



SAMS

MONTHLY

NEWSLETTER

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Shining Hope Into Syria
**Renewal, Resilience
& Recovery**

September Medical Mission Brings Life-Saving Care to Syria

This September, SAMS medical teams are traveling across Syria on a multi-city medical mission, bringing life-saving care to communities in Deir Ezzor, Aleppo, Homs, Idlib, Ghouta, Damascus, and Eastern Ghouta. Clinics were filled with children and adults seeking hope, reassurance, and treatment across specialties like pediatrics, cardiology, internal medicine, women's health, gastroenterology, and oncology.



Day after day, our teams have provided hundreds of consultations, advanced surgeries, and specialized procedures, from pediatric cardiac catheterizations to reconstructive surgeries and life-saving cardiac device implants. In Idlib, patients received renewed chances at life through advanced cardiac care, while in Homs and Aleppo, our doctors balanced direct patient care with lectures and hands-on training for local medical staff—building long-term capacity.

In Al-Bukamal, a historically underserved city on the Syria-Iraq border, SAMS brought critical care to families with little access to healthcare, ensuring patients left with clear diagnoses, medications, and treatment plans. Among them, two-year-old Khaled,

who has battled asthma since birth, received a treatment plan, a nebulizer, and guidance for proper care—giving him and his family hope for calmer, healthier days ahead.



Every consultation, surgery, and training session is made possible because of supporters like you. Your gift ensures that SAMS can continue bringing life-saving care to Syria's most vulnerable communities—where it's needed most.



Join us in delivering hope and healing to families across Syria.



Empowering Syria's Next Generation of Medical Professionals

This month, SAMS Medical Education showcased its ongoing commitment to strengthening healthcare in Syria through a series of remarkable initiatives designed to empower medical students, residents, and young researchers.

The First Young Researchers Conference, held at the University of Aleppo and its teaching hospital under the generous patronage of the university presidency, brought together over 23 doctors and medical students presenting distinguished research. The event featured 12 oral presentations and multiple research posters, with several studies of such high quality that they are suitable for publication. Panel discussions with successful young researchers encouraged lively conversations about the challenges and opportunities in scientific research.



Participants highlighted the creativity and resilience of young doctors and students navigating the demanding conditions of local hospitals despite economic and administrative hurdles. The conference reflects the University of Aleppo and SAMS' shared

commitment to nurturing the next generation of medical researchers by facilitating research and publication, supporting work in the Avicenna Journal, and recognizing outstanding contributions with incentive awards. This partnership between local and international stakeholders underscores the goal of turning challenges into opportunities for growth and innovation.

In parallel, the September Medical Mission in Aleppo has launched a series of educational activities aimed at advancing continuous medical education across Syrian governorates. The program began with a specialized lecture delivered by Dr. Mazen Najjar, an internal medicine and infectious diseases specialist from the United States, at Ibn al-Bitar Hall—recently renovated with support from SAMS. Dr. Najjar shared evidence-based approaches to the optimal use of medications, the latest strategies for managing infectious diseases, and minimizing treatment-related side effects. Fifth-year medical student Shiteraz Al-Saleh reflected on the session, saying, “Through this lecture, we learned about common infectious diseases and effective management strategies that are useful both in our studies and in the community. Dr. Najjar shared invaluable insights from his U.S. training, and we hope SAMS will continue to organize such lectures rich in updated and practical knowledge.”

Continuing the mission's educational series, Dr. Tawfiq Al Lahham, MD, a specialist in neurology and muscular diseases from the United States, returned to Syria after more than 21 years to deliver a lecture at Al-Birr Hospital in Homs. Emphasizing the importance of transferring modern medical knowledge, Dr. Al Lahham stated, "The country is in great need, and whatever we can offer, we will not withhold from our country and its people. Continuous medical education is the foundation of medical practice." His lecture inspired students, including Mohammad Anas Haj Hussein, a 6th-year medical student, who said, "The lecture was extremely informative and very beneficial to me, especially as I approach graduation and specialization. This experience encouraged me to consider specializing in neurology and muscular diseases."

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Dr. Tawfiq Al Lahham, MD, specialist in neurology and muscular diseases

Adding to these activities, the SAMS Institute, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, organized a scientific lecture at Aleppo University Hospital in coordination with the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Aleppo. Dr. M. Ammar Katerji, MD, a Pediatric Neurology Specialist from the United States, delivered a lecture on neurological disorders in children. Around 60 medical students attended, actively engaging with Dr. Katerji by asking questions and discussing the latest developments in pediatric neurology, demonstrating both curiosity and commitment to specialized medical knowledge.



Together, the First Young Researchers Conference and the September Medical Mission's educational activities highlight SAMS Institute's dedication to continuous medical education, mentorship, and knowledge exchange. By empowering Syrian healthcare professionals with up-to-date clinical skills and supporting young researchers, SAMS is fostering a culture of learning, resilience, and innovation that will strengthen the country's medical community for years to come.



A New Chapter for Aleppo's Future Doctors

The Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS), together with Noor Al-Hayat Charity, is pleased to announce the completion of renovations to Ibn Al-Bitar Hall at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Aleppo. This hall has long served as a central learning space for aspiring Syrian physicians. Thanks to the restoration work, students will once again benefit from a modern, safe and inspiring environment to study and collaborate.

“Reviving this hall is a message of commitment to Aleppo’s students and the future of medical education,” said Dr. Osama Abu Al-Ezz, SAMS Aleppo Office Manager. “Together with our partners, we continue building brighter opportunities for Syria’s youth.”



This renovation is more than cosmetic—it reaffirms SAMS’ core mission: rebuilding hope, strengthening education, and empowering the next generation of Syrian medical professionals. As these students train in renewed facilities, they are better equipped to meet the challenges of a health system rebuilding after conflict.

This project reflects SAMS’ ongoing mission to rebuild hope, strengthen education, and empower the next generation of Syrian medical professionals.

Your support makes this possible. Every donation helps SAMS continue to rebuild healthcare across Syria and bring lifesaving care to those who need it most.





Witnessing SAMS' Lifesaving Work Across Syria

In mid-September, SAMS Executive Director David Lillie traveled across Syria to witness our work firsthand — from the bustling head office in Damascus to mobile clinics in Daraa and a maternity hospital in Idlib. Every stop revealed the same truth: your support is changing lives.

“Our team is growing, and so are our services. We’ve already reached all Syrian governorates—and we’re committed to doing even more. Together with SAMS’ 1,500 members, government partners, and local communities, I feel blessed to be part of this mission during such a critical time,” he said, reflecting on the dedication and resilience of the team.

In Daraa, he toured our Mobile Clinic and the region’s one-of-a-kind Oncology Center. There, he saw how our teams bring essential medical care directly to displaced families. “It’s gratifying to see our mobile medical team soften the plight of thousands in the south through compassionate, dignified care,” David shared. For many, these clinics are their only lifeline.

In Idlib, a delegation from the European Union, UNFPA, and WHO visited our Maternity Hospital to monitor operations and explore ways to strengthen collaboration. The visit highlighted SAMS’ critical role in providing safe births, emergency care, and support to communities affected by conflict.

These visits make one thing clear: SAMS is reaching families when and where they need it most. Your support continues to ensure that mobile clinics roll out, hospitals stay equipped, and medical teams can keep saving lives every day.



EU Delegation Visits SAMS Mental Health Programs in Northern Syria

As part of a recent field visit to northern Syria, a delegation from the European Union (EUinSyria) visited several EU-supported health and education initiatives, including programs advancing medical education.

The visit included a stop at the Ariha Health Center in Idlib, where the delegation joined a roundtable discussion with Dr. Bachir Tajaldin. Participants included graduates of the EU-funded AQL Project for Mental Health, among them Master's graduates in Clinical Psychology, Diploma graduates in Psychiatric Nursing, and current students in the Psychiatric Nursing program.



These programs, implemented under the AQL framework, are designed to strengthen Syria's mental health workforce and expand access to quality care. The EU delegation highlighted the importance of investing in mental health as a core component of the health response in Syria.

This visit underscores the strong partnership between SAMS and the European Union in building the capacity of medical professionals and ensuring that mental health remains an essential pillar of humanitarian and health interventions in Syria.



October is
**MENTAL
HEALTH
AWARENESS
MONTH**

OCTOBER 10 *is*
**WORLD MENTAL
HEALTH DAY**



Healthcare Under Attack: SAMS-Supported Clinic Destroyed in Gaza

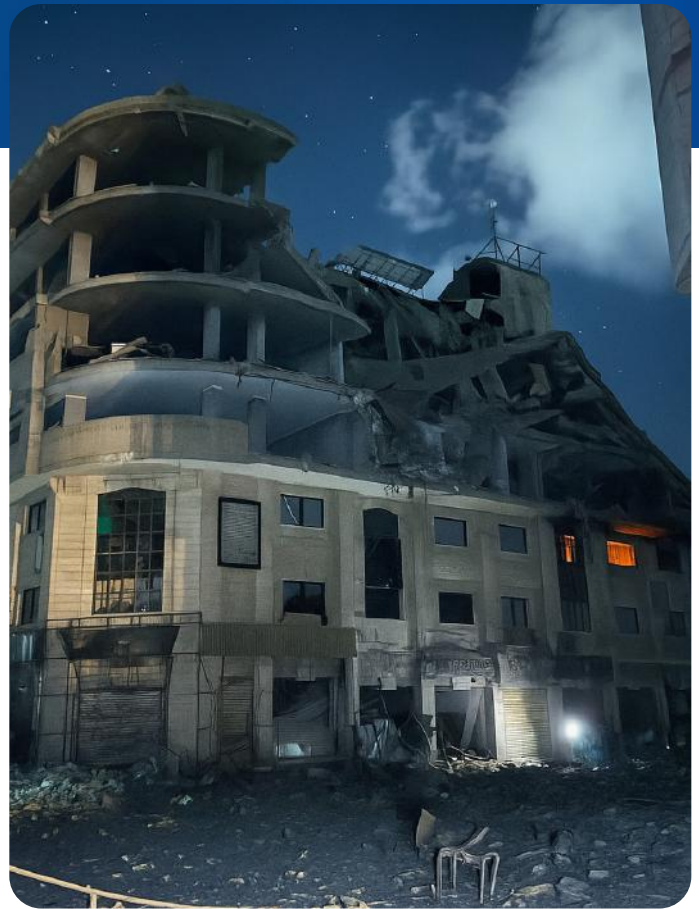
On the evening of September 14, an airstrike destroyed a Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS)-supported clinic in northern Gaza.

This facility had recently been relocated from Sheikh Radwan to the Al-Jundi Al-Majhoul area following evacuation orders. The building housing the clinic was struck and significantly damaged, resulting in the loss of essential medical equipment and supplies. Thankfully, no patients or staff were injured in the attack. However, the destruction of this facility means that approximately 1,600 medical services will no longer be provided each month through this clinic.

Healthcare workers across Gaza continue to face extreme dangers while providing lifesaving care. Two weeks ago, a SAMS female doctor was seriously injured while traveling to work at a mobile clinic in northern Gaza. This incident reveals the severe risks medical personnel face daily.

“The destruction of our clinic and the injury of one of our doctors highlight the unbearable reality faced by healthcare workers in Gaza,” said Dr. Aref Rifai, SAMS’ President. “They risk their lives every day to serve patients under impossible conditions. We call on the international community to act urgently to protect civilians and medical personnel, and to ensure that health facilities are never targeted. Healthcare must never be used as a weapon of war.”

SAMS continues to support its partners in operating clinics in northern and southern Gaza, while also running three mobile clinics—two in the south and



one in the north. Medical staff on the ground report that urgent evacuation orders have been issued for residents and medical personnel in Gaza Port and the Al-Rimal neighborhood, with warnings of imminent military operations. As a result, medical teams are relocating south toward designated humanitarian zones in Al-Mawasi, though the situation remains extremely dangerous.

There is no safe place in Gaza. SAMS urgently calls on all parties to respect and uphold international humanitarian law, protect civilians and medical personnel, and ensure that health facilities remain off-limits to attack. We also call on the international community to act immediately to safeguard healthcare access for Gaza’s civilians, who are bearing the brunt of this humanitarian catastrophe.

Healthcare is not a target.

Donate now:
sams-usa.net/donate





SAMS Midwest Chapter: Making a Difference at Home and Around the World

SAMS Midwest Chapter—one of our largest local chapters—operates a free subspecialty clinic in Willowbrook, Illinois, as part of SAMS Community Outreach programs. Since its opening in April 2019, this clinic has been providing essential endocrinology, gynecology, adult and pediatric cardiology, and pulmonology services to underserved communities facing financial and linguistic barriers to healthcare.

This initiative embodies the SAMS members' unwavering dedication to bringing essential healthcare services to vulnerable populations both abroad and at home. Our mission doesn't stop at international borders; we are deeply invested in our local communities as well.

This back-to-school season, the SAMS Midwest Chapter was at Hinsdale South High School offering free school and sports physicals to students. This initiative reinforces our ongoing commitment to enhancing community health and well-being, building upon the foundation of our free clinic services in Willowbrook, Illinois.

Each month, the clinic serves approximately 80 patients, and operates entirely through the dedication of SAMS volunteers, including medical professionals, students, and administrative staff. It is open two weekend days each month, making it more accessible for individuals who cannot take time off work or school during regular weekdays. Through the hard work and compassion of our volunteers, we are able to provide high-quality care to those who need it most, without the burden of cost.

"Our free community clinic reflects the heart of SAMS' mission of delivering compassionate, high quality care not only to those suffering abroad, like in Syria, but also to our neighbors here at home." Said Dr. Kassas, President of SAMS Midwest Chapter.

At SAMS, we believe that health is a universal right not a privilege and our community outreach programs continue to reflect this core belief. From our global humanitarian efforts to our local clinic services, SAMS is dedicated to making healthcare accessible to all.



We're proud to serve our community and look forward to continuing these vital outreach programs. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of those who need it most.



SAMS

MIDWEST 18th
ANNUAL GALA



SYRIA REBORN

A BRIGHTER FUTURE *for*
GENERATIONS TO COME

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday | December 13 | 2025
6:00 p.m.

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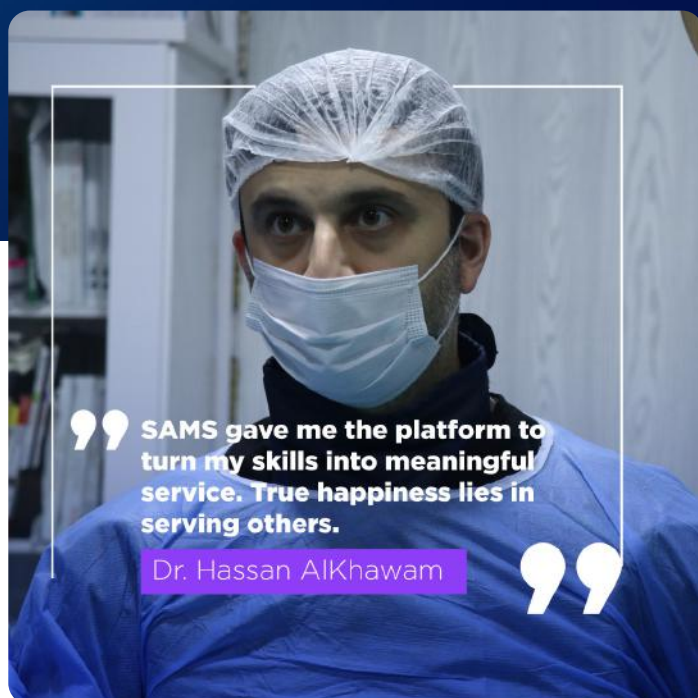
MEMBER UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Hassan AlKhawam, an interventional and structural cardiologist and a dedicated SAMS member, has built a career defined by compassion, expertise, and service.

Born in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, with roots in Hama, Syria, Dr. AlKhawam earned his medical degree from Cairo University before moving to the United States to continue his training. He completed his residency in Internal Medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Elmhurst Hospital Center, followed by fellowships in Cardiology at St. Louis University, Interventional Cardiology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and an advanced fellowship in Interventional & Structural Cardiology at the same institution.

Today, he serves as an Interventional & Structural Cardiologist at the University of Alabama – St. Vincent's Hospital in Birmingham. His career milestones include helping lead a program recognized with the highest 3-Star rating for TAVR outcomes and performing the first Navitor TAVR valve implantation in Birmingham. Beyond medicine, he is a devoted husband and proud father of two daughters, Maria and Lara, and enjoys traveling, exploring history, and studying the evolution of technology.

Dr. AlKhawam joined SAMS in 2022, after eight years of intensive training. On his very first mission, following the devastating earthquake in Syria, he performed urgent cardiac catheterizations and PCI procedures. Since then, his impact has grown tremendously—introducing complex PCI, ASD closures, pulmonary valvuloplasty, and the first TAVR procedures in northern and central Syria.



He has also led hands-on workshops for cardiologists, surgeons, and fellows in Idlib, Hama, and Homs, while playing a key role in establishing a dedicated Valve Clinic in Syria. This clinic, complete with weekly valve conferences modeled after U.S. standards and a mentorship network, is helping train the next generation of physicians.

Reflecting on his journey, Dr. AlKhawam says: “SAMS provided the platform to channel my skills into meaningful service. It gave me the support and infrastructure to treat patients, educate future physicians, and deliver advanced cardiac care in Syria. Volunteering with SAMS taught me that true happiness lies in serving others.”

His story is a testament to the power of combining medical expertise with humanitarian commitment. Through his contributions, Dr. AlKhawam is not only saving lives but also building sustainable systems of care and mentorship that will benefit communities for generations to come.

Stay tuned for more inspiring stories from SAMS Members Under the Spotlight.



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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