

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 15/14/97
Distrib: PG/SC

To: Health professionals
From: Medical Office /Middle East sub-regional team
Date: 6 June 1997

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION
Avraham Marcus KLINGBERG
ISRAEL/OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Keywords

Theme: ill-health

Profession/association: bacteriologist/doctor

Summary

Professor Avraham Klingberg is a 78-year-old prisoner arrested secretly in 1983 and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for espionage. For a period of almost ten years after arrest, Professor Klingberg was held in solitary confinement. He is now in very poor health, with hypertension, cardiac arrhythmia and angina and has suffered a number of strokes. Various appeals for his release or reduction of sentence on grounds of ill-health have been rejected by the Supreme Court and by the Prison Service parole board. In view of the prisoner's serious state of ill-health, to which prolonged solitary confinement may have contributed, AI is calling for him to be transferred to a less stressful environment or else released.

Recommended action

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses given below

- saying that you are writing to raise the case of Dr Avraham Klingberg and to express concern at his state of health
- expressing particular concern at the effects on his health of prolonged isolation and other conditions of imprisonment which AI considers to have amounted to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment
- expressing concern for his emotional well-being in addition to his physical state given the lack

o
f
c
o
n
t
a
c
t
h
e

h
a
s

h
a
d

i
n

p
r
i
s
o
n
.
N
o
t
i
n
g

t
h
a
t
a
l
t
h
o
u
g
h

h
e

w
a
s

g
r
a
n
t
e
d

3

a
p
e
r
i
o
d
o
f
s
o
m
e
h
o
u
r
s
,
l
e
a
v
e
f
r
o
m
p
r
i
s
o
n
i
n
1
9
9
6
,
t
h
e

p
e
r
i
o
d

g
r
a
n
t
e
d

w
a
s

v
e
r
y

s
h
o
r
t
c
o
m
p
a
r
e
d

t
o

t
h
a
t
o
f
o
t
h
e
r
p

- noting that recent appeals for parole have been rejected by the Supreme Court and prison parole board who, while not disputing the fact that Professor Klingberg's medical problems would shorten his life, argued that his release would endanger state security urging that if proper care cannot be guaranteed in Ashkelon prison he be transferred to a less stressful environment or that he be granted parole now that he has served two-thirds of his sentence
- urging that while he remains in prison, measures such as longer periods of leave be considered

Addresses

Binyamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister, Construction and Housing
Minister, Religious Affairs Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan Street
Hakiryah
Jerusalem 91007
Israel
Fax: +972.2.5664.838
+972.3.691.7915 (Tel Aviv office)

Tzahi Hanegbi
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
29 Salah al-Din Street
Jerusalem 91010
Israel
Fax: +971.2.6285.438

Yitzhak Mordechai
Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
7 'A' Street
Hakiryah
Tel Aviv
Israel
Fax +972.3.697.6218

Yehoshua Matza
Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
2 Ben Taibai Street
PO Box 1176
Jerusalem 91010
Israel
Telex: 25206 MOH IL

Copies to:

Ahron Barak
President of the Supreme Court of Israel
Shaarey Mishapt Street
Qiryat David Ben-Gurion
Jerusalem 91909
Israel
Fax +972.2.6759.703

Mr Yoran Blacher
President
Israel Medical Association
2 Twin Towers
35 Jabontisky Street
Ramat Gan
Tel Aviv 52511
Israel

6

Fax: +972.3.575.3303

EXTERNAL

AI Index : MDE 15/14/97

Distr : PG/SG

Date: 6 June 1997

**Avraham Marcus KLINGBERG
ISRAEL/OCCUPIED TERRITORIES**

In November 1993 and January 1994, Amnesty International issued appeals on behalf of Avraham Marcus Klingberg, a 78-year-old prisoner in extremely poor health (see MDE 15/15/93 and MDE 15/01/94). He has been held in Ashkelon prison since 1983 following his conviction on charges of espionage and, although he is now allowed limited contact, much of his time in prison has been spent in solitary confinement. He suffers from severe hypertension, angina pectoris, transient ischaemic attacks and has abnormal neurological symptoms. In late 1993 he suffered a stroke and has since suffered a number of further strokes, most recently on 20 November 1996. He is sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment.

There have been a number of calls within Israel for Professor Klingberg's early release on health grounds. These have included appeals from Knesset members. According to the Israeli press, a group of ten Knesset members sought a meeting with President Weizman earlier in the year to explain the reasons they believed Professor Klingberg should be released. An appeal for his early release on humanitarian grounds was brought before the Israeli Supreme Court in January 1996. The appeal stated that he suffered from a number of serious illnesses any of which could lead to his sudden death. The court recognized the gravity of his health situation and accepted that Professor Klingberg did not intend to reveal state secrets. However, it considered that he may do so unwittingly and his appeal was rejected on these grounds, with the court ruling that state security overrode the consideration of an individual's health situation. Another petition for early release was heard by a prison parole board in January-February 1997 and this was again rejected although, since the previous hearing, Professor Klingberg had suffered a further stroke leaving him temporarily paralyzed. In rejecting the appeal, the board cited the earlier ruling of the Supreme Court.

In recent years there has been an increase in the frequency and intensity of Professor Klingberg's ischaemic attacks and attacks of angina. Sharp rises in his blood pressure have been noted despite continual antihypertensive treatment. In November 1995 Parkinson's disease and normocytic anaemia were reported to have been diagnosed. He is said to be experiencing frequent bouts of fainting. Professor Klingberg's lawyer arranged examination by an independent doctor on a number of occasions and medical reports were submitted to the courts when appeals for release have been lodged. This doctor, who consulted fully with prison doctors, concluded the following in a report prepared for court submission in October 1993:

"The increasing number of episodes of paralysis and of angina pectoris, on the basis of poorly controlled hypertension, forbodes the advent of a grave and possibly terminal complication in one of the vital organs. The case of Prof. Klingberg raises a difficult

therapeutic problem. Were it not for the attacks of paralysis, the syndrome of unstable angina pectoris would require cardiac catheterization to explore the possibility of dilating coronary arteries and to weight the indication for bypass surgery. However, the neurological conditions described and the danger of a severe cerebrovascular accident present a clear contraindication to invasive procedures. In view of the patient's physical and mental deterioration, the prognosis in my opinion is bad, and the possibility of Prof. Klingberg dying in prison in the near future is very real."

A report prepared by the same doctor in August 1995 noted a marked deterioration in Professor Klingberg's physical and mental state since the previous examination. He stated that Professor Klingberg lacked any vitality and had said he had no will to live. Arterial hypertension had not been brought under control despite medication, there had been additional attacks of temporary paralysis of the left side of the face accompanied by weakness in the left hand and leg and a reduction in his walking capability. He has a limp in the left leg and, in addition, he has become deaf in one ear and there has been a worsening of cataracts in both eyes. In summing up, the report pointed to the negative impact of depression on internal disease. (During his imprisonment, Professor Klingberg has attempted suicide a number of times.)

Background to arrest

Avraham Klingberg was born in Poland in 1918 and studied medicine until the outbreak of the second World War. He then left German-occupied Poland for the USSR and completed his medical studies in Minsk in 1941. On the day of the German attack against the USSR in June 1941 he volunteered as a doctor for the Red Army. After having been wounded, he specialized in epidemiology and worked as Chief Epidemiologist of the Bielorussian Republic. After the war he returned to Poland where he learned that all his family had been killed. He emigrated to Sweden in 1946 and in 1948 left for Israel as a volunteer in the Israeli Defence Force. In Israel, Professor Klingberg became deputy head of the government-run biological institute in Ness Ziona and also worked at the Tel-Aviv University Medical School where, in 1978, he was appointed head of the Department of Preventative Medicine. He published widely, particularly in the field of congenital malformations.

In January 1983 Professor Klingberg "disappeared" after travelling to Switzerland to attend a scientific conference. Nothing was known of his whereabouts for several years until it emerged that he had in fact been arrested in 1983, charged with spying for the Soviet Union and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. Due to the nature of the charges and the secrecy of his trial, exact details of the offences of which he was convicted are not known. Between the time of his arrest and August 1993 Israeli censors forbade any publication of details of his arrest and trial, although he is now reported as having been imprisoned for passing information on biological warfare to the Soviet Union.

Dr Klingberg was held in total solitary confinement under a false name for almost ten years after arrest. Amnesty International considers that to have held him thus for such a protracted number of years must be regarded as amounting to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Dr Klingberg's conditions of detention have now been somewhat relaxed and he is permitted to receive some visitors on the proviso that security clearance is obtained at each visit.

Professor Klingberg was widowed in 1990 and has one daughter and a grandson. In August 1996 he was granted a seven-hour period of leave from prison, this to take place at a predetermined and guarded location, with the phones disconnected and other strict conditions met. Earlier requests for furloughs, appeals for release or reduction of sentence on grounds of

good behaviour have been rejected. The law allows for the reduction of sentence on health grounds for prisoners who have served two-thirds of their sentence.