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Authors

Kalantar-Zadeh, K
Alfonzo, J
Martínez, A
et al.

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Let's have the next ISN conferences in Havana and Nuremberg

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To the Editor: The recent editorial by Dr Feehally¹ has reassured some concerned professionals in that the International Society of Nephrology (ISN) secretary reiterated constructive plans to address the discriminatory regulations against nephrology education in Cuba and other embargoed countries. However, some statements might be interpreted as if the ISN intended to overcomply with the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) regulations. Anything beyond the minimum necessary compliance with the OFAC regulation may compromise ISN's position. Several other US scientific organizations including the Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineer (IEEE)² and The American Chemical Society (ACS)^{3,4} have harshly criticized the OFAC regulations. These protests have led to major revisions in OFAC regulations allowing publications by the scientists from embargoed countries in US scientific journals.

Many scientists believe that the freedom of science is independent of whether Cuba or any other country has a non-capitalist government or whether any administration or political system in any part of the world under any pretext prescribes sanctions against medicine and science in another part of the world. Maybe such statements as, 'ISN must also *always* act within the law'¹ were not necessary, as they may indicate a rigid black-and-white approach with limited flexibility for appropriate civil disobedience, as IEEE and ACS successfully did.²⁻⁴ History has shown that such strictly robust law-and-order statements as, 'We *always* obeyed the law; otherwise life would be chaos' are amenable to misinterpretation and abuse.⁵ There was no need for stating such discouraging predictions as, 'Regardless of the efforts of ISN and other like-minded scientific and medical societies, it

must, however, be recognized that such changes (in the current sanction regulations) will only follow substantial shifts in the international political climate.¹ The IEEE and ACS obviously had a different attitude and managed to challenge OFAC successfully.²⁻⁴

We are confident that the ISN, as an organization, will do everything in its power to re-emphasize its commitment to sponsoring nephrology education in such embargoed countries as Cuba and will continue to reiterate the importance of scientific justice, freedom, and ethics, which may have been violated by OFAC regulations. Hence, we suggest that the next ISN conferences be held in Havana, Cuba, and in Nuremberg, Germany, and that several lectures and programs be devoted to the campaign against political and ideological forces that seek to restrict the freedom of science and scientists and to compromise the ethical values of medical education.

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K Kalantar-Zadeh^{1,2}, J Alfonzo³, A Martínez³ and G Pérez³
¹Division of Nephrology and Hypertension, Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, Torrance, California, USA; ²David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, Los Angeles, California, USA and ³Cuban Society of Nephrology, Havana, Cuba

Correspondence: K Kalantar-Zadeh, Division of Nephrology and Hypertension, Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, 1124 West Carson Street, Torrance, California 90502, USA. E-mail: kamkal@ucla.edu