

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT BY THE AIDS CONSORTIUM et al

By *moderator*

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We would like to commend the decision of Justice Edwin Cameron for his stand on openness before the Judicial Services Commission today. For many years before his appointment as a Judge, Justice Cameron was one of the pioneers of calls for human rights, equality, dignity and privacy for all people -- including people with HIV and AIDS. His decision today is in keeping with this.

Justice Cameron's openness is a courageous personal step. It has been taken after careful consideration of the impact that it will have on his personal life -- as well as on the lives of other people living with HIV and AIDS.

We call on all South Africans to continue to respect his right to privacy as well as the rights of millions of others. We restate that the decision to be open about one's HIV status is voluntary. It should be made only when a person feels safe in the knowledge that such disclosure will not lead to personal abuse, unfair discrimination and stigma.

Judge Cameron's decision must not be misunderstood. In his press statement today he confirms that respect of the right to privacy, confidentiality and of access to life-improving treatment is an essential pre-condition for individual 'openness'. It does not in any way lend support to those who are calling for compulsory partner notification or compulsory disclosure.

All South Africans, but especially the government, the churches and people with power and influence in society have a duty to campaign for acceptance of people with HIV.

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