

May 26, 2004

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The American Nurses Association (ANA) urgently requests your intervention on behalf of five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian physician who have been sentenced to death by a Libyan court. ANA, as the professional association for registered nurses and the U.S. representative to the International Council of Nurses, considers this to be a grave miscarriage of justice that must be addressed.

Arrested in 1999, these health professionals have been falsely accused of spreading HIV infection in a children's hospital in Benghazi, Libya. Since the time of their arrest they have been held in police custody, subject to torture, rape, beatings, electric shock, and other forms of coercion. Over the past five years, world renown experts such as Dr. Luc Montagnier, one of the first scientists to isolate the HIV virus, have testified that the HIV outbreak started the year before the health professionals arrived at the hospital. Dr. Montagnier stated that the outbreak was more likely due to poor hygiene and re-use of infected equipment at the hospital. Last year a Libyan court dismissed the case against the health professionals due to insufficient evidence; however, a May 6th appeal of the verdict by the prosecution resulted in re-instatement of the charges and the death sentence.

Since the verdict of death was re-instated, health care organizations and governments throughout the world have expressed their revulsion toward the verdict and have urged the Libyan government to reverse the sentence and free these health professionals. It would appear that the Libyan government is trying to place blame for a national tragedy on innocent foreign nationals. These health care providers' lives must not be sacrificed.

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ANA urges you to immediately communicate with Col. Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi and other officials within the Libyan government, to speak out against this injustice.

Thank you for your attention to this most critical issue.

Sincerely,

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Barbara A. Blakeney, MS, APRN,BC, ANP
President

cc: Linda J. Stierle, MSN, RN, CNAAB,BC
Chief Executive Officer