

Nurses, doctor spared death in Libya

by UPI

TRIPOLI, Libya -- The Libyan High Judicial Council Tuesday commuted death sentences for five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor to life in prison in an AIDS scandal. The high court's action followed a deal in which the families of 438 HIV-infected children will receive \$1 million compensation each, the BBC reported. The families dropped their demand that the six medical workers be executed in exchange. All six were convicted in 2004 of deliberately infecting children at a Benghazi hospital as part of a plan for research on AIDS. They have denied their guilt, and supporters, including some of the best-known researchers into the disease, say that they were charged as part of a cover-up of poor conditions at the hospital. Dr. Zdravko Georgiev, a Bulgarian doctor who was acquitted and is married to one of the nurses, said he had expected the commutation because the alternative was too awful to contemplate. "I find it very hard to speak now," Georgiev told the Sofia News Agency. "I have no idea how the girls have reacted to the news." Ivailo Kalfin, the Bulgarian foreign minister, told the BBC that negotiations to allow the nurses to return home will begin immediately.

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