

# News Release

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For immediate release

## **RUSSIA MUST ADOPT HARM REDUCTION NOW TO STOP THE SPREAD OF HIV**

*Visit by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights  
sheds light on this forgotten subject*

**MOSCOW, February 13, 2011** — A Russian coalition, supported by international colleagues — representing affected communities, activists, practitioners and non-governmental organisations working in the field of HIV/AIDS and harm reduction — is today urging Judge Navanethem (Navi) Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to carry forward an important message: Harm reduction in Russia is needed now to curb the concentrated HIV epidemic among people who use drugs.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is conducting a high-level visit in Russia from February 13-19 and meeting with many civil society and human rights actors. Among those invited to meet with Judge Pillay is Irina Teplinskaya, an HIV+ woman who contracted the virus through unsafe intravenous drug use and now serves as a human rights activist.

“My story, my testimony, clearly demonstrates how critical it is that harm reduction measures be made available in Russia,” says Ms. Teplinskaya. “There are many people in Russia who use drugs, and we are human beings with human rights — including the right to health care that could save our lives and stop the needless spread of HIV. I hope that Judge Pillay will hear my message and take our fight for life directly to the Russian President and the Minister of Health.”

Indeed, while other parts of the world have seen a marked decrease in new infections, Russia is experiencing one of the fastest growing HIV epidemics in the world. However, rather than combat this head-on with proven harm reduction measures, Russia continues to rely on repressive and ineffective measures that further marginalize people who use drugs.

“The overt lack of concern for the human rights of those who use drugs is directly contributing to the proliferation of HIV in Russia” says Mikhail Golichenko, Senior Policy Analyst of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network.

“This visit by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is a critical opportunity to talk about what’s not working in Russia and start a real dialogue to fix our situation, “ says Anya Sarang, from Andrey Rylkov Foundation. “We must lift the ban on the medical use of narcotic drugs in drug treatment programmes for those who use drugs, and scale-up safe injection measures immediately. We know what works, we know how to save lives, and we can stop the HIV epidemic in Russia.”

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