



רופאים לזכויות אדם
PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
إطباء لحقوق الإنسان

January 25, 2017

To: Mr. Moshe Bar Siman Tov, Director General, Ministry of Health

Dear Sir,

Re: Request to revoke Prof. Mor Yosef's medical license

We call upon you to revoke the Medical license of Prof. Shlomo Mor Yosef since as the head of the Population and Immigration Authority – a position central to executing the policy of deporting asylum seekers living in Israel – Prof. Mor Yosef acts in a manner that endangers the health of the most vulnerable members of society, a choice that indicates that compassion – a fundamental principle in the medical profession – no longer guides his actions.

Recently, Dr. Tami Karni, Chair of Israel Medical Association, published a document highlighting the unique role of physicians, as professionals who may “...find themselves in the middle between state authorities, the employer and other entities and the individual patient. These situations are defined as ones of ‘dual loyalty’.” The document rightly claims that the physician is committed above all to the patient and that particular care must be taken in this regard when the latter belongs to a disadvantaged population. Moreover, the document emphasizes that a doctor may not confirm a person's health status for detention, and may not take part in any activity involving torture, mistreatment or humiliation.

The deportation to Rwanda of Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers who have been living in Israel for about a decade now, is an obvious violation of these principles. As the testimonies of those who already left Israel to Rwanda indicate, Rwanda is not a safe haven for asylum seekers coming from Israel. In the absence of legal status, work permit and access to basic social services, they are forced to continue their journey of refugeehood. The weakest among the asylum seekers – those with severe illness, physical disability or mental disorder – need help, certainly not deportation that exposes them to continued victimization.

This is a fundamental contravention of the Oath of the Hebrew Physician that calls upon us to “aid the sick irrespective of whether they are converts or gentiles or citizens, whether they are ignominious or respected” and of the principle of protecting our patients from harm and injustice.

In a previous letter addressed to Prof. Shlomo Mor Yosef and hitherto signed by some 1000 physicians and other health professionals, we emphasized our special role:

We meet many asylum seekers as part of our work in hospitals and clinics, and are well aware of the external restrictions – lack of medical insurance and harsh living conditions – that often deny them comprehensive care. We do our best to treat them with devotion and listen to their painful life histories. This acquaintance is enough to prevent us from remaining silent regarding the decision to deport them – one that also means that our efforts to heal them have been made in vain. As physicians, nurses and health workers, we cannot stand by and watch the physical and mental health, and

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the very survival of our patients are placed at risk. Our silence would be tantamount to consenting to a human rights violation of historic proportions.

Although Prof. Mor Yosef does not perform his job at the Population and Immigration Authority as a physician, the very fact that a physician bears responsibility for such actions tarnishes the entire profession. Mor Yosef needs to choose between his job and his vocation. According to Bloche & Marks¹

The therapeutic mission is the profession's primary role and the core of physicians' professional identity. If this mission and identity are to be preserved, there are some things doctors must not do.

Based on these premises, PHRI calls to revoke Prof. Mor Yosef's medical license, as a major factor in a policy that endangers the life and health of the asylum seekers. In these dire times, the medical community as a whole must make a determined stand and face the challenges of migration with human courage and offer a humane and moral framework that will allow those living among us to exercise their right to health and dignity.

Sincerely

Hadas Ziv,
Public Outreach
& Ethics Committee

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Bloche & Marks, When Doctors Go to War, New England Journal, Jan. 6 2005¹