

## December 1, 2019, Turkey's World AIDS Day Statement;

### It is time to stop HIV!

HIV which has caused one of the most serious outbreaks of humanity has not yet been identified for forty years, but we are close to a lasting scientific solution.

Following the first shock wave in the early eighties, the ability to reduce the virus to a chronic carrier level in as little as fifteen years was recorded as one of the most historic achievements of medical science. In the next twenty years following this development and the tools like B equals B, PrEP, ART to stop HIV today are spectacular. Which means, HIV has changed a lot!

Civil society and activist communities are the key figures that need to be mentioned when heralding this change and the point that HIV science has reached today. We wouldn't be able to talk about the positive picture of today if there was no leadership of activist communities that forced the science to research, the politics to produce solutions, and the society to face the problem in a realistic way in the pessimistic atmosphere where science and politics were in desperation. So, this year, the global theme of World AIDS Day 2019 is *Ending the HIV/AIDS Epidemic: Community by Community*.

Activist communities in Turkey as it is anywhere in the world as well, are working so hard offering comprehensive services to people living with HIV, and also communicating with all levels of the society to normalize the subject and to explain the fact that HIV is everyone's problem.

But unfortunately, these works carried out by civil society are not enough. **In the country, we are in the 41-88-96 level, far from the global target 90-90-90 stated by the UNAIDS for 2020. According to World Health Organization data, the rate of increase in the last decade is over 450%!** In simplest terms, the data says that we have failed to prevent new HIV transmission and access everyone living with HIV to medication. However, when we look at the successful practices in the world, we can see that when the right steps are taken, it is possible to stop the spread of HIV. These right steps start with an open-minded and national response to the phenomenon of HIV / AIDS and with the sincere support of all stakeholders to civil society efforts.

There is no obstacle to stop HIV in our country. We have all the necessary tools, an experienced civil society, sufficient knowledge, skills, and desire. Now, all we must do is to work together to remove Turkey from countries where HIV is spreading rapidly.

So, considering the World AIDS Days as an opportunity, we invite all the stakeholders to work in cooperation to;

- Removing legal barriers to anonymous testing,
- Make PrEP, which is an effective transmission prevention method, easily accessible throughout the country,
- Make new scientific developments like U=U be well-known and spoken in health institutions.

Because HIV is not just a matter of people living with HIV or NGOs, it is everybody else's matter.  
Because it's time to stop HIV!

**Red Ribbon Istanbul Association**

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