

Freedom of Expression and Peaceful Protest

The International AIDS Society has endorsed freedom of expression as an essential principle in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The combined efforts of all stakeholders in the public and private sectors and in civil society are required to halt and reverse the AIDS pandemic.

Activism and advocacy contribute to advancing commitment, policy and practice aimed at ending the epidemic. The right to peaceful protest is fundamental to ensuring open dialogue between all stakeholders.

The IAS encourages lively debate and dialogue between presenters and delegates at the conferences it organizes. Peaceful protest is also considered to be acceptable at all IAS conferences. However, the IAS is adamantly opposed to the occupation, obstruction of access to or destruction of property or the use of physical force by any individual or group of individuals during the conferences it organizes. The IAS also opposes the disruption of conference sessions or satellite meetings that results in the infringement of the freedom of expression of invited speakers.

Procedures in the Event of Actions Contrary to Freedom of Expression

General Principles

- a. Peaceful protest, not involving the use or threat of physical force, the occupation, obstruction of access to or destruction of property, or the infringement of the freedom of expression of invited speakers, is considered acceptable behaviour at the conferences organized by IAS.
- b. Security services will remove from the conference venue any person or persons using or threatening to use physical force, or occupying, obstructing access to or destroying property at conferences organized by the IAS.
- c. Conference accreditation will be withdrawn from any person or persons who are removed from the conference venue due to their use or threat to use physical force, or to having occupied, obstructed access to or destroyed property.
- d. Any person attending a conference organized by the IAS is subject to the laws of the country in which the conference takes place.
- e. Association: Any person or persons not directly involved in using or threatening to use physical force, or occupying, obstructing access to or destroying property at conferences organized by the IAS, but who are seen to be encouraging or prolonging a disturbance will be treated as involved and may face withdrawal of their accreditation to the conference.
- f. Prior Resolution: This policy is in place to deal with actual disturbances. The IAS encourages dialogue to occur prior to any disturbance taking place. On many occasions IAS staff will be able to facilitate and offer advice on how to de-escalate or prevent altogether a disturbance. If this advice is ignored or refused, IAS cannot be held responsible for the initiation of the disturbance. However, this will not affect how disturbances are treated and the general principles will still apply.
- g. Wrongful Expulsion: If a person has his or her conference accreditation withdrawn and feels that he or she has been wronged in this action, the person will have 24 hours to appeal to the IAS for his or her accreditation to be re-instated. Appeals will be treated on a case by case basis.

Procedures involving Disruptions within Sessions and Satellite Meetings

- a. A slide will be available for all session halls which reads "Please respect the right of the speaker to be heard". In the event of any verbal disturbance, the Chair will signal the audio visual technician to put up the slide. The slide will remain up until the disturbance has died down. If there are further disturbances, the slide will be put back up.
- b. If physical force or threats of physical force are used by any person or persons, security services will remove the person or persons from the conference venue, and their conference accreditation will be withdrawn.
- c. If, despite procedures in place, a speaker is unable to deliver his/her presentation, the IAS will afterwards issue a statement condemning the action as contrary to its freedom of expression policy.

Disruptions in the Exhibition Hall

- a. It is recommended that all exhibitors designate someone to be responsible for engaging in dialogue with demonstrators, prior to any situation arising. IAS staff and/or security services will in most cases be able to facilitate dialogue.
- b. If any person or persons are using physical force or threatening to use physical force, or if property is being occupied, access to property is being obstructed or property is being destroyed, the security services will remove the person or persons from the conference venue and the person or person's conference accreditation will be withdrawn. The IAS will not be consulted in this instance
- c. In the event of any property being destroyed or physical force being used by any person or persons against another, the IAS will afterwards issue a statement condemning the action as contrary to its freedom of expression policy.