

TAC joins ARASA in condemning AIDS denialism in Zambia

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The Treatment Action Campaign endorses the following statement by the AIDS and Human Rights Alliance of Southern Africa.

Human Rights and AIDS Organisations Condemn Rise of HIV Denialism and Quack Cures in Zambia

(Windhoek, Namibia, 7 March 2007) - Today, the AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA), a partnership of human rights and HIV/AIDS organisations in the 14 countries of Southern Africa, denounced American charlatan, Boyd E. Graves, for peddling false AIDS cures in Zambia, where his claims to be able to treat HIV infection are creating mass confusion across the country among people living with HIV/AIDS.

“We are hearing reports from our partner organisations that people are stopping their AIDS medications now that they are being led to falsely believe that a cure for AIDS has been found,” said Michaela Clayton, the Director of ARASA. In fact, the Treatment Advocacy and Literacy Campaign in Zambia is reporting that individuals are being told by agents of Mr. Graves to stop taking their antiretroviral drugs, stop using condoms and stop immunizing their children against infectious diseases. In addition, a leading Zambian newspaper has devoted three pages to the new “AIDS cure” and the false and misleading claims and dangerous advice of Mr. Graves. “Antiretroviral drugs keep people with HIV/AIDS alive and condoms protect the uninfected from HIV transmission-Boyd E. Graves is endangering the lives of millions of Zambians and we call upon the Zambian government to start an immediate investigation of his activities before more damage is done,” said Gregg Gonsalves, the co-ordinator of ARASA’s treatment literacy and advocacy programme.

Claims of AIDS cures are common throughout the world, where charlatans prey on the hopes and fears of people living with HIV/AIDS for their own personal, commercial gain. ARASA calls on all Southern African governments to establish programmes to monitor their countries for fake cures, which impoverish their citizens who spend their wages on these useless or sometimes even harmful concoctions. In addition, ARASA calls on all Southern African governments to tightly regulate the health claims of what can be marketed or advertised in their countries and link any permission to market or advertise any substance or procedure to a medical review process under the aegis of Ministries of Health.

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