

Arrest of MSM in Senegal

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On December 22 2008, nine men were arrested in Senegal and charged with "committing acts against nature" and "establishing an illegal organization". On January 6 2009 they were convicted and sentenced to eight years in prison.

It is believed that the charges were laid against these individuals because they are men who have sex with men and active in HIV prevention and treatment organizations in the country. Activists working on the situation understand that part of the case against the men derived from their possession of HIV information for distribution amongst men who have sex with men.

The arrest of these men is deeply concerning. It is a violation of their privacy and their right to life and dignity. It is a poignant example of the barriers we still face in upholding the rights of people living with HIV and delivering effective national HIV prevention and treatment programmes.

Activists in Senegal have been working closely with government and are hopeful that they can come to an adequate and timely agreement. For now TAC is respecting their request to let the national process proceed.

Meanwhile international dignitaries including Archbishop Emeritus Desmond M Tutu and Justice Edwin Cameron have signed onto a letter authored by former President of Botswana Festus Mogae to President Wade of Senegal appealing for personal consideration into the case and consideration into the the adverse impact their fate has on constructive HIV policies on the continent.

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