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ASOCIATIA EUROPEANA A MEDICILOR DIN SPITALE

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## Attacks on Medical Personnel Causing Increasing Concern

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(17.03.2011) Doctors' leaders from the World Medical Association are becoming increasingly alarmed about the growing threats to physicians and medical personnel caught up in uprisings and mass protests throughout the world.

Physicians involved in treating the wounded in several recent protests have been killed or attacked. The latest reports of assaults on physicians have come from physicians in Bahrain, where according to Amnesty International, the attacks were unprovoked and unjustifiable and in breach of international law enforcement standards. Together with Amnesty, the WMA is calling on the Bahrain authorities for these attacks on health professionals to be investigated fully and independently, and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

Dr. Wonchat Subhachaturas, President of the WMA said: 'We are receiving an increasing number of reports from the fighting in Libya and elsewhere in the Middle East, from Mexico, India and from Afghanistan, of medical personnel and facilities being attacked. The WMA has constantly condemned such attacks as intolerable and against various international Conventions and WMA Declarations.

'Physicians have an ethical duty to care for their patients, and governments have a duty to ensure that appropriate conditions exist to allow them to do so.'

At its Council meeting in Sydney, Australia next month (April 7-9) the WMA will debate what more is needed to protect physicians and other medical personnel during times of armed conflict. One proposal being put forward is that there should be an international systematic mechanism for reporting and documenting acts of violence against medical personnel and facilities.

Dr. Subhachaturas added: 'Physicians have a clear duty to care for the sick and injured whether in peacetime or in times of armed conflict. WMA Regulations state clearly that physicians must be granted access to patients, medical facilities and equipment and the protection needed to carry out their professional activities freely. Necessary assistance, including unimpeded passage and complete professional

independence, must be granted.

'However, we will now be considering whether more should be done by the international community to collect evidence of assaults on medical personnel and facilities to enable those responsible to be prosecuted.'

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