

I-22 AMA Late Resolution 1003: AMA Declares Its Support for Turkish Physicians Imprisoned in Turkey in Violation of their Human and Professional Rights

Sponsor: American Association of Public Health Physicians

November, 2022 Decision by the House of Delegates: “Referral to the AMA Board of Trustees for Action”

Whereas: AMA has long declared its support for “physicians who have been subject to imprisonment or torture because of their humanitarian efforts to improve the health of their patients,” (1) and

Whereas: AMA policy concerning healthcare in “countries in turmoil...urges appropriate organizations to transmit these concerns to the affected country's government; and asks appropriate international health organizations to monitor the status of medical care, medical education and treatment of medical personnel in these countries,” (2) and

Whereas: Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı,, President of the Turkish Medical Association (TMA) is in detention since 26 October 2022, after she called for an independent investigation into allegations that Turkish armed forces might have used chemical weapons in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, (3) and

Whereas: The Ankara Prosecutor General's Office has initiated legal proceedings to dismiss the Council Members of the Turkish Medical Association, for their actions or statements in favour of “*terrorist organisations*”. (3)

Therefore, be it Resolved that:

1. The AMA reaffirms Resolution H-65.991, “Persecution of Physicians for Political Reasons and Participation by Doctors in Violations of Human Rights”, and H-65.994: “Medical Care in Countries in Turmoil” [Reaffirm HOD policy], and

2. The AMA recommends to its Delegation to the World Medical Association (WMA) to offer AMA's assistance to the WMA with efforts to free unjustly imprisoned health professionals and to preserve the independence of the Turkish Medical Association [Directive to Take Action], and
3. The President of the AMA will write to the U.S. Secretary of State to express AMA's concerns and to ask the Secretary to intervene in support of these Turkish health professionals and the independence of the Turkish Medical Association [Directive to Take Action].

References:

1. H-65.991: Persecution of Physicians for Political Reasons and Participation by Doctors in Violations of Human Rights H-65.991 (last modified 2015):

The AMA (1) reiterates its endorsement of the 1975 World Medical Association Declaration of Tokyo which provides guidelines for physicians in cases of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in relation to detention and imprisonment; (2) opposes participation by physicians in the torture or inhuman treatment or punishment of individuals in relation to detention and imprisonment; and (3) expresses its sympathy to those physicians who have been subject to imprisonment or torture because of their humanitarian efforts to improve the health of their patients.

2. H-65.994: Medical Care in Countries in Turmoil

The AMA (1) supports the provision of food, medicine and medical equipment to noncombatants threatened by natural disaster or military conflict within their country through appropriate relief organizations; (2) expresses its concern about the disappearance of physicians, medical students and other health care professionals, with resulting inadequate care to the sick and injured of countries in turmoil; (3) urges appropriate organizations to transmit these concerns to the affected country's government; and (4) asks appropriate international health organizations to

monitor the status of medical care, medical education and treatment of medical personnel in these countries, to inform the world health community of their findings, and to encourage efforts to ameliorate these problems.

3. Email from the WMA 11.4.2022:

From: **World Medical Association** <communications@wma.net>

Date: Fri, Nov 4, 2022 at 12:17 PM

Subject: Support to Şebnem Korur Fincancı and to the Turkish Medical Association

Dear colleagues,

With this mail, I would like to give a short update of the latest developments regarding the grave threats against the Turkish Medical Association and its members:

- Prof Şebnem Korur Fincancı, President of the Turkish Medical Association (TMA) is in detention since 26 October 2022, after she called for an independent investigation into allegations that Turkish armed forces might have used chemical weapons in Kurdistan Region of Iraq during a live TV interview in Germany on 19 October 2022. The Ankara 3rd Criminal Court ordered her arrest on charges of “*propaganda for a terrorist organisation.*” The date of the Court hearing, to confirm or not her indictment, is not yet known.
- In parallel, on 30 October, the Ankara Prosecutor General's Office has initiated legal proceedings to dismiss the Council Members of the Turkish Medical Association, for their actions or statements in favour of “*terrorist organisations*”.

We are in close contact with TMA, waiting for their guidance on the best way to act in support of

Sebnem and TMA. The global health and human rights community (Physicians for Human Rights-PHR, Amnesty International, CPME, IRCT and others) is mobilized. Yesterday PHR organized an online meeting with the participation of TMA and their lawyer to coordinate our advocacy work. One of the actions agreed was to disseminate the information widely and to raise the issue with decision-makers to put pressure on the Turkish government.

We would therefore appreciate if you could contact the authorities of your country: (1) to inform them about the detention of Sebnem and threats against TMA, and (2) to ask them to intervene with the Turkish authorities to put an end to the oppression against the medical profession in the country. To that end, feel free to use the following [model letter](#) or part of it.

I would be grateful if you could keep me informed of any actions taken on your side.

Thank you very much in advance and kind regards,

Clarisse Delorme

World Medical Association

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