

ICASA 2015 Conference in Zimbabwe:

Society for AIDS in Africa's inconsistent and obscure choice

Initially scheduled in Tunisia, the International Conference on AIDS and STI in Africa (ICASA), held on or around December 1 each two years, is finally announced to be taking place in Zimbabwe.

This information was officially issued by the Society for AIDS in Africa (SAA) on June 23, following its sudden announcement last May of the cancellation and the postponement of the conference initially scheduled.

The decision of the SAA is particularly surprising: violence and discrimination against homosexuals is known to be a major aggravating factor of the epidemic, yet the SAA decided to hold its conference in a country whose president is notorious for his homophobic views.

Indeed, Robert Mugabe has made extremely violent anti-gay statements: "The church says homosexuality is an abomination. This is also the case in our own culture. People who engage in this kind of practice deserve to be castrated."

Zimbabwe is not a safe country for AIDS activists. Experience has shown the greatest risk for them often lies in discriminatory politics promoted by governments: the ICASA conference held in Senegal in 2008 was followed by the imprisonment of nine Senegalese AIDS activists, prosecuted for "criminal association and unnatural practices."

SAA's reasons for this decision remain obscure. They certainly show no consistency with the congress participants' combat, or pay them any respect, as participants must also implement actions in their area by December 1, and booked their trip to Tunis a long time ago.

AIDS activists want quality conferences, held on locations consistent with their mission and organized well in advance, without haste and in a transparent manner. These events must allow them to acquire new means for combating AIDS as well as fighting for the rights of all communities concerned by AIDS.

We AIDS activists have decided to boycott this conference and we call on the entire AIDS-fighting community to join us!



And professors Françoise BARRE-SINOSSI, laureate 2008 of the Nobel Prize of Medicine ou Physiology,

HAKIMA HIMMICH, Presidente of the ALCS and professor of medicine,

and Christine KATLAMA, Department of infectious and tropical diseases of the Infection and Immunodepression unit of the Hospital Pitié-Salpêtrière

Press contacts:

Marion Guincestre, communication Officer of the Crips Île-de-France – mguincestre@lecrips.net – 01 56 80 33 47/06 87 34 93 04

Michel Bourrelly, Director of the Crips Île-de-France – 06 25 91 64 07

Yves Yomb, spokesman of the network Africagay contre le sida – +237 698 48 26 14