

Journal defends accused medical workers

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The scientific journal Nature says it has concluded six medical workers who face the death penalty in Libya are probably innocent of charges.

The defendants -- five Bulgarian women and a Palestinian man -- are accused of deliberately injecting 426 children with HIV in 1998. International medical experts who reviewed the evidence conclude the prosecution's case is deeply flawed.

"There is a shocking lack of evidence in this case," said Janine Jagger, an epidemiologist who heads the International Healthcare Worker Safety Center at the University of Virginia. "The Libyan government stands to carry out an act that would not be forgotten by the international healthcare community."

The prosecution has called for the medics to be given the death penalty when the trial ends next Tuesday.

Nature said the court has denied requests by defense lawyers to have evidence from international scientists heard, and has also rejected a report from the discoverer of the AIDS virus, which concluded the medics were innocent.

Nature's editors also said they had obtained "solid data" proving the HIV infections began one or more years before the medical workers even arrived in Libya.

The report appears in the latest issue of Nature.

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