



Türkiye: Global Health Experts Call for Immediate Release of Dr Sebnem Fincanci

We the undersigned, representatives of the global health community, are dismayed to witness once again the harassment of our esteemed colleague and human rights defender Prof. Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı by the government of Türkiye and its judiciary.

Arbitrarily detained since 26th October, Prof. Dr. Fincancı is a world-renowned and respected academic and forensic scientist and one of the leading voices in advancing the fight against torture. President of the Turkish Medical Association (Türk Tabipleri Birliği) and board member of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT), Prof. Dr. Fincancı has been targeted by authorities due to her call for an investigation to be conducted by an independent committee in a recent highly publicised case related to Türkiye on the possible use of chemical weapons, based on her objective examination of alleged video evidence. On 27th of October, after several hours of questioning, the Ankara Court ordered the pre-trial detention of our colleague on accusations of “making propaganda for a terrorist organisation.”

We stand in solidarity with our esteemed colleague and friend Şebnem and we support her call for an independent investigation on the alleged use of chemical weapons; we are appalled to observe once more that Şebnem is a victim of judicial harassment for exercising her ethical duties, her professional independence, and her freedom of expression.

We urgently demand to the authorities the immediate and unconditional release of Prof. Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı and for all charges against her to be dropped. Her shocking detention and arrest constitute yet another attempt to silence independent voices in Turkey. We call on the judiciary to stop using anti-terrorism laws to target dissenting views and to instead support health professionals in the exercise of their professional duties.

Further, we are extremely concerned by the smear campaign to which Şebnem has been subjected due to her work as physician and as President of the Turkish Medical Association since she was elected to the position in September 2020, simply for being an outspoken voice in reminding the authorities of their obligation to duly respect fundamental human rights.

Further, we are extremely concerned with the present crackdown on the independence of the Turkish Medical Association. Following Şebnem’s arrest, the Ankara Chief Prosecutor’s office has ordered the dismissal of the Medical Association’s governing Council and is attempting to force new elections in order to silence its members critical voices. The independence and autonomy of the Medical Association are universal values of the health profession that have been upheld for thousands of years and play a critical role in countries of ensuring the highest quality of care for individuals and the public health.

We, the undersigned, reiterate our call on the Turkish authorities to immediately release our colleague Şebnem, to end the judicial harassment against her and stop the procedure against the legitimately elected Council of the Turkish Medical Association.

IFEG (Independent Forensic Expert Group) members:

Prof. Djordje Alempijevic MD, PhD; **Prof. Resmiye Oral**, MD, FAAP; **Prof. Duarte Nuno Vieira**; **Prof. Jason Payne-James**, LLM, MSc, FFLM, FRCS, FRCP, FCSFS, FFCFM(RCPA), RCPATHME ; **Prof. Ravindra Fernando**; **Prof. Vincent Iacopino**, MD, PhD; **Dr. Pierre Duterte**, MD; **Dr. Michele Heisler**, MD, MPA; **Prof. em. Jørgen Lange Thomsen**; **Dr. Bettina Steiner Birmanns** MD; **Dr. Jens Simon Modvig**; **Dr. Adriaan van Es**, MD; **Dr. Rohini J. Haar**, MD, MPH; **Prof. Peter Vanezis**, MB, ChB, MD, PhD, FRCPATH, FRCP(Glasg), FFLM, FCSFS, FAFMS(UK), DMJ(Path); **Prof. Peter Mygind Leth**; **Dr. Jose Quiroga**; **Dr. Marie Brasholt**; **Ms. Felicitas Treue**; **Dr. Clifford Perrera**; **Dr. Steen Holger Hansen**; **Dr. Hernán Reyes**; **Dr. Sidsel Rogde**; **Dr. Sana Hamzeh**; **Dr. Lilla Hárđi**; **Dr. Jonathan Beynon**; **PD Dr. med. Matthis Schick**; **Dr. Türkcán Baykal**, MD, PhD; **Prof. Rusudan Beriashvili**, MD, PhD; **Dr. Önder Özkalıpcı**, MD, Forensic Physician; **Dr. Hege Cathrine Luytkis**; **Dr. Agapios Terzidis**, MD; **Dr. Máximo Alberto Duque Piedrahíta**; **Prof. Antti Sajantila** MD, PhD.

Organisations:

Independent Forensic Expert Group: www.irct.org/ifeg

International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims: www.irct.org

Physicians for Human Rights: www.phr.org

Coimbra University Centre for Humanitarian and Human Rights Forensic Research and Training: www.igc.fd.uc.pt

IFHHRO | Medical Human Rights Network: www.ifhhro.org

Restart Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture: www.facebook.com/restartcenter

Colectivo Contra la Tortura y la Impunidad: www.es-la.facebook.com/CctiColectivo

Cordelia Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Torture Victims: www.cordelia.hu/en

Dignity-Danish Institute Against Torture: www.dignity.dk/en

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