Dirty Sticks, Dirty Tricks

Gay inmates in Chile allege medics infected them with HIV

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Q: Why is the Chilean consulate receiving hundreds of bottles of bleach in the mail?

A: It's not because AIDS activists are giving them housekeeping hints.

A San Francisco group is calling for the bleach-in after 37 inmates in a Chilean prison were allegedly tested for HIV with only 10 needles-despite the prison officials' alleged prior knowledge that 22 prisoners were infected with the virus. According to Homer Hobi of the Positive Humanists and Friends Club, the inmates were being transferred to a new prison after attorney Trinidad Lathrop of Centro Lambda Chile called for an investigation of living conditions of gay convicts. While visiting detainees in the "Colin 2" penitentiary in Santiago, Lathrop was told about the alleged carelessness of the prison medics in possibly transmitting the virus. Upon questioning, however, the medics reportedly told her they used 37 needles. Lathrop sought the help of Chilean Humanist Party President Tomas Hirsch, who held an August 11 press conference saying he would file court charges to force a probe of the alleged mistreatment.

Prison officials, who deny the accusation, subsequently sued Hirsch for defamation of character, but the charges were dropped. As POZ went to press, no investigation was under way. Hobi's group is urging concerned individuals to write to the nearest Chilean consulate calling for an investigation, including a bottle of bleach as a symbolic statement about cleaning needles before reusing them on inmates.

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