



August 27, 2010

His Excellency Dr. Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Rabeeah
The Minister of Health
Ministry of Health Building
King Abdulaziz Street
Ministries Area
Riyadh 11176
Saudi Arabia

Your Excellency:

The American College of Physicians (ACP) and Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) would like to indicate our support for those Saudi Arabian physicians and hospitals who have refused to participate in the intentional infliction of a spinal cord injury as retribution for an alleged attack by an individual that resulted in another person's paralysis. Consistent with the principle of nonmaleficence in medical ethics -- to do no harm -- we are confident that the use of medical facilities, procedures and personnel to maim human beings is, under all circumstances including the punishment of convicted criminals, abhorrent to physicians everywhere.

According to the ACP Ethics Manual, "the physician must respect the dignity of all persons" and "under no circumstances is it ethical for a physician to ... participate in or tolerate cruel or unusual punishment or disciplinary activities." Physicians are ethically obligated to comply with the international laws regarding the treatment of prisoners, including Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

Our responsibility as physicians is to relieve suffering and not inflict it. Our obligation as professional societies is to speak out against physician participation in practices that breach medical ethics.

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cc: Islamic Medical Association of North America
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