



## Transparency

*Monday 23 July 2007*

It has been over eight years since the start of the Bulgarian nurse's ordeal, who were imprisoned in Libya and sentenced to death for intentionally infecting over 400 Libyan children with HIV.

Now we have reached the final chapter of this case, however, this does not mean that the truth or the actual circumstances surrounding this tragedy has finally been revealed.

This is a sad state of affairs that has destroyed the lives of hundreds of children and their families, but the case still remains surrounded by suspicious dealings that have concealed the truth regarding the real criminals and the victims.

This is not the first time that Libya has concluded a deal with the West.

The case did not receive significant reaction by the Arab media where the Libyan regime has been deliberately promoting the idea that the Israeli Mossad is responsible for this case. These statements were enough to provoke public sentiment.

Automatically, the sense of accountability had retreated to make way for the advancement of conspiracy theories.

Before looking into the deficiencies in the media's attention in this particular instance, there is a truth that needs to be addressed, which is that in the era of image and information, Libya is still living behind iron walls, particularly when it comes to freedom of the press.

In its report last year, the International Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) nominated Libya in the top 5 countries in the world that limit freedom of the press in an unprecedented manner.

Although the triangle of heated Arab issues is mostly confined to Iraq, Palestine and sometimes Lebanon, an issue such as that of the Bulgarian nurses is an alarm bell that alerts us of how unaware we are of what is happening in this country.

Let us look at the developments of this case alone, especially in its final stages.

Settlement requires the payment of compensation to victims (and this is certainly necessary), yet on the other hand why should the defendants sign documents that state that they are prevented from filing a lawsuit against Libya!

Does Libya fear that it would be internationally prosecuted for the whole case after defendants are pardoned?

How can the Libyan authority have the power to change the sentence or issue a pardon?

Various reports that state that the nurses and the Palestinian doctor have been tortured have been dropped and will not be examined. More importantly, there has been an increase in information from multiple sources that state that the HIV infection was widespread even before the arrival of the nurses and the doctor to the Libyan hospital.

It is difficult to predict the truth behind this case, however, the path that the issues have led to raises a lot of suspicion.

Libya is an example of forcing its nation, in this era of image, to not benefit from the media.

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