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Anti-asbestos campaigner Eric Jonkheere died of mesothelioma contracted as a result of exposure to asbestos at the Belgian Eternit factory.

Hello everyone,

Jan Fermon, Eric Jonkheere's lawyer, informed me of his death on Friday evening. This is very sad news, for his family, for us his friends and companions in the fight, but also for our international solidarity network in the fight against the asbestos industry and for justice. A few words below to express my sadness and admiration for his commitment.

Eric Jonkheere, 5th mesothelioma victim in his family, victim of environmental exposure to asbestos at the ETERNIT factory in Kapelle-op-den-Bos, Belgium.

For those who don't know him, Eric lived in the immediate vicinity of an Eternit factory in Kapelle-op-den-Bos, Belgium. He left Kappelle over 40 years ago. But mesothelioma did not spare him.

His family was decimated by asbestos: his parents and two brothers also died of mesothelioma. He is therefore the 5th family victim of Eternit, a company whose asbestos-cement production claimed thousands of victims among workers in factories such as Kapelle, but also among local residents like the Jonkheere family.

Eric was president of the Belgian Asbestos Victims Association (ABEVA). One of the last events he took part in was the inauguration of a monument to asbestos victims in the Kapelle market square https://www.abeva.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=248:le-blog-de-l-andeva&catid=2&lang=fr&Itemid=102

In 2012, Eric's book "Ma guerre contre l'amiante" (My war against asbestos) was awarded a prize by the Solidaires organization <https://www.solidaire.org/articles/le-prix-solidaire-2012-la-famille-jonckheere-pour-son-combat-contre-l-amiante-denoncer-pas>

Eric has been involved in all the struggles against asbestos, both nationally and internationally. Following in the footsteps of his mother, Françoise Jonckheere, he also decided to take Eternit to court. In Belgium, when a victim appeals to the Asbestos Fund, the law provides for immunity for the polluter unless the victim demonstrates the existence of intentional fault. In the 1st instance, this intentional fault was recognized by the court. <https://www.asso-henri-pezerat.org/la-responsabilite-deternit-reconnue-dans-la-maladie-deric-jonckheere/>

We were together at the last international congress on mesothelioma, organized by Pr Scherperel (head of department at the University Hospital) in Lille in June 2023. <http://www.ban-asbestos-france.com/actualites2023.htm>

We were all deeply moved by Eric's contribution to a round-table discussion devoted to the voice of patients. It was our last meeting. With Virginie Dupeyroux, we presented the "Aulnay-sous-Amiante" (Aulnay-Upon-Asbestos) exhibition and shared with Eric our concerns about the extent of environmental contamination. http://www.ban-asbestos-france.com/aulnay_sous_amiante_exposition.htm

I'd like to express my fraternal solidarity and condolences to Dorothée and all your family, Eric. Thank you for everything we've shared, everything you've done for justice and prevention. The fight goes on, but we miss you and will miss you as we face the challenges ahead: fighting for the criminal conviction of those responsible for this health disaster of which you and your family are the victims, and obtaining effective decontamination of living and working environments, so that the tragedy of so many lives cut short by asbestos-related cancers finally comes to an end.

Annie Thébaud-Mony

For Ban Asbestos-France