

GLOBAL APPEAL 2013

TO END STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE AFFECTED BY LEPROSY

Endorsed by the International Bar Association and member organisations

Throughout its long history, leprosy has been one of the world's most misunderstood and stigmatizing diseases. Over the centuries, countless millions afflicted by leprosy have been shunned by their fellow human beings in the belief that they are cursed with a highly contagious, disabling, untreatable disease.

Thanks to modern chemotherapy, leprosy, or Hansen's disease, is now completely curable. With early diagnosis and treatment, it is not disabling. Nor is leprosy highly transmissible. There is no need to isolate anyone with the disease, exclude him or her from their place of work or ban them from public office.

But old images of leprosy die hard and continue to shape popular perceptions of the disease—perceptions reinforced by stigmatizing terminology. For those that are the object of such prejudice, the social, economic and psychological consequences can be devastating.

Helping to perpetuate these outdated stereotypes are various laws, customs and regulations that discriminate against people affected by leprosy in different parts of the world.

There are no medical grounds for segregating or otherwise singling out a person affected by leprosy. Therefore, any laws that sanction such practices are without foundation.

We call for the abolition of all laws that discriminate on the basis of leprosy, we condemn all acts of discrimination against people affected by leprosy and we support the right of people affected by leprosy to live in dignity enjoying all their basic human rights.

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