



## **Open letter of support to the attention of Turkish physicians**

17 June 2019

Dear Turkish colleagues,

We are writing to you on behalf of the World Medical Association, the global federation of National Medical Associations representing physicians worldwide. Acting on behalf of patients and physicians, the WMA endeavours to achieve the highest possible standards of medical care, ethics, education and health-related human rights for all people.

With this message of support, we echo the voice of millions of physicians worldwide for peace, for the dignity and well-being of all human beings. It seems to us that in Turkey this voice is being silenced, but we are solidly behind you to resound your concerns.

Like you and your physician's leaders from the Turkish Medical Association (TMA), we trust that war is a human-made public health problem with effects of destroying nature and humankind.

Like you, we consider that physicians have the duty to denounce violence and alert governments to the dramatic immediate and long-term health effects of warfare and armed conflicts. Expressing an opinion in support of peace is not a criminal offence in a democracy. Quite the contrary, it is an essential human right enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that Turkey ratified in 2003.

We are therefore shocked and deeply disturbed by the recent decision of the Criminal Court of Ankara which condemned TMA's Central Council members of prison sentences for their call for peace. This is pure aberration.

We are also aware that many physicians are the target of a pervasive obstruction campaign run under the pretext of state of emergency, which prevents you to practice your profession in adequate conditions. Not only does it violate your right to work, but it also deprives millions of people from access to health as a result. A sustainable and equitable health system allowing quality care to all those in need relies on a solid workforce with safe and sustainable working conditions. Ultimately, targeting physicians amounts to targeting the Turkish population with increased exposure to diseases, suffering and premature deaths, as well as insecurity and poverty. We therefore seriously doubt that the current state of emergency serves the right purpose.

As physicians, we all took an oath to protect human life before any other interest. Our values are based on medical ethics and include the respect for autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice. Be assured that we are in solidarity with you in protecting those ethical standards from any abuse.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. Dr. Franck Ulrich Montgomery  
Chair of the Council



Dr. Otmar Kloiber  
Secretary General