

## Petition launched against IMA and Dr Blachar

**O**n the 21<sup>st</sup> of May a petition, signed by 725 physicians across the world, was sent to WMA Council Chair Dr Edward Hill and the Council members, “publicly protest[ing] and appeal[ing] against the recent appointment of Dr. Yoram Blachar, longstanding President of the Israeli Medical Association, as President of the World Medical Association.”

The letter reports allegations of torture, although through the years no specific names were mentioned and so there was no way to check the veracity of the claims. On the one instance that names were mentioned, in a report of the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), Professor Avinoam Reches, Chair of the IMA’s Ethics Committee, personally spoke with each and every physician cited in the report that he was able to locate. (Details were incompletely or inconsistently

listed in the report and so it was not possible to reach them all). Most were never employed by, nor had any connection to, the Israeli Prison Services. The three who were employed there, all vigorously denied any involvement in interrogations, torture or medical approval for the above.

The letter further states that Dr. Blachar has made statements which were untrue on at least 10 occasions in the Lancet and the BMJ, although no basis is made for these claims other than the opinion of the authors. Finally, it goes so far as to accuse the IMA ethics chairman, Prof. Avinoam Reches, of being personally involved in torture.

Whatever political views one may hold, we firmly believe that politics has no place in medicine. Medicine is meant to serve as a bridge, not a divide. The intermingling of medicine and politics is dangerous,

particularly when opinions, presented as facts, are presented on the pages of medical journals. Legitimate protests are fine; the cynical exploitation of medicine in advancing political and/or anti-semitic agendas crosses the line. We view the current situation as extremely dangerous for the future of Israeli medicine, of academic freedom and international cooperation.

On June 15<sup>th</sup> the Israeli Medical Association responded to this with a petition against anti-Israel activity and campaigns in the medical press. 5,264 physicians from all over the globe signed this petition stating their support for Dr. Blachar as WMA President and for the Israeli Medical Association. We thank of all of you who participated and showed your support for Dr. Blachar as well as for medicine unfettered by political considerations.

**Dear Colleague,**



Thank you for supporting Israeli medicine during these difficult times.

It is both disturbing and worrying that anti-Israel sentiments have found their way into the field of medicine. Political views should be discussed, but not within the framework of a profession whose supreme value is the health and well-being of all human beings. The Israeli medical community has much to be proud of in this regard.

We are grateful to you for taking part in the struggle against the politicization of medicine and the degradation of the Israeli medical profession in the eyes of the

global medical community. By signing the Israel Medical Association's petition you have demonstrated your support and solidarity. Thank you for taking the time to assist your colleagues here in Israel.

**Thank you for your continued support.**

**Sincerely,**

› **Dr. Yoram Blachar**  
President, Israeli Medical Association  
President, World Medical Association

› **Dr. Tzaki Siev-Ner**  
Chairman, IMA World Fellowship