

# Genocide charge against TAC chief

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Staff Reporters

A charge of genocide has been laid against Treatment Action Campaign head Zackie Achmat at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands, for promoting the provision and use of antiretroviral drugs to treat HIV.

This is the latest attack in the long-running battle between the TAC and arch-rivals who vehemently oppose the use of ARVs.

The TAC has been at the forefront of the battle to get the govern-

ment to provide the drugs to HIV-positive people.

A 59-page criminal complaint has been laid against Achmat by Cape Town advocate Anthony Brink of the Treatment Information Group (TIG).

Brink admits that he gets funding from a foundation set up by controversial Aids treatment figure Dr Matthias Rath.

In documents, he calls on the court to charge and find Achmat "guilty of genocide – the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole".

He alleges that Achmat has

played a "direct criminal role in the deaths of thousands of South Africans from poisoning from so-called antiretroviral drugs".

He said this morning from his home in Tamboerskloof: "Recent research data cited in the complaint (submitted at The Hague) demonstrates (ARVs) are killing thousands of people in South Africa – mostly black and mostly poor.

"TAC leader Zackie Achmat correctly claims personal responsibility for getting these drugs into the public health system, and, accordingly, is personally criminally cul-

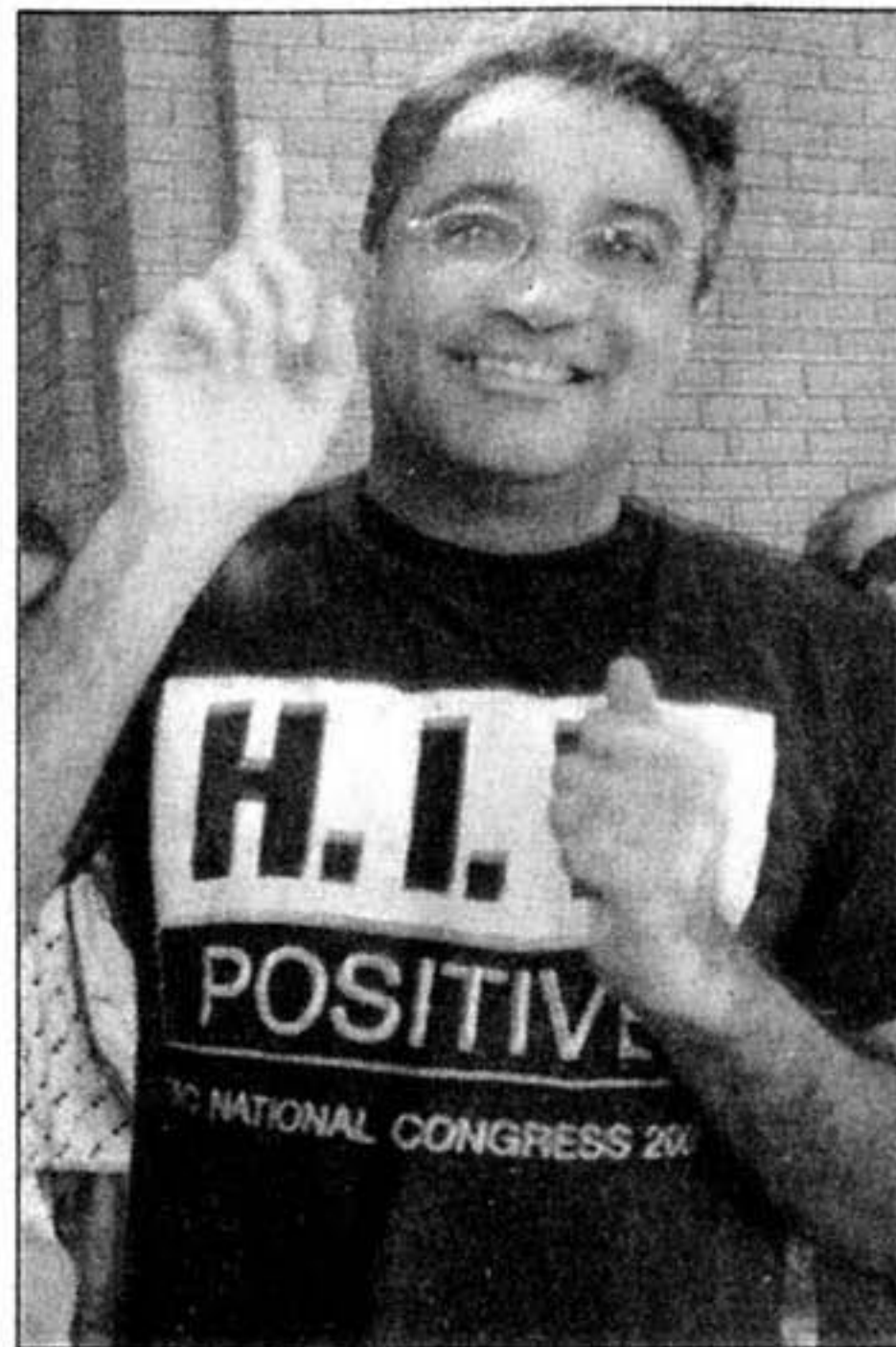
pable for the deadly consequences."

Brink has asked the court to impose the harshest sentence on him – "permanent confinement in a small white steel and concrete cage, bright fluorescent light on all the time to keep an eye on him ..."

A TAC spokesman described the complaint as "the rantings and ravings of a madman" and said it "does not deserve comment".

According to the latest available statistics, an estimated 5.5 million people are HIV-positive in South Africa. At least 500 000 of them need to be on ARV treatment.

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**ACCUSED:** Zackie Achmat