

From the SCI Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee

October 16, 2015



Regarding: The Walter Palmer case

Dear Board Member:

With the announcement from Zimbabwe that Dr. Walter Palmer will not be charged with an illegal hunt in the taking of Cecil the Lion, the SCI Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee has dismissed the ethics case against Dr. Walter Palmer. The temporary suspension of Dr. Palmer's membership has been lifted.

When the case was opened and Dr. Palmer was temporarily suspended, a number of you voiced your concern that the suspension was contrary to a presumption of "innocent until proven guilty." The Committee shares this concern and it does not make recommendations for temporary suspension lightly. SCI's Bylaws allow for temporary suspension when it appears that an emergency situation exists and that SCI may be harmed. The rules that govern those suspensions protect the rights of the individual hunter by giving him an immediate notice and the opportunity to request a hearing.

When Zimbabwe announced its allegations that Dr. Palmer illegally hunted Cecil the Lion, it sparked an immediate global outpouring of negative opinion. This tidal wave of hatred was not just aimed at Dr. Palmer but at all hunting and at all hunters.

The Committee immediately reviewed the available information and opened a case against Dr. Palmer. It made the judgment that an emergency situation existed in which SCI could be harmed in carrying out its mission to protect the freedom to hunt. The Committee recommended the temporary suspension of Dr. Palmer pending the outcome of its investigation. The EC approved the temporary suspension on the evening of July 28.

A notice was sent to Dr. Palmer the next day and he was given the right to request a hearing on the suspension. He did not request a hearing.

A temporary suspension is not a judgment of guilt. It is similar to a police agency temporarily suspending an officer who has fired his weapon or a nursing home temporarily suspending a worker when allegations of misconduct surface. Its purpose is to protect SCI and its ability to carry out its mission to protect the freedom to hunt for all hunters as a group. The individual hunter who has been suspended is protected by being given an immediate notice and the right to request a hearing on the suspension. In other cases, we have recommended the lifting of suspensions after the hearing.

The Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee is made up of hunters who are SCI members like yourselves. Its job is to promote SCI's mission to protect the freedom to hunt for all hunters by assuring that individual hunters are acting ethically and legally. The outpouring of negative opinion about hunting in the Palmer case shows that hunting occurs in an environment that can turn hostile very quickly. In the Palmer case that hostility was widespread and led to a number of attacks on hunting and on SCI.

The Committee welcomes responses to this message. We are all working to protect the freedom to hunt.

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