



## **Open letter**

Mr Juan Orlando Hernandez  
President of the Republic of Honduras  
Presidential House  
Boulevard Juan Pablo II  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
[info@presidencia.gob.hn](mailto:info@presidencia.gob.hn)

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Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the World Medical Association (WMA), the global federation of National Medical Associations representing millions of physicians worldwide. Acting on behalf of patients and physicians, the WMA endeavours to achieve the highest possible standards of medical care, ethics, education and health-related human rights for all people. As such, the WMA plays a key role in promoting good practice, medical ethics and medical accountability internationally. The Association supports doctors at risk worldwide.

The purpose of this letter relates to the national strike started on May 30 in Honduras against the health and education reforms. Doctors and teachers protesters fear that those reforms lead to mass dismissals in the public sector and constitute a first step towards the privatization of education and health services in the country.

We are very concerned to note the extreme repression of these demonstrations by the police, charging demonstrators brutally and using tear gaz. We are also informed that the physical safety and life of leaders and members of the board of directors of the medical school of Honduras have been threatened.

The WMA condemns in the strongest terms the use of violence and threats against protesters. Such acts constitute a severe violation of international human rights standards, including the freedom of expression and assembly as stated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that Honduras ratified in 1997.

Moreover, we deplore the fact that physicians' leaders are exposed to threats to their life. Such attitude can only accelerate severely tensions, preventing a serene context for a constructive dialogue with protesters. Beyond the grave perpetration of human rights violations, the use of violence is all the more absurd that it depreciates the social climate in the country, precisely where the government aims to intervene through those reforms in the health and education sectors.

We therefore support the recent call from the Latin American and Caribbean Medical Confederation (CONFEMEL) to the authorities of Honduras to strengthen the national health system and protect the right to health of the population. Accordingly, we urge you to take all the required measures as a matter of urgency to:

- Bring to an immediate end the use of violence against protesters and protect their constitutional right of protest;
- Conduct an independent and impartial investigation into the use of violence and bringing to justice security force found to have ill-treated demonstrators or other members of the public.
- Open a dialogue with demonstrators, including physicians' leaders, to seek consensus for a prompt solution to the problem based on their claims.

I thank you for your attention.



Dr Leonid Eidelman, President  
World Medical Association