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## **IN MEMORIAM: PASSENGERS OF MH17**

*Statement by the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network*

**July 18, 2014** — In the aftermath of the tragic loss of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, our thoughts go out to the families of all passengers, including those researchers, medical professionals, allies and activists en route to the International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2014) in Melbourne, Australia.

Our talented, brave colleagues were doing their part to overcome the AIDS epidemic. Sadly, many governments around the world — including some who are now expressing platitudes and condolences — continue to fuel the epidemic with terrible, oppressive and ultimately deadly policies. We are bearing witness to hate laws and brutality targeting LGBTI communities, to endemic violence against women and girls that is regularly ignored, and to the wilful blocking of life-saving harm reduction measures for people who use drugs. We often need not look far from home to see laws that have already been shown to contribute to death of sex workers, and trade agreements — such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership — negotiated to line big-pharma pockets at the expense of poor people's lives. The link between human rights for everyone and an end to AIDS is being obscured, and we must redouble our efforts on behalf of all those whose lives have been needlessly curtailed.

Thankfully, we also see strong examples from which we can all learn, examples that must be emulated the world over if we truly care about health and human rights for all. Some countries have adopted early and effective commitments to harm reduction, and/or to the decriminalization of sex work and the protection of sex workers' health and human rights. Others are taking legislative steps to end violence, in its many forms, against marginalized people and communities. Many are realizing that evidence-based policies are the way to move forward. We hope that this positive trend will continue, as this would be a most fitting tribute to those who have died.

The International AIDS Society (IAS) will proceed with the International AIDS Conference, "in recognition of our colleagues' dedication to the fight against HIV/AIDS." Therefore, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network's own activities at the conference will go on. Health, human rights and an end to AIDS motivate the work of all 14 000 delegates attending the conference, and they undoubtedly also motivated those

dedicated allies whose journeys were cut short. We will continue our work in their memory.

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**About the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network**

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network ([www.aidslaw.ca](http://www.aidslaw.ca)) promotes the human rights of people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, in Canada and internationally, through research and analysis, advocacy and litigation, public education and community mobilization. The Legal Network is Canada's leading advocacy organization working on the legal and human rights issues raised by HIV/AIDS.