

Mandela Announces New 46664 Concert

Written by Robert ID897

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Nelson Mandela, who last year announced he was bowing out of public life, promised on Thursday to attend an international concert to raise money to fight AIDS/HIV among women in South Africa.

A host of international stars have agreed to perform for free at the concert, dubbed 46664 after Mandela's prison number, on March 19 in George, 250 miles from Cape Town.

The 86-year-old Mandela officially retired from public engagements last year but continues to devote time to major causes, notably HIV/AIDS, which infects more than 5 million of South Africa's 45 million people.

"We know that young women are six times more likely to be infected by the virus in comparison to men. Six times more," the former South African president told a news conference at which he gave details of his second HIV/AIDS benefit concert.

"I am calling on South Africans, now more than ever before, to protect young women and girls," Mandela said. "Our future depends on them and we and the world must recognize our responsibility."

He said he would be at the concert "even though I have been told explicitly to retire from public life."

Earlier this month he addressed a rally in London to drum up support for a campaign to tackle poverty in Africa. Mandela was applauded by HIV/AIDS activists last month when he announced that his only surviving son, Makgatho Mandela, had died of an AIDS-related illness, aged 54. The announcement was seen as a major boost to efforts to end the stigma attached to AIDS.

The March concert will feature 150 local and international stars including Queen's Brian May and Roger Taylor.

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Mandela said U.S. film actor and hip-hop rap artist Will Smith, a 46664 ambassador, would be master of ceremonies and introduce the international stars, including Annie Lennox, Katie Melua and India Arie.

Mandela, who spent 27 years in jail for his fight against apartheid, is the driving force behind the 46664 concerts.

Organizers said the first concert in Cape Town in 2003 had yet to cover its costs but that more cash was expected from DVD sales. Lessons learned from it should also ensure better returns from next month's event, which will be on a lesser scale.

"I am concerned that not enough has been done by the public in general since the last 46664 concert in Cape Town," Mandela said.

[Source](#)