

SYRIA HEALTH CRISIS

APPEAL FOR ACTION

This document advises on letter-writing action that can be taken by health professionals in connection with the Amnesty International report, *Health Crisis: Syrian government targets the wounded and health workers*, which will be launched on 25 October 2011.

More than 2600 people have been killed since the current unrest began in Syria in March 2011. Scores others have been injured. While serious injuries require prompt and adequate medical attention, it is precisely at such moments of greatest need that healthcare services in Syria have become another casualty of the internal disturbances: vulnerable to disruption, interference, and attack.

This report provides a compelling picture of how Syrian authorities have turned hospitals and medical staff into instruments of repression by blocking access to healthcare for people wounded during protests and other incidents related to the unrest; and preventing health professionals from treating such patients freely and without fear of reprisal.

It is based on research conducted in August and September 2011 in the form of interviews with individuals wounded during the ongoing disturbances; relatives of those wounded and subsequently detained; relatives of people with firearm and other injuries related to the unrest; and health workers, including surgeons, doctors, nurses and other hospital employees.

Amnesty International findings show that security personnel have subjected wounded people to torture and other ill treatment; acted with blatant disregard for hospital standards regarding the safety and welfare of patients; and interfered in the medical care of those wounded who are perceived as government opponents. Also, wounded patients in at least four state-run hospitals have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment at the hands of hospital staff, including some doctors and nurses; in some cases, patients have faced discrimination in access to and quality of healthcare.

Health workers have been among the thousands of people who have been arrested by the army and security forces and detained incommunicado where torture and other ill-treatment are reported to be rife either for treating people injured during the unrest without reporting them to the authorities or because they are suspected of peaceful activities, such as participating in peaceful demonstrations and providing information about human rights violations.

Such actions flagrantly violate Syria's obligations under international human rights law. Syrians have the right to life, security and liberty and an adequate standard of living, including medical care, regardless of their political views.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY TO:

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH, THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE:

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 NOVEMBER 2011

Thank you for all your support and any action you can take!