

AVSGF • UK

ASBESTOS VICTIMS SUPPORT GROUP FORUM

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Asbestos victims call on French & New Zealand rugby teams to end 'sportswashing' sponsorship deals with Altrad

UK and French anti-asbestos campaigners and asbestos victims are protesting outside the France vs New Zealand rugby match at the Stade de France on Friday 8th September 2023.

We are holding a press conference in Paris at 6pm on Friday 8th September. Please contact us directly for details of the venue.

We are calling on Altrad, whose headquarters are in Montpellier, to donate £10 million to research into life-extending treatments for mesothelioma.

Altrad are a major sponsor of both the French & New Zealand rugby teams. Unless Altrad donates this money to research, we believe both teams should reconsider their sponsorship deals with Altrad.

Mesothelioma is a fatal cancer caused by asbestos. Altrad is the parent company of Cape, a leading manufacturer of asbestos products in the UK from the 1950s to the 1980s.

A 2019 legal case in the UK Supreme Court forced Cape to disclose documents. These proved that, from the 1960s, Cape withheld evidence on the true dangers of its asbestos products. These products were far more dangerous than disclosed by Cape at the time.

Families were torn apart when their loved ones died from exposure to Cape's asbestos products. Had the Cape disclosed what they knew at the time, we believe asbestos would have been banned much sooner in the UK, and many lives would have been saved.

Rob Rayner, Chair of the Asbestos Victims Support Group Forum said: *"Cape's asbestos products are responsible for many deaths. As Cape's parent company, Altrad has a moral obligation to put right some of the wrong that has been done. Altrad is a global brand, and a major sponsor of the French and New Zealand rugby teams. It is incomprehensible that they cannot find £10 million for mesothelioma research. In the eyes of asbestos victims, Altrad's sponsorship of the French and New Zealand rugby teams is an insult, both to the sport and to the fans"*.

The documents Cape were forced to disclose can be accessed on our website, for free.

A Forbes article on 13th December 2022 stated: *“A French court convicted Mohed Altrad of bribery, influence peddling and misuse of corporate assets charges on Tuesday. The French billionaire, who Forbes estimates is worth \$3.3 billion, was given an 18-month suspended prison sentence and was fined more than 50,000 Euros. According to the court, Altrad conspired with World Rugby vice chairman Bernard Laporte to make his Altrad Group the official front-of-shirt sponsor for the French national rugby team in exchange for a 180,000 Euro payment.”*

Full article here: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chasewithorn/2022/12/13/who-is-mohed-altrad-the-billionaire-scaffolding-king-found-guilty-of-rugby-bribery/?sh=5c40cec03846>

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Altrad’s acquisition of Cape for £332m in 2017 was a sufficiently attractive commercial proposition to take on Cape’s liabilities to meet negligence claims, for which Cape had already set up a fund. The fund is no more than a vehicle to cover Cape’s legal liabilities in negligence. It has nothing to do with the request for a donation.
2. To contact Cape/Altrad for comment, contact Antoine Martinez (Head of Group Communications). Phone +33 (0)4 74 56 42 28. Mobile +33 (0)6 78 09 73 37. Email Antoine.Martinez@altrad.com
3. There were 2,268 deaths from mesothelioma in Great Britain in 2021, and asbestos-related cancers continue to be the UK’s largest cause of workplace death. This is due to a latency period between exposure and illness which is typically between 10 and 60 years.
4. To date, 40 UK Members of Parliament have signed Early Day Motion 93 (tabled 23rd May 2023) in support of the campaign. See: <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/59797/cape-holdings-and-asbestos-research>
6. Mesothelioma is a terminal cancer caused by (sometimes very low) exposure to asbestos. Average prognosis is very poor, at around 12 months. Research into treatments for mesothelioma is chronically underfunded compared to that for other cancers.
10. Details of Altrad’s sponsorship of the French & New Zealand rugby teams can be found here: <https://www.altrad.com/en/rugby-partnerships.html> .
11. To read more about the campaign & access the documents: <https://asbestosforum.org.uk/cape-case/>