

# SA to maintain relations with UAE

The South African government says it respects the independence and judiciary of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), despite the challenges that emerged during Professor Cyril Karabus' ordeal.

"I must reiterate a point we have made on previous occasions, that the South African government respects the independence of the judiciary and its processes in the UAE, and that we are committed to maintaining our cordial diplomatic and trade relations with the UAE," International Relations and Cooperation Deputy Minister Marius Fransman said.

Fransman was addressing the media at the Cape Town International Airport on Friday where Karabus landed at noon, much to the delight of his family and friends.

Karabus had been in detention in Abu Dhabi since August 2012 where he was arrested while in transit.

He had been found guilty and sentenced in absentia to three years on charges of manslaughter and falsifying documents after the death of a young leukaemia patient he treated in Abu Dhabi 11 years ago. Karabus was not aware of the charges and his sentence until his arrest.

The case was postponed 13 times due to the inability of the prosecution to present documentary evidence.

## Innocent on all charges

The University of Cape Town emeritus professor and retired paediatric oncologist was finally acquitted by a UAE court in March, based on the findings of a medical review committee, which absolved him of all blame in the case.

The South African government had rendered assistance to Karabus from the onset. This included regular visits to the UAE by Fransman to engage his UAE counterpart, and International Relations and Cooperation Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane writing a letter to her UAE counterpart requesting the case be resolved fairly. Government's concerns centred on Karabus' right to a fair and speedy trial, especially taking into consideration his health and age.

On Friday, Fransman said: "We are elated to have Prof Karabus back in Cape Town, South Africa, where his absence for almost eight months was felt mostly so by his close family as well as the broader family, i.e. the South African nation."

He thanked the Karabus family and the professor's legal team for their full cooperation, understanding and patience.

He also thanked the government of the UAE, in particular his counterparts, who were willing to engage on the matter.

The deputy minister also acknowledged the role civil society, including the media, played in highlighting the plight of Karabus, thereby putting the spotlight on a process that appeared to deprive the professor of his right to a fair trial.

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