

President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
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Mr President Erdoğan,

The Austrian Medical Chamber is writing to you to express its grave distress caused by the ongoing campaign against the Turkish Medical Association (TMA) since its press release on 24 January 2018 stressing that war is a public health concern that damages the environment and threatens the survival of society at large.

We strongly condemn the campaign of intimidation against the TMA. The head prosecutor in Ankara filed a criminal complaint against the TMA on January 29, and the TMA's office was searched. In addition, another lawsuit was filed against the TMA's leaders, demanding that they be dismissed from their positions on the grounds that they are acting beyond the scope of the mission of the TMA. We understand that eleven of the TMA's leaders are under arrest at the time of writing.

We are absolutely appalled by such a reaction to TMA's call for peace. We denounce this escalation of aggression aimed at the TMA in the strongest terms. Physicians worldwide share a professional commitment to medical ethics, human rights and peace. Medical professionals have the duty to denounce violence and alert governments and other relevant decision-makers to the dramatic immediate and long-term health effects of warfare and armed conflicts.

The Turkish Medical Association has done nothing other than express its opinion in support of human rights and peace. This is not a criminal offence. Moreover, filing a criminal complaint against the TMA on the basis of the peaceful exercise of freedom of expression constitutes a flagrant infringement of human rights as stated in

the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that Turkey ratified in 2003, hereby establishing its consent to be bound by its provisions.

We therefore urge the Turkish authorities to:

- Release immediately the leaders of the Turkish Medical Association;
- Put an immediate end to all acts of harassment and intimidation, including at the judicial level, against the Turkish Medical Association;
- Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and instruments ratified by Turkey.

We trust that you will promptly take all the necessary actions in line with these core universal human rights and values.

Sincerely,



a.o. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Thomas Szekeres
President of the Austrian Medical Chamber