



4 April 2023

President Rejep Tayyip Erdoğan
Ankara, Türkiye

contact@tccb.gov.tr

Dear President Erdoğan,

As leading international medical and human rights organisations, we write to you today to call for the cessation of ongoing judicial harassment of the leadership of the Turkish Medical Association (TMA).

The eleven members of the Central Council, who are charged with violation of law no. 6023 on the responsibilities and mission of the TMA, risk being dismissed from their elective functions. The court hearing in Ankara's 31st Civil Law Court, Case No.2022/424, on 6 April is an opportunity for state prosecutors to comply with Türkiye's constitutional and human rights law obligations and drop the baseless charges against the Central Council of Türkiye's largest association of physicians.

The TMA, which has about 110,000 members nationwide, is the Turkish affiliate of the World Medical Association and the Standing Committee of European Doctors and a close partner to all of us. We can attest to its international reputation for the highest commitment to medical ethics, the highest standards of medical care, and human rights. Members of the Central Council are among the most eminent medical practitioners in Türkiye, elected by thousands of their peers to represent and lead the country's medical profession.

Since at least 2014, members of the TMA have been subjected to arbitrary detention, searches of their offices, and grueling years of battling baseless criminal charges and public smears that they foster "terrorism." In October 2022, the Minister of Justice announced plans to introduce new regulations to bring the TMA under government control. Under the right to freedom of association and freedom of expression, the TMA is protected from undue interference with its membership and activities. Moreover, the Turkish constitution guarantees individual members freedom of thought and opinion (Article 25), freedom of expression and dissemination of thought (Art. 26) and freedom of Science (Art. 27). In addition, the constitution guarantees the autonomy of professional organisations (Art. 135). The consequences of unchecked harassment of the TMA are a surrender of judicial independence and respect for the rule of law, with the judicial system reduced to serving as a political cudgel for autocracy.

We call upon the state to cease harassment of the TMA for its lawful and ethical activities, and the judges at the 31st Civil Law Court in Ankara to immediately dismiss all charges against the members of the Central Council of the Turkish Medical Association.

Sincerely,

CPME (Standing Committee of European Doctors)
Physicians for Human Rights
Redress
World Medical Association