

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500  
USA

---

**From the  
Chairman of Council**

20 June 2013

Dear Mr President

### **Hunger Strikers at Guantánamo Bay**

The British Medical Association (BMA) is writing to express its outrage at the continued force-feeding of detainees at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base.

Force-feeding of competent adults who are involved in a voluntary hunger strike violates international standards of medical ethics, as set out in the World Medical Association's Declaration of Malta. The BMA is deeply concerned by the reported involvement of doctors in these practices at Guantánamo Bay. The role of doctors and other medical staff should be restricted to providing consensual care to detainees in accordance with internationally recognised ethical codes. The primary obligation of all doctors, whether civilian or military, is to ensure the well-being of patients and medical staff must never become punitive agents of the state. In addition, detainees must be allowed access to medical assessment by an independent doctor.

The BMA urges you to suspend immediately any medical involvement in force-feeding practices sanctioned by the US Department of Defense and to institute an urgent inquiry into how a situation involving such gross violations of international ethical codes was allowed to develop.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Mark Porter  
Chairman of BMA Council**

cc. Dr A D Hoven, President, American Medical Association

**Chief Executive/Secretary:** Tony Bourne

Mr Chuck Hagel  
Secretary of Defense  
1400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1400  
USA

---

**From the  
Chairman of Council**

20 June 2013

Dear Mr Secretary

### **Hunger Strikers at Guantánamo Bay**

The British Medical Association (BMA) is writing to express its outrage at the continued force-feeding of detainees at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base.

Force-feeding of competent adults who are involved in a voluntary hunger strike violates international standards of medical ethics, as set out in the World Medical Association's Declaration of Malta. The BMA is deeply concerned by the reported involvement of doctors in these practices at Guantánamo Bay. The role of doctors and other medical staff should be restricted to providing consensual care to detainees in accordance with internationally recognised ethical codes. The primary obligation of all doctors, whether civilian or military, is to ensure the well-being of patients and medical staff must never become punitive agents of the state. In addition, detainees must be allowed access to medical assessment by an independent doctor.

The BMA urges you to suspend immediately any medical involvement in force-feeding practices sanctioned by the US Department of Defense and to institute an urgent inquiry into how a situation involving such gross violations of international ethical codes was allowed to develop.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Mark Porter  
Chairman of BMA Council**

cc. Dr A D Hoven, President, American Medical Association

**Chief Executive/Secretary:** Tony Bourne