Mr Süleyman Soylu

Devlet Mahallesi

İsmet İnönü Blv. No: 4, 06580

Çankaya/Ankara, Turkey

***Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***

Dear Minister,

On 24 January 2018, the **Turkish Medical Association (TTB)** issued a statement calling for an end to the Turkish armed forces’ operation in Afrin, northern Syria. The ongoing military offensive began on 20 January 2018 and is directed at the Kurdish Autonomous Administration’s military wing, the YPG (the People’s Protection Units) in Afrin, northern Syria. Turkish government cites YPG’s links to the armed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), a proscribed organisation which the Turkish armed forces have been involved in armed clashes with for decades.

Following the publication of their statement, the Ankara head office of the TTB received a large number of threats of violence by email and phone calls, as well as on social media which included anonymous threats that the office would be invaded. Individual members of TTB’s executive committee have also been targeted on social media, threatened with physical violence (e.g. ‘we will eradicate you’), and called ‘traitors’. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also attacked the TTB during a speech on 26 January 2018, calling them the ‘so-called Turkish Medical Association, the terrorist lovers’. On the same day, two trade unions known to be close to the government, Sağlık-Sen and Memur-Sen, called a protest outside the offices of the Istanbul branch of TTB for Monday 29 January. As a precaution, TTB evacuated its Ankara head office on 26 January, and has requested Ankara governorship to provide protection to the organisation and its members.

I am hereby expressing my concerns for the safety of members and staff at TTB’s offices in Ankara, Istanbul and elsewhere in Turkey and call on you

* **to open a prompt, thorough, impartial and independent investigation into the calls for the invasion of TTB offices and threats of violence;**
* **to provide immediate and effective protection for TTB’s members, staff and offices, as requested by the organisation.**

Yours sincerely,

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**Copy to: Embassy of Turkey, Lombachweg 33, P.O. Box 34, 3000 Berne 15, Fax: 031 352 88 19**

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