



INTERNATIONAL  
**NIGHT OF**  
SOLIDARITY

SATURDAY, 2 JUNE 2007



# WHAT IS THE NIGHT OF SOLIDARITY?

Since 2004, Germans have observed a “Night of Solidarity” on June 2. Taking place just prior to the G8 conference, the purpose of the Night of Solidarity is to mobilise organisations and citizens to come together to raise awareness about AIDS and to put pressure on the G8 to act.

In June 2007, the G8 summit will be held in Germany. For this reason, in 2007 campaigners from around the world are invited to join their German counterparts in an international display of solidarity in the face of the pandemic.

Coordinated for the past three years by Action against AIDS Germany, the Night of Solidarity in Germany began with approximately 40 events. Last year events took place in more than 80 cities across Germany, with nearly 300 organisations and thousands of people taking part.

While the event name, “Night of Solidarity” refers to the candlelight ceremony during the night, awareness raising events typically take place throughout the day with the climax of events being the candlelight

ceremony at night fall. During the day, regional and local organisations mobilise awareness raising events and activities. This is a decentralised effort with all sorts of activities taking place, ranging from exhibitions and film showings to political marches and rallies.

In each event there is a candlelight ceremony with an arrangement of candles in the shape of a red AIDS ribbon (the light ribbon). While the ribbon and candles may take on different forms at different events, this candlelight ceremony is the shared experience between all of the different solidarity events. The Night of Solidarity also includes an advocacy element and participants are urged to email or write to their G8 officials.

One of the strengths of this event is that it allows individual groups and organisations to plan unique events in their area, yet it still contains an element of solidarity. Action against AIDS Germany coordinates the event at a national level, providing action guides, posters, dummy press releases, and an online calendar for the events. But all of the direct event coordination is done by local organisations, which Action against AIDS contracts prior to the event.

Beyond Germany, the International Night of Solidarity marks the culmination of a period of intense global mobilisation efforts around AIDS. These efforts begin 20 May, on International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day, continue through the Global AIDS Week of Action and come to a head around the Night of Solidarity. All these mass mobilisation efforts, coordinated by different alliances and partners, offer important opportunities for the public to get involved in the fight against AIDS around the time of the G8.

Now in its 24th year, International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day is one of the largest AIDS mobilisation efforts in the world, with events coordinated in 110 countries last year. The event remembers those who have died of AIDS, and gives campaigners a chance to raise awareness, influence policy makers and improve dialogue on AIDS prevention, treatment and care.

International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day begins the Global AIDS Week of Action, which runs 20 - 25 May. This gives campaigners a five-day opportunity to stand together, generate political pressure and demand action from leaders. The Night of Solidarity will not only celebrate the mobilisation efforts that have taken place 20 May - 25 May, but will refocus international public and media attention immediately prior to the G8 summit, creating a broad, united call that demands leaders listen.



# HOW COULD THE NIGHT OF SOLIDARITY BECOME INTERNATIONAL?

A number of AIDS organisations working on G8-related activities are interested in adopting the Night of Solidarity theme as one of the mobilisation events around the 2007 G8 summit. Night of Solidarity events would take place in both the Global North and the Global South and would provide a strong message of unity to the G8 leaders. To express a strong, unified global message, many of these groups will be campaigning under the theme, "Keep the Promise of Universal Access".

Here are some flexible principles for the Night of Solidarity that Action against AIDS Germany and World AIDS Campaign have captured in an attempt

to build support around this international day of mobilisation.

In terms of the visual theme of the event, a big red ribbon shaped by candles or made with alternative materials is the common element for most of the events, serving as the Night of Solidarity's "corporate identity." Participatory exercises with red ribbons in a spacious environment are therefore recommended.

Another recommended element is the use of the international poster of the red ribbon motif, which is available as graphic file from the World AIDS Campaign office.

**The German experience with the Night of Solidarity clearly shows that locally adapted events work better, so please feel free to use the principles that best suit your campaign environment.**

- The recommended broad campaigning theme for the Night of Solidarity is, "Keep the Promise of Universal Access".
- More specific advocacy messages within the Night of Solidarity should be decided by the organisations involved.
- Efforts should be made to support partners in the Global South to organise events on the Night of Solidarity.
- The events can have any format. They could range from sombre acts of reflection to upbeat dance parties.
- This is a moment to raise awareness about AIDS. Participating partners should work together to develop information packs and other resources.
- As an act of solidarity, effort should be recorded and shared. World AIDS Campaign, Action against AIDS Germany and other interested partners will help collate and distribute this information.
- The Night of Solidarity can enhance media coverage on the G8's role in the fight against AIDS. Accentuating the possibilities for the media to cover this story, for example by creating strong photo opportunities, is encouraged
- Since this year marks the first international Night of Solidarity, all organising groups are encouraged to keep good records of their events so that the lessons learned can inform future campaigns.

## BUILDING THE ALLIANCE

**World AIDS Campaign and Action against AIDS Germany are working together to promote the Night of Solidarity in the run up to the 2007 G8 summit.**

The World AIDS Campaign is coordinating information for the International Night of Solidarity. This includes creating and maintaining contact lists for organisations already participating in events; collecting information about event themes and logistics; posting activity events and other relevant information on the web and providing electronic versions of Night of Solidarity materials (including guidelines, posters and other visuals). World AIDS Campaign will not be able to provide funding or support for specific events. Action against AIDS Germany will be coordinating information surrounding the German Night of Solidarity.

We are looking to build a broad alliance around this effort. If you are interested in working with the Night of Solidarity, please contact either:

Molly Lepasca, World AIDS Campaign at:  
[Nos@worldaidscampaign.org](mailto:Nos@worldaidscampaign.org)

Rainer Seybold, Action against AIDS Germany at:  
[Seybold@aids-kampagne.de](mailto:Seybold@aids-kampagne.de)



# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## FOR NIGHT OF SOLIDARITY

### Creating a Light Ribbon

Like no other symbol, it is the light ribbon that connects the events of the International Night of Solidarity. The light ribbon can be placed in public squares, on mountainsides and fields, on beaches, lakes, and sports fields, etc. Ribbons can be big or small. In 2006, during an event coordinated by AIDS-Hilfe Thüringen in Erfurt, Germany, a new world record of lit candles was made in Germany. To reach this record, 11,004 candles were donated and coincided with a street festival attended by over 12,000 visitors attended.

For the lights, we suggest using candles with red plastic holders, or any other creative interpretation of this, including lanterns, torches, flashlights that shine red (place a thin piece of crepe paper over the flashlight), bike lights, etc. If it is still too bright at the planned time to form the lit ribbons, red T-shirts, clothes, hats, handkerchiefs, cardboard or plastic bags can also be used to create AIDS ribbons. Whatever means are used, the participants in the ribbon should be notified in a timely manner so that they can bring their candles. Alternatively, extra materials should be kept on hand.

### Practical tips and safety

Based on the experiences of the German campaign, it is a good idea when planning, to make one or two people responsible for choreography when forming the

ribbon. It is generally recommended, especially in events where passers-by can become involved, to draw or mark the approximate size and shape of a ribbon on the ground. The participants then only have to line up along the lines and hold their light or place the light on the ground. If this is not possible, get participants to stand at designated points (at the beginning, end, loop, overlapping point, etc). The ribbon loop should not be too narrow or small since this would make the opening difficult to recognise. In addition, the overlapping section of the two lines should be organised so that it is clear to see which side lies on top of the other. Agree on a signal or time to form the light ribbon. When the ribbon is made of people, it is advisable to specify a period of no movement in which everybody stands in place. To draw press or public attention, it is advisable to place a banner or flag near your event. If candles and torches are left in place, take a trash bag so that they can be thrown away later.

If large light ribbons are formed that involve open fire (torches), be sure to plan for fire extinguishers. It is also a good idea to ask the local volunteer fire department if they want to participate in the action and provide the necessary safety. Caution is especially required with torches (especially when children and adolescents are participating). A first aid kit with burn cream is also advisable.



## ACTIVITIES SURROUNDING THE NIGHT OF SOLIDARITY

In many cases, Night of Solidarity events are accompanied with informational events, charity presentations, concerts, film presentations, exhibits, a solidarity run, or church services. In years past in Germany, cities have hosted many events including concerts in Oldenburg, Hannover, Braunschweig, Aachen and Frankfurt ranging from gospel to organ music, which drew large crowds; and street festivals in cities such as Cologne and Munich. Events can be big and communal, like street festivals, or small and individual, like a letter writing campaign. Beyond the activities that have already been listed or discussed, we have included a list of suggested activities that can be included with your Night of Solidarity events. However, we encourage your organisation to do whatever activities are appropriate for your audience.

### Some suggested activities:

- Begin a “Keep the Promise of Universal Access” letter writing campaign to G8 embassies in your country
- Create a “Keep the Promise” petition and collect signatures during the Night of Solidarity events
- Consider an electronic Night of Solidarity campaign via email or the web
- Contact other cities in your region, country or internal to collaborate on “twin city” events
- Connect with local vendors to get them to donate red items for your Night of Solidarity event, or help you to promote events