



Through evidence,  
change is possible.

Donna McKay  
Executive Director

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Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  
President of the Republic of Turkey  
Cumhurbaşkanlığı Külliyesi  
06560 Beştepe, Ankara, Turkey  
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Dear President Erdoğan,

On behalf of Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), I write to express grave concern regarding the detention of senior members of the Turkish Medical Association (TMA) following days of threats and protests over the association's statement criticizing war as a danger to public health.

The impact of war on public health has long been a concern of the medical community in numerous countries. As the internationally respected organization of Turkish medical professionals affiliated with the World Medical Association, the TMA supports the promotion of medical ethics and professionalism. PHR strongly condemns the campaign of intimidation and harassment of our esteemed Turkish colleagues, including the threats of physical violence and the arrest of its members. We note with consternation your own statements against the association, which appear wholly without justification and only serve to inflame this grave situation. We also echo the condemnation of many [UN experts](#) concerning the use of terrorism charges against human rights defenders and people legitimately expressing dissent in Turkey.

The latest crackdown on health professionals for their non-violent defense of human rights and the principles of their profession illustrates a pattern of assault on health care providers by your government, including the arrest, detention, and dismissal of hundreds of doctors and other health professionals. Health professionals must have the freedom to call out threats to public health without fear of retribution, and efforts to silence them are unacceptable, especially when backed by the Turkish government. Your government's campaign to curtail freedom of *expression* and to punish *dissent* is in gross violation of international human rights norms, including rights to freedom of expression and opinion as stated in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Turkey ratified in 2003 and to which it is bound.

We call on your government to immediately:

- Release all detained members of the Turkish Medical Association;
- Put an end to all acts of harassment and intimidation, including at the judicial level, against the Turkish Medical Association and its members;
- Safeguard the independence of professional health associations;
- Cease legal actions against human rights defenders for exercising their right to freedom of expression;
- Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Turkey.

We insist that the Turkish government take all necessary actions to safeguard the rights of health professionals in accordance with international human rights law and medical ethics.

Sincerely,

Donna McKay  
Executive Director



cc: Mr. Binali Yıldırım, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey;  
Mr. Abdülhamit Gül, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Turkey;  
Mr. Süleyman Soylu, Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Turkey;  
Mr. Ahmet Demircan, Minister of Health of the Republic of Turkey;  
Mr. Serdar Kiliç, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the United States;  
Mr. Feridun Hadi Sinirliođlu, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations.