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TAC Electronic Newsletter

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- TAC mass action events this week:
    - UCT to be addressed by Achmat and Dubula at 1pm on Jammie Plaza, followed by demonstration, 6 September
    - Court case of TAC members arrested for trespassing during August's civil disobedience events: Cape Town Magistrate Court, 7 September, 9am
    - Night vigil outside Parliament for TAC's five demands, 7 September, gather at 6pm, event starts at 8pm.

See also:

- Call for action
-

Why TAC is protesting

Appeal for funds

In the last few weeks TAC's campaign has stepped up pressure on the government in South Africa to respond properly to HIV. We consider this campaign necessary because of the ongoing crisis of HIV prevention and treatment, which is being exacerbated by political denial. 900 deaths from AIDS a day should be intolerable in any society and we will not tolerate it. This is why we have called on the President to convene a national crisis meeting and for the firing of the Minister of Health. We believe that millions of people depend upon our success with these demands and we will not end this campaign until there is a real and lasting breakthrough.

To sustain this campaign we are planning to hold further demonstrations, meetings with key allies, and place advertisements in national media setting out the facts about HIV deaths in our country. The budget for this campaign is attached.

If you support this campaign we appeal to you to help us by donating to TAC's Campaign Fund. If you are employed donate $10 or R100 directly via our website (www.tac.org.za/donate.html). Encourage your friends, family and comrades to do the same. Every donation will be recorded and audited.

Please help us. This will save lives.

(A detailed budget is being prepared and will be made available shortly. TAC's financial audits and other financial information are available at http://www.tac.org.za/finance.html. Our seventh annual audit will be signed off this week and placed on our website next week.)

South African Health System Requires a State of Emergency

By Gordon Tlama Mthembu, TAC Ekhurleleni District Co-ordinator

This is an unedited version of a letter published in City Press on 3 September 2006

As a person openly living with HIV & AIDS, I am ashamed of what will happen in the future if Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang continues to be the Minister of Health. I have contributed to the liberation of this country. I served years in prison for the African National Congress and I was shot defending it during the Thokoza & Katlehong upheavals as a member of a Self Defence Unit (SDU). Many of my former MK and SDU comrades are dying as a result of this epidemic.

Since the recent International AIDS conference, thereâ??s been escalating tension between the Treatment Action Campaign and the South African Government. Government has accused TAC of trashing the South African exhibition in Toronto. This is false. TAC members showed their frustration by demonstrating against Tshabalala-Msimang's incompetence. The stand was not damaged. Other countries displayed what they were doing to deal with HIV/AIDS, e.g. research, prevention strategies, rolling out ARVs, nutrition etc. South Africa's stand featured garlic, lemons and potatoes as well as photos of Tshabalala-Msimang, the President and the Deputy-President. (ARVs were only put on display after South African delegates criticised the stand.)

Is that what Tshabalala-Msimang went to Toronto for?

Tshabalala-Msimang has allowed AIDS dissidents like Matthias Rath to operate in the country with impunity. Rath's medicines are not registered and he is not registered as a doctor, so the Minister's support of him has undermined key institutions like the Medicines Control Council and the Health Professions Council of South Africa. She has also

misused traditional healers in her fight against ARVs and TAC, even though garlic, lemons and beetroot are not traditional medicines. The Minister's old apologist, the head of NAPWA, Nkululeko Nxesi has called TAC opportunistic. His organisation is almost entirely funded by the Department of Health. The Auditor-General has issued a qualified audit of the Department of Health for NAPWA's failure to account for its expenditure of state funds. Nxesi's office is no longer operational as a result of misappropriation of funds. His sole purpose appears to be to attack TAC and say things the Minister wants to say but can't. These are the types of opportunists the Minister works with.

The Minister boasts about the Comprehensive Plan for the Management, Treatment & Care for HIV & AIDS. The problem lies with the implementation of the plan. It is not the most comprehensive in the world as Tshabalala-Msimang claims. If we look at the percentage of people on treatment who need treatment, South Africa isn't even in the top ten in Africa. The Minister emphasises the nutritional aspect of the plan, but God forbid if nutrition is only about her famous beetroot, garlic and lemon. TAC has never disputed the importance of nutrition. But it is a problem if nutrition is claimed to be a replacement for treatment. It is not a question of either treatment or nutrition. Both are needed. And getting enough to eat is an issue for people with and without HIV.

The Durban Westville prisoners' court case has been a major cause of the conflict between TAC and government. The court has ruled that inmates must be provided with ARVs but government has failed to implement the judgment and has now been found in contempt of court. Clearly senior government officials do not respect the Judicial system. Dennis Bloem, head of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, should have done his job and called the Minister of Correctional Services to account before his committee. Instead Bloem chose to gratuitously attack the TAC.

The health system is in a shambles and Tshabalala-Msimang has no plan to sort it out. We have a massive TB epidemic, that has been made much worse because of HIV. We have seen the collapse of SANTA and its subsequent incorporation into the Department of Health. There are insufficient resources to ensure the TB DOTS programme works. Staff shortages in our hospitals and clinics have created a heavy burden on health workers. Lay counsellors are not getting the respect they deserve; many have gone without pay for months. The referral system between clinics and hospitals is also failing. As one newspaper editor has already indicated, a state of emergency should be declared for our Public Health System.

[END OF MTHEMBU'S ARTICLE]

TAC mass action events this week.

- 6 September: UCT demonstration. Meet at Jammie Plaza at 1pm.
- 7 September: Cape Town Magistrate's Court, for 44 arrested TAC members, 9am.
- 7 September: Night vigil outside Parliament in support of the five demands that TAC has made. Gather at 6PM in Plein Street (outside Parliament), Cape Town. Event begins at 8pm.

Student coalition calls UCT community to action on AIDS

Issued by TAC UCT.

ZACKIE ACHMAT and VUYISEKA DUBULA of the Treatment Action Campaign [TAC] will be speaking on Wednesday 6 September at 1pm on Jammie Plaza. Zackie and Vuyiseka and students leaders will then walk together

off campus and march to Genadendal (on Rondebosch Main Rd), the home of Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka to present a memorandum.

The event is being organised under the banner of a broad coalition of student organisations including TAC UCT, Shawco, Islamic Society, Habonim, POLSSA, SAUJS, History and Current Affairs Society, Haicu, IkamvaYouth, UCT Debating Union, DASO and the Young Communist League. We ask all student organisations to join in the organisation of this event, endorse it and/or sign the memorandum to be handed to the Deputy President. (The memorandum will be circulated shortly, and will resemble the Call to Action attached.) All university bodies and student groups are welcome. Endorsements will be added to advertising material.

The present campaign and the memorandum (to be drafted soon) consists of 5 key demands which form the core of the present nationwide TAC mobilisation:

- Convene a national meeting and plan for the HIV/AIDS crisis.
- End deaths in prisons - provide nutrition, treatment and prevention.
- Dismiss Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang.
- Respect the rule of law and the Constitution.
- Health for All - End Health Apartheid, Build a people's health service.

AIDS is not party-political. It is a life and death issue and it is a human-rights issue. 1000 new infections occur every day. 800 people die of AIDS-related illnesses every day. Over 300,000 people died of such illnesses last year. Without addressing the five demands above the situation will deteriorate.

SEE YOU WEDNESDAY 6 September Jammie Plaza 1 pm.

[END OF MASS ACTION EVENTS]

- Funding and Finances
- Manto Tshabalala-Msimang
- South African Government

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