



JAMES L. MADARA, MD
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

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February 13, 2019

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Madame Secretary:

Allegations of ongoing forced feeding of immigrant detainees in U.S. custody, possibly with participation by physicians, are being brought to our attention.

Forced feeding of detainees on hunger strike violates core ethical values of the medical profession. Every competent patient has the right to refuse medical intervention, including life-sustaining interventions.

The American Medical Association (AMA) has long endorsed the World Medical Association (WMA) Declaration of Tokyo, which is unequivocal on the point: "Where a prisoner refuses nourishment and is considered by the physician as capable of forming an unimpaired and rational judgment concerning the consequences of such a voluntary refusal of nourishment, he or she shall not be fed artificially as stated in the WMA Declaration of Malta on Hunger Strikers. The decision as to the capacity of the prisoner to form such a judgment should be confirmed by at least one other independent physician. The consequences of the refusal of nourishment shall be explained by the physician to the prisoner."

We urge you to ensure that this matter receives prompt and thorough attention and to address any situation in which a physician may be asked to violate the ethical standards of his or her profession. The AMA remains committed to providing whatever assistance we can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Barbara L. McAneny, MD
Patrice A. Harris, MD, MA
David O. Barbe, MD, MHA
Jack Resneck Jr., MD