



OPEN LETTER

President of the Republic of Turkey, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (contact@tccb.gov.tr)
Minister of Justice, Mr. Yılmaz Tunç (info@adalet.gov.tr)
Minister of Health, Mr. Fahrettin Koca (sabim@saglik.gov.tr; disabgm@saglik.gov.tr)
Minister of Interior, Mr. Ali Yerlikaya (diab@icisleri.gov.tr; sti@icisleri.gov.tr)

21 September 2023

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the World Medical Association (WMA), the global federation of National Medical Associations representing millions of physicians worldwide. The WMA plays a key role in promoting good practice, medical ethics and medical accountability internationally.

We would like to draw your attention to the case of Dr. Ayşe Uğurlu, who is facing grave criminal and administrative proceedings following her participation in a press conference held at the Ankara Medical Chamber on 22 August 2020 to recall the ethical norms of the medical profession related to the treatment of prisoners and to call the authorities to listen to the voice of two lawyers, Ebru Timtik and Aytaç Ünsal, who were on hunger strike at the time to demand their rights to a fair trial to be respected.

Following the press conference, Ankara Chief Prosecutor's Office initiated a criminal investigation against her for the charges of "*making propaganda for a terrorist organization*". In parallel, Dr. Uğurlu is facing a separate disciplinary proceeding by the administrative authorities.

International ethical standards¹ requires that the physician treat prisoners with dignity, respect their autonomy, prevent coercion or any other practices amounting to ill-treatments or torture and protest if it occurs. By calling for the respect of those fundamental principles, Dr Uğurlu has acted in conformity with the ethical values of our profession.

Through these criminal and administrative proceedings, the Turkish authorities exert unacceptable pressure on Dr Uğurlu. We condemn in the strongest terms such gross behaviour, unworthy of a State governed by the rule of law.

¹ [WMA Declaration of Malta on Hunger Strikers; WMA Statement on the Responsibility of Physicians in the Documentation and Denunciation of Acts of Torture or Cruel or Inhuman or Degrading Treatment; WMA Declaration of Hamburg concerning Support for Medical Doctors Refusing to Participate in, or to Condone, the Use of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment](#)

We urge the Turkish authorities to put an immediate end to all proceedings against Dr. Ayşe Uğurlu and drop all charges against her for respecting the requirements of the medical profession and defending human rights.

We also demand that the Turkish authorities put a stop once and for all to the ongoing harassment of physicians and provide them with adequate working conditions so that they can practice safely in compliance with the ethical standards of their profession.

Your sincerely,



Dr Osahon Enabulele,
President of the World Medical Association