

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK

OF ACADEMIES AND SCHOLARLY SOCIETIES

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The International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies (H.R. Network) is an alliance of more than 80 national academies and scholarly societies that supports and defends the fundamental rights of fellow academics and health professionals worldwide. We, the members of the H.R. Network's Executive Committee, are deeply concerned about recent acts of harassment and intimidation against the Turkish Medical Association (TMA) and its leadership in connection with a statement issued by the TMA on January 24 expressing concern about the adverse public health effects of Turkey's military operation in Afrin, Syria and calling for peace.

Following release of the TMA's statement, the association and its members have received numerous threats of physical violence by email, telephone, and social media. Reports also indicate that the TMA has been targeted for harassment by certain media outlets, trade organizations, and paramilitary groups. We are alarmed by the serious nature of the threats being made against the TMA's members and staff and call for the Turkish government to take immediate steps to ensure their personal safety.

We are further concerned that, on January 30, the TMA's main office in Ankara was raided by police, and all 11 members of the TMA's Central Council were taken into custody as part of a criminal investigation launched by the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's office in connection with the TMA's January 24 statement. The statement, as described above, clearly constitutes the peaceful exercise of the TMA members' fundamental rights to freedom of opinion and expression. These rights are protected under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights, both of which Turkey has ratified. Thus we urge the Turkish government to ensure that all legal processes solely related to the signing of the statement will be dropped and the TMA's leaders will be promptly released.

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(*Nobel Laureate)

Academies in the Network support and promote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, assist unjustly incarcerated nonviolent professional colleagues, address grave science-related human rights issues, and advocate for member institutions whose independence is threatened.

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