

Press Release

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The PACE Bureau recalls that the Bulgarian nurses and doctor are 'innocent'

Strasbourg, 29.06.2007 – The Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), meeting today in Strasbourg, has approved the following statement:

"The Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe expresses indignation at the plight of the five Bulgarian nurses and the Palestinian now Bulgarian Doctor, who stand accused of having intentionally infected children with HIV/AIDS at the Benghazi hospital and have subsequently been condemned to death.

The Bureau of the Assembly is deeply concerned about the possible outcome of the imminent ruling on 11 July of Libya's Supreme Court on an appeal, which will mark the final stage of the medical staff's trial and will be the last opportunity for the Courts to recognise their innocence. In this context, the Assembly reiterates its firm condemnation of the unfair trial procedures, accompanied by the use of torture and threat of execution in order to extract "confessions". The defendants' right to a fair trial is universal and irrevocable, finding its basis in a variety of regional and international legal instruments, including the European Convention of Human Rights.

It recalls the Assembly's position on this case in [Recommendation 1726 \(2005\)](#) in particular its conclusion that the nurses and doctor should be regarded as innocent. It also recalls the fundamental principle to which the Assembly is attached: the rejection of the death penalty in all circumstances.

The Bureau of the Assembly is profoundly troubled by the humanitarian tragedy that has befallen the children and their families, and underscores the imperative need for adequate medical treatment and support. The Assembly continues to support strongly the efforts of the international community to provide the children and their families care and support."

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).