosity fuels every step of this work, from training to treatment, and brings lasting change to communities that need it most.





SAMS Statement: Standing with Survivors of the Mar Elias Church Attack

The Syrian American Medical Society condemns in the strongest terms the brutal attack that took place on Sunday at Mar Elias Church in the Damascus suburb of Dweila. This tragic event claimed the lives of at least 25 worshippers and injured more than 60 others during a sacred time of prayer and community gathering.

Our deepest condolences go to the families and loved ones of those killed and to all those affected by this senseless act of violence. SAMS stands in solidarity with the survivors and the broader Syrian community as they navigate the physical and emotional aftermath of this tragedy.

Our medical teams are mobilizing urgently to provide critical medications, supplies, and direct care to those wounded in the attack. We are committed to supporting overwhelmed local hospitals and ensuring that survivors receive the treatment and mental health support they desperately need.

This attack underscores the urgent need for continued humanitarian aid and international support. SAMS thanks our partners, donors, and volunteers whose generosity enables us to respond swiftly and effectively. Together, we remain committed to serving the people of Syria with compassion and resilience.

“This attack is a heartbreaking reminder of the ongoing suffering endured by Syrians across the country. Our mission is to bring medical relief, hope, and healing in the darkest of times. We call on the global community to stand with us in supporting the victims and their families.”

Dr. Mufaddal Hamadeh,
Past President of SAMS

The Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) is a nonprofit, non-political organization that works on the front lines of crisis relief, providing medical and humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable in Gaza, Syria, its neighboring countries, and beyond. Last year, SAMS provided lifesaving medical services to 3.6 million people.

**Help provide aid to
victims of this tragedy**
sams-usa.net/donate



VOLUNTEER STORIES

Delivering A Lifeline: Volunteers Powering SAMS' Gift-in-Kind Work

An Interview with Amer Ghali, SAMS Michigan Chapter & Young Professionals Committee

Can you briefly introduce yourself and share how you got involved with SAMS and the gift-in-kind effort?

My name is Amer Ghali, I'm a third year medical student at the University of Toledo College of Medicine and Life Sciences hoping to pursue a career as a surgical intensivist. I was asked to join the board of the SAMS Michigan chapter in August of 2022, where I founded the Young Professionals Committee (YPC) with the aim of preparing the next generation of Syrian-American medical philanthropists. I became involved with the gift-in-kind effort in the immediate aftermath of the devastating earthquakes that affected Turkey and Northwest Syria on February 6th, 2023, where it was student volunteers from the YPC who largely carried out the container loading events and inventorying procedures.

What inspired you to volunteer your time and skills in this specific area of SAMS' work?

I'm grateful to enjoy a long history of involvement with Syria-related philanthropy initiatives, specifically by founding two chapters of Students Organize for Syria (a collection of student groups dedicated to advocacy and raising awareness). As such, when the time came to coordinate the YPC



in order to respond to the developments of the earthquake, I was able to draw on many of the skills and professional contacts I had developed over the years of this work. The scenes of overwhelmed healthcare facilities and reports of easily avoidable diseases that were affecting the population due to lack of access to essential medications drove me to invest my time and energy into doing what I could to address their plight.

Can you walk us through what it takes to identify, collect, and ship donated medical supplies or equipment? What does a typical week or month look like for you?

Our process begins by identifying urgent needs through regular communication with hospitals and clinics on the ground in Syria. We then collect suitable donated items from local health systems or private donors in the United States before verifying their condition and inventorying them at volunteer events hosted at universities or community centers. A typical week includes coordinating with donors, managing YPC members to attend events, and preparing shipments for export.

What are some of the challenges you face in this work—whether logistical, regulatory, or otherwise—and how do you overcome them?

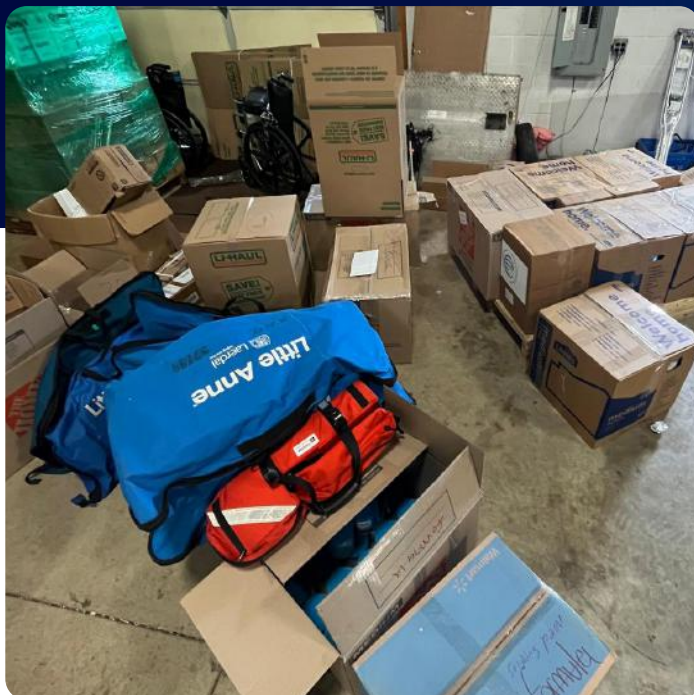
Regulatory barriers and customs restrictions can delay or block shipments, especially for medications and devices. Additionally, logistics in conflict zones can be unpredictable due to rapidly changing developments. We overcome these challenges through careful planning, close legal oversight, and coordination with trusted local partners.

Is there a shipment or moment in this work that has stayed with you—where you really felt the impact of what you were doing?

One of our longtime volunteers (who I know prefers to stay anonymous) attended a loading event for the earthquake victims despite having a severe injury to his ankle's Achilles tendon that left him on crutches. Throughout the day he held supplies in one hand with his crutch in the other, and never complained or rested until the job was over. Seeing his dedication to service and selfless effort inspired me to continue with the work we were doing, even at times it was not always easy to do so amid competing priorities with my academic schedule.

Why is gift-in-kind support so critical for SAMS right now—and what would you want more people to understand about its value?

Gift-in-kind donations allow us to deliver life-saving supplies without the delays and costs of international procurement while simultaneously benefiting health systems across the United States through Form 8283 tax-incentives as well as inventory removal, as it requires space and resources for them to continue storing unwanted



medical supplies. In crisis zones such as Syria, even basic medical items are scarce or completely unavailable; in turn, this ultimately contributes to serious conditions that may otherwise be entirely avoidable (such as wounds becoming infected due to a lack of surgical gauze or antibiotics). Ideally, it would help a great deal if more understood the idea that these donations directly translate into improved patient care with considerable long-term benefits to recipients' health.

Closing thought: What keeps you going? What gives you hope as you continue this work with SAMS?

I spent every summer and many winters in Syria until the conflict began in 2011, and came to regard the country as my second home. To that end, I am given hope by the possibility that our work plays a role in helping its beleaguered people rebuild their devastated country, as I am able to continue serving them without necessarily being on the ground myself. Finally, the opportunity to work alongside other driven humanitarians is a privilege in and of itself, as I have learned a great deal from my colleagues who have supported this project from its very beginning.



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

New Study Exposes Critical Gaps in Syria Cancer Care

A newly published study by members of the SAMS medical research team, featured in the Avicenna Journal of Medicine, reveals a growing cancer crisis in Syria.

Between 2017 and 2022, 192 breast cancer cases were documented at the Idlib Oncology Center, Syria's only cancer referral center in the northwest, serving over 4.6 million people. The findings are alarming:

- ▶ Most patients had aggressive, fast-spreading breast cancer
- ▶ Diagnoses often came at late stages, when treatment is harder
- ▶ Radiotherapy was delayed by over 7 months after surgery
- ▶ Women displaced by conflict faced lower survival rates

These are not just numbers, they represent real lives and real families enduring an unimaginable burden in a conflict zone. A lack of access to medications and radiotherapy is putting lives at risk every day.

SAMS is working to close this gap. Our oncology program in Syria provides diagnostics, chemotherapy, surgery, and ongoing care, but we need your support to keep going.

Explore the full paper at
sams-usa.net/reports





SAMS Brings Lifesaving Hygiene Education to Displaced Women in Gaza

In the displacement camps of southern Gaza, a midwife from SAMS Mobile Medical Team initiated a valuable awareness lecture for women on the fundamentals of hygiene and personal cleanliness. The lecture emphasized the critical importance of these practices in maintaining family health and preventing infectious diseases prevalent in displacement conditions. The midwife addressed various aspects such as handwashing, personal care, food and water sanitation, and proper waste management. The aim of the lecture was to equip women with the knowledge and tools necessary to create as healthy an environment as possible for their families amidst the challenging circumstances.

STAY CONNECTED. MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

"Reflecting on this month's stories, from healing in Syria to hope in Gaza, it's clear that our united efforts are making a greater difference than ever.

But the work is far from over.

Whether you're a healthcare professional, advocate, or supporter, you have a role to play in advancing our mission of delivering dignified, high-quality care to communities in crisis.

Here's how you can stay engaged:



Donate to support emergency relief and medical care:
sams-usa.net/donate



Volunteer your time and expertise:
sams-usa.net/volunteer




Advocate by amplifying our message and engaging with policymakers


*Thank you for being part of the SAMS family.
Together, we are healing, rebuilding, and
inspiring hope.*


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