

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **Dutch civil court awards € 1.000.000,- damages to victim Benghazi HIV-trial**

*Amsterdam, 27 March 2012* – On 21 March 2012, a Dutch civil court awarded one of the victims of the Benghazi HIV-trial, the Palestinian doctor Ashraf El-Hojouj, € 1.000.000,- for material and immaterial damages.

On 27 July 2011, mr. El-Hojouj submitted a claim for damages against 12 Libyan civil servants who took part in his torture and inhumane treatment. The torture took place during the illegal detention of the Palestinian doctor, together with five Bulgarian nurses, in the Benghazi HIV-trial from 1999 to 2007 in Libya. None of the Libyan defendants appeared in Dutch court.

Later this month the UN Human Rights Committee is expected to rule on a similar complaint of mr. El-Hojouj concerning torture during his detention in Libyan prison. On 2 October 2009 the Human Rights Committee declared this complaint admissible.

Having been awarded damages by a Dutch court, mr. El-Hojouj's lawyer, prof. Liesbeth Zegveld urges Libya to guarantee the payment of the damages without delay. She also calls upon the Netherlands and the European Union and its member states to assure that the compensation is paid forthwith. Liesbeth Zegveld: "The EU and several of its members states have repeatedly condemned the scapegoating of the Palestinian doctor and the Bulgarian nurses and have strongly pushed for their release in 2007. In view of these previous efforts, we count on their support to obtain compensation for the victims."

Mr. El-Hojouj is a medic and former resident of Libya, who was wrongfully detained and convicted in the Benghazi HIV-trial. The Palestinian doctor has, together with five Bulgarian nurses, been accused of murder or attempted murder of some 450 children, and – due to a grave judicial error – spent over 8 years incarcerated (1999-2007), many of those years under a sentence of death. They underwent severe torture, a fact that has been confirmed by al-Gaddafi's son, Seif al-Islam. In 2007 they were released due to quiet diplomacy of the EU, the US and Bulgaria. Part of the solution was an agreement with the families of the 450 HIV children on compensation for their deceased or infected children, reportedly worth \$1 million per child.

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