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Libya overturns AIDS death penalties

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27 December, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Libya overturns AIDS death penalties

The Libyan Supreme Court has reversed the decision of a lower court to execute five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor. The six medics were sentenced to death seven years ago for infecting 426 children with the HIV virus. Libya's highest court now says the original death sentences were wrong due to "irregularities" in the questioning of the nurses. Bulgaria has repeatedly said the nurses were tortured into confessing to their crimes. The high profile case has rarely been out of the headlines. The latest move has raised hopes that the six may be sent home, following a retrial.

Human rights groups were overjoyed that the executions will now not go ahead. However, families of the infected children are furious with the Supreme Court's decision. Awad al-Mesmari, a lawyer for the families, said he was saddened by the decision. He asked: "What did the children do so that they suffer now? We have already buried 50 of them. May God bless them." Conversely, the defendants' lawyer said the ruling "reflects the evidence and facts...that the confessions were made illegally". The decision has angered many Libyans. Meanwhile, Bulgaria is to set up a fund to help the infected children.

WARM-UPS

1. LIBYA SEARCH: Talk to as many other students as you can to find out what they know about Libya. After you have talked to lots of students, sit down with your partner(s) and share your information. Tell each other what you thought was interesting. Would you like to visit or live in Libya?

2. MY COUNTRY: In pairs / groups, talk about the system of justice in your country. Is it effective? Does it help stop crime? Does it make society safer? What changes would you make to the laws.

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Courts / decisions / nurses / HIV / irregularities / Bulgaria / torture / hopes / joy / lawyers / being saddened / suffering / evidence / facts / anger / setting up funds

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. TWO-MINUTE DEBATES: Debate these arguments about the death penalty with a partner for just two minutes. Change partners often. Student A agrees with the first argument, Student B, the second.

- a. All killing is wrong. vs. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.
- b. It saves taxpayers' money. vs. No price can be put on human life.
- c. The death penalty stops crime. vs. Murders happen with or without it.
- d. The death penalty goes against human rights. vs. So does multiple murder.
- e. Mistakes are made. Innocent people die. vs. No system is perfect.
- f. The death penalty gives society the message that killing is OK. vs. No way.
- g. It provides closure for victims' families. vs. That's a poor reason to kill someone.
- h. Life in prison is better. vs. Life in prison means life watching TV, reading and chatting.

5. AIDS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with AIDS. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. A Libyan court ordered the retrial of 6 medics waiting to be executed. T / F
- b. The medics reportedly infected 426 children with the HIV virus. T / F
- c. The case has just hit the headlines after seven years in the shadows. T / F
- d. There is no hope the six medics will return home. T / F
- e. The infected children's families are furious at the court's decision. T / F
- f. The defendants' lawyer said the confessions were made illegally. T / F
- g. The trial has created anger among many Libyans. T / F
- h. Bulgaria is to set up a fund to help with the nurses' rehabilitation. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| a. reversed | doctors and nurses |
| b. execute | disheartened |
| c. medics | increased |
| d. confessing | kill |
| e. raised | decision |
| f. overjoyed | angry |
| g. furious | endowment |
| h. saddened | overturned |
| i. ruling | ecstatic |
| j. fund | admitting |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. reversed the decision | original death sentences were wrong |
| b. sentenced to death seven years ago | the evidence and facts |
| c. Libya's highest court now says the | not go ahead |
| d. "irregularities" in the | of a lower court |
| e. the nurses were tortured | bless them |
| f. the executions will now | into confessing to their crimes |
| g. families of the infected children | to help the infected children |
| h. May God | for infecting 426 children |
| i. the ruling reflects | questioning of the nurses |
| j. Bulgaria is to set up a fund | are furious |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Libya overturns AIDS death penalties

The Libyan Supreme Court has _____ the decision of a lower court to execute five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor. The six _____ were sentenced to death seven years ago for _____ 426 children with the HIV virus. Libya's highest court now says the _____ death sentences were wrong due to "irregularities" in the _____ of the nurses. Bulgaria has repeatedly said the nurses were tortured into confessing to their _____. The high profile case has rarely been out of the headlines. The latest move has _____ hopes that the six may be sent home, following a _____.

Human rights groups were _____ that the executions will now not go _____. However, families of the infected children are furious with the Supreme Court's _____. Awad al-Mesmari, a lawyer for the families, said he was _____ by the decision. He asked: "What did the children do so that they _____ now? We have already buried 50 of them. May God _____ them." Conversely, the defendants' lawyer said the ruling "reflects the _____ and facts...that the confessions were made illegally". The decision has angered many Libyans. Meanwhile, Bulgaria is to set up a _____ to help the infected children.

questioning

medics

retrial

original

crimes

reversed

raised

infecting

bless

saddened

overjoyed

evidence

suffer

ahead

fund

decision

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Libya overturns AIDS death penalties

The Libyan Supreme Court has _____ the decision of a lower court to execute five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor. The six medics were sentenced to death seven years ago for _____ 426 children with the HIV virus. Libya's highest court now says the original death sentences were wrong due to "irregularities" in the _____ of the nurses. Bulgaria has repeatedly said the nurses were _____ into confessing to their crimes. The high profile case has rarely been out of the headlines. The latest move has _____ hopes that the six may be sent home, following a _____.

Human rights groups were _____ that the executions will now not go ahead. However, families of the infected children are _____ with the Supreme Court's decision. Awad al-Mesmari, a lawyer for the families, said he was _____ by the decision. He asked: "What did the children do so that they suffer now? We have already _____ 50 of them. May God bless them." Conversely, the defendants' lawyer said the ruling "_____ the evidence and facts...that the confessions were made illegally". The decision has _____ many Libyans. Meanwhile, Bulgaria is to set up a fund to help the infected children.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'reverse'** and **'decision'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "LIBYA" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about Libya and its position in the world.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| • reversed | • overjoyed |
| • seven | • furious |
| • original | • suffer |
| • repeatedly | • conversely |
| • headlines | • angered |
| • hopes | • meanwhile |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What did you know about this case before you read the article?
- c. Do you think the Supreme Court's decision is a good one?
- d. How would you feel about the decision if you were related to one of the infected children?
- e. Has this decision changed your image of Libya?
- f. What do you think of America protesting about the death penalty and the use of torture?
- g. Do you agree with the death penalty?
- h. If the medics are really guilty, what do you think their sentence should be?
- i. Do you think there is ever any situation in which torture can be used to question people?
- j. Do you think Libya will now be a more accepted member of the international community?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think Libya should send the medics home?
- d. What sentence do you think the medics should receive in the retrial?
- e. Do you think opinions will differ over this case in the Muslim and Christian worlds?
- f. Why has this case continued for seven years?
- g. Do you think it's OK for one country to execute citizens of another country?
- h. Do you think the infected and deceased children will see justice done?
- i. How would you like this case to end?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Libya and the Supreme Court's decision. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. DEATH PENALTY: Make a poster explaining the pros and cons of the death penalty. Show your posters to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar ideas?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to the head judge of Libya's Supreme Court. Tell him/her what you think of the decision to order a retrial. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone write similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. T c. F d. F e. T f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. reversed	overturned
b. execute	kill
c. medics	doctors and nurses
d. confessing	admitting
e. raised	increased
f. overjoyed	ecstatic
g. furious	angry
h. saddened	disheartened
i. ruling	decision
j. fund	endowment

PHRASE MATCH:

a. reversed the decision	of a lower court
b. sentenced to death seven years ago	for infecting 426 children
c. Libya's highest court now says the	original death sentences were wrong
d. "irregularities" in the	questioning of the nurses
e. the nurses were tortured	into confessing to their crimes
f. the executions will now	not go ahead
g. families of the infected children	are furious
h. May God	bless them
i. the ruling reflects	the evidence and facts
j. Bulgaria is to set up a fund	to help the infected children

GAP FILL:

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The Libyan Supreme Court has **reversed** the decision of a lower court to execute five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor. The six **medics** were sentenced to death seven years ago for **infecting** 426 children with the HIV virus. Libya's highest court now says the **original** death sentences were wrong due to "irregularities" in the **questioning** of the nurses. Bulgaria has repeatedly said the nurses were tortured into confessing to their **crimes**. The high profile case has rarely been out of the headlines. The latest move has **raised** hopes that the six may be sent home, following a **retrial**.

Human rights groups were **overjoyed** that the executions will now not go **ahead**. However, families of the infected children are furious with the Supreme Court's **decision**. Awad al-Mesmari, a lawyer for the families, said he was **saddened** by the decision. He asked: "What did the children do so that they **suffer** now? We have already buried 50 of them. May God **bless** them." Conversely, the defendants' lawyer said the ruling "reflects the **evidence** and facts...that the confessions were made illegally". The decision has angered many Libyans. Meanwhile, Bulgaria is to set up a **fund** to help the infected children.