

9 August 2006

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Libyan Children in a Hospital Deliberately Infected with HIV/AIDS

Five Bulgarian nurses and one Palestinian doctor are retried

Although Libya has apparently been on an optimistic diplomatic relations' course with the West, especially with the United States, after the latter resumed diplomatic talks with Libyan officials, doubts about the nation's horrendous human rights violations' records resurface. This case concerns the deliberate HIV/AIDS infection, some medical experts asserted on Tuesday, of hundreds of children in a hospital, which in turn triggered the retrying of five Bulgarian nurses and one Palestinian doctor, on suspicion that one or more of them had been involved with such an action, CNN informs. The five Libyan experts testified in a court in Tripoli on Tuesday that they still supported a 61-page 2003 report they wrote, whose main conclusions were that the children's HIV/AIDS infection had been a deliberate act. "This report is real and we are honest in reporting from the files which are available in the hospital and according to the cases which we interviewed", Othman Shabani, one of the five medical doctors, stated. The legal proceedings were adjourned by Court President Mahmoud Haouissa until August 29th. Earlier on, he had declined to let HIV/AIDS experts testify in defense of the doctor and the nurses, even though international HIV/AIDS experts stated that the HIV outbreak at the Benghazi hospital where they worked had started before the six arrived there. The report had been submitted as an important piece of evidence in the previous trial, when the six people, Palestinian Ashraf Alhajouj and Bulgarians Snezhana Dimitrova, Nasya Nenova, Valentina Siropolu, Christiana Valcheva and Valia Cherveniaszka, belonging to the medical personnel of the Benghazi hospital, were convicted to death by firing squad of intentionally infecting 426 children with HIV. However, the Supreme Court overturned the decision in December 2005, even though the verdict had also been based on the confessions of the accused. Back then, all of the six stated that they had been beaten and tortured into making the respective alleged "confessions". They also benefited from the support of the United States, Bulgaria and the European Union, which maintained that all six of them are innocent, even though they have been jailed since 1999. Tripoli officials stated that the nurses could be cleared of the charges if Bulgaria agrees to pay 5.5 billion dollars in compensation to the families of the children. Even though the Sofia administration declined such a deal, it did join the United States, the European Union and Libya in supporting the establishment of an aid fund.