



March 6, 2014

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  
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Dear Prime Minister Erdoğan,

We are deeply concerned that the Ministry of Health is taking punitive actions against physicians who acted ethically in providing emergency medical care to demonstrators and bystanders injured during the Gezi Park protests that began in May 2013. We ask that you take action to immediately and unconditionally drop the Ministry of Health's current legal actions against members of the Turkish Medical Association (TMA).

On 27 January 2014, the Ministry of Health brought a court suit against the members of the governing and disciplinary boards of the TMA's Ankara Chamber of Medicine and requested their removal from office on the grounds that they "established healthcare units **called infirmaries** illicitly and without control and supervision and thus engaged in activities out of its mission."

As you know, thousands of demonstrators were injured during the Gezi Park protests in dozens of cities across Turkey. The TMA recruited and organized physicians to provide urgently needed emergency medical care to injured demonstrators. Medical care took place in mosques, shopping malls, hotels – anywhere possible and for only as long as the need existed. Such spontaneous and idiosyncratic medical relief efforts cannot be characterized as "established healthcare units." The TMA not only followed international standards of medical ethics at great personal risk, they also acted in accordance with the Turkish Penal Code, which makes it a crime for medical personnel to neglect their duty of providing emergency medical care to those in need.

Physicians should never be punished for following their professional duty of providing care without discrimination to those in need. As members of the international medical community, we are gravely concerned by the actions that have been taken against the TMA and the provisions contained in the new health law, which criminalizes emergency medical care and requires routine reporting of all confidential patient information to state authorities.

The Turkish government has an obligation to respect the sacred duty of physicians to care for those in need and uphold people's right to health.

We call upon the you, Prime Minister Erdoğan, and the Turkish government to respect the professional duty of all medical personal to provide medical care to those in need, including injured demonstrators, and immediately and unconditionally end the legal suit against TMA members.

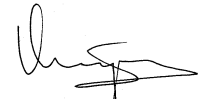
Yours Sincerely,



Donna McKay, Executive Director, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR)



Dr. Otmar Kloiber, Secretary General, World Medical Association (WMA)



Dr. Vivienne Nathanson, Director of Professional Activities, British Medical Association (BMA)



Prof. Dr. Frank Ulrich Montgomery, President, German Medical Association (Bundesärztekammer, GMA)



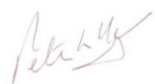
Dr. Katrin Fjeldsted, President, Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)



Dr. Mark Reiter, President, American Academy of Emergency Medicine (AAEM)



Dr. Adriaan van Es, Secretary, International Federation of Health and Human Rights Organizations (IFHHRO)



Dr. Peter Hall, Chair, Doctors for Human Rights (DHR)



Dr. M. Masoud Sarwari, Coordinator, Alliance of Health Organizations (AHO)



Meenakshi Menon, Executive Director, Global Health through Education, Training and Service (GHETS)



Elizabeth Adams, Director of Professional Development, Irish Nurses and Midwifery Organisation (INMO)

CC:

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