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September 23, 2014

Leading Medical Groups Ask for Dismissal of Charges against Turkish Medical Association

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Nine leading medical organizations today asked for the dismissal of a lawsuit against the Turkish Medical Association (TMA), which recruited and organized physicians to provide urgently needed emergency medical care to demonstrators injured during the Gezi Park demonstrations that began in May 2013.

The Turkish Ministry of Health in January filed a lawsuit against the TMA, alleging that it had illegally “established healthcare units called infirmaries.” A pre-trial hearing in the case is scheduled for September 30 at the 23rd Basic Civil Court in Ankara.

The groups issued the following statement:

“We are deeply concerned by the Ministry of Health’s punitive actions against physicians affiliated with the Turkish Medical Association (TMA), who followed medical ethics by providing emergency care to demonstrators and bystanders injured during the Gezi Park protests. The TMA acted accordingly by recruiting and organizing physicians to provide urgently needed care to the injured in impromptu places, such as mosques, shopping malls, and hotels. The location and duration of emergency care was based on medical need – occurring in close proximity to the injured and lasting only for as long as individuals required care. The TMA followed international standards of medical ethics as well as those outlined in the Turkish Penal Code, which make it a crime for medical personnel to neglect their duty of providing emergency medical care to those in need. We are calling upon the judges at the 23rd Basic Civil Court in Ankara to immediately dismiss all charges against the TMA, and for Turkish authorities to respect medical professionals’ duty to provide emergency medical care to all those in need.”

Signatories:

- Dr. Mark Reiter, president, American Academy of Emergency Medicine (AAEM)
- Dr. Vivienne Nathanson, senior director, British Medical Association (BMA)
- Dr. Peter Hall, chair, Doctors for Human Rights (DHR)
- Prof. Dr. Frank Ulrich Montgomery, president, German Medical Association (Bundesärztekammer, GMA)
- Dr. Adriaan van Es, secretary, International Federation of Health and Human Rights Organizations (IFHHRO)
- Elizabeth Adams, director of professional development, Irish Nurses and Midwifery Organisation (INMO)
- Donna McKay, executive director, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR)
- Dr. Katrin Fjeldsted, president, Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)
- Dr. Otmar Kloiber, secretary general, World Medical Association (WMA)