



EUROPEAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION SOLIDARITY FOR IRANIAN HEALTHCARE WORKERS AND THE PROBLEMS THEY ARE CURRENTLY FACING

The European Medical Association has been urged by many parties to express its solidarity with Iranian healthcare workers who have been subjected to threats, pressure, and violence simply for carrying out their mission in accordance with ethical principles.

We are saddened and cannot fail to express our dismay and disgust at what we read in BMJ 2026; 392 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.s228> (Published February 3, 2026), which we report almost in its entirety.

We write to express our grave concern regarding the escalating and systematic violations of medical neutrality in Iran.

Credible and independent reports indicate that doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers have been arrested, tortured, threatened with execution, and otherwise persecuted solely for providing medical care to civilians injured during recent nationwide protests. These professionals are being punished for fulfilling their fundamental ethical and professional duty to treat the wounded without discrimination.

Multiple sources document deliberate state actions to obstruct access to medical care, intimidate healthcare personnel, and militarise hospitals in order to suppress evidence of state violence. Injured protesters have reportedly been forcibly removed from healthcare facilities by security forces, denied essential treatment, or killed in what appear to be execution-style actions within medical settings. Such acts constitute a direct assault on the sanctity of healthcare spaces and represent serious violations of international humanitarian law, medical neutrality, and the core principles of medical ethics.

An investigation by The Guardian describes widespread disappearances of bodies, mass burials, and testimony from medical professionals and morgue workers suggesting a death toll far higher than officially acknowledged. The report depicts a pervasive climate of fear in which injured individuals avoid seeking medical care due to the risk of arrest or death, while healthcare workers face severe reprisals for treating protest-related injuries.¹

Further reporting by IranWire details explicit threats issued by Iranian security agencies to physicians, warning them not to treat injured protesters or instructing them to report patients to the authorities. This places clinicians in an untenable ethical position, directly contradicting the principles of patient confidentiality and the duty of care. Additional cases of detained doctors and healthcare workers have been documented by independent media, underscoring the systematic targeting of medical professionals for adhering to their ethical obligations.

The criminalisation of healthcare workers for providing life-saving care represents a profound breach of the principles that underpin the medical profession globally. Physicians and healthcare workers must never be punished for preserving life and alleviating suffering. Silence from the international medical community risks normalising these abuses and eroding the universality of medical ethics.

Medical journals, professional bodies, and healthcare organisations worldwide have a responsibility to unequivocally condemn not only the killing and injury of unarmed civilians, but also the persecution of healthcare workers who attempt to care for them. Defending medical neutrality is not a political position; it is a moral, ethical, and professional imperative.

We hope that this situation will come to an end as soon as possible and that the mission of doctors and other healthcare workers can be carried out in Iran with the serenity and peace of mind that such an important mission, which is to save human lives, deserves the utmost respect.

Vincenzo Costigliola, EMA President
And the EMA Board

Brussels, 12 February 2026