

PUBLIC RECORD

Date: 04/10/2024

Medical Practitioner's name:	Dr Azhari AHMED
GMC reference number:	5186569
Primary medical qualification:	MB BS 1986 University of Khartoum
Type of case	Outcome on non-compliance
Review - Non-compliance with a performance assessment	Non-compliance found

Summary of outcome

Suspension for 12 months
Review hearing directed

Tribunal:

Legally Qualified Chair	Mrs Judith Walker
Lay Tribunal Member:	Mrs Brenda McAll-Kersting
Medical Tribunal Member:	Dr Loralie Rodrigues

Tribunal Clerk:	Ms Angela Carney
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Attendance and Representation:

Medical Practitioner:	Not present, not represented
GMC Representative:	Mr John Morrison, Counsel

Attendance of press / public

In accordance with Rule 41 of the General Medical Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2004 the hearing was held in public and private.

Overarching Objective

Throughout the decision making process the tribunal has borne in mind the statutory overarching objective as set out in s1 Medical Act 1983 (the 1983 Act) to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public, to promote and maintain public confidence in the medical profession, and to promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of that profession.

Determination on consideration of Non-compliance 04/10/2024

1. This is the second review of Dr Ahmed's case following a Medical Practitioners Tribunal (MPT) hearing which concluded in September 2022. The order was reviewed in September 2023.

The Outcome of Applications made during this stage

2. The Tribunal granted an application made by Mr Morrison, Counsel on behalf of the GMC, pursuant to Rules 20 and 40 of the Rules that notice of this hearing had been properly served on Dr Ahmed. It also granted the GMC's application made pursuant to Rule 31 of the Rules to proceed with the hearing in Dr Ahmed's absence. The Tribunal's full decision is included at Annex A.

Background

3. Dr Ahmed qualified MB BS from University of Khartoum in 1986. Dr Ahmed is a Locum Consultant Physician who has been registered with various locum agencies. Between September and November 2021, the GMC received information from several different sources, raising concerns about Dr Ahmed's clinical performance, timekeeping and communication with patients.

4. On 21 January 2022, the GMC directed Dr Ahmed to undergo a performance assessment in accordance with Rule 7(3) and Schedule 1 of the Rules. Dr Ahmed was informed of this decision in a letter sent by post on 27 January 2022. The letter requested that Dr Ahmed submit the Assessment Portfolio by 23 February 2022. Following further correspondence to Dr Ahmed he responded on 4 March 2022, and informed that he was living in the Sudan. The deadline for the submission of Dr Ahmed's Assessment Portfolio was extended to 15 March 2022. Three reminder emails were sent by the GMC to Dr Ahmed in March, April and May 2022 and an attempt was made to contact him via telephone.

5. On 9 June 2022, having received no response from Dr Ahmed, the GMC took the decision to refer the matter to a non-compliance Tribunal, which took place on 8 September 2022.

The 2022 Tribunal

6. Dr Ahmed was not present or represented at the non-compliance hearing in September 2022.

7. The 2022 Tribunal considered whether Dr Ahmed had failed to comply with the direction to undergo a performance assessment. The 2022 Tribunal was satisfied that the GMC had properly notified Dr Ahmed of the requirement to undergo an assessment of his performance. Despite all reasonable efforts by the GMC, Dr Ahmed failed to respond.

8. The 2022 Tribunal found that it had no explanation from Dr Ahmed as to why he had not supplied the information requested. It concluded that Dr Ahmed had disengaged from the process.
9. The 2022 Tribunal was therefore satisfied that Dr Ahmed had failed to comply with the direction to undergo a performance assessment and that non-compliance had been found.
10. Having found non-compliance by reason of Dr Ahmed's failure to undertake a performance assessment in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Rules, the 2022 Tribunal went on to consider whether to give a direction for conditional registration or suspension ('a non-compliance order').
11. Taking into consideration Dr Ahmed's lack of engagement, the serious concerns being raised and his non-compliance with the GMC's direction, the 2022 Tribunal concluded that an order of conditions would not be sufficient to satisfy the overarching objective.
12. The 2022 Tribunal determined to suspend Dr Ahmed's registration for a period of 12 months and directed a review, with the onus being on Dr Ahmed to demonstrate compliance and undergo a performance assessment.

The 2023 Tribunal

13. Dr Ahmed was not present or represented at the non-compliance hearing in September 2023.
14. The 2023 Tribunal found that the GMC had taken all reasonable steps to encourage Dr Ahmed to comply with its direction to undergo a performance assessment. It noted that Dr Ahmed had not engaged with the GMC since the last hearing and that his last reply to the GMC was an email in March 2022.
15. The 2023 Tribunal was satisfied that there had been no progress since the last hearing, and that Dr Ahmed has continued to fail to comply with the direction to undergo a performance assessment. The 2023 Tribunal found that there was no explanation or good reason from Dr Ahmed for his non-compliance. The 2023 Tribunal determined that non-compliance has been found.
16. The 2023 Tribunal considered that, given Dr Ahmed's non-compliance with the GMC's request to undergo a performance assessment, it was reasonable to conclude that there was no evidence that he would comply with any conditions placed on his registration. Further, in the light of the serious and wide-ranging concerns about his clinical abilities, and in the absence of a performance assessment, conditions could not be formulated to manage the risks in this case.

17. The 2023 Tribunal was satisfied that, given Dr Ahmed's continued non-compliance, lack of any evidence of mitigation, and lack of independent reassurance that Dr Ahmed was currently safe to treat patients, the only appropriate and proportionate sanction in this case was suspension. The 2023 Tribunal was of the view that only a period of suspension would uphold the overarching objective.

18. The 2023 Tribunal determined to suspend Dr Ahmed's registration for a further period of 12 months to give him time to re-engage with the GMC and for a performance assessment to be arranged and completed.

19. The 2023 Tribunal directed a review hearing with the onus on Dr Ahmed to demonstrate compliance.

Today's Tribunal

20. This Tribunal has met to review Dr Ahmed's case. It has considered, under Rule 22A of the Rules, whether there has been a failure to comply with an assessment under Schedule 1 of the Rules.

21. The Tribunal has taken into account the documentary evidence which included but was not limited to:

- Record of Determinations 2022 and 2023
- Correspondence from the GMC to Dr Ahmed from September 2023
- Email dated 2 October 2024 from XXX, Mr A

Submissions

22. On behalf of the GMC, Mr Morrison, Counsel referred the Tribunal to the *Non-compliance hearings guidance for medical practitioner tribunals* ('the non-compliance guidance').

'A16 When considering the issue of the doctor's compliance with a GMC direction or request to provide information, the tribunal should ask the following questions:

a. has the doctor failed to comply with the GMC's direction or request to provide information?

b. if so, is there a good reason for the doctor's failure to comply?

A18. A doctor may have failed to comply with a GMC direction or request to provide information where they have:

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...d. failed to respond to a direction to undergo an assessment or request to provide information...

A33. In the absence of objective medical evidence, or where the objective medical evidence does not indicate there is a realistic prospect that the doctor will be able to comply in a reasonable timeframe, a proportionate regulatory response will usually be to restrict the doctor's practice until such time as they are able to comply with the direction or request for information.

A39. Where a doctor raises their personal circumstances as a reason for not being able to comply, the following situations will not usually amount to a good reason unless there is objective evidence the doctor will be able to comply in a reasonable timeframe:

a. a doctor says they are unable to travel or obtain a visa to travel...'

23. Mr Morrison submitted that Dr Ahmed has failed to comply and continued to fail to comply with the direction to undergo a performance assessment. There was no response from Dr Ahmed to the GMC's correspondence and there is no legal or factual change in the background. In relation to 'good reason', Mr Morrison referred to the email of 2 October 2024 sent on behalf of Dr Ahmed by Mr A (reproduced in full in Annex A). He said that it appears that Dr Ahmed has been in the Sudan since December 2021 a short time after the concerns were raised with the GMC.

24. Mr Morrison referred the Tribunal to paragraph 6 of the 2022 Tribunal's determination:

'6. On 8 November 2021, the GMC received information from an anonymous whistleblower, stating that they had concerns about Dr Ahmed's [XXX].'

25. Mr Morrison stated that there may have been previous concerns regarding Dr Ahmed's XXX but also stated that the guidance makes clear that there should be objective evidence about XXX which prevents them from complying with a direction. He submitted that the email from Mr A is lacking sufficient detail to amount to a good reason and is not objective.

26. Mr Morrison stated XXX. He submitted that the GMC would expect there to be independent evidence such as information about XXX providing details of exactly when that occurred. He stated that there is no information to say how XXX have prevented Dr Ahmed from attempting to comply nor is there any independent evidence as to how XXX may have impacted on the non-compliance. Mr Morrison stated that the email does acknowledge that Dr Ahmed has not been engaging or responding with any communication but does not explain why Dr Ahmed cannot communicate or engage with the GMC or MPTS himself. Mr Morrison submitted that this does not, at this point in time, without further evidence, amount to a good reason.

The Tribunal's decision

27. In reaching its decision, the Tribunal has given careful consideration to all of the documentary evidence adduced and the submissions made by Mr Morrison, Counsel, on behalf of the GMC.

28. Whilst the Tribunal has borne in mind the submissions made, the decision regarding non-compliance is one for it to reach, exercising its own judgement.

29. The Tribunal has borne in mind paragraph C53 of the Non-compliance guidance (September 2019), namely whether Dr Ahmed has:

'a. continued to fail to comply with the direction or request to provide information that led to the non-compliance order being made, and ...'

30. The Tribunal noted the extensive correspondence sent to Dr Ahmed since the previous hearing in September 2023. The Tribunal noted that Dr Ahmed was aware of the GMC's direction to undertake a performance assessment but has failed to do so.

31. The Tribunal has taken account of the email dated 2 October 2024 from XXX, Mr A, in which he indicated that Dr Ahmed XXX, is living in a war zone in the Sudan and has no passport to return to the UK.

32. The Tribunal noted that the email has not come from Dr Ahmed himself but from Mr A, with no explanation as to why Dr Ahmed cannot correspond himself. Whilst the Tribunal acknowledges Dr Ahmed's difficult circumstances, it has received no objective evidence from him or Mr A about XXX. Neither is there any objective evidence regarding correspondence with the Home Office about the issuance of an emergency travel document or any independent evidence as to when such documents may be issued. As such, the Tribunal determined that Dr Ahmed has failed to provide a good reason why he has not complied with the direction to undergo a performance assessment.

33. In all the circumstances, the Tribunal determined that non-compliance had been found.

Determination on Sanction 04/10/2024

34. Having determined that there is non-compliance by reason of Dr Ahmed's failure to comply with the direction of a performance assessment in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Rules, the Tribunal has considered whether a sanction should be imposed.

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35. The Tribunal has considered the submissions made by Mr Morrison, Counsel, on behalf of the GMC regarding the appropriate sanction, if any, that should be imposed on Dr Ahmed's registration.
36. Mr Morrison submitted that the appropriate and proportionate sanction is a further period of suspension. He stated that the length of any suspension is a matter for the Tribunal. He referred to the email from Mr A regarding Dr Ahmed's return to the UK and said that it appears he may be willing to engage and submitted that an indefinite suspension would not be appropriate at this time.
37. Mr Morrison reminded the Tribunal that it must balance the need to protect the public with the rights of Dr Ahmed and in doing so, it should bear in mind the three elements of the statutory overarching objective.
38. Mr Morrison said that the continued non-compliance has gone on for a period of two years but there is some evidence to suggest there may be a desire from Dr Ahmed to comply with the performance assessment. However, he pointed out that Dr Ahmed had provided no information himself and the information that he wished to comply came only in the email from Mr A.
39. Mr Morrison submitted that conditions would not be appropriate given Dr Ahmed's non-compliance.
40. In relation to suspension, Mr Morrison referred the Tribunal to the non-compliance guidance:

'C22. In the context of non-compliance, an order of suspension sends a message about the important role the GMC and MPTS play in making sure that a doctor's practice meets the expected standards and that the public is adequately protected where fitness to practise concerns have been raised.

C23. When considering whether a period of suspension is a proportionate response to a doctor's non-compliance, the tribunal may want to consider the previous opportunities the doctor has had to comply and the level of the doctor's engagement with the fitness to practise process.

C24. Suspension is likely to be appropriate where a doctor has explicitly refused to comply with a direction or request to provide information or has failed to respond to a direction or request to provide information, and there is no mitigating information to suggest that conditions are likely to be sufficient.

C25 Suspension has a deterrent effect and can be used to send a signal to the doctor, the profession and public about what behaviour is expected from a registered doctor. Suspension from the register also has a punitive effect, in that it prevents the doctor

from practising and therefore from earning a living as a doctor during the period of suspension, although this is not its purpose'

The Tribunal's approach

41. The Tribunal is aware that the decision as to the appropriate sanction, if any, to impose on Dr Ahmed's registration is a matter for this Tribunal exercising its independent judgment. In reaching its decision, the Tribunal has taken account of the *Non-compliance hearings guidance for medical practitioner tribunals*.

42. Throughout its deliberations, the Tribunal has also borne in mind that the purpose of a sanction is not to punish or discipline doctors but may have a punitive effect.

43. Throughout its deliberations, the Tribunal has applied the principle of proportionality, balancing Dr Ahmed's interests with protecting the public which includes the protection of patients, the maintenance of public confidence in the profession, and the declaring and upholding of proper standards of conduct and behaviour.

44. The Tribunal has already made a determination on non-compliance, and it has taken those matters into account during its deliberations on sanction.

45. The Tribunal has borne in mind paragraph C56 of the non-compliance guidance, which states:

'C56. In making its decision, the tribunal can decide to:

- a. extend the order*
- b. vary the order*
- c. revoke the order'*

It noted that it may impose conditions for a period of up to three years, extend the current suspension order for up to 12 months or, in this case, may impose a period of indefinite suspension.

The Tribunal's Decision

Revoking the current order

46. The Tribunal first considered whether to conclude Dr Ahmed's case by revoking the current order of suspension.

47. The Tribunal noted that Dr Ahmed has not engaged with the GMC since March 2022. The Tribunal determined that in view of its findings on non-compliance with the direction to undergo a performance assessment and the concerns raised about Dr Ahmed's clinical practice an order is necessary in order to protect the public, maintain confidence in the

profession and uphold proper professional standards and conduct. In these circumstances it would be neither sufficient, proportionate nor in the public interest, to conclude this case by revoking the current order of suspension and making no further order.

Conditions

48. The Tribunal next considered whether it would be appropriate to impose a period of conditions on Dr Ahmed's registration. It has borne in mind that any conditions must be appropriate, proportionate, workable and measurable.

49. The Tribunal considered paragraphs C13 and C14 of the non-compliance guidance which state:

'C13. Conditions might be appropriate where the doctor has provided some mitigation for their non-compliance that, whilst not sufficient to satisfy the tribunal that the doctor had a good reason for their past non-compliance, does satisfy the tribunal that the doctor will comply in the future and that conditions are sufficient to meet the regulatory purpose of protecting the public.'

'C14. Conditions are unlikely to be appropriate where a doctor has explicitly refused to comply with a direction or request to provide information or has failed to respond to a direction or request to provide information, and there is no mitigating information available.'

50. The Tribunal noted that conditions are likely to be workable where it is satisfied the doctor will comply with them. Dr Ahmed has not engaged with the GMC since March 2022. However, it noted the email from Mr A explaining that he is currently stranded in the Sudan. The Tribunal noted that the clinical concerns remain and neither Dr Ahmed nor Mr A have provided it with any evidence to support or verify Dr Ahmed's present situation or his future intent.

51. The Tribunal noted that Dr Ahmed was directed to undergo a GMC performance assessment and has failed to comply with that direction. The Tribunal concluded that at this time it could not be satisfied that Dr Ahmed would comply with conditional registration.

52. Further, the Tribunal considered that a period of conditional registration would not adequately reflect the untested clinical concerns and determined that conditions could not be formulated which would protect the public, maintain public confidence in the medical profession and uphold professional standards and conduct.

53. The Tribunal has, therefore, determined that it would not be sufficient to direct the imposition of conditions on Dr Ahmed's registration.

Suspension

54. Having determined that the imposition of conditions would not be appropriate, the Tribunal considered whether to suspend Dr Ahmed's registration for a further period.

55. The Tribunal noted that it has been over two years since Dr Ahmed was directed to undertake a performance assessment and that he has failed to do so.

56. The Tribunal has received some information that may mitigate Dr Ahmed's non-compliance, however it has no objective evidence of this. Given that information, the Tribunal considered that there may be a possibility that Dr Ahmed will re-engage with the GMC and undergo a performance assessment on his return to the UK.

57. In all the circumstances, the Tribunal has determined that it is necessary, for the protection of patients and in the wider public interest, to suspend Dr Ahmed's registration for a period of 12 months. The Tribunal considered that a period of 12 months will be sufficient time for Dr Ahmed to return to the UK and for the performance assessment to be arranged and completed. Should Dr Ahmed complete the performance assessment, it would be open to him to request an early review.

58. As Dr Ahmed has been suspended for a consecutive period of two years the Tribunal has the power to indefinitely suspend his registration. However, given the indication that Dr Ahmed is willing to engage on his return to the UK, the Tribunal considered it appropriate to allow him the opportunity to comply with the GMC's direction of a performance assessment and that an indefinite suspension would be disproportionate at this time.

59. The effect of this direction is that, unless Dr Ahmed exercises his right of appeal, this decision will take effect 28 days from when written notice of this determination is deemed to have been served upon him. If Dr Ahmed decided to appeal against this decision, the suspension currently imposed on his registration will remain in force until the appeal is determined.

Review

60. A Tribunal will review Dr Ahmed's case at a hearing to be held before the end of the period of suspension. It will then consider whether it should take any further action in relation to his registration. Dr Ahmed will be informed of the date of that hearing, which Dr Ahmed will be expected to attend. The Tribunal reviewing Dr Ahmed's case would be assisted by receiving the following:

- Evidence that Dr Ahmed has undertaken a performance assessment
- Independent information regarding the matters raised by Mr A's email
- XXX

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- If Dr Ahmed has not undertaken a performance assessment, evidence of any steps he has taken to arrange or undertake a performance assessment

61. The effect of this direction is that, unless Dr Ahmed's exercises his right of appeal, this decision will take effect 28 days from when written notice of this determination is deemed to have been served upon him. A note explaining Dr Ahmed's right of appeal will be provided to him.

62. That concludes this hearing.

ANNEX A – 04/10/2024

Application on Service and proceeding in absence.

63. Dr Ahmed is neither present nor represented today at this Medical Practitioners Tribunal ('MPT') non-compliance review hearing. The Tribunal therefore considered whether the relevant documents had been served in accordance with General Medical Council (Fitness to Practise Rules) 2004 as amended ('the Rules'), and paragraph 8 of Schedule 4 of the Medical Act 1983. In so doing, the Tribunal has considered all the information placed before it, together with the submissions made by Mr John Morrison, Counsel on behalf of the General Medical Council (the GMC).

64. Mr Morrison referred the Tribunal to the relevant proof of service documents as follows:

- a. Screenshot of Dr Ahmed's GMC registered postal and email address
- b. General Medical Council (GMC) Rule 34(9) letter sent by post and email, dated 22 August 2024
- c. GMC email chain dated 4 October 2024 regarding proof of service of the Rule 34(9) letter
- d. Royal Mail proof of delivery details of the Rule 34(9) letter and enclosures, dated 24 August 2024
- e. MPTS Notice of Hearing (NoH) letter sent by post and email, dated 23 August 2024
- f. MPTS NoH letter proof of delivery which was signed for on 24 August 2024
- g. Email from Mr A, XXX, dated 2 October 2024

65. Mr Morrison submitted that there has been effective service.

Service

66. The Tribunal took account of the correspondence sent by the GMC and MPTS by recorded delivery to Dr Ahmed's registered address and email addresses. The Tribunal has borne in mind that the onus is on the doctor to ensure their registered address and contact details are up to date. The Tribunal noted that the letters appear to have signed for.

67. Having considered the evidence before it and the submissions made by Mr Morrison, the Tribunal was satisfied that that the Notice of this Hearing and relevant documentation from the GMC had been served on Dr Ahmed in accordance with Rules 20 and 40 of the GMC (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2004 (the Rules), and paragraph 8 of Schedule 4 to the Medical Act 1983, as amended.

Proceeding in absence

68. Mr Morrison invited the Tribunal to proceed in Dr Ahmed's absence pursuant to Rule 31. He reminded the Tribunal that this is the third hearing of non-compliance. Mr Morrison referred the Tribunal to the case of *GMC v Adeogba [2016] EWCA Civ 162*. Mr Morrison stated that the main statutory objective of the GMC being the protection, promotion and maintenance of the health and safety of the public and dealing with cases fairly but also economically, expeditiously and efficiently and that balance weighs in favour of the GMC.

69. Mr Morrison referred the Tribunal to the email dated 2 October 2024 purported to be from XXX. He submitted that it is unclear why Dr Ahmed has been unable to contact the GMC directly and referred the Tribunal to all of the GMC's correspondence which has not been responded to. He said there is no independent evidence to support the information in the email. He also said that there is no stringent timeline as to when Dr Ahmed will return from the Sudan. Mr Morrison submitted that against this backdrop the hearing should proceed in Dr Ahmed's absence.

70. As the Tribunal was satisfied that notice had been properly served on Dr Ahmed, it then considered whether to proceed with this hearing in his absence, in accordance with Rule 31 of the Rules, which states:

'31. Where the practitioner is neither present nor represented at a hearing, the Committee or Tribunal may nevertheless proceed to consider and determine the allegation if they are satisfied that all reasonable efforts have been made to serve the practitioner with notice of the hearing in accordance with these Rules.'

The Tribunal noted that the NoH had been sent to and signed for at Dr Ahmed's registered address and also had been sent to his registered email address and a further email address which he had provided. In these circumstances the Tribunal considered that all reasonable efforts had been made to serve notice.

71. The Tribunal has borne in mind the relevant Rules, the case of *GMC v Adeogba [2016] EWCA Civ 162* and the overarching objective. The Tribunal had regard to the following factors:

- a. The nature and circumstances of the doctor's behaviour in absenting himself;
- b. Whether the behaviour was voluntary and therefore that the doctor waived the right to be present;
- c. Whether an adjournment would result in the doctor attending on a subsequent occasion;
- d. The likely length of any such adjournment;
- e. Whether the doctor, although absent, wished to be represented, or whether he had waived his right to be represented;

f. The general public interest.

72. The Tribunal was mindful that the discretion to proceed in the absence of a doctor should be exercised with the utmost care and caution and with a regard to the overall fairness of the proceedings. In doing so, it considered the need to balance Dr Ahmed's interests with the overarching statutory objective.

73. The Tribunal considered that the fair, economical, expeditious and efficient disposal of a hearing is of very real importance. The Tribunal must balance the interests of Dr Ahmed with the interests of the public.

74. The Tribunal noted that Dr Ahmed has not engaged with the GMC since prior to his substantive hearing in September 2022 which he did not attend. Dr Ahmed did not attend his previous review hearing in September 2023. It appears from Dr Ahmed's last email on 4 March 2022 that he is living in the Sudan.

75. The Tribunal noted the email from XXX, Mr A dated 2 October 2024, which states:

'I am writing to provide an update on [Dr Ahmed]'s general situation and his upcoming non-compliance review, which is scheduled for 4th October 2024 at 9:00 AM. As per previous correspondence, [Dr Ahmed] has not been engaging nor responding to any communication. [XXX]

[Dr Ahmed] has not been in the UK since December 2021; he initially traveled to Sudan to visit family. [XXX]. Additionally, he became caught up in the perilous civil war that broke out in April 2023. He was stuck in a besieged district of Khartoum. [XXX]. He is now safe but currently stranded in Port Sudan.

I am trying to facilitate his return to the UK. His UK passport is damaged, and he cannot travel with it. I am currently seeking advice and assistance from the Home Office and awaiting the issuance of an emergency travel document to allow him to travel to Egypt initially, before booking a flight back to the UK. Once he is safely back in the UK, he will follow up with the case accordingly.

PS [Dr Ahmed] should be back in the UK at the latter end of this month - October 2024 '

76. The Tribunal noted that there is no objective evidence to support the assertions made by a Mr A. It also noted that Mr A has not requested an adjournment.

77. The Tribunal was of the view that an adjournment would serve no useful purpose in this case. There was no evidence before the Tribunal as to when or if Dr Ahmed would be able to attend a hearing if it were held at a later date.

78. The Tribunal determined that Dr Ahmed has voluntarily absented himself from this hearing and therefore waived the right to be present.

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79. The Tribunal has balanced Dr Ahmed's interests with the wider public interest in deciding whether to proceed in his absence. The Tribunal noted that Dr Ahmed's current suspension expires on 12 October 2024. The Tribunal concluded that it is in the public interest and in the interests of justice to proceed with this hearing today.

80. Accordingly, the Tribunal determined that it was fair and reasonable to proceed in Dr Ahmed's absence in accordance with Rule 31 of the Rules.