

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

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Subject

Campaign against the Council-Members of the Turkish Medical Association

Mr President Erdoğan,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Royal Dutch Medical Association (KNMG) to express our concerns regarding the campaign against the Turkish Medical Association (TMA). Although, to our relief, the Council-members of the TMA have been released from detention this week, they are still prosecuted and assigned to obligations weekly (signature of an official document at the police station).

The campaign against the TMA, following its press release on 24 January 2018 stressing that war is a public health concern, is a gross violation of international human rights norms. The KNMG asserts that the TMA 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. The KNMG particularly points out in this context the 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 that Turkey ratified in 2003, thereby consenting to be bound by its provisions.

It is entirely appropriate for a medical association to speak out concerning the health consequences of armed conflict. 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 KNMG therefore urges you to:

- 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 international instruments ratified by Turkey.

We trust that you will take promptly all the necessary actions in line with these core universal human rights and values.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of the Board of the KNMG,



R.A.C.L. Héman,
President KNMG

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World Medical Association
Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs
Dutch Minister of Health, Welfare and Sports