Mass Appeal

December 1, 1999 By Shana Naomi Krochmal

Organizations of the National Day of Struggle for Medications in Rio de Janeiro successfully lobbied in the cash-strapped Brazilian government to reverse its decision to cut funding for AIDS meds. An estimated 536,000 Brazilians have HIV, but the sharp devaluation of the *real* (Brazil's currency) led to a moratorium on expensive imported drugs. Preventive Theater Company--an offshoot of Brazil's first AIDS org, Grupo Pela Vidda--staged a political funeral complete with black veils, wilted flowers and an executioner. The September 8 demo, held the day after Brazil's Independence Day, drew major media and more than 100 mourners to the steps of the national health ministry. "The only sound was a lonely drum," said co-organizer Ronaldo Mussauer. "It seemed that not only a burial was taking place--the whole graveyard has come out to the streets."

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