

# BMA procedures for human rights interventions

1. The BMA does not have the capacity to verify all information submitted to it. Any information received must be verified with Amnesty International (AI) before a case is pursued. *No case* in which AI believes there to be a significant element of doubt should be pursued.
2. Information reported by groups other than AI and not already available to AI is forwarded to that organisation for its investigation. *No action* can be taken until the information has been verified.
3. If reputable bodies in the same country as the potential human rights case are in a position to verify evidence or support the BMA's own request for further information, it may be decided to request their assistance. This can only be done after discussion with the Head of Division and obtaining advice from regional experts regarding the potential danger to any of the parties involved.
4. The BMA primarily responds to cases in which doctors are involved. For example:
  - doctors may be involved because of their participation in activities contrary to the Declaration of Tokyo such as the forced feeding of hunger strikers
  - doctors may be involved in practices contrary to the recommendations of the BMA Torture Report such as monitoring torture, examining fitness for torture, or administration of capital punishment
  - doctors may themselves be victims of human rights abuses.
5. In addition, the BMA responds to cases clearly involving important health issues, such as the health care of prisoners, repressive measures against patients, kidnapping of patients and military interference with provision of medical services.
6. Even where information has been substantiated by reputable agencies such as AI, the BMA will not make any accusations but will request information or assistance in establishing the circumstances.
7. BMA letters of enquiry are directed to the relevant medical association requesting assistance in eliciting information.
8. Letters of enquiry are also sent either to the Minister of Health or the Head of State, urging that the matter be clarified. The Association draws attention to the allegations which have been raised and request that they be looked into.
9. Where the national medical association is itself the object of repression, advice will be taken from regional experts as to whether contact with that association would pose a danger to it. If it is not considered to pose a danger, or at the specific request of the national medical association, the BMA may address letters of enquiry to the Minister of Health or Head of State, urging that the matter be clarified and international legal instruments observed.
10. The BMA does not request the immediate or unconditional release of any detained person. For those in long term detention without trial, the BMA may request that any intended charges be brought and the detainee granted a fair trial under the provision of international legal instruments.

*This policy was first published in Medicine Betrayed: Participation of Doctors in Human Rights Abuses (1992) and drawn up with advice from Amnesty International and the International Committee of the Red Cross.*