

ההסתדרות הרפואית בישראל
ISRAEL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



Dr Leonid Eidelman
President
Israeli Medical Association

Prof A.C Kruseman
President
Royal Dutch Medical Association
P.O. Box 20051
3502 LB, Utrecht
Netherlands

Dear Prof Kruseman,

I would like to thank you for contacting the Israeli Medical Association (IMA) and highlighting your concerns regarding the report published by the Physicians for Human Rights Israel and the Public Committee against Torture in Israel. The IMA has already been in contact with the authors regarding this report; please see the letter referenced 00196-2011 enclosed.

We wish to emphasize that the Israeli Medical Association has clear guidelines which unequivocally prohibit the participation of physicians in torture, or the "approval" of torture and which require that physicians report any suspicions in this regard.

The IMA is working and will continue to work towards implementing and assimilating the prohibition of physician participation in interrogations and torture, in accordance with the ethical code of doctors in Israel. Our ethical code is distributed to all doctors in Israel, is available to read on the IMA website and is given as a gift to all medical students at the beginning of their clinical studies.

The IMA has clear position papers on issues of human rights which are publicized in our journals and on our websites. These include: the prohibition of physician participation in interrogations and torture, the restraint of prisoners and detainees in hospitals, force feeding hunger strikers and solitary confinement. In addition, the IMA Ethics Bureau, as well as the IMA Scientific Societies, run lectures and conference on human rights issues.

Furthermore, the IMA has established a hotline where physicians (especially, but not limited to, those working in the prison system) could submit anonymous reports of alleged human rights violations or receive guidance regarding ethical dilemmas in this area. The IMA position has always been to prefer that doctors working for the prison service be regulated by the Ministry of Health and not the Prison Service, in order to limit these dilemmas.

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The IMA has and continues to work with the IDF Medical Corps in the area of human rights. We previously held a joint human rights training course for medical officers and have recently approached the current Chief Medical Officer to discuss renewing this training program.

Unfortunately the report ignores the progress which was made at a recent meeting at the Israeli Ministry of Health, of which the IMA was among the initiators. During this meeting, in which the IMA participated along with the Israeli Prison Services and PHR, it was decided that the Ministry of Health would establish a monitoring committee to which physicians could report any concerns about suspected violations or acts of torture, which would then be investigated and any required action taken. We are proud to state that the chairman of our Ethics Bureau is an active member of this committee.

We can only regret the lack of reference to these points in the report, as well as the incorrect interpretation adopted regarding the position papers of the IMA.

Finally, we cannot agree with the statement in the report that Israeli medical professionals are regularly involved in torture or abuse. The IMA will continue to inform doctors about their obligation to report any suspected human rights violations, and to restate the requirement that they must continue to conduct themselves appropriately.

I thank you again for raising your concerns with us and assure you that the IMA continues to do everything possible with the tools available to us.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Leonid Eidelman
President
Israeli Medical Association

Enc: Letter –Reference: 00196-2011 - 30th June 2011



30th June 2011
Reference: 00196-2011

FAO
Irit Blass
Public Committee Against Torture

Anat Litvin
Physicians for Human Rights

Re: Draft Joint Report of the Public Committee Against Torture and PHR

Reference: letter R / 115

We received the draft report attached to the letter referenced above, and our response follows:

1. As you are well aware, the IMA is working on and will continue to work towards implementing the prohibition of the participation of physicians in interrogations and torture, in accordance with the ethical code of doctors in Israel.
2. We continue to emphasize that the IMA is not an investigative organization but is rather a guiding body, one in which our clear guidelines unequivocally prohibit physicians participating in torture or the "approval" of torture and require that physicians report any suspicions in this regard.
3. Although the report ignores the progress made at the meeting held at the Ministry of Health, we believe that the basis of the agreements, which require that doctors report any suspicion of the use of torture, are important and fundamental in providing an adequate response to this issue. As you may recall, the IMA was among the initiators of the meeting with the Israeli Prison Service (IPS) at the Ministry of Health and offered concrete suggestions that led to the decisions taken.
4. At the above meeting, dated 16/02/11, it was decided that the Ministry of Health would establish a committee on the subject of suspected of torture, that physicians could report directly to the committee and they in turn would forward the reports for investigation and response. The Ministry of Health also announced that they would examine the need to issue a circular and / or regulations that would include the methods of reporting available to the doctor and promote the cooperation of the various security bodies.
5. We can only regret the lack of reference to these decisions in the report, as well as the incorrect interpretation which you chose to adopt regarding to the position papers of the IMA.
6. Our position was and remains, that it is preferable for doctors working for the prison service to be regulated by the Ministry of Health and not the IPS.
7. The IMA is committed to providing protection to doctors, who may have been exposed to repercussions in their workplace by virtue of their submitting a report.



8. The IMA cannot agree with the statement that medical professionals are regularly involved in torture or abuse, and we will continue to do everything possible with the tools available to us, to inform doctors about their obligation to report and to conduct themselves appropriately.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Leonid Eidelman
President
Israeli Medical Association

Cc: Dr. Boaz Lev - Ministry of Health