

Swiss healer gets 13 years jail for infecting 16 with HIV

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A Swiss court on Friday sentenced a self-proclaimed healer to almost 13 years in prison for injecting 16 people with HIV-tainted blood and infecting them with the virus.

A court cleric told AFP that the 54-year-old man, whose name was not given, had been found guilty of inflicting "serious bodily harm" by injecting his victims with the tainted blood, using a syringe.

The Bern regional court sentenced him to a total of 12 years and nine months in prison.

"The accused and no one else is responsible for the infection of these 16 people," Urs Essen, the head of court, was quoted as saying by the ATS news agency.

Blood analysis has shown that the victims, who were infected with the virus that causes AIDS between 2001 and 2005 and who are all still alive, were infected with the same strain of blood.

The trial, which began on March 6, took a dramatic twist last week when police were forced to storm the man's home, where he had barricaded himself after failing to turn up for hearings.

When the court requested that police bring him to the courthouse, he refused to cooperate and locked himself in his apartment with a female neighbour for 24 hours, threatening to use a firearm, ATS reported.

The prosecutor had called for him to be sentenced to 15 years in prison.

The man has denied the charges, claiming to be the victim of a conspiracy.

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