Prime Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu
Office of the Prime Minister
Vekalestler Caddesi
Başbakanlık Merkez Bina 06573
Kızılay/Ankara
Turkey

3 November 2015

Breaches of medical neutrality

Dear Prime Minister

I am writing on behalf of the British Medical Association to express strong opposition to the prison sentences recently passed down to Dr Yasemin Erenç and Dr Sercan Yüksel for treating injured demonstrators in Dolmabahçe Bezm-i Alem Valide Sultan Mosque during the disturbances in Gezi Park in 2013. According to reputable international human rights bodies, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the prison sentences, although said to be for ‘denigrating a mosque’, are a politically motivated response effectively punishing health professionals for providing urgent medical treatment to protesters.

As we set out in earlier letters to you following the protests in 2013, doctors are under a professional obligation to provide emergency treatment to those in need. A failure to do so would put them in breach of their duties under the International Code of Medical Ethics and could have led to international condemnation and resulted in disciplinary proceedings by their professional body. International standards in human rights and medical ethics make it clear that all health professionals must be able to carry out their duties to provide assistance to those in need without fear of reprisal. The Turkish government has an obligation to support and protect health professionals as they strive to fulfil their duties to the sick and injured. We are therefore gravely concerned by these prison sentences and urge you to seek their immediate review.

Chief executive: Keith Ward

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