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## You Helped Free Turkey's Leading Human Rights Defender

Even as we closely monitor the landscape in Turkey following the attempted coup, we are thrilled to report that, with your help, Turkey's leading human rights defender, our partner Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı, was released from prison in June after being arrested by Turkish authorities on trumped-up terrorism charges.

Dr. Fincancı, president of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, and two colleagues were detained for defending the editorial independence of *Özgür Gündem*, a paper aligned with Turkey's Kurdish minority and frequently critical of the Turkish government. Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) helped to lead a global campaign advocating for their release, and they were subsequently freed on bail. With your help, we're continuing to pressure the Turkish government to drop all criminal charges against the three. The renewed crackdown on civil society following the coup attempt is a growing concern and we'll keep you updated about any implications for our colleagues.

But that's not all. Your support also brought a landmark victory in international justice. In March, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia found former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic guilty of genocide, war crimes,

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## 2 You Helped Free Turkey's Leading Human Rights Defender

*continued from front cover*



*Turkish human rights activist Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı, who was released from prison after PHR helped lead an international outcry over her detention. Photo: Umit Unuvar/Human Rights Foundation of Turkey*

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and crimes against humanity during the Bosnian war. PHR led a team of forensic scientists 20 years ago in the exhumation of the mass graves at Srebrenica, where 8,000 Muslim men and boys were brutally executed under Karadzic's watch, and we contributed evidence and testimony to the proceedings against Karadzic.

We are gratified to see justice finally being served, and are grateful to our supporters for helping us lead efforts to document atrocities in the former Yugoslavia.

Most crucially, this ruling delivers a clear message to world leaders like Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who have committed war crimes against their own people with impunity: those who believe in justice never give up.

Thank you for standing with us.

Donna McKay  
PHR Executive Director



*PHR Executive Director Donna McKay*

*Cover photo:*

*Protesters hold photos of Turkish human rights activist Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı, Erol Önderoğlu of Reporters Without Borders, and writer Ahmet Nesin, who were jailed by Turkish authorities for defending press freedom.*

*Photo: Ozan Kose/AFP/Getty Images*

# Documenting War Crimes, One Hospital Attack at a Time

Your Voice Will Bring Perpetrators to Justice

As we go to press, the Syrian government's relentless destruction of the country's medical community continues unabated: more than 750 doctors and health workers have been killed and 265 facilities have been attacked since the start of the conflict in 2011. More than half of Syria's doctors have joined the millions of people who have fled the country, and those who remain struggle under extreme deprivation and the constant threat of violence to provide care for their desperate, wounded, and sick fellow Syrians. You have helped PHR shine a spotlight on these illegal attacks – each constituting a war crime, and, collectively, amounting to crimes against humanity.

One of the hardest-hit communities is the ancient city of Aleppo. Our report *"Aleppo Abandoned: A Case Study on Health Care in Syria"* showed how deliberate, savage attacks in eastern Aleppo city have devastated the health care system there. More than two thirds of the city's hospitals no longer function and 95 percent of doctors have fled, been detained, or been killed. As the conflict ground into its sixth bloody year, our report *"No Peace Without Justice in Syria"* assailed the international community for its failure to maintain peace and security and demanded that it commit to delivering justice for the Syrian people.



*The rubble of a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Aleppo after a suspected February 2016 airstrike by Russian forces allied with the Syrian government. Photo: Stringer/AFP/Getty Images*

PHR has become the "go-to" resource for attacks on health care in Syria: the data contained in our Syria mapping project is used at the highest levels of international policymaking, humanitarian efforts, and media coverage of the conflict. Our documentation is creating scientific, irrefutable proof of the countless human rights violations being committed every day in Syria. Your voice is helping us ensure that those who torture and commit other atrocities will one day face justice for their crimes.

THE  
NEW YORKER

**"In the past five years, the Syrian government has assassinated, bombed, and tortured to death almost seven hundred medical personnel, according to Physicians for Human Rights, an organization that documents attacks on medical care in war zones."**

See our Syria map at [phr.org/syria-map](http://phr.org/syria-map).

750 medical workers have been killed since the start of the Syrian conflict\*



\* Through May 2016

## You Fought Back Against Torture – and Won!

For more than 10 years, you have helped PHR wage a tireless campaign to expose and end torture by the U.S. government, to demand justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators, and to stop the complicity of medical professionals in these heinous practices.

In December, our efforts yielded momentous results when the Pentagon withdrew psychologists from all detainee operations at Guantánamo Bay detention center. That month, we bolstered an effort led by the American Civil Liberties Union – which last fall filed an historic lawsuit against psychologists James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen, the architects of the CIA torture program – by issuing our *“Truth Matters”* report describing the torture methodology that Mitchell and Jessen devised. Your support helped us facilitate powerful commentary by PHR and other experts, and fueled our work in partnership with other human

rights groups to insist that the U.S. government not stand in the way of litigation.

But our work is not done. PHR and our partners are keeping the pressure on President Barack Obama to end indefinite detention and close Guantánamo, where 76 men are still detained. We continue to demand the full declassification of the Senate Intelligence Committee’s report on CIA torture. We are pushing the U.S. Department of Justice to criminally investigate all those responsible for detainee torture and ill-treatment, including health professionals.

We believe that you and the rest of the public deserve to know the truth about the U.S. government’s human rights abuses, and that health professionals must be held to the highest standards of medical ethics and the law.



*U.S. Marines transport a detainee on a gurney at Guantánamo Bay detention center. Photo: Chris Hondros/Getty Images*

## You Are Giving Survivors of Sexual Violence Their Day in Court

Survivors of a shockwave of sexual violence that ripped through Kenya following the 2007 elections there are suing the Kenyan government in a landmark case. Thanks to human rights supporters like you, PHR, along with eight survivors and three civil society organizations, brought the lawsuit – the only case demanding that the Kenyan government be held accountable for the fate of the thousands of people who were sexually assaulted in the post-election violence. The case has taken on even greater significance as the Kenya cases before the International Criminal Court have faltered.

PHR’s team is taking a leading role in this groundbreaking case, working with the co-petitioners on strategy, arranging psychological evaluations of the survivors for court use, and helping to prepare petitioners and expert witnesses to testify. With hotly-contested elections looming in Kenya in 2017, this case is being closely watched, and you are helping to support an important justice process.



*Survivors of sexual and other violence during post-election unrest in Kenya are briefed following a hearing in a landmark lawsuit against the government brought by eight survivors, PHR, and civil society organizations.*

# Standing Up for Women and Girls in Afghanistan

PHR and Allies Challenge “Virginity Testing”



*Dr. Tamana Asey of Afghanistan at a Physicians for Human Rights training in Istanbul to improve skills in documenting human rights abuses.*

A lavish wedding ceremony was recently held in Afghanistan, and the bride left her family’s home to join the family of her husband. But when the bride did not bleed on her wedding night, her in-laws took her to the hospital and requested that a hymen test be conducted to ensure that their son had married a virgin. Despite the doctor’s assurances that the young girl had indeed been a virgin, her skeptical in-laws rejected her and sent her back to her father’s house.

Afghan physician Dr. Tamana Asey finds such hymen examinations to be “total abuse.” Working with the Afghanistan Forensic Science Organization (AFSO), which PHR helped establish in 2011, Dr. Tamana is at the forefront of change on this issue. As she notes, there is no scientific or medical validity to these exams, and she is working to stop the abusive practice.

“It has physical, emotional, legal, and social consequences,” says Dr. Tamana, who recently attended a PHR training in Istanbul to build her teaching and facilitation skills. “[The women] feel valueless, they feel like they cannot protect themselves...Depression, anxiety,

feeling deprived – these feelings are so common. ... They will not have their normal family relationships, or in the society, or with their friends.”

So-called virginity testing is widely used in Afghanistan and in many other countries to determine whether a bride who does not bleed on her wedding night had intercourse prior to marriage – something impossible to ascertain by inspecting the hymen. In addition, women suspected of adultery are subjected to hymen examinations by doctors at the state-run Legal Medicine Directorate, and the results are used as evidence to convict and imprison them for “moral crimes.” Indeed, the vast majority of women imprisoned in Afghanistan are there for “moral crimes,” victims of this specious test.

The troubling prevalence of hymen exams prompted PHR to issue a scientific brief debunking virginity testing as illegitimate and completely unscientific. The brief is now being used by AFSO both to challenge the practice and to review the many cases of women imprisoned on the basis of such a test.

Dr. Tamana works with prosecutors, judges, government officials, medical doctors, and community leaders to explain how hymen exams cannot reveal a woman’s sexual history, and that such procedures violate the medical tenet to “do no harm.” With her colleagues, she runs workshops to raise awareness and advocates for a ban on the practice altogether.

Despite resistance, Dr. Tamana is confident that the tide is turning. “After ten years, there will be no victim of hymen examinations in Afghanistan,” she told PHR.

You can find PHR’s brief on virginity testing, in multiple languages, at [phr.org/virginity-testing](http://phr.org/virginity-testing).



## The New York Times

**“Health professionals who conduct these exams are violating their ethical duty to ‘do no harm.’ Both the European Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights have held that forced virginity tests constitute torture and ill treatment.”**

*Widney Brown, PHR director of programs*

## 6 Your Support Shines at PHR's 2016 Gala

"My country is dying ... I have seen the broken bodies and damaged souls of torture victims up close. Despair is everywhere around us. And yet, I have hope."

With these words, Syrian physician Dr. Lena accepted the 2016 Physicians for Human Rights Award for exceptional courage and defense of human rights on behalf of herself and fellow Syrian medic Dr. Nour\* at PHR's annual gala. The event, which drew hundreds of distinguished guests to Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall in New York for an evening dedicated to the Syrian people, also honored philanthropists Ayman and Sawsan Asfari for their commitment to supporting tolerant, inclusive, just societies in the Middle East – particularly in Syria, Ayman's birthplace.

PHR was delighted to have best-selling author and journalist Kati Marton present the award to the Asfaris. Dr. Lena's and Dr. Nour's awards were presented by human rights activist and physician Dr. Kamiar Alaei, who, along with his brother, Arash, was imprisoned in his native Iran and spoke movingly of the role played by PHR to secure their release.

Dr. Lena and Dr. Nour work tirelessly inside and outside Syria to provide critically needed medical care under



PHR Executive Director Donna McKay (second from left) with (from left) PHR 2016 honorees Sawsan Asfari, Dr. Lena, whose face has been obscured to protect her identity, and Ayman Asfari.  
Photo: Thos Robinson/Getty Images

grueling circumstances, and to document the tragically frequent acts of torture and sexual violence that have been inflicted on their patients during the five-year conflict.

We thank you for the continued support that makes it possible for us and our partners to train courageous human rights defenders like Dr. Lena and Dr. Nour all over the world.

\* Dr. Lena's and Dr. Nour's names have been changed to protect their identities.

**"One day, perhaps soon, the perpetrators of these human rights crimes will be brought to court. The evidence I am collecting will be used in their trials and they will be sent to jail. And my patients, my people, will have justice."**

*Dr. Lena, Syrian physician and torture documenter*

*The Kinan Azmeh Cityband performing at PHR's 2016 Gala at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall.*  
Photo: Thos Robinson/Getty Images



# Doctors Are Uniquely Qualified to Stand Up for Human Rights



*PHR Board Chair Kerry Sulkowicz, MD  
Photo: Thos Robinson/Getty Images*

**Kerry Sulkowicz, MD is the new board chair of Physicians for Human Rights (PHR). Trained as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Dr. Sulkowicz is a clinical professor of psychiatry at NYU School of Medicine and founder of the Boswell Group LLC, a consultancy based in New York that advises business leaders. Dr. Sulkowicz recently spoke to medical students at PHR's National Student Conference about the intersection of medicine and human rights. The following is adapted from that address.**

I've been mulling over the name of this organization – Physicians FOR Human Rights. As far as I know, there isn't an organization called Physicians AGAINST Human Rights. So why do we need one that is explicitly FOR it?

Well, the answer to that question, at least for me, isn't entirely obvious. People in many professions, including medicine, fight for those whose inalienable rights have been violated or taken away. The human rights field is large and diverse, and there's strength in those numbers and in the diversity of approaches. The need for

human rights work, tragically, will probably never go away. The nature of the human condition almost guarantees that, because our capacity to do terrible things to one another gets passed down from generation to generation. And large-scale external political and economic conditions set the stage for mass atrocities, and allow them to continue.

So where do physicians come into the picture? We're trained to take care of people when they're sick, to prevent them from getting ill in the first place, and to further the study of disease and its treatments. There is no nobler profession, in my view. But what really makes it a noble profession isn't only the work we do every day, but the ideals that guide it. It's about alleviating suffering. Medicine is also about truth, about listening deeply and understanding, about intellectual honesty, and fundamentally about empathy. It is about respect for people when they are at their most vulnerable, their most needy.

That's one of the reasons why I was drawn to Physicians for Human Rights, because its work embodies the ideals that made me want to go to medical school. But there's more, and it's much more personal.

My father was born in 1909, and my mother in 1919, both in Poland. After spending most of the Second World War together in the Lodz Ghetto, my father was taken to Auschwitz, and my mother to Ravensbrück. Miraculously, they both survived, but my mother's entire family was killed, and most of my father's, as well. My parents were deeply damaged by their experiences. Their trauma wasn't something I thought about every day growing up, but it shaped me profoundly.

About six years ago, I was honored to be asked to join the board of PHR. PHR allowed me to combine my passion for human rights with the ideals that drew me to medicine in the first place. But the really personal part for me is that the work of

PHR is a way of honoring the memory of my parents, and the grandparents I never knew, and all of the people in the world who – to this very day – are the victims of egregious violations of their basic human rights. It is happening now, as we speak, in places like Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and much closer to home, in the United States. And it is awful.

One of the things I've learned from my work with leaders is that, while change can start from the top, some of the most important, most radical, most vital change also starts from within, from the bottom up. So while I'm working with leaders who can make a difference, the people I'm really cheering on are the activists, the troublemakers, those who speak truth to power, who don't take no for an answer, and who even break the rules every now and then when the rules themselves are wrong. Social change is hard, and it usually doesn't happen on its own. To make the world a better place, to stop violations of human rights, it takes activists, artists, and other people with a moral imagination who aren't afraid to shake things up. That includes those of us in the medical professions.

We doctors should not, cannot, stand by as our fellow humans are tortured, raped, murdered, and imprisoned because of their beliefs or simply because of who they are. And we can't stand by as our fellow doctors are prevented from, or punished for, taking care of others. Sometimes we have to err on the side of unreasonableness to change the world. Sometimes we have to push hard, and be loud. And we always have to be smart, and keep our eyes open. Physicians should not only be FOR human rights; physicians should ACT on behalf of human rights. We, as a profession, are uniquely qualified and positioned to do so.

# A Navy Nurse Says "Thank You!"

Your Advocacy Helps a Nurse Who Stood Up for Medical Ethics

After two years of retaliation by the U.S. government, a U.S. Navy nurse who refused to force-feed hunger-striking detainees at Guantánamo Bay detention center was finally vindicated when the U.S. military dropped all proceedings against him and restored him to full duties.

Ordering medical personnel to force-feed competent adults violates the ethical duty of health professionals to "do no harm" and to respect patient autonomy. When the Navy originally sought to discharge the nurse for adhering to professional ethics, you stood with PHR as we mobilized medical experts and professional organizations, including the American Nurses Association, to protest at the highest levels of the U.S. government.

We prevailed: the Navy dropped the discharge proceedings.

When the Defense Department then tried to revoke the nurse's security clearance, you again supported our aggressive joint advocacy campaign – and once again, our efforts paid off. In May, the Pentagon reinstated the nurse's security clearance, allowing him to resume caring for patients. Thank you for standing in solidarity with this courageous medical officer in his refusal to take part in a cruel, inhuman, and degrading practice. His conduct is a model for health professionals around the world and sends a clear signal that governments cannot interfere with professional ethics.

To receive regular news and updates from PHR, sign up at [phr.org/subscribe](http://phr.org/subscribe).



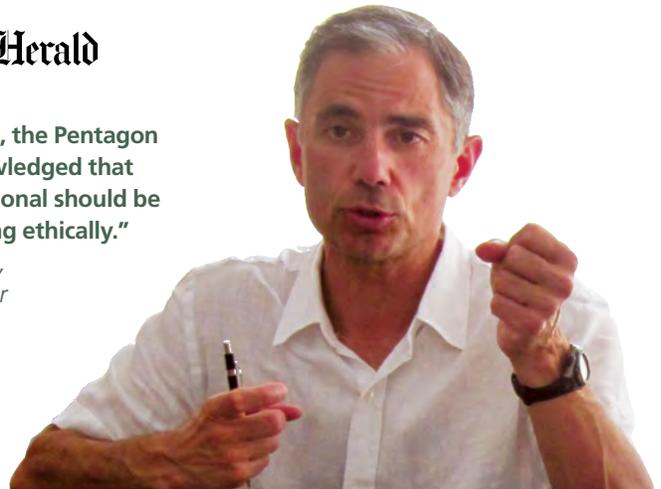
*The restraint chair used to force-feed detainees on hunger strike at Guantánamo Bay detention center.*

*Photo: Mladen Antonov/Getty Images*

## The Miami Herald

**"With this decision, the Pentagon has finally acknowledged that no health professional should be punished for acting ethically."**

*Dr. Vincent Iacopino,  
PHR medical director*



[phr.org](http://phr.org)

For 30 years, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) has used science and medicine to document and call attention to mass atrocities and severe human rights violations. PHR is a global organization founded on the idea that health professionals, with their specialized skills, ethical duties, and credible voices, are uniquely positioned to stop human rights violations. PHR's investigations and expertise are used to advocate for the protection of persecuted health workers and medical facilities under attack, prevent torture, document mass atrocities, and hold those who violate human rights accountable.



Nobel Peace Prize  
Co-laureate

Questions? Feedback? We'd like to hear from you. Contact the PHRecord by writing to Claudia Rader, PHR content and marketing manager, at [crader@phrusa.org](mailto:crader@phrusa.org).