



The President

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Honorable Leader,

I dare writing to you about the condemnation to death by a Benghazi Court of 5 Bulgarian nurses and 1 Palestinian medical doctor, which have been accused of having deliberately infected by the AIDS virus 420 children at the Benghazi Pediatric Hospital in 1998. I was committed as expert by the Foundation which bears your name and is headed by your son, Mr Saif El Islam Gaddafi to seek the causes of this dramatic case. Together with my colleague Pr. Vittorio Colizzi from Roma University we have made a detailed analysis which concluded rather to a serie of accidental infections in the hospital by a particular strain of HIV, a highly infectious one.

In any case, there was a serious doubt concerning the responsibility of the condemned personnel. This is why, as co-discoverer of the AIDS virus and with an experience of more of 20 years in this virus, I am asking you the favour of giving your pardon to the condemned people, for the sake of justice doubt.

I believe that such a decision coming from your graciousness will certainly magnify the good image of Libya in the world.

Let me briefly give you a scientific argument against the thesis defended in the Court of a deliberate human use of the virus to criminal purposes.

The AIDS virus is highly variable and can be divided into subtypes A, B, C, D, E, F, G,, each of which have a particular geographic distribution in the world. In each infected adult patient, small variations of the virus occur, but are not sufficient to change its classification as subtype. However, we see, particularly in Africa and China, a situation in which a patient is doubly infected by two viruses belonging to different subtypes, for instance A and G. In this case, there is a mixing of the genes of the two viruses leading to emergence of a third subtype, recombinant of the two former virus, called in this particular instance A/G. This ability of frequent recombination is a hallmark of the AIDS virus. The recombinant A/G strains seem to better replicate in patients from West Africa, so that most of the viral strains isolated in this region are now of the A/G subtype.

Mouammar Gaddafi

Several A/G strains have been analysed in detail for their molecular make-up and their sequences - slightly different one from the other - have been deposited in a data bank. The analysis of the Benghazi strain that we have performed, as well as those previously accomplished by our Swiss colleagues of the Cantonal Geneva Hospital and by our Italian colleagues of the Spallanzani Hospital in Roma, have shown that it belongs to the A/G subtype, while being slightly different from the strains already isolated from West African adult patients by other laboratories.

This is, to my opinion, against the hypothesis that someone would have used one of the known A/G laboratory strains to multiply it and inject it to the Benghazi's children. If this strain had been manipulated by men, we should have detected it by our analyses, which by the way we are pursuing as today to have a complete view of all viral genes.

The most likely explanation for this dramatic serial contamination is that it started from an African children infected by his mother at birth, which was hosted in the Hospital in 1997 or before. This strain has then been propagated accidentally to some other children at the Hospital, due to improper practice of sterilisation. When the Hospital medical staff discovered the presence of HIV in the Hospital, they took adequate measures to improve their practice and the transmission had ceased.

The fact that the viral strain has kept its initial characters in the children in which it has been analysed is perhaps due to its unusual high virulence, so that it has not induced an immune response strong enough to select new variants of the virus.

In the hope of your favourable intervention, I am respectfully yours,

Luc Montagnier