



## Petition: End Forced Sterilisation!

The sterilisation of women living with HIV without their informed consent in Namibia is an emerging human rights issue and the extent of the problem is yet to be discovered.

In 2007, reports surfaced of cases in which women seeking medical care were allegedly subjected to sterilisation without informed consent at state hospitals in two of the thirteen regions of Namibia. Since February 2008, fifteen individual cases have been documented, which appear to be merely the tip of the iceberg.

We, concerned citizens of Namibia and civil society organisations from around the globe, condemn the alleged sterilisation of women living with HIV without their consent in public health facilities in Namibia and call for an end to this practice.

We believe that numerous human rights have been violated, including those guaranteed and protected under the Namibian Constitution and international treaties. These include, but are not limited to, the right to liberty and security of the person; to health, to found a family, including reproductive health; to family planning; to privacy; to equality; to freedom from discrimination; and to life.

We call on government to send a clear message that it will not tolerate the violation of any woman's fundamental right to make free and informed decisions about her own body and health, particularly with regard to reproductive choices, and further that it is actively pursuing initiatives to end the discrimination against people living with HIV. We hope this will mark an end to this flagrant violation of HIV-positive women's sexual and reproductive health and rights in Namibia.

**In order to ensure that these violations of rights do not occur in the future, we ask that the Namibian government:**

1. Immediately issue a circular to both public and private health facilities explicitly prohibiting the practice of sterilisation without informed consent and ensuring that correct procedures are followed for obtaining informed consent;

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2. Review and update current reproductive health policies and guidelines to reflect the same;
3. Train health care workers on the rights of patients, including the right to informed consent;
4. Ensure that all health care workers receive adequate training about the need for patients to receive quality and non-discriminatory medical care, regardless of their HIV status;
5. Conduct a public awareness campaign on this issue, particularly on patients' rights and the responsibilities of medical personnel in general;
6. Establish an effective and accessible complaint mechanisms for reporting violations of patients' rights; and
7. Conduct a public inquiry on the issue of sterilisation without informed consent and ensure that women who have been sterilised receive just and fair compensation for their loss, including the option of sterilisation reversal.

**Signed:**

- Legal Assistance Centre, Namibia
- Namibia Women's Health Network, Namibia
- International Community of Women living with HIV, Namibia
- AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa, Namibia
- Women's Solidarity Namibia, Namibia
- Women's Leadership Centre, Namibia
- Sister Namibia, Namibia

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