

# Polio in 2013-2014: Now an Islamic Disease?

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## Introduction

Poliomyelitis — commonly called "polio" — is a viral disease that causes permanent paralysis of muscles in about 0.5% of infected patients. The paralysis most commonly affects the legs. Paralysis of muscles responsible for inflation of lungs leaves survivors dependent on an "iron lung" machine that ventilates their lungs. In the early 1950s, polio was the leading infectious cause of childhood death in the USA. The polio virus lives in human intestines and is excreted in feces. Polio is transmitted by consuming contaminated food or beverages.

Three scientists in the USA developed polio immunizations during the 1950s:

1. In 1950, Koprowski developed the first immunization against polio, using oral administration of an attenuated virus.
2. Salk developed a polio immunization using killed virus that was given by intramuscular injection. Salk's vaccine was licensed for use in the USA in 1955.
3. In 1961, Sabin's oral polio immunization using attenuated (i.e., live) virus was licensed for use in the USA. A trivalent oral polio vaccine was licensed in 1963, and quickly replaced Salk's vaccine.

As a result of polio immunizations, polio became rare in the USA in the early 1960s. In 1952, there were more than 21,000 cases of paralytic polio in the USA, but only 61 cases in the year 1965. The last case of wild polio in the USA was in 1979.

The oral polio immunization is more effective than the intramuscular injection of killed virus. Also, the oral immunization is easier to administer (i.e., no need for needles and syringes), which is an advantage in developing nations or massive vaccination campaigns. However,

there are a very small number of polio cases caused by the live virus used in oral polio immunizations. As polio is almost eradicated in a nation, there will be more cases of polio caused by oral polio vaccine than by the wild polio virus, and, at that time, public health authorities commonly switch from oral polio immunizations to intramuscular injections of killed virus. In the USA, oral polio immunizations were discontinued in the year 2000, and currently only the intramuscular injection of killed polio virus is available in the USA.

For more about this disease and immunizations, see

- "Poliomyelitis: Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases," [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)
- "Poliomyelitis", Fact Sheet, [WHO](#)

On 20 Sep 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that "Three countries remain endemic for indigenous transmission of wild poliovirus virus: Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan." [WHO](#).

On 29 Oct 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that there were ten confirmed cases of polio in [Syria](#), and the disease could spread to the entire Middle East.

On 31 Oct 2013, I began writing this essay to collect some little-known information about polio in the modern world, namely that polio has been eradicated from Western Civilization and is now endemic in only three nations, each of which is predominantly Islamic. Of course, the polio virus is *not* concerned with the religion of its victims. But, owing to the appalling ignorance of Islamic terrorists and their barbaric tactics of assaulting and killing health-care workers who were immunizing children against polio, the result is that polio now flourishes only in Islamic nations. Everyone understands that assassinations, airplane hijackings, and suicide bombings are instruments of Islamic terrorism. This essay shows that attacks on health-care workers are also part of Islamic terrorism.

On 5 May 2014, the World Health Organization announced the spread of polio from Pakistan, Syria, and Cameroon constituted an "extraordinary event" that called for an international response:

After discussion and deliberation on the information provided, and in the context of the global polio eradication initiative, the Committee advised that the international spread of polio to date in 2014 constitutes an "extraordinary event" and a public health risk to other States for which a coordinated international response is essential. .... It was the unanimous view of the Committee that the conditions for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) have been met.

At end-2013, 60% of polio cases were the result of international spread of wild poliovirus, and there was increasing evidence that adult travelers contributed to this spread. During the 2014 low transmission season there has already been international spread of wild poliovirus from 3 of the 10 States that are currently infected: in central Asia (from Pakistan to Afghanistan), in the Middle East (Syrian Arab Republic to Iraq) and in Central Africa (Cameroon to Equatorial Guinea). A coordinated international response is deemed essential to stop this international spread of wild poliovirus and to prevent new spread with the onset of the high transmission season in May/June 2014;

unilateral measures may prove less effective in stopping international spread than a coordinated response. The consequences of further international spread are particularly acute today given the large number of polio-free but conflict-torn and fragile States which have severely compromised routine immunization services and are at high risk of re-infection. Such States would experience extreme difficulty in mounting an effective response were wild poliovirus to be reintroduced. As much international spread occurs across land borders, WHO should continue to facilitate a coordinated regional approach to accelerate interruption of virus transmission in each epidemiologic zone.

The over-riding priority for all polio-infected States must be to interrupt wild poliovirus transmission within their borders as rapidly as possible through the immediate and full application in all geographic areas of the polio eradication strategies, specifically: supplementary immunization campaigns with oral poliovirus vaccine (OPV), surveillance for poliovirus, and routine immunization. The Committee provided the following advice to the Director-General for her consideration to reduce the international spread of wild poliovirus, based on a risk stratification of the 10 States with active transmission (i.e. within the previous 6 months) as of 29 April 2014.

**States currently exporting wild poliovirus** Pakistan, Cameroon, and the Syrian Arab Republic pose the greatest risk of further wild poliovirus exportations in 2014. [technical recommendations deleted here]

**States infected with wild poliovirus but not currently exporting** Afghanistan, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Israel, Somalia and particularly Nigeria, given the international spread from that State historically, pose an ongoing risk for new wild poliovirus exportations in 2014. [technical recommendations deleted here]

"WHO statement on the meeting of the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee concerning the international spread of wild poliovirus," [WHO](#), 5 May 2014. See also: "UN: Spread Of Polio Now A World Health Emergency," [Associated Press](#); "Pakistan's failings to fight polio spark global emergency response," [Reuters](#); both on 5 May.

What the World Health Organization did *not* say was that, despite generous foreign aid to Pakistan and Syria, these two nations had failed to immunize their people against polio, thereby endangering the entire world.

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## Pakistan

In a display of appalling ignorance, Islamic terrorists in Pakistan claim that polio immunizations will make Muslim children sterile. [Washington Post](#), 16 Nov 2012; [NPR](#), 17 Oct 2012.

There is no evidence supporting such a claim, it is just an erroneous belief. Nearly every child in the USA since the mid-1950s has been immunized against polio, but those people are not sterile. Still, Islamic propagandists can claim that different ingredients are used in the

version of the vaccine distributed in Muslim nations.

A Muslim cleric in Pakistan declared polio immunizations "poison" and "un-Islamic". *The Tribune* in Pakistan reports: "Residents said the cleric had tried to convince them that the polio campaign was a 'western conspiracy' to render the population impotent." [The Tribune](#), 13 June 2012.

In June 2012, the Taliban banned polio-immunization teams from entering North and South Waziristan in Pakistan until the USA stops its drone attacks in Pakistan. [NY Times](#), [CNN](#), 18 June 2012. Also see articles on 16-18 July 2012:

- "Taliban hits Pakistan polio campaign in tribal areas," [BBC](#),
- "Taliban's vaccine ban may affect 280,000 children," [CNN](#),
- "North Waziristan tribes endorse Taliban ban on polio vaccination," [The Tribune](#) in Pakistan.

A pan-Arab newspaper based in London, England explained:

For years, authorities were aware that Taliban commanders had broadcast claims that the vaccination drive was actually a plot to sterilise Muslims.

That may seem absurd to the West, but in Pakistan such assertions are plausible to some. Years of secrecy during military dictatorships, frequent political upheaval during civilian rule and a poor public education system mean conspiracy theories run wild.

"Violence, fear & suspicion imperil Pakistan's war on polio," [Asharq Al-Awsat](#), 23 Dec 2012.

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### **Pakistan Oct-Nov 2013**

In November 2013, the Taliban in Pakistan continues its ban on polio immunizations. The Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* reports:

The [Federally Administered Tribal Areas] Secretariat is understood to be in contact with the Taliban through a tribal jirga for early removal of the ban on polio vaccination in North Waziristan Agency.

The development comes out as another child in the restive agency tests positive for polio taking the number of this year's cases of the crippling disease to 16, the highest by any agency or district in the country. ["Until now this year, 39 of the 54 nationwide polio cases have been reported in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas ...."]

....

[Government officials in Peshawar] told Dawn on Thursday [31 Oct] that more than 150,000 children remained unvaccinated due to the Taliban ban.

"Ban on polio vaccination: Jirga in contact with Taliban," [Dawn](#), 1 Nov 2013.

*Al-Arabiya* reports:

Besides American drones, the Pakistani Taliban in the tribal North Waziristan region

are worried about polio vaccines, which they think are an American plot to sterilize their population.

The militant group ordered a ban on polio vaccinations in 2012 after it emerged that a Pakistani physician, Shakil Afridi, was helping the CIA run a fake vaccine program in Abbottabad to confirm the presence of Osama bin Laden in the town.

But the ban is now threatening thousands of children in the area with Polio, which can cause irreversible infantile paralysis after infection.

Authorities have recently begun talks with the Taliban through local tribal Jirga mediators to remove the ban, Pakistan's Dawn newspaper reported. The talks reportedly began after another child was diagnosed with Polio, taking the toll of 2013 cases to 16.

"Pakistani Taliban fear polio vaccines are U.S. plot to sterilize them," [Al-Arabiya](#), 2 Nov 2013.

In the year 2012, there were 58 cases of polio in Pakistan. On 13 Nov 2013, Agence France-Press reported there were already 62 cases of polio in Pakistan this year, with 48 days remaining in the year. 72% of the cases are in the lawless tribal areas, along the Afghanistan border. "Polio cases in Pakistan pass 2012 total," [france24.com](#); "On the rise: Polio cases pass 2012 total," [Express-Tribune](#) in Pakistan.

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### **Examples of Murders of Health-Workers in Pakistan**

On 18 Dec 2012, Islamic terrorists in Karachi, Pakistan killed four women who were providing polio immunizations. On the same day, Islamic terrorists shot two women giving polio immunizations in Peshawar, Pakistan, killing one of them. As a result of the five deaths, the Pakistani government decided to temporarily suspend the polio-immunization campaign. [The Guardian](#), [NY Times](#), [BBC](#), 18 Dec 2012. [The Independent](#), 19 Dec 2013 (adds that a sixth fatality occurred on Monday, 17 Dec).

On 22 Dec 2012, *The Economist* weekly newsmagazine in London published an article: ON DECEMBER 18th five health workers, all women, were gunned down in Pakistan in carefully planned and co-ordinated shootings. They were administering polio vaccinations. The following day a vaccination supervisor and her driver were killed. Several health workers are critically injured. The youngest killed was a 17-year-old in the north-western town of Peshawar. Others were working in poor, ethnic Pushtun districts in the southern megacity of Karachi, where polio workers have already been killed this year. The Pakistani Taliban or allied groups are the murderers, and they have now caused the UN to suspend its campaign to eradicate polio in Pakistan.

The country is one of only three countries left where polio is endemic, leading the world in 2011 in cases of the crippling childhood disease. It had been making progress in 2012. The country, backed by the UN, was striving urgently to immunise 34m

children. Almost all the polio cases are among Pushtuns, who live mainly in north-west Pakistan or in Karachi. They also form the main ethnic group in the Pakistani Taliban.

The extremists spread the rumour that polio drops are a Western conspiracy to sterilise Muslims. As it is, the credibility of health workers has been badly shaken by the revelation in 2011 that the CIA had recruited a Pakistani doctor, Shakil Afridi. He set up a fake vaccination programme, for hepatitis B, as part of the hunt that finally killed Osama bin Laden. Militants also use polio to press the government. They say they will refuse to allow immunisations in North or South Waziristan, part of the wild tribal areas, unless attacks by unmanned American drone aircraft are stopped.

"Killing disease: Grisly attacks in Pakistan target those doing good to children," [The Economist](#), 22 Dec 2012.

On 19 Dec 2012, Islamic terrorists killed a polio immunization supervisor and her driver in Charsadda, Pakistan and also killed a polio immunizer in Peshawar. These three murders bring the three-day death toll to nine. [CNN](#), [france24.com](#), [Reuters](#), 19 Dec 2012.

On 1 Jan 2013, Islamic terrorists in Swabi, Pakistan killed two health workers who were providing polio immunizations, along with killing five teachers. Associated Press article in [Boston Globe](#), 2 Jan 2013.

On 28 May 2013, Islamic terrorists in Peshawar, Pakistan shot two health workers who were providing polio immunizations, killing one. In response, the WHO suspended the polio immunization campaign in that area of Pakistan. NBC News reports: "WHO officials say 18 people, including health workers and police officers, have been killed and seven others injured during attacks since July 2012." [NBC News](#), [AP](#), 28 May 2013, [CNN](#), 29 May 2013.

On 16 June 2013, Islamic terrorists in Swabi, Pakistan killed two health workers who were providing polio immunizations. The Associated Press said:

Militants also try to block inoculation campaigns by portraying them as a conspiracy to sterilise and reduce the world's Muslim population. Over the past year, nearly 20 health workers from the anti-polio campaign have been murdered.

"Pakistani militants shoot dead two polio vaccination workers," [The Guardian](#), 16 June 2013; "Polio volunteers shot dead in Swabi," [Express Tribune](#) in Pakistan.

On 7 Oct 2013, an Islamic terrorist's bomb exploded near a clinic in Peshawar where polio immunization materials were being distributed to health workers. Two people died and at least 13 were wounded. Two polio vaccinators were amongst the wounded. This bomb appeared to target a police van that was protecting the clinic and health workers. [CNN](#), [The Telegraph](#), [The Independent](#), 7 Oct 2013. [Express Tribune](#) in Pakistan, 8 Oct 2013.

On 23 Nov 2013, Islamic terrorists in Khyber Agency in Pakistan (part of the lawless border with Afghanistan) kidnapped 11 teachers who were participating in a polio immunization campaign for private school children. The kidnappers arrived minutes after the vaccinators had departed from the school. [Express Tribune](#) in Pakistan, [The Nation](#) in Pakistan, [Reuters](#), [Al-Jazeera](#), all 23 Nov 2013.

Later news reports clarified that seven (not eleven) people had been kidnapped — "four teachers of a private school, a male nurse and two volunteers." And the kidnappings occurred

on 21 Nov. On 23 Nov, tribal leaders began negotiations with Lashkar-e-Islam for the release of the kidnapped people. [Al-Arabiya](#), 20:51 GMT, 23 Nov 2013. See also: [Express-Tribune](#) in Pakistan, 24 Nov 2013. On 26 Nov, the kidnapped people were released after five days of captivity. Reuters says: "[The teachers] were abducted just after a team giving polio vaccinations had left the school and the militants may have mistaken them for the polio team, Khyber official Niaz Ahmad Khan said." [Reuters](#), 08:16 GMT, 26 Nov 2013; [Express-Tribune](#), 27 Nov 2013.

On 30 Nov 2013, gunmen in Peshawar killed a policeman who was protecting polio workers. [Express-Tribune](#), 30 Nov 2013.

On 13 Dec 2013, gunmen in Jamrud, Khyber Agency, Pakistan killed a polio worker. In a separate attack on the same day, gunmen in Swabi killed two policemen who were departing to protect polio workers. *The Nation* says "at least 28" people have been killed in attacks on polio workers and their security since the Taliban forbid the vaccinations in June 2012. [The Nation](#) in Pakistan, 14 Dec 2013. [Express-Tribune](#) in Pakistan, 13 Dec 2013.

On 21 Dec 2013, two masked "militants" fatally shot the supervisor of the polio vaccinations campaign in his office in Jamrud tehsil, in Khyber Agency. [Express-Tribune](#) in Pakistan, [Dawn](#) in Pakistan, both on 21 Dec 2013; [The Nation](#) in Pakistan, 22 Dec 2013.

On 28 Dec 2013, the supervisor of polio vaccinations in Peshawar was shot and killed when "militants" entered his office at the Civil Hospital. A hospital orderly and a woman were injured by the gunfire. [Express Tribune](#) in Pakistan, [Dawn](#) in Pakistan, each on 28 Dec 2013.

*The News International* in Pakistan summarized:

Officials said 31 people were killed in attacks on polio teams in the country during the last 15 months. Some sources put the number at 35, adding that most of the attacks happened in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in Peshawar.

"Polio campaign supervisor killed in Peshawar," [The News](#), 29 Dec 2013.

Pakistan announced that Khasadar Force personnel will administer oral polio to children in Jamrud and Landi kotal, beginning in Jan 2014. The switch to police personnel was caused by the deaths of two civilian polio workers that caused 400 volunteers to quit. [The Nation](#) in Pakistan, 28 Dec 2013; [Dawn](#) in Pakistan, 27 Dec 2013.

Gunmen killed three polio workers in Karachi on 20 Jan 2014. A fourth polio worker was killed in Mansehra, Pakistan on the same date. [Express-Tribune](#) in Pakistan; [News International](#) in Pakistan; [BBC](#); [Al-Jazeera](#).

On 16 Feb 2014, a remote-controlled bomb exploded in Peshawar, killing a policeman who was guarding an immunization site for polio and childhood diseases. [GlobalPost](#) (AFP); [Express-Tribune](#) (AFP) in Pakistan.

One day later, on 17 Feb 2014, masked gunmen kidnapped a physician, two WHO employees, and three policemen who were administering polio immunizations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. [GlobalPost](#) (AFP); [Express-Tribune](#) in Pakistan; [Dawn](#) in Pakistan.

On 1 March 2014, two roadside bombs detonated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province near the Afghan border as a convoy of police and polio vaccinators drove past. Initial reports were that 11 Khasadars (paramilitary police) died, but the final toll was 12 or 13 Khasadars dead. Also, one child was killed in the crossfire between terrorists and police, after the bombs exploded. Ironically, later on the day of this attack, the Taliban announced a month-long ceasefire during peace negotiations with the government of Pakistan. [BBC](#); [Express-Tribune](#) in Pakistan; [Associated Press of Pakistan](#); [Reuters](#); [CNN](#), all on 1 March 2014. [Dawn](#) in Pakistan; [Express-Tribune](#) in Pakistan; [The Nation](#) in Pakistan; all on 2 March 2014.

On 24 March 2014, police in Pakistan found the body of a 30 y old polio worker who had been kidnapped from her home after midnight on 23 March, tortured, and shot multiple times. [Express-Tribune](#); [Dawn](#); [The Nation](#).

On 27 Oct 2014, the Independent Monitoring Board of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative issued a scathing Report that identified Pakistan the source of most polio cases in the world, and further the number of polio cases was *increasing* with time in Pakistan. So while polio has been eradicated in most of the world, Pakistan is not only an exception, but also becoming worse.

Pakistan's polio programme is a disaster. It continues to flounder hopelessly, as its virus flourishes. Home to 80% of the world's polio cases in 2014, Pakistan is now *the* major stumbling block to global polio eradication. The principal victims are the children of Pakistan, who are left vulnerable and unprotected by their government.

....

In Pakistan, less than a quarter of vaccination campaigns assessed in the last twelve months have met the required standard of 80% coverage.

....

Pakistan's polio programme is a disaster. It continues to flounder hopelessly, as its virus flourishes. Home to 80% of the world's polio cases in 2014, and with a programme that is incomparably weak, Pakistan is the major stumbling block to global polio eradication.

Independent Monitoring Board of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, [Tenth Report](#), Oct 2014.

On 26 Nov 2014, unidentified gunmen killed four anti-polio health workers near Quetta. Three other health workers were wounded by gunfire. *The New York Times* says, in Pakistan, polio "immunization efforts have been deeply hampered by political chaos and militant violence." [NY Times](#). *Al-Jazeera* says: "Pakistan is one of only three countries where polio remains endemic and attempts to stamp it out have been badly hit by opposition from armed groups and attacks on immunisation teams, which have claimed more than 60 lives in the last two years. .... Officials say the number of polio cases recorded in Pakistan has reached 246 for the year - a 14-year high and more than double the total for the whole of 2013." [Al-Jazeera](#). See also [Express Tribune](#); [The Nation](#); [News International](#); all in Pakistan. [Reuters](#).



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### my comments

The demand of Islamic terrorists in Pakistan to refuse to permit immunizations until the U.S. drone attacks stop is ludicrous. They are linking two *unrelated* items — like a child who refuses to eat his broccoli until there is peace in the world. And by stopping immunizations, innocent people in Pakistan will suffer, and some will die, from *preventable* diseases. Pakistani children, who are most at risk from polio, are being effectively held hostage by the Taliban, through its ban on polio immunizations. The Taliban is shooting itself in the foot to ban polio immunizations in Pakistan because of violations of Pakistan's sovereignty by U.S. drones.

As explained above, the Taliban enforce their ban on polio immunizations by shooting or bombing health-care workers who are providing polio immunizations. It is one thing to have misconceptions or erroneous beliefs, but another thing to *kill* people who disagree with those erroneous beliefs. The killing of unarmed civilians — especially health-care workers — is barbaric conduct that is the essence of terrorism.

The USA should be ashamed of the conduct of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) that in 2011 established a bogus immunization program in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in order to collect information on the location of Osama bin Laden. See "CIA organised fake vaccination drive to get Osama bin Laden's family DNA," [The Guardian](#), 11 July 2011; "Vaccination Ruse Used in Pursuit of Bin Laden", [NY Times](#), 11 July 2011. This bogus immunization program deliberately perpetrated a fraud on the people of Pakistan. The long-term effect of this bogus immunization program is that the people of Pakistan have good reason *not* to trust the USA with so-called medical or humanitarian assistance. See "Bin Laden raid harms Pakistan polio fight," [CNN](#), 7 June 2012; Editorial: "Militancy and polio," [Express Tribune](#) in Pakistan, 21 June 2012.

While the Pakistani physician who cooperated with the CIA (Dr. Shakil Afridi) actually gave immunizations against hepatitis B, it is sometimes erroneously reported that he was giving polio immunizations. The erroneous association with polio immunizations does additional harm to the anti-polio campaign.

On 19 May 2014 — three years after the CIA fake vaccination program — the CIA promised not to do that again. Not only was the CIA program a blatant violation of the trust between physician and patient, but also the exposure of the CIA program helped the Taliban "justify" attacks on innocent polio workers. [Yahoo News](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#).

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## Nigeria

On 8 Feb 2013, gunmen in Nigeria attacked two clinics and killed at least nine polio-immunization workers. *The New York Times* says "suspicion fell on Boko Haram, a militant

Islamist group". [NY Times](#), [Reuters](#), [Al-Jazeera](#), 8 Feb 2013. See also [British Medical Journal](#), 12 Feb 2013.

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## Somalia

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) provided free medical services to people in Somalia since 1991. In retaliation for the free medical care, the Islamic terrorists and criminals in Somalia killed 16 MSF personnel. "There has also been an unbearably high number of threats, thefts and other intimidating incidents." On 14 Oct 2013, MSF finally had enough, and pulled out of Somalia. The president of MSF wrote:

What dashed our last bit of hope of working in [Somalia] was that the very parties with whom we had been negotiating minimum levels of security tolerated and accepted attacks against humanitarian workers. In some cases, they were actively supporting the criminal acts against our staff. In many other cases, these parties sustained an atmosphere that allowed attacks to take place. Nobody has stood up to say that it is unacceptable to threaten, abduct or kill doctors, nurses and other staff who simply try to bring health care to people who would otherwise have none.

Dr. Unni Karunakara, "Op-Ed: Why MSF Left Somalia," [MSF](#), 20 Aug 2013.

Somalia had 228 cases of polio during the years 2005-2007. [WHO](#), 2011(?), accessed 14 Nov 2013.

In May 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported the first case in a new outbreak of polio in Somalia.

See: [WHO](#) (no date); "Wild poliovirus in Somalia," [WHO](#), 11 May 2013.

By 10 Nov 2013, WHO reported 180 cases of wild polio in Somalia alone, more than the total of 76 cases in the remainder of the world (i.e., Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria) combined, so far in 2013. The BBC reported on 16 Aug: "Most of the Somali cases are in areas controlled by Islamist group al-Shabab."

See: Current indicators, [WHO](#) (continually updated);

"Polio in Somalia: UN warns of 'explosive' outbreak," [BBC](#), 16 Aug 2013.

"Somalia polio outbreak spreads; 105 recorded cases," [Washington Post](#), 16 Aug 2013;

"Africa and Pakistan Face Polio Outbreaks, in Blow to Global Fight," [NY Times](#), 22 Aug 2013.

"Violence, Chaos Let Polio Creep Back Into Syria And Horn Of Africa," [NPR](#), 30 Oct 2013.

*The Independent* newspaper in London reports:

Oliver Rosenbauer, a WHO spokesman, said every time a polio case is detected, DNA tests are conducted to trace the source of the virus. He said the polio outbreak in Somalia had come from a virus originally from Nigeria. From Somalia it had then spread into Kenya and Ethiopia.

[The Independent](#), 27 Oct 2013.

Somalia has been declining since it was granted independence from Britain and Italy in 1960,

and especially in decline since the Somali civil war began in 1991. It is difficult to assign blame in a so-called nation like Somalia that has many gigantic problems: weak and absolutely dysfunctional government, Al-Qaeda terrorist group (i.e., al-Shabab), pirates that hijacked ships at sea for ransom (2005-2012), poverty, illiteracy (62% of adults can not read), .... [Factbook](#). Nonetheless, regardless of religion or culture, when someone like MSF is helping, the beneficiary of that help should honor, respect, and protect MSF. This failure of Somalia says something really *ugly* about the people of Somalia and their culture.

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## Sudan

There were a few cases of polio in Sudan in 2004-2005 and 2007-2009. "The last reported wild poliovirus case was reported in March 2009." [WHO](#), no date, accessed 14 Nov 2013.

South Sudan had a total of 64 cases of polio during a 2008-2009 outbreak. "The last wild poliovirus case [in South Sudan] was reported in June 2009." [WHO](#), 2012(?), accessed 14 Nov 2013.

As documented above, in Pakistan and Nigeria, Islamic terrorists have killed health-care workers who were immunizing people against polio. In Sudan, the problem was less violent: the government and Islamic rebels failed to reach an agreement allowing United Nations health-care workers access to 165,000 children who needed polio immunizations.

- "UN Security Council weighing how to enable Sudan's polio campaign, says president," [UN](#), 11 Nov 2013;
- "Dispute over meeting thwarts polio vaccinations in Sudan - UN," [Reuters](#), 22:50 GMT, 11 Nov 2013;
- "Polio vaccination campaign in Sudan has failed, UN admits," [The Guardian](#) (Associated Press), 04:37 GMT, 12 Nov 2013;
- "Sudan polio vaccination campaign has failed, U.N. admits," [Al-Arabiya](#), 05:24 GMT, 12 Nov 2013;

It is really stupid when petty disputes about political power and authority prevent children from being immunized against fatal diseases. Although Sudan had zero cases of polio during 2010-2013, they are likely to have polio cases in the future if they do not immunize their children.

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## Mainstream Muslim Clerics

Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria used Islamic religious leaders to "allay fears of vaccination and wipe out" polio. Reuters reports:

Some 22 top Islamic scholars from around the world have signed an endorsement of the polio eradication program, which is being used to persuade Pakistani parents, Wazir Ali [Special Assistant to Pakistan's Prime Minister, who is in charge of the polio eradication campaign] said.

"This should put to rest some of the misapprehensions and reservations in the minds of certain areas of the population in Pakistan. We feel this has been quite effective," she said.

"In other words, these endorsements here categorically say that Islam does not in any way, form or manner prevent intake of the oral polio vaccine and that the oral polio vaccine being given to the children is endorsed by them and is fully safe."

[Reuters](#), 24 May 2012.

Islamic clerics met on 6-7 March 2013 and issued a call for all Muslims to cooperate with the immunization of Muslim children against polio. [WHO](#)

Unfortunately, these endorsements by mainstream Muslim clerics have not been effective in reversing the opposition of Islamic terrorists. Amongst *uneducated* people in impoverished areas, fear created by trusted local leaders is stronger than appeals to rational reasons by distant Muslim scholars.

On 9 Dec 2013, Maulana Sami ul-Haq, head of an Islamic seminary in Pakistan, issued a fatwa urging parents to immunize their children against polio and other diseases. [BBC](#); [Global Post](#)(AFP); [Express-Tribune](#) in Pakistan; all on 10 Dec 2013.

On 26-27 Feb 2014, the first meeting of The Global Islamic Advisory Group on Polio Eradication was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Islamic scholars agreed that polio immunization was permitted by Islamic law, the scholars endorsed the safety and effectiveness of the oral polio immunization, the scholars criticized fatwas that alleged that polio immunization causes infertility and denounced violence against polio workers. [Arab News](#), 27 Feb; [Al-Arabiya](#); [Arab News](#), 28 Feb.

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## Syria

On 29 Oct 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO), a subsidiary of the United Nations, issued a Global Alert about polio in Syria:

Following reports of a cluster of 22 acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) cases on 17 October 2013 in the Syrian Arab Republic, wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) has been isolated from ten of the cases under investigation. Final genetic sequencing results are pending to determine the origin of the isolated viruses. Wild poliovirus had not been detected in the Syrian Arab Republic since 1999.

Most of the cases are very young (below two years of age), and were un- or under-immunized. Estimated immunization rates in the Syrian Arab Republic declined from 91 percent in 2010 to 68 percent in 2012.

....

Given the current situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, frequent population

movements across the region and subnational immunity gaps in key areas, the risk of further international spread of wild poliovirus type 1 across the region is considered to be high. A surveillance alert has been issued for the region to actively search for additional potential cases.

"Polio in the Syrian Arab Republic," [WHO](#), 29 Oct 2013.

On 29 Oct 2013, Reuters reported:

The crippling disease, which is caused by a virus transmitted via contaminated food and water, could spread especially fast in Syria, where civil war has led to falling vaccination rates.

....

[Polio] is endemic in just three countries — Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan — raising the possibility that foreign fighters imported the virus into Syria, where Islamist militants are among the groups battling to oust President Bashar al-Assad.

"Polio outbreak in Syria threatens whole region, WHO says," [Reuters](#), 29 Oct 2013.

On 31 Oct 2013, *The Express Tribune* in Pakistan reported:

World Health Organisation (WHO) Polio Eradication Chief Dr Elias Durry, while talking to *The Express Tribune*, said that the Regional Reference Laboratory had not yet completed the genetic analysis of the virus found in Syria and there was a possibility that the virus had originated from Pakistan.

"We have laboratory proof that viruses isolated in Palestine and Egypt originated from Pakistan but, until the genetic analysis of the Syrian poliovirus is not complete, we cannot be certain that it is of the same strain," he said adding that the possibility was due to the ongoing poliovirus circulation in the region.

....

Meanwhile, Pakistan remains one of the toughest challenges for polio workers. Many communities in the remote tribal areas bordering Afghanistan have historically been suspicious of vaccination programmes.

Last year, the Taliban [prevented](#) health workers vaccinating children in North and South Waziristan, a decision that meant 240,000 children under the age of five missed out. Dozens of health workers and police guards have been attacked and many have been killed.

It is not yet known where the Syrian virus originated from, something that will only be identified by the tests being conducted in laboratories in Tunisia. Some reports have raised the prospect that the polio virus in Syria may have been introduced by a foreign fighter joining the hostilities against President Bashar al-Assad. The city of Deir Al Zour is partly controlled by Syrian government forces while the surrounding countryside is held by rebel forces.

"Startling development: Pakistan suspected origin of polio in Syria," [The Tribune](#), 31 Oct

2013.

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Two infectious disease experts in Germany wrote a letter to the *Lancet*, a medical journal in England, that mentioned the possibility of polio spreading from Syria to Europe:

... hundreds of thousands of people are fleeing Syria and seek refuge in neighbouring countries and Europe. Because only one in 200 unvaccinated individuals infected with [wild-type polio virus 1] will develop acute flaccid paralysis (case/infection ratio  $C=0.005$ ), infected individuals can spread the virus unrecognised. .... In regions with low vaccination coverage (eg, Bosnia and Herzegovina [87%] or Ukraine [74%]), particularly those with low coverage of inactivated polio vaccine (eg, Austria [83%]), herd immunity might be insufficient to prevent sustained transmission.

.... It might take more than 30 generations of 10 days — nearly 1 year of silent transmission — before one acute flaccid paralysis case is identified and an outbreak is detected, although hundreds of individuals would carry the infection. Vaccinating only Syrian refugees — as has been recommended by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control — must be judged as insufficient; more comprehensive measures should be taken into consideration. .... [footnotes omitted]

Martin Eichner and Stefan O. Brockmann, "Polio emergence in Syria and Israel endangers Europe," *The Lancet*, online publication 8 Nov 2013.

That letter in *The Lancet* generated news articles at [Reuters](#), 23:32 GMT, 7 Nov 2013; [france24.com](#), 00:18, 8 Nov; [BBC](#), 02:21 GMT, 8 Nov; [The Independent](#).

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The United Nations issued a press release saying they intended to immunize twenty million children against polio in Syria and surrounding nations:

Aiming to stop a polio outbreak in Syria from spreading across the region, the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) is spearheading the largest-ever immunization campaign in the Middle East today, with plans to vaccinate some 20 million children in seven countries and territories against the highly infectious virus.

Presenting a consolidated report on the polio outbreak, WHO spokesperson Sona Bari told reporters in Geneva that the massive consolidated immunization response, which also includes the UN Children's' Fund (UNICEF), is already under way in the region targeting over 20 million children in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey, as well as in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Ms. Bari said the unprecedented response to polio virus circulation in the region includes plans for a six-month sustained effort of intense immunization activity. "Massive anti-polio campaign to reach 20 million children across Middle East — UN agency," [United Nations](#), 8 Nov 2013.

This story was reported in numerous news sources, first: [NY Times](#), 6 Nov 2013. Then, on 8 Nov 2013: [Al-Arabiya](#); [Los Angeles Times](#); [Reuters](#), 15:06 GMT, 8 Nov 2013; [france24.com](#); and the [BBC](#).

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On 11 Nov 2013, the WHO said that genetic sequencing showed the polio virus in Syria is "most closely linked to virus detected in environmental samples in Egypt in December 2012 (which in turn had been linked to wild poliovirus circulating in Pakistan)." [WHO](#). See also: "Polio outbreak in Syria linked to Pakistan," [france24.com](#); "Polio virus strain in Syria confirmed as being from Pakistan — WHO," [Reuters](#).

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The Chief Diplomat at the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies wrote:

But last week's [11 Nov] news that the virus originated from Pakistan is a stark reminder that the most important thing the world can do is extinguish polio at its source. The underlying problem is not in Syria or in the Horn of Africa, the site of another polio outbreak this year, but in Pakistan and the other two endemic countries that have never interrupted transmission of the virus: Afghanistan and Nigeria. We must stop the virus there.

Siddharth Chatterjee, "Polio in Syria: putting children above politics," [Al-Jazeera](#), 17 Nov 2013.

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On 26 Nov 2013, WHO confirmed two new cases of polio in Syria. What is significant is the location of these two cases. The previous cases were in Deir Al Zour province, while the new cases are in Damascus and Aleppo. The WHO says: "In addition to 15 cases confirmed in Deir Al Zour province, two additional cases have been confirmed, one each in rural Damascus and Aleppo, confirming widespread circulation of the virus." [WHO](#).

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On 13 Jan 2014, polio immunization was halted in Raqqa, Syria, owing to the fighting by rebels and jihadists against ISIL. [WHO](#), [Reuters](#), [Gulf News](#).

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On 21 March 2014, WHO reported that a six-month old boy in Baghdad Iraq was diagnosed with the same strain of polio that was circulating in Syria in 2013. This is the first case of polio in Iraq in 14 years. The WHO reported:

As of 20 March 2014, in the Syrian Arab Republic a total of 37 WPV1 cases have been reported: 25 cases by the Syrian Arab Republic Ministry of Health, and 12 cases from contested areas (Aleppo, Edleb and Deir Al Zour) not yet reflected in official figures. The most recent case had onset of paralysis on 17 December 2013, from Edleb.

Further evidence of regional spread was confirmed this week by notification of a WPV1 case from Iraq, the first polio case in the country since 2000. The case, a six-month old boy from Baghdad who had not been immunized, developed paralysis on 10 February 2014. Genetic sequencing indicates the virus is most closely related to virus detected in the Syrian Arab Republic. WPV1 was also isolated from the child's three-year old sister, who did not develop symptoms.

"Polio outbreak in the Middle East — update," [WHO](#), 21 Mar 2014.

On 7 April 2014, The Polio Global Eradication Initiative reported: the most recent polio case in Syria had onset of paralyses on 21 January 2014. [PGEI](#) (does not allow linking to past reports); [NY Times](#).

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### Syrian propaganda

On 3 Nov 2013, the Associated Press reported some propaganda from the Syrian government: A Syrian government minister said Sunday that foreign fighters who have come to the country to wage jihad are responsible for the outbreak of polio in the rebel-controlled north.

....

Minister of Social Affairs Kindah al-Shammat told The Associated Press on Sunday [3 Nov] that jihadis from Pakistan were to blame.

"The virus originates in Pakistan and has been brought to Syria by the jihadists who come from Pakistan" the minister said. She offered no evidence and did not elaborate on the claim. Pakistan is one of three countries where polio remains endemic.

Al-Shammat said the government has launched an immunization campaign to "protect all children in Syria." She did not say if and how the vaccination campaign will proceed in the northern areas along the border with Turkey. That area has been under opposition control since the rebels captured large swaths of land and whole neighborhoods of Aleppo, Syria largest city, from the regime over the past year.

"Syria: Foreign Jihadis Responsible For Polio," [Associated Press](#), 09:49 EST, 3 Nov 2013. See also [Al-Arabiya](#), 3 Nov 2013.

### my comments

This claim is propaganda from the Syrian government. Not only does Ms. Al-Shammat offer no evidence, but also there are obvious alternative explanations. The virus from Pakistan has been found in sewage in Cairo, Egypt. [WHO](#), 11 Feb 2013. So it is possible that anyone (e.g., business traveler, student, jihadist, etc.) who was in either Pakistan or Egypt could have carried the virus to Syria. Even if jihadists did import the polio virus to Syria, it is likely to be inadvertent, and *not* deliberate.

I am definitely *not* a supporter of jihadists, but I think we should hate jihadists for the right reasons: (1) jihadists infringe religious freedom, and (2) jihadists are barbaric terrorists.

Polio spread in Syria because polio immunizations were suspended during the civil war. In turn, the civil war is the fault of Assad's government, rebels, *and* jihadists — each of whom refuses to negotiate a peace without oppressive preconditions.

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### Conclusion



In 2013-2014, polio is now prevalent in only three nations: Nigeria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. That is because Islamic terrorists in those three nations have prevented health-care workers from providing polio immunizations that could eradicate polio. The Islamic terrorists use illogical reasons and erroneous beliefs to justify their acts, which makes them look stupid. Furthermore, attacks by Islamic terrorists on unarmed medical personnel show that Islamic terrorists are barbarians.

In October 2013, polio began to appear in Syria, because of the decline in immunization during the civil war that began in March 2011. The polio virus appears to have come from Pakistan, possibly introduced into Syria by jihadists from a foreign nation.

To be clear, endemic polio in three predominantly Muslim nations is *not* a problem with mainstream Islamic religion. Many predominantly Muslim nations have been free of polio cases for many years, and mainstream Muslim clerics have [endorsed](#) polio immunizations. The endemic polio in three predominantly Muslim nations is a problem with *Islamic terrorists* (e.g., Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Boko Haram in Nigeria).

Polio in any nation threatens the entire world, because of international travel. So polio immunization in impoverished nations is not only a humanitarian project to protect local people, but also helps make the entire world free from polio.

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