

Beat: Health

Mandela's condition unchanged as he spends time family

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USPA News - Former South African President Nelson Mandela was visited by family members on Monday as he spent a fifth day at an undisclosed hospital, receiving treatment for a recurrence of a lung infection, the government said. There has been no change in his condition.

Presidential spokesman Mac Maharaj said Mandela, who is 94, spent part of Family Day with members of his family, who he said have expressed their appreciation for the outpouring of support they have received from the public. Easter Monday is known as Family Day in South Africa. But no new details were released about the condition of the anti-apartheid icon, and it remains unclear when he may be released from hospital. "There is no significant change in his condition since the update issued last night," Maharaj said, adding that he continues to receive treatment for pneumonia. On Sunday, when doctors reported a "further improvement" in Mandela's condition, South African President Jacob Zuma thanked fellow South Africans who prayed for Mandela at Easter church services during the weekend. "We also thank all people at home and around the world, who continue to keep Madiba and his family in their thoughts and to show their love and support in various ways," he said, referring to Mandela by his Xhosa clan name. The sudden hospitalization late Wednesday immediately raised new concerns about the former president's health. On Saturday, doctors said Mandela is now able to breathe without difficulty after they withdrew excess fluid that had accumulated in the space surrounding his lungs. Prior to Saturday's procedure, however, Maharaj had said that Mandela was in "good spirits" and "making steady progress," but he made no mention of breathing problems. The government has been repeatedly criticized for being reluctant to provide more specific details about Mandela's situation, causing uncertainty. Earlier, on Thursday morning, Zuma had wished Mandela a speedy recovery but said he has "full confidence" in the medical team. "We appeal to the people of South Africa and the world to pray for our beloved Madiba and his family and to keep them in their thoughts," he said at the time. Later that day, U.S. President Barack Obama, speaking from the White House, also sent his best wishes to Mandela. "Obviously we're all deeply concerned with Nelson Mandela's health," he said after meeting with African leaders. "He's a hero I think to all of us. And we will be keeping him in our thoughts and prayers, and his entire family. Obama added: "[Mandela] is as strong physically as he's been in character and in leadership over so many decades, and hopefully he will come out of this latest challenge. But we all recognize that he has given everything to his people, the people of South Africa, to the people of the continent, and he's ended up being an inspiration to all of us." 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 later was 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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