ALP and TAC condemn attacks on Heywood by Mseleku and Mametja

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The AIDS Law Project (ALP) and Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) condemn the attacks on Mark Heywood by the Department of Health Director General, Thami Mseleku and the national DOH TB cluster manager, David Mametja.

Mseleku, speaking from the floor after a plenary presentation by Heywood, made a personal attack on the presentation, claiming that Heywood had merely swapped his slides from HIV to TB, and that ?human rights were not relevant to considerations of health policy in a developmental state?.

Mametja, in the closing session of the conference abused his position as co-chair of the conference track on Patient and Civil Society. Instead of reporting on the outcomes of that track he focused solely on attacking Heywood?s presentation of the day before. This was contemptuous of all the people who presented and participated in the track that he co-chaired.

The ALP and the TAC stand fully behind the call for partnership with government. However, we also stand by statements that South Africa?s TB programme has and is failing because of a lack of human and financial resources, as well as the lack of consistent and clear political leadership. We believe that, as with HIV, the plan is undermined by the overwhelming lack of faith in the Minister of Health, and the paralysis of her Ministry. It is time that she was replaced.

In conclusion, the ALP accepts Mametja?s offer to Heywood to join the Department of Health on an inspection of MDR sites in KwaZulu-Natal on Monday, 7 July. However, we call for this process:

- to be extended to all MDR TB hospitals in the country,
- to be linked to a commitment to rapidly finalise a clear national policy on MDR/XDR TB isolation
- to immediately rectify all deficiencies identified at the sites, and
- to finalise regulations that allow for isolation of drug resistant TB patients based on principles of justice and fairness.

- Thami Mseleku
- Tuberculosis

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