



## Global Statement on HIV Is Not A Crime Awareness Day

28th Feb 2024

#HINACDay #NotACriminal #HIVJustice

This year, on February 28th, the HIV JUSTICE WORLDWIDE coalition commemorate HIV is Not A Crime Awareness Day as a Global Awareness Day for the first time, under the theme: “You care about ending HIV criminalisation, you just don’t know it yet”. We invite you to stand with us in solidarity and action as we strive to eliminate the unjust criminalisation of people based on their HIV-positive status.

HIV Is Not A Crime Awareness Day was launched in the United States two years ago by HIV JUSTICE WORLDWIDE founding partner, the SERO Project, in collaboration with the [Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation](#), and has grown in size and prominence ever since.

HIV criminalisation laws and prosecutions persist in many parts of the world<sup>1</sup>, perpetuating stigma, discrimination, and human rights violations against people living with HIV. These laws reinforce misconceptions, fuel fear and prejudice instead of fostering empathy and understanding. They undermine public health efforts by deterring people living with HIV from seeking testing, treatment, and support, ultimately hindering progress in HIV prevention and care and reaching targets set to end AIDS by 2030.

The impact of HIV criminalisation extends beyond legal consequences, affecting the social, economic, and emotional well-being of those affected. It breeds shame and secrecy, hindering open communication about HIV and perpetuating a cycle of silence and isolation. HIV criminalisation disproportionately impacts marginalized communities most affected by HIV, exacerbating existing inequalities and injustices as seen in recent years.

We believe that everyone has a role to play in ending HIV criminalisation, marked by our theme this year : **“You care about ending HIV criminalisation, you just don’t know it yet,”** . We as the HIV JUSTICE WORLDWIDE coalition partners are raising awareness, challenging stigma, and advocating for policy reform and HIV decriminalisation. We want to create a more just and compassionate society for all. It begins with education, empathy, and a commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of every individual, regardless of their HIV status. It's time for change. It's time to dismantle the legal barriers that perpetuate stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV. It's time to shift the narrative from fear and punishment to compassion and support. It's time to recognise that HIV criminalisation not only affects individuals but also our communities, as it undermines public health efforts and human rights principles.

On this HIV Is Not A Crime Awareness Day, we call upon governments, policymakers, advocates, healthcare providers, and communities worldwide to take action:

- **Reform Legal Frameworks:** Advocate for the repeal or reform of laws and policies that criminalise HIV non-disclosure, exposure or non-intentional transmission. Replace punitive measures with evidence-based approaches grounded in public health and human rights.
- **Promote Education and Awareness:** Raise awareness about the impact of HIV criminalisation on individuals, families, and communities. Foster empathy, understanding, and support for people living with HIV.
- **Ensure Access to Justice:** Ensure that individuals living with HIV have access to legal support and representation to challenge unjust prosecutions and discriminatory practices.
- **Foster Inclusive Policies:** Advocate for policies that promote inclusivity, dignity, and respect for the rights of people living with HIV, including access to comprehensive healthcare, prevention, and support services.
- **Empower Communities:** Empower communities affected by HIV to advocate for their rights, including for HIV decriminalisation, challenge criminal laws and policies and demand accountability from policymakers and institutions.

Together, we can create a future where no one faces criminal legal system discrimination or prosecution simply because they are living with HIV.

Join us in saying no to HIV criminalisation and yes to justice, compassion, and solidarity. #HINACDay 2024.

Statement from the HIV JUSTICE WORLDWIDE coalition. We are global coalition of community-led global and regional networks and human rights defenders working to shape the discourse on HIV criminalisation, as well as share information and resources, network, build capacity, mobilise advocacy, and cultivate a community of transparency and collaboration.

The coalition is comprised of fourteen networks and organizations. It was founded in 2016 by: the AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa ([ARASA](#)), The Global Network of People Living with HIV ([GNP+](#)), HIV Justice Network ([HJN](#)), The HIV Legal Network ([Legal Network](#)), International Community of Women Living with HIV ([ICW Global](#)), Positive Women's Network ([PWN-USA](#)), and the Sero Project ([Sero](#)).

A further seven partners have since joined the coalition: AIDS Action Europe ([AAE](#)), Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS ([EWNA](#)), Harm Reduction International ([HRI](#)), [MENA Community](#), Global Action for Gay Men's Health and Rights ([MPact](#)), Southern Africa Litigation Centre ([SALC](#)) and the Global Network of Young People Living with HIV ([Y+ Global](#)).

To learn more about the HIV JUSTICE WORLDWIDE coalition please visit: [www.hivjusticeworldwide.org](http://www.hivjusticeworldwide.org)

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<sup>i</sup> The HIV Justice Network's [Global HIV Criminalisation Database](#) counts **109 jurisdictions in 80 countries** with HIV-specific criminal laws, including 23 jurisdictions in the United States, two in Mexico, and three in Nigeria, together with a federal HIV law in each country. The Database includes individual case reports of HIV criminalisation in **161 jurisdictions in 90 countries** since we began monitoring HIV cases. These include cases in all eight Australian states, eight provinces and territories in Canada, seven Mexican states, two Nigerian

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states, 42 jurisdictions in the United States, and all four nations of the United Kingdom. We consider **89 jurisdictions in 52 countries** to be ‘active’ – those which have enforced relevant laws in the past five years. A total of 39 of these jurisdictions have HIV-specific laws in place, while 50 jurisdictions applied general criminal laws, such as communicable disease or general harm provisions, to instances of alleged HIV non-disclosure, potential or perceived exposure, or non-intentional transmission.