

going on behind the scenes,” says physicist Robert Cywinski of Leeds University in the U.K., scientific adviser to an ESS bid from three Yorkshire universities and the regional development organization. In 2003, the Yorkshire team met with U.K. Science Minister David Sainsbury, who ordered up a review of Britain’s future requirements for neutron facilities. Published last March, the review didn’t endorse ESS but made a megawatt-level spallation source the top priority and urged the government to work with European partners to develop one.

ESS is also one of 35 large-scale projects deemed worthy of support in a report this month from the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) (*Science*, 20 October, p. 399). ESS could move straight to construction as soon as negotiations on site and funding are complete, the forum concluded. “The ESS has come back with a vengeance in the ESFRI road map,” says Cywinski. Tindemans says that both the U.K. neutron review and the road map have “helped enormously.”

Physicist Karl-Fredrik Berggren of Linköpings University in Sweden says that the Swedish government last year completed a review and supports building ESS at Lund University. “We expect approval should come fairly shortly,” he predicts. At a meeting of the ESS Initiative in Bilbao, Spain, earlier this month, the Basque regional government said the national government would support its bid, along with a rumored €300 million in funding. Tindemans says Hungary is also poised to approve a bid to site ESS on its soil.

Cywinski says the Yorkshire bid is currently in limbo, as the government has not responded to the neutron review. Right now, “governments are just trying to form alliances,” says Tindeman. According to Berggren, “The country that ties up the big nations very quickly will win.”

With the U.S. and Japanese sources already talking about upgrading the power of their accelerators, to 2.5 and 5 megawatts, respectively, Europe needs to move quickly if it is to keep pace, says Cywinski: “If the focus of neutron science moves from Europe, the scientists will move too.”

—DANIEL CLERY

## HUMAN RIGHTS

# Scientists Urge Libya to Free Medics

U.S. scientists are adding their voices to mounting international pressure on Libya to release six foreign medical workers who could face execution within weeks. A letter published online this week by *Science*—written by virologist Robert Gallo, director of the Institute of Human Virology in Baltimore, Maryland, and co-discoverer of HIV, and signed by 43 other scientists—accuses the Libyan government of using the medics as scapegoats for the accidental infection with HIV of more than 400 children at a hospital in Benghazi. Libyan police rounded up the five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor in 1999 and used torture to extract confessions that they had deliberately infected the children as an act of bioterrorism, according to human rights organiza-

in 2004 in favor of damning testimony by Libyan doctors that was “full of errors and misunderstandings of basic molecular biology.” The judge sentenced the medics to death by firing squad. The medics’ final appeal is now being heard by the Libyan supreme court in Tripoli. Yet more scientific evidence has accumulated since then, says Colizzi, but the supreme court denied the defense an opportunity to present it. The final session is scheduled for 31 October; a verdict is expected soon after.

“We want to get people angry and influence their governments to do something,” says Gallo. Libya’s actions “send a chilling message” to international health workers that could discourage them from working in the developing world, says Gallo, adding that the Libyans themselves “need all the scientific help they can get to prevent another outbreak.” For its part, the Libyan government has said that the case could be settled if Western governments pay “blood money” to satisfy the families of the infected children; a sum of \$5.7 billion has been suggested.

Outrage among scientists has been building in recent weeks in parallel with diplomatic pressure from the U.S. and European governments. The U.K.’s Royal Society, the New York Academy of Sciences, and the Federation of the European Academies of Medicine, among others, have published open letters to the Libyan government calling for the medics’ release. The Web site of AAAS (publisher of *Science*) contains directions for how individual scientists can add to the pressure.\*

If the medics are not given a reprieve, says Gallo, “I will do everything I possibly can, starting with a call for an emergency

session of the [U.S.] Academies of Science” to consider a “full scientific embargo.” And if Libya decides to free the medics, Gallo says international praise and support should be equally swift: “They need to know that this virus is a problem for all of us, and we scientists can help.”

—JOHN BOHANNON

\* [shr.aaas.org/aaashran/alert.php?a\\_id=328](http://shr.aaas.org/aaashran/alert.php?a_id=328)



**Scapegoats.** A Libyan judge sentenced six foreign medical workers (behind bars, below) to death, but scientists say they are innocent and that the Libyan children (above) were accidentally infected with HIV before the medics arrived.

tions. European scientists say poor hygiene likely caused the outbreak before the medics started working in the country (*Science*, 8 April 2005, p. 184).

The scientific evidence supported the medics’ innocence, says Vittorio Colizzi, a virologist at the University of Rome “Tor Vergata” and an expert witness in the case. But it was disregarded by a Benghazi judge