

His Excellency Major General
Mohamad Ibrahim al-Shaar
Ministry of Interior
'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar
Street
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Fax : 963 113110554

Dear Minister,

I am a German Police Officer and writing to express my concerns regarding reports of serious human rights violations reflecting evident contempt for the medical needs of wounded persons which have been committed by Syrian security forces during the ongoing unrest that broke out in Syria in March 2011 and to urge you to take concrete steps to address these concerns.

In its latest report Health Crisis: Syrian government targets the wounded and health workers, which was published on 25 October 2011, Amnesty International has found that security personnel are reported to have interfered in the work of paramedics and health professionals providing treatment to the wounded by obstructing and unnecessarily delaying ambulances sent to pick up the wounded; threatening paramedics and Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers with violence; preventing some patients from receiving medical scans prescribed by doctors; entering operating rooms during or shortly after surgical operations; and removing wounded patients from hospitals - including operating rooms - without showing arrest warrants and without consulting their doctors.

In addition, the military and security forces have occupied some hospitals making it unsafe for wounded patients to receive treatment there. According to Amnesty International's information, wounded persons are subjected to intense beatings upon arrest and when they arrive at security-run detention facilities. Moreover, health workers who seek to provide medical care to the wounded in conformity with the principles of recognized medical ethics have also been targeted for arrest and detention. The arrests of such health workers are reportedly based on their failing to comply with government rules obliging them to report wounded patients to the authorities. Doctors, nurses and other health workers complying with recognized medical ethics are unable to report patients to the authorities, as they know that this will place the patients at risk of torture. In some cases, we understand that such health workers now face prosecution for participating in anti-government protests because of their efforts to uphold the interests of wounded patients and to abide by medical ethics.

In light of these very disturbing reports, I urge you to:

- immediately and unconditionally release all wounded people and health professionals arbitrarily detained unless they are charged with internationally recognizable criminal offences;
- instruct all members of the military and security forces to prioritize the treatment of wounded individuals over interrogation and to treat such individuals humanely;
- allow, without any interference, medical treatment of these and other patients;
- hold to account anyone proved to have delayed, obstructed or interfered in the work of health workers providing treatment to the wounded.

Yours sincerely,