

THE ROLE OF TAC AND OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS IN CAMPS AND SAFETY SITES

Who is TAC?

The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) is an organisation whose primary commitment is providing people with HIV, their caregivers and families accurate information about life-saving medicines and treatment. TAC is involved in community education programmes, advocacy and issues arising out of human rights violations.

Principles along which TAC operates:

TAC promotes dignity and the right to life according to the Constitution of South Africa. It strives to promote social equality and all other human rights.

- The TAC has made it a priority to give displaced persons a voice. Liaising with representatives of refugee groups, every effort has been made to convey their complaints and demands without trying to influence them in any way.
- The TAC took the principled position that it was not the role of civil society to carry out reintegration, repatriation or resettlement, and that we must (together with the displaced persons) force national and international bodies to fulfil their mandate. The TAC has asked that government stop deportation of foreign nationals.
- The UNHCR has been called on repeatedly to assist refugees and displaced persons, with co-operation from the Department of Home Affairs.
- Wherever human rights have been violated, the TAC has appealed to the relevant bodies to restore dignity and security to those affected.
- The TAC has striven to operate within the framework of the law, and appealed for standards within the camps to be raised to within international norms and standards.
- The TAC is committed to operating in a culture of non-violence.

What TAC has done during the crisis

- Provided approximately R2 000 000 in humanitarian aid.
- Fielded legal queries, and directed them to lawyers working for various companies and agencies in Cape Town.
- Publically demonstrated to create awareness in the authorities and with the public, delivered memorandums and marched to Parliament and the Provincial Government.
- Illegally occupied the Civic Centre to advocate for adequate shelter.
- Independently run halls in Khayelitsha.
- Maintained a profile in the media advocating for better conditions in camps, and called on City and Province to work together to open facilities and provide relief.
- Met with leaders of refugee communities and represented their demands on a case by case basis without trying to influence opinion.

What TAC is doing now/Where to from here?

Currently, TAC is:

- Carrying out site assessments with the aim of providing accurate information regarding the relief needs within the camps
- Assessing legal needs regarding documentation of displaced people.
- Demanding fulfilment of needs from government.
- Coordinating humanitarian relief efforts with the aim of handing these over to the Provincial Government.
- Committed to assisting where requested in directing relief and advocacy needs.