

WMA RESOLUTION TO STOP ATTACKS AGAINST HEALTHCARE WORKERS AND FACILITIES IN TURKEY

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PREAMBLE

Several media report that over the last two months of conflict in Turkey, healthcare workers have been killed, wounded or threatened with guns. Some physicians have been taken out of ambulances and beaten. Access to wounded people is prevented by security forces, and ambulances as well as health facilities are regularly targeted. A rather comprehensive study conducted by the Turkish Medical Association confirms these facts.

There are indications that attacks on healthcare workers and the obstructions of service delivery are used as a deliberate political instrument to intimidate people, depriving them of their democratic rights.

Parties in armed conflict have the obligation to protect health care provision to wounded and sick and to prevent attack on or threat to medical activities, healthcare workers and facilities. Physicians and other healthcare workers should not be impeded to perform their duties. Such attacks constitute blatant violation of international human rights law, in particular the inherent right to life that shall be protected by law, and the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health[1].

These attacks undermine gravely as well fundamental medical ethics principles, in particular WMA international Code of Medical Ethics and the Ethical Principles of Health Care in Times of Armed Conflict and Other Emergencies endorsed by civilian and military health-care organisations[2], stating that: "Health-care personnel, as well as health-care facilities and medical transports, whether military or civilian, must be respected by all. They are protected while performing their duties and the safest possible working environment shall be provided to them » (article 10).

Recommendations

The WMA urges all parties to:

1. Stop attacks on healthcare workers and patients, health care facilities, and ambulances and ensure their safety,
2. Respect the professional autonomy and impartiality of healthcare workers,
3. Comply fully with international human rights law as well as other relevant international regulations that Turkey is a State Party to, and
4. Document and record all violations and duly prosecute their perpetrators.

[1] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, article 12 – December 1966

[2] Adopted by the ICRC, the WMA, the International Committee of Military Medicine (ICMM), the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) – June 2015