

Open letter to Minister of International Relations: Intervene in Karabus case

Dear Minister

OPEN LETTER REQUESTING YOUR IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION IN THE CASE OF PROFESSOR CYRIL KARABUS

We request you to intervene urgently to secure the release of Professor Cyril Karabus, a South African citizen, from incarceration in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Professor Karabus is a paediatrician who has dedicated himself to public service. He worked for many years at Red Cross Children's Hospital. He was also a professor of paediatrics at the University of Cape Town. His devotion to child health exemplifies the wonderful values that South Africa promotes.

We have learned that Professor Karabus has spent the last month in prison in the UAE. He was tried and found guilty of manslaughter in absentia and without his knowledge. This was in relation to a case over a decade ago in which, while he was a locum at Sheikh Khalifa Medical Centre in Abu Dhabi, he treated a child who later died of leukemia. While travelling back to South Africa from Canada, he was arrested in transit in Dubai on 18 August.

We respect the laws of foreign countries when they are just, even if they are vastly different from our own laws. However, by no modern principle of jurisprudence is it acceptable to try a foreign citizen in absentia without informing him or attempting to extradite him. Furthermore, Professor Karabus is 77 years old and in frail health. The South African government should be negotiating a pardon for Professor Karabus from the UAE, or at minimum negotiating that he be allowed out on bail while a retrial takes place.

We have also learned that the South African mission in UAE has been visiting Professor Karabus, but has done very little to assist with his release. We cannot fathom what could possibly be more important to the embassy in Abu Dhabi or the consulate in Dubai than doing everything possible to rescue a model human being who is a citizen of our country from unjustly instituted distress.

Please respond by 1 October with an explanation of all the steps being taken by the South African government to secure Professor Karabus's release.

Yours sincerely

Vuyiseka Dubula, General Secretary of the Treatment Action Campaign
Brad Brockman, General Secretary of Equal Education
Mandla Majola on behalf of the Social Justice Coalition
Mark Heywood, Director SECTION27
Zackie Achmat on behalf of Open Shuhada Street

CC:

Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE - by email via the South African embassy: uae@mweb.co.za
H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai - by email via the South African embassy: uae@mweb.co.za
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Source URL (retrieved on 2018/05/27 - 7:22pm): <http://www.tac.org.za/community/node/3315>