

## British Medical Association

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Prime Minister, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Vekaletler Caddesi  
Başbakanlık Merkez Bina 06573  
Kızılay / Ankara

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**Directorate of Professional  
Activities**

16 July 2013

Dear Prime Minister

### **Breaches of medical neutrality in Turkey**

Further to our letter of 18 June, and the letter sent to you on 12 July by representatives of Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), the World Medical Association (WMA), the German Medical Association (GMA) and the Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME), the British Medical Association (BMA) remains gravely concerned at mounting evidence of violations of medical neutrality in Turkey.

According to evidence gathered by the Turkish Medical Association, the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey and PHR, the police and other law enforcement officials have deliberately attacked clearly identifiable medical personnel and medical facilities with tear gas, water cannon, and rubber bullets. Police have beaten and detained dozens of doctors and other medical personnel for providing emergency care to those injured by police. There is also evidence that the Ministry of Health has required medical personnel to report the names of injured demonstrators, in clear breach of ethical requirements for medical confidentiality, and of medical personnel who have provided care to the injured.

By providing emergency assistance to the injured, medical workers in Turkey have fulfilled their duty under the International Code of Medical Ethics; had they not done so, they would have risked international condemnation and professional disciplinary proceedings being brought against them. International standards in human rights and medical ethics make it clear that doctors, nurses, paramedics and other health workers must be able to carry out their professional responsibilities to provide emergency and other medical care to those in need, without interference or fear of reprisal. The Turkish Government has a duty to support and protect health workers in their moral, ethical and professional responsibilities to provide care for the sick and injured. The evidence outlined above indicates that doctors and other health professionals have been, and continue to be, subject to a repressive response by the Turkish authorities, in clear breach of the principle of medical neutrality and human rights standards.

The BMA is also alarmed to learn that a health bill, recently submitted by the Ministry of Health to the parliament, would, if passed, criminalise the provision of emergency medical care, not only to demonstrators, but to anyone in need of emergency medical assistance in Turkey. We note that such legislation would be in direct conflict with the fundamental ethical obligation of doctors to give emergency care as a humanitarian duty.

The BMA joins with the representatives of PHR, the WMA, GMA and the CPME in urging you to take whatever action is necessary to ensure immediate protection for all health professionals in fulfilling their professional ethical duties to provide treatment to those in need, and full protection of the right to

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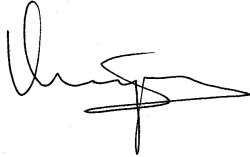


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appropriate medical care for those suffering injuries. Doctors and other medical staff must be able to fulfil these duties without fear of interference, reprisal, attack or arrest. We urge you to prohibit any such response to those medical personnel who have provided, and continue to provide, emergency medical assistance to injured protesters, or to anyone else in need of emergency medical treatment, in Turkey.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vivienne Nathanson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Professor Vivienne Nathanson**  
**Director of Professional Activities**