

Critically ill Mandela returns home after 3 months in hospital

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USPA News - Anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela, who had been hospitalized for nearly three months after suffering a recurrence of a lung infection, returned to his Johannesburg home on Sunday but will continue to receive intensive care, officials said. Presidential spokesman Mac Maharaj said Mandela, who is 95, remains in a `critical and at times unstable` condition.

"Nevertheless, his team of doctors are convinced that he will receive the same level of intensive care at his Houghton home that he received in Pretoria," Maharaj said, referring to Johannesburg's wealthy Houghton suburb. Mandela's family recently reconfigured his house, allowing him to receive the intensive care he requires. "The health care personnel providing care at his home are the very same who provided care to him in hospital," Maharaj explained. "If there are health conditions that warrant another admission to hospital in future, this will be done." The former leader has been treated by a large medical team comprised of people from the military, academia, private sector and other public health spheres since he was taken to Medi-Clinic Heart Hospital in Pretoria on June 8. Few details about Mandela's illness have been released, but officials have said he is suffering from `various illnesses.` "During his stay in hospital from the 8th of June 2013, the condition of our former president vacillated between serious to critical and at times unstable. He has received full medical support and continues to do so. He has also received visits from family, friends and colleagues," Maharaj said. "Despite the difficulties imposed by his various illnesses, he, as always, displays immense grace and fortitude." The presidential spokesman called for Mandela and his family to have the "necessary private space" so his care can proceed with dignity and without unnecessary intrusion. But just hours later, confusion spread when the office of former U.S. President George H. W. Bush mistakenly announced Mandela's death. "Barbara and I mourn the passing of one of the greatest believers in freedom we have had the privilege to know," Bush wrote in a statement that had been prepared in advance for Mandela's death. "As President, I watched in wonder as Nelson Mandela had the remarkable capacity to forgive his jailers following 26 years of wrongful imprisonment -- setting a powerful example of redemption and grace for us all." Reached by telephone after the statement was e-mailed by Bush spokesman Jim McGrath, Maharaj denied that Mandela had died after his release on Sunday. "It is clearly incorrect. We see it as an error on his side, and not make a big deal about it," he said, referring to Bush's office. McGrath later apologized for his error, which was reported on by dts News, and explained that he had misread an e-mail alert from the Washington Post when he woke up. "I just made a very stupid mistake. I'm very sorry about that," he told the newspaper. "I apologize, because I know I put a lot of people into a modestly stressful position, which is never my intent for my friends in the media. So I'm sorry about that. A massive egg on my face, I'm so sorry." The hospitalization since June marked Mandela's most serious health scare yet, with doctors at one point denying information from court documents that claimed Mandela was in a vegetative state. He had also been hospitalized for more than a week in late March, also for a recurrence of a lung infection, and doctors withdrew excess fluid that had accumulated in the space surrounding his lungs. After the procedure in late March, the government revealed Mandela was able to breathe without difficulty, even though it had previously made no mention of breathing problems and instead said the former leader was in "good spirits" and "making steady progress." The government has been repeatedly criticized for being reluctant to provide more specific details about Mandela's condition, causing uncertainty. Earlier in March, Mandela spent about 24 hours in hospital for what the government described as a `scheduled medical check-up` to manage existing conditions in line with his old age. Officials at the time assured Mandela was "well" but refused to provide more specific details about the nature of the visit. Mandela was also hospitalized in December 2012 for what was later revealed to be a recurrence of a previous lung infection. The anti-apartheid icon also underwent a successful procedure on December 15 to remove gallstones which were discovered while Mandela was undergoing tests. The hospitalization in December lasted for more than three weeks. Major South African news organizations harshly criticized the government's handling of information relating to Mandela's hospitalization, complaining that the government did not act on a previously developed protocol that would have ensured the former leader's privacy while keeping South Africans informed of major developments. Before being elected as president, Mandela was a strong anti-apartheid activist and the leader of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the African National Congress. He spent 27 years in prison after being convicted and sentenced to life in prison on charges for sabotage and other crimes. Much of his prison term was served on Robben Island. Mandela was released on February 11, 1990, and became president only four years later, leading the country with a multi-racial administration to end the apartheid. Mandela and Frederik Willem de Klerk were jointly awarded the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize for their work for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa.

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UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

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