



WMA Declaration of Tokyo - Guidelines for Physicians Concerning Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Relation to Detention and Imprisonment

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PREAMBLE

It is the privilege of the physician to practise medicine in the service of humanity, to preserve and restore bodily and mental health without distinction as to persons, to comfort and to ease the suffering of his or her patients. The utmost respect for human life is to be maintained even under threat, and no use made of any medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity.

For the purpose of this Declaration, torture is defined as the deliberate, systematic or wanton infliction of physical or mental suffering by one or more persons acting alone or on the orders of any authority, to force another person to yield information, to make a confession, or for any other reason.

DECLARATION

1. The physician shall not countenance, condone or participate in the practice of torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading procedures, whatever the offense of which the victim of such procedures is suspected, accused or guilty, and whatever the victim's beliefs or motives, and in all situations, including armed conflict and civil strife.
2. The physician shall not provide any premises, instruments, substances or knowledge to facilitate the practice of torture or other forms of cruel,

inhuman or degrading treatment or to diminish the ability of the victim to resist such treatment.

3. When providing medical assistance to detainees or prisoners who are, or who could later be, under interrogation, physicians should be particularly careful to ensure the confidentiality of all personal medical information. A breach of the Geneva Conventions shall in any case be reported by the physician to relevant authorities.

The physician shall not use nor allow to be used, as far as he or she can, medical knowledge or skills, or health information specific to individuals, to facilitate or otherwise aid any interrogation, legal or illegal, of those individuals.

4. The physician shall not be present during any procedure during which torture or any other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is used or threatened.
5. A physician must have complete clinical independence in deciding upon the care of a person for whom he or she is medically responsible. The physician's fundamental role is to alleviate the distress of his or her fellow human beings, and no motive, whether personal, collective or political, shall prevail against this higher purpose.
6. Where a prisoner refuses nourishment and is considered by the physician as capable of forming an unimpaired and rational judgment concerning the consequences of such a voluntary refusal of nourishment, he or she shall not be fed artificially. The decision as to the capacity of the prisoner to form such a judgment should be confirmed by at least one other independent physician. The consequences of the refusal of nourishment shall be explained by the physician to the prisoner.
7. The World Medical Association will support, and should encourage the international community, the National Medical Associations and fellow physicians to support, the physician and his or her family in the face of threats or reprisals resulting from a refusal to condone the use of torture

or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

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Declaration of Tokyo

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It is the physician's duty to heal, alleviate suffering, provide comfort, and act in the best interests of his or her patients. These responsibilities apply any time a physician interacts with a person by applying his or her medical knowledge. The World Medical Association was founded in September 1947, shortly after the Nuremberg trials, where the abuses of medicine in concentration camps – including brutal acts of medical experimentation and torture - and euthanasia activities of Nazi Germany were brought to the world's attention. Although the scale and scope of what occurred during World War II are extreme, the abuse of medical knowledge still exists in many parts of the world.

There is a clear line between medicine for the benefit of the person and the abuse of medicine. However, physicians may find themselves in a difficult situation in cases where the state uses or condones torture or other harmful practices and physicians are asked, or forced, to attend to the victims. While physicians have an obligation to diagnose and treat victims of torture, they are ethically prohibited from conducting any evaluation, or providing information or treatment, that may facilitate the future or further conduct of torture. Such actions constitute physician participation in torture, which is not only unethical, but also facilitates the acceptance of such procedures, and ultimately destroys patients' trust in the medical profession.

The [Istanbul Protocol](#), published by the United Nations, is a manual for physicians and other health professionals that defines their role in identifying, diagnosing, treating and rehabilitating torture victims. The WMA and several of its members co-authored the Istanbul Protocol and proactively support its distribution and use.

WMA Current Policy & Action

- [Declaration of Tokyo](#). Guidelines for Physicians Concerning Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Relation to Detention and Imprisonment
- [Declaration of Malta on Hunger Strikers](#)

- [Declaration of Hamburg](#) Concerning Support for Medical Doctors Refusing to Participate in, or to Condone, the Use of Torture or Other Forms of Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment
- [Resolution on the Responsibility of Physicians in the Documentation of Acts of Torture or Cruel or Inhuman or Degrading Treatment](#)
- WMA course on Prison-Medicine on-line-version
<http://www.wma.net/en/20activities/20humanrights/30doctorsprison/index.html>
- WMA course on Prison-Medicine - Order CD-ROM version in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Turkish, Russian (For physicians attending patients in prisons only)
- Please see also [human rights section](#)

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