



**Message from Peter Archer, President of the International Federation of Environmental Health**

**'The arrest of the Turkish Medical Association Leadership is a Threat to the Human Rights of Health Professionals Everywhere'**

**In my role as IFEH President, I have signed a survey monkey statement supporting the arrested Turkish Doctors. This statement will be published in the Lancet. I encourage all IFEH Member Organisations to review the contents of this press release and consider adding their name to the many already signed up.**

**Many thanks Peter Archer, IFEH President**

**Background; The International Federation of Environmental Health is a Partner of the World Federation of Public Health Associations which has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. In the past few days the IFEH has received the following letter from Michael Moore, President of the WFPHA seeking support for doctors who are members of the Turkish Medical Association. In the past few days the Turkish President has ordered the arrest of the members of the General Council of the Turkish Medical Association for issuing a statement seeking peace in Syria**

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Dear Members of the WFPHA,

You will have seen the recent reports regarding the arrest of the members of the General Council of the Turkish Medical Association.

A number of Associations are collecting signatures, individual and organisational, in support of this statement with a view to urgent publication in The Lancet. Our invitation came through the World Medical Association (WMA) and the People's Health Movement (PHM).

You can use the following link to sign on the statement <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9SJ5SGX>. It would be great if WFPHA members are willing to sign on; and if WFPHA members are willing to use their network links to encourage other organisations to sign on.

Many thanks for considering.

Kind regards,

Michael Moore

President WFPHA

The World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) alerts its members and Lancet's readers to the arrest of the Central Council of the Turkish Medical Association (TTB).

On Wednesday 24 January 2018 the Central Council of the TTB released a brief public statement(1), affirming that war is a human-made public health problem and that the medical profession has an obligation to defend life and help to build an environment of peace. The statement affirmed the importance of a just, democratic, equalitarian, free and peaceful society.

This statement was released in response to a new offensive launched on 20 January by the Turkish military in northern Syria. Two days after the statement President Erdogan denounced the "so-called Turkish Medical Association" as "terrorist-lovers". He was reported two days later as saying: "They are not intellectuals, they are a gang of unthinking slaves... They are the servants of imperialism."(2, 3) On Tuesday 30 Jan all eleven members of the Central Council were arrested by the Turkish state. Health professionals world-wide will have been shocked by the intimidation of these leaders of the TTB which represents over 80% doctors in Turkey. However, there are deeper implications regarding human rights, freedom of expression and the role of health professionals.

The TTB insists that problems with neighbouring countries can be resolved without armed conflicts or war. With the TTB, many Turkish citizens are concerned to avoid the inhumane results of the war but it is illegal to express these concerns. The BBC reports that hundreds have been arrested for criticising the Turkish attack in Northern Syria.(4) The current attack on the TTB is an attack on the right and responsibility of health professionals to speak out for peace and for justice, equity and human rights.

The World Medical Association has called for national medical associations to advocate for Turkey to respect its humanitarian and human rights obligations, including the right to health.(5) The WFPHA calls on health professionals and social movements everywhere to condemn the arrest of the TTB officials and to demand their immediate release and full restitution. To speak for their human rights is to defend our own.

## References

1. Central Council Turkish Medical Association. War is a public health problem! 2018 [Accessed 3 Feb 2018]. Available from: [http://www.ttb.org.tr/haber\\_goster.php?Guid=28de85da-00e5-11e8-a05f-429c499923e4](http://www.ttb.org.tr/haber_goster.php?Guid=28de85da-00e5-11e8-a05f-429c499923e4).
  2. Middle East Eye. Turkey detains top medical group members over criticism of Afrin offensive Middle East Eye2018 [Accessed 3 February 2018]. Available from: <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-detains-8-doctors-over-criticism-afrin-offensive-838902150>.
  3. Reuters Staff. Turkey orders detention of top doctors over criticism of Syrian offensive 2018 [updated 30 January 2018; Accessed 3 Feb 2018]. Available from: [https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey-security/turkey-orders-detention-of-top-doctors-over-criticism-of-syrian-offensive-idUSKBN1FJ0XB?utm\\_source=34553&utm\\_medium=partner](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey-security/turkey-orders-detention-of-top-doctors-over-criticism-of-syrian-offensive-idUSKBN1FJ0XB?utm_source=34553&utm_medium=partner).
  4. BBC. Syria war: Turkey arrests hundreds for criticising Afrin offensive: BBC; 2018 [updated 29 January 2018; Accessed 3 Feb 2018]. Available from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42863531>.
  5. Association WM. Arrest of Turkish Medical Association leaders condemned by WMA: World Medical Association; 2018 [updated 30 Jan 2018; Accessed 3 Feb 2018]. Available from: <https://www.wma.net/news-post/arrest-of-turkish-medical-association-leaders-condemned-by-wma/>
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