



2<sup>nd</sup> February 2018

## Doctors In Unite

Doctors In Unite are gravely concerned by news that arrest warrants and detention orders have been issued for eleven Council Members of the Turkish Medical Association (TMA); eight of our colleagues have so far been taken into custody. They join over three hundred other citizens, including journalists, who have been detained after growing criticism of Turkey's decision to join a ground offensive in Afrin, Syria.

We strongly condemn this action by the Turkish government.

Our colleagues were arrested following a statement made by the TMA expressing concern about the incursion into Afrin which has already claimed the lives of many civilians. They aptly described war as a 'human-made matter of public health causing harm' and demanded 'peace right now'. There can be no legitimate justification for responding to such a statement with arrest and detention.

The Turkish government, including the Turkish Ministry of Health, has failed to understand the basic duty of doctors. We must raise our voices and inform governments of the human costs of warfare. We must recognise and advocate for citizens whose physical and mental health are affected. We must alert nations to the huge environmental costs of armed conflict and its detrimental effects on the well-being of society. In addition, the Turkish government has failed in its duty to abide by its obligations to protect human rights namely: freedom of expression, freedom of association and the right to health.

We call for:

The immediate release of all members of the TMA who are in detention.

Guaranteed protection of civil and political rights, as enshrined in article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - ratified by Turkey in 2003.

We add our voices to those of the World Medical Association, The European Junior Doctors, Physicians For Human Rights, The Standing Committee of European Junior Doctors and Amnesty International in denouncing these arrests and call on doctors around the world to join us in advocating for the release of our colleagues.