

# PRESS RELEASE

Amsterdam, 9 July 2018



## **Towards ZERO Together – Princess Mabel van Oranje to join protest march in Amsterdam**

HIV activists walk from Brussels to Amsterdam

From 15-23 July this year, HIV activists from Australia, South Africa and the United Kingdom will walk from Brussels to Amsterdam (via Rotterdam), led by Australian activist Ruan Uys. Thousands more activists will join them when they arrive in Amsterdam on 23 July, to complete the final section of the 'Towards ZERO Together' AIDS walk. Princess Mabel van Oranje will be one of the new additions in Amsterdam, and will deliver a speech to the crowd. In Rotterdam, the activists will be welcomed by the Australian ambassador in the Netherlands.

The protest march also marks the start of the international AIDS conference 'AIDS 2018' which – after 26 years – now returns to the Dutch capital and will run from 23-27 July. The international HIV activists will walk roughly 25 kilometres per day, in order to raise awareness of the fight for an AIDS-free world, and help close the gap between those living with HIV and the general public. The activists have chosen 'Towards ZERO Together' as their message, symbolising the journey towards ZERO barriers to HIV medications, ZERO criminalisation and ZERO stigmatisation of those living with HIV.

'Objectives that are clear and achievable, provided we – the political, activist and scientific communities – act now and work together,' says organiser Alexander Pastoors, from the Dutch Association of people living with HIV (*Hiv Vereniging*) and special representative for AIDS 2018. 'Ruan is part of the generation that knows what has to happen to make it a reality. He and other activists worldwide are also aware, however, of how poor government policy and lack of funding can push these objectives even further away. But things can change – and they must. AIDS is still with us, and claims over 1 million victims worldwide each year.'

Of the global population currently living with HIV, over 50% (around 17 million) still have no access to life-saving medication. Pastoors: 'People living with HIV have been abandoned by indifferent politicians and greedy pharmaceutical companies. At this crucial moment in the fight against HIV and AIDS, countries such as the US are cutting back on funding and programmes that would prevent new HIV infections and save lives. Russia sees 80 deaths every day from the consequences of AIDS, and 100,000 new HIV infections per year. The Venezuelan healthcare system has collapsed, cutting off 77,000 people living with HIV from their medication.'



**MONDAY 23 JULY 2018**  
**13:00 AMSTELVELD -----> 16:00 RAI**



The epidemic is also further fuelled by the criminalisation, discrimination and stigmatisation of those living with HIV. 'All over the world, people experience the daily negative effects of living with HIV, even those in the Netherlands,' Pastoors continues. 'HIV is no longer a death sentence for those who have access to effective HIV medication. Medication which allows people living with HIV to lead full and fulfilling lives in society. What is more, those who use the medication successfully are no longer capable of transmitting HIV, which is all the more reason to create rapid and improved access to HIV medications. We are the generation capable of putting an end to one of the greatest epidemics of all time. But if we don't act quickly, we will miss this unique opportunity in the battle against AIDS.'

For more information and the route, please visit: <https://www.hivsters.info/towards-zero-together/> and <https://www.aids2018march.nl>.

On 23 July – the first day of the international AIDS 2018 conference – the group of international activists will arrive in the Netherlands. The march will continue on from Amstelveld at 13:00, ending at the RAI conference centre at 16:00. The route will proceed via Vijzelgracht, Weteringcircuit and Ferdinand Bolstraat to Scheldestraat, finishing at Europaplein. Speeches will be held at both the start and the end of the march. In addition to Princess Mabel of Orange, other speakers include Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (Director of WHO), Simone Kukenheim (Deputy Mayor and member of the Amsterdam municipal executive).

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*Note to editorial staff:*

All are welcome to attend the above events, including the protest march in Amsterdam on 23 July.

For press accreditation please visit:

<https://aids2018march.nl/press-media/>

For more information, please contact:

[info@aids2018march.nl](mailto:info@aids2018march.nl)

Conference information is available at:

<https://www.aids2018.org/About>



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