



World Medical Association
Dr. Otmar Kloiber, secretary-general
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Via e-mail: otmar.kloiber@wma.net

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Physicians detained in Belarus, violations of the Right to Health

Dear dr. Kloiber, dear Otmar,

We have been informed by Professor Robert van Voren of Human Rights in Mental Health-GIP, who is very well informed about the situation in Belarus, about the arrest and detention of over 60 medical specialists in the midst of the serious repressive measures by the dictatorial regime of President Lukaschenko.

One of them is psychiatrist Sergei Popov, chairman of the Ethics Committee of the Belarus Psychiatric Association. He contracted Covid-19 in detention and is now in hospital in serious condition.

This happens in a time of overwhelming repression and mass demonstrations against the regime of Lukaschenko, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is no reliable evidence that the detained colleagues are culpable of criminal actions.

The detention of medical personnel is clearly extremely detrimental to the health of the population, very much so in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The detentions are therefore a violation of the Right to Health, various WMA declarations and the Geneva Conventions that stress the immunity of medical services including in internal conflicts and unrest.

We call on you and the Council of the WMA to take appropriate action in the defense of our colleagues in Belarus.

With kind regards,

Adriaan van Es, secretary IFHHRO

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Adriaan van Es' with a horizontal line underneath.

C.C.:

Prof Afzal Javed, President, World Psychiatric Association
Dr RACL Héman, President KNMG (The Netherlands)