



President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  
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30 January 2018

Mr President Erdoğan,

We are writing to you to express our 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.

The TMA is the Turkish affiliate of the World Medical Association and the Standing Committee of European Doctors, internationally respected organizations of medical professionals. 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.

Our organisations represent together millions of physicians worldwide, who share a professional commitment to medical ethics, human rights and peace. Like our Turkish colleagues, the medical professionals we represent have the duty to denounce violence and alert our 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,



Dr Yoshitake Yokokura, President, World Medical Association (WMA)



Donna McKay, Executive Director, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR)



Dr. Jacques de Haller, President, Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)



Adv. Leah Wapner, Secretary General, European Forum of Medical Associations (EFMA)



Victor Madrigal, Secretary General, International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)

Copy to:

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