



Call for International Action to coincide with Dublin AIDS Summit

Over 50 groups/experts from more than 20 countries endorse "Dublin Declaration on HIV/AIDS in Prisons in Europe and Central Asia"

Dublin, Ireland - As Ministers from 55 countries in Europe and Central Asia meet at Dublin Castle this week to discuss their responses to HIV/AIDS, international non-governmental organisations and experts working in HIV/AIDS and prison reform are uniting in a call for urgent action to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic in prisons. This call will be made today at the launch of the ***Dublin Declaration on HIV/AIDS in Prisons in Europe and Central Asia***.

The Declaration (in English, French, Russian, Spanish and German) as well as the list of signatories will be available at www.penal-reform.ie at the time of the launch.

HIV/AIDS is a serious problem for prison populations across Europe and Central Asia. Rates of HIV infection in most countries are many times higher amongst prisoners than amongst the population outside prisons - a situation often linked to sharing injecting equipment both inside and outside prison walls and to unprotected sexual encounters in prison. In a majority of countries, adequate preventive measures are not provided to prisoners, although they have been successfully introduced in other prison systems and shown to be effective. This failure to act has serious implications for both human rights and public health.

The *Dublin Declaration* outlines an international consensus on the rights of prisoners to HIV prevention and treatment and the responsibility of governments to meet these agreed standards. It also provides a framework for action to address the prison HIV crisis based upon best practice, scientific evidence and human rights. The *Dublin Declaration* is endorsed by over 50 NGOs and experts from more than 20 countries including the Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States.

"This is an historic document in which non-governmental organisations and experts from across Europe and Central Asia have united to say to our governments that this public health crisis requires urgent action," said Rick Lines, Executive Director of the Irish Penal Reform Trust.

Dr. Ralf Jürgens, Executive Director of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network who will address the Dublin conference on Tuesday, said "Governments have a moral and ethical obligation to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in prisons, and to provide proper medical care for those infected. Yet the fact remains that few of our governments are meeting their obligations."

"The action needed is clear," said Anya Sarang of the Central and Eastern European Harm Reduction Network. "The policies and programmes that effectively reduce the spread of HIV in prisons and provide care and treatment for prisoners living with HIV/AIDS already exist in several countries and should be replicated elsewhere."

Said Julian Hows of the Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS, "Government representatives are in Dublin this week to discuss 'Breaking the Barriers' in the fight against HIV/AIDS. We call upon them to begin by breaking down the barriers over which they have total control - the barriers that have thus far prevented comprehensive HIV/AIDS services from being implemented in prisons."

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The Dublin Declaration on HIV/AIDS in Prisons in Europe and Central Asia will be launched on Monday, February 23rd at 1:30pm sharp at the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin Castle. (For directions, see <http://www.cbl.ie/about/>)

Representatives from Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS, the Central and Eastern European Harm Reduction Network, AIDES (France), AIDS Foundation East-West, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and the Irish Penal Reform Trust will address the launch.

***For the Attention of International Journalists
Spokespeople Are Available In Several Languages***

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