

CARTE

BLANCHE

H.U.B



THE FREE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE: A RIGHT AND A DUTY, EVEN UNDER A TOTALITARIAN REGIME

Hamid Ghareh Hassanlou, an Iranian radiologist, has just been sentenced to death in his country for having come to the aid of peaceful protestors opposed to the regime. Such a threat of reprisals for exercising the medical profession is intolerable.

Signed by Sadeghi-Meibodi Niloufar, Director of the Radiology Department; Jean-Michel Hougardy, H.U.B. Medical Director; Renaud Witmeur, H.U.B. General Director; Nicolas Mavroudakos, Professor of Neurology and Dean of the ULB Faculty of Medicine.

We have learned with consternation of the death sentence passed on Dr Hamid Ghareh Hassanlou, a radiologist in Iran, for having come to the aid of peaceful protestors opposed to the regime. This death sentence is a serious violation of the values of humanism and freedom of thought that we strongly defend.

As human beings and more particularly as doctors, nurses and employees of the Brussels University Hospital (H.U.B.), a grouping of the Erasmus Hospital, the Children's Hospital and the Jules Bordet Institute, we cannot remain silent in the face of such a decision! It is our duty to protect the life and dignity of each individual.

The death penalty, used as a tool of repression by a totalitarian regime, is cruel and deeply inhumane. It sows terror, banishes freedom of thought, kills humanism and adds to suffering and grief.

We are also shocked to observe that the Iranian Government is using hospitals and universities to search for opponents, using ambulances as a means of transport for the forces of repression and giving prison sentences to aid workers (with the emblematic case of a 28-year sentence for Olivier Vandecasteele as part of a macabre attempt at "hostage diplomacy"). We cannot remain silent and appeal for the mobilisation of all.

An affront to fundamental values

Freedom of thought should be a fundamental right for each individual. Every individual has the right to speak freely and to express his or her convictions without fear of reprisals. Everybody should have the right to practice their profession of nurse, teacher or academic without violation of their fundamental rights. The right to health is equally essential. Sentencing to death a doctor, whose action symbolises the profound meaning of his profession while at the same time defending the values of humanism and freedom of thought, is a dramatic affront to the most elementary fundamental values.

As staff and directors at the H.U.B., we protest strongly against any action that opposes humanism, freedom of thought and the very meaning of the act of caring for others. All persons, whatever their origins, their beliefs or their culture, are entitled to health and access to hospitals that must remain inviolable in all circumstances. We are united in defending these unalienable rights and demand respect for the life and dignity of each individual.