Beat: Health

Mandela remains critical but responding to treatment, Zuma says

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USPA News - Anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela, who is being treated at a South African hospital for a recurrence of a lung infection, is responding to treatment but remains in a critical condition as the former president approaches his 95th birthday. South African President Jacob Zuma visited Mandela, who is 94, at Medi-Clinic Heart Hospital in Pretoria on Wednesday evening and was briefed by the medical team.

"[Zuma] found him still critical but stable, and [he] was told by doctors that he was responding to treatment," presidential spokesman Mac Maharaj said. No other details were immediately released, but the news comes days after doctors denied information from court documents that claimed Mandela is in a vegetative state. "We are encouraged that Madiba is responding to treatment and urge the public to continue providing support and showering him with love which gives him and the family strength,`` Zuma said after Wednesday`s visit, referring to Mandela by his Xhosa clan name. There have been conflicting reports about Mandela`s condition since he was hospitalized on June 8, and it followed other hospitalizations in recent months, raising concerns about his health condition. Mandela was 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 situation, 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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