13 October 2017 | GENEVA: The World Health Organization has received reports of an attack on medical facilities in eastern Syria that has destroyed the only vaccines cold room in al-Mayadeen district, Deir Ezzor Governorate.

More than 100,000 doses of measles vaccines and 35,000 doses of polio vaccines were stored in these facilities, alongside equipment, syringes, and stocks for all vaccine-preventable childhood diseases.

If confirmed, this would set back the efforts of WHO and health partners to protect the children of Deir Ezzor from preventable childhood diseases, including polio. WHO and local partners have intensified efforts to respond to an outbreak of polio that has affected 48 children in Syria since March this year.

“WHO has made strenuous efforts in cooperation with health authorities to deliver vaccines to protect the children living in these areas from disease,” said Elizabeth Hoff, WHO Representative in Syria. “We unequivocally condemn these actions. Vaccines are not a legitimate target of war.”Â

“Until a new cold room is built and the required cold chain equipment -- including solar fridges, cold boxes and vaccine carriers -- are delivered, this will delay the implementation of routine immunization for vulnerable children in the area,” Hoff added.

WHO has supported 23 polio campaigns since the first outbreak in 2013 and helped to establish 1,148 sentinel sites across the country, of which more than 35% are in hard-to-reach and besieged areas, includingÂ al-Mayadeen in Deir Ezzor Govenorate.

The last polio vaccination campaignÂ in Deir Ezzor reached 252,768 children aged 0-59 months.