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HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS: CARIBBEAN, CANADIAN HIV/AIDS ACTIVISTS HONORED

Recipients Champion Rights of Marginalized Communities

Toronto, June 9, 2011 — Today, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and Human Rights Watch will jointly present their **2011 Awards for Action on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights**. The International Award honors the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities coalition and its late co-founder, Dr. Robert Carr. The Canadian Award recognizes 20 years of advocacy on behalf of incarcerated people by the Prisoners' HIV/AIDS Support Action Network.

The awards, given annually since 2002, recognize outstanding individuals and organizations that protect the rights and dignity of people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. This year's awards will be presented at a public ceremony in Toronto as part of the Legal Network's Symposium on HIV, Law and Human Rights (www.aidslaw.ca/symposium). The keynote speech, following the ceremony, will be by Alan Young, counsel in *Bedford v. Canada*, a constitutional challenge to Canada's prostitution laws that harm sex workers.

Dr. Carr's untimely death in early May ended a brilliant career of dedication to the plight of those most vulnerable to HIV, the Legal Network and Human Rights Watch said. However, the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities coalition (CVC), the group he co-founded in 2004, continues his vital work throughout the Caribbean.

Founded in 2004, CVC is a coalition of community leaders and non-governmental agencies providing services directly to and on behalf of Caribbean populations especially vulnerable to HIV infection or often forgotten in access to treatment and health-care programs. These include women and girls, sex workers, LGBT people, and people who use drugs, among others.

"In a social, cultural and political environment that is hostile and often violent, CVC strives to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our region do not remain voiceless and invisible," said Ian McKnight, executive director of CVC. "This award is an honor and a recognition of Dr. Carr's tireless work, as well as encouragement for what still needs to be achieved."

In Canada, the work of Prisoners' HIV/AIDS Support Action Network (PASAN) has long championed one of the most marginalized groups of people, those who are incarcerated, the groups said. It was formed in 1991 as a grass-roots response to the AIDS crisis in the Canadian prison system.

PASAN provides HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C prevention education and support services to prisoners, former prisoners, youth in custody and their families. It currently serves more than 600 people. It also has published extensive reference material, including a landmark study about on women and HIV/AIDS in prison.

“Prisoners’ rights here in Canada are being increasingly challenged, and sadly we expect that situation to get worse before it gets better,” said Anne Marie DiCenso, PASAN’s executive director. “In such a climate, the work we have to do is more important than ever.”

In a joint statement, the Human Rights Watch health and human rights advocacy director, Rebecca Schleifer, and the Legal Network executive director, Richard Elliott, expressed admiration for the efforts of the 2011 Award recipients and gratitude for their contributions to the rights, health and dignity of the most vulnerable.

“Time and again, we see how widespread human rights abuses fuel the HIV epidemic and deny people access to critical information, care and treatment,” their statement said. “It is in the interests of our global society that CVC and PASAN continue their important work demanding health and human rights for all.”

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About the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

Since 1992, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network (www.aidslaw.ca) has been promoting the human rights of people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, in Canada and internationally, through research, legal and policy analysis, education, and community mobilization. The Legal Network is one of the world’s leading advocacy organizations working on the legal and human rights issues raised by HIV/AIDS.

About Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org) is one of the world’s leading independent organizations dedicated to defending and protecting human rights. By focusing international attention where human rights are violated, we give voice to the oppressed and hold oppressors accountable for their crimes. Our rigorous, objective investigations and strategic, targeted advocacy build intense pressure for action and raise the cost of human rights abuse. For 30 years, Human Rights Watch has worked tenaciously to lay the legal and moral groundwork for deep-rooted change and has fought to bring greater justice and security to people around the world.

For more information, including bios, and to arrange interviews:

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