

## Pressure mounts on Libya over death sentences

By Judith Crosbie

**The EU should consider withdrawing financial aid to Libya and suspending co-operation on immigration following the death sentences handed down to five Bulgarian nurses, according to a Bulgarian observer to the European Parliament.**

"Any measures are appropriate in this situation," said Georgi Bliznashki, a Socialist observer who becomes an MEP on 1 January.

He added that the EU and other bodies needed to show Libya it would get tough. "That's what we expect from our friends here, our new friends including the EU and NATO," he added.

A court in Tripoli handed down the sentences to the nurses and a Palestinian doctor on Tuesday (19 December) following accusations that they deliberately infected more than 400 children with HIV/AIDS.

Franco Frattini, the European commissioner for justice, freedom and security, condemned the ruling and signalled it would hurt relations with the EU. "I fervently hope the Libyan authorities will review this decision, which represents a dangerous gesture and an obstacle to co-operation with the EU," he said.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the German foreign minister, said pressure would have to be brought on Libya "not only to ensure Libya participates in a solution but provides a final solution to the case".

A lawyer for the medical workers said an appeal would be lodged with Libya's supreme court. Amnesty International called on the EU to use its influence on Libya.

"The EU has a direct responsibility and must stand firm in this case," said Dick Oosting, director of Amnesty International's EU office.

Josep Borrell, president of the European Parliament, called on the Libyan authorities "to reconsider this verdict, which is an obstacle to improved relations between the European Union and Libya".

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