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**Turkish Medical Group Faces Lawsuit for Providing Emergency Care**

Physicians for Human Rights Says Lawsuit against Turkish Medical Association over Gezi Park Events Must be Dismissed

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NEW YORK – Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) is calling on judges in Ankara to dismiss 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 protests that began in May 2013.

A pre-trial hearing in the case is scheduled for September 30 at the 23rd Basic Civil Court in Ankara.

“A lawsuit that aims to punish medical professionals for honoring their ethical obligations to treat the injured - and doing so at personal risk - is appalling and represents an affront to the entire medical profession,” said Donna McKay, PHR’s executive director. “These doctors did their jobs, and we should expect nothing less from health professionals. They must be allowed to carry out their critical work of helping the wounded in emergencies without fear or harassment from the authorities.”

The Ministry of Health (MOH) filed the lawsuit in January, saying the TMA had illegally “established healthcare units called infirmaries” following the protests that began in May 2013. PHR pointed out that members of the TMA not only followed international medical ethics by providing emergency care, but also acted in accordance with the Turkish Penal Code, which makes it a crime for medical personnel to neglect their duty to provide emergency care to those in need.

PHR said the lawsuit is part of the government’s larger [assault on health care providers](http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/library/reports/contempt-for-freedom.html) who treated demonstrators involved in anti-government protests. Medical personnel and impromptu medical relief sites were attacked with tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets, and police beat and detained dozens of medical workers who provided injured protesters with care.

PHR in March filed a [friend-of-the court brief in the case](https://s3.amazonaws.com/PHR_other/tma-amicus-brief-2014.pdf), which outlines how the TMA acted in accordance with medical ethics as well as Turkish and international laws regarding medical care. The location and duration of emergency care was based on medical need, as the impromptu sites were set up close to where people were injured and during a time that urgent care was needed. The amicus brief points out that sanctioning the organization would have a chilling effect on emergency medical care, with devastating public health consequences.

In addition to PHR, [other leading U.S. and European medical groups](https://s3.amazonaws.com/PHR_other/press-release-leading-medical-groups-ask-for-dismissal-of-charges-against-turkish-medical-association.pdf) have also criticized the MOH’s legal actions, including the World Medical Association, the British Medical Association, the German Medical Association, the Standing Committee of European Doctors, the American Academy of Emergency Medicine, and the International Federation of Health and Human Rights Organizations.

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) is a New York-based advocacy organization that uses medicine and science to stop mass atrocities and severe human rights violations. To learn more: [www.phr.org](http://www.phr.org).