

# Statement

## UNAIDS condemns violence against peaceful gay rights activists

**Geneva, 1 June 07** – The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) believes that the violence and abuse perpetrated against gay rights activists in the Russian capital on 27 May undermines fundamental human rights, as well as an effective response to AIDS in Russia..

The activists gathered last week to deliver a letter to Moscow's mayor to appeal against the ban on a Gay Pride march. The march would have been held in the capital to mark the 14th anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality in Russia.

UNAIDS supports the rights for all people to assemble peacefully and to be protected from discrimination and violence. Those rights extend to everybody, including gay men and all other minority groups. Social movements are important forces for human rights promotion. They have also contributed to effective responses to the AIDS epidemic.

UNAIDS notes that some of the greatest successes in addressing the HIV epidemic have been due to the efforts of gay men and other marginalised groups to organise and form networks for information, advocacy and support.

In countries around the world, stigma, discrimination and violence make people more vulnerable to HIV infection. When gay men (or any group of people) have their physical security or freedom of expression and association threatened, it results in social marginalization. This marginalization in turn decreases the access of these men to health services and information, thereby increasing their vulnerability to HIV infection.

Effective responses to HIV depend on tolerance, social dialogue and a supportive and legally protective environment. Important steps in this direction involve campaigns against discrimination, including homophobia, and protection under the law.

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UNAIDS is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations, bringing together the efforts and resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response. The Secretariat headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland—with staff on the ground in more than 80 countries. Coherent action on AIDS by the UN system is coordinated in countries through UN theme groups, and joint programmes on AIDS. UNAIDS' Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Visit the UNAIDS Web site at [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)