

**Announcement**

**2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2012  
Vilnius, Lithuania**

**EHRN calls on the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women to investigate and prevent further systematic violence against women who use drugs**

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2012, Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN) submitted a collective complaint on behalf of women who use drugs in Russia, Ukraine and Georgia to UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. The submission focuses on testimonies provided by women themselves from Russia, Ukraine, as well as harm reduction service providers in Ukraine and Georgia. The collected data and facts call for urgent action to prevent further violence against women who use drugs, and to establish mechanisms to investigate and redress acts of violence against women who use drugs.

The testimonies confirm that women who use drugs experience systematic and widespread violence, harassment, and sexual abuse at the hands of law enforcement officers. They are not only denied their right to healthcare, but are often forced into drug treatment centers where they are subject to physical and psychological abuse. With nowhere to turn, they find themselves without protection against violence from their sexual partners, parents, and extended families. This violence is facilitated by misguided drug legislation.

EHRN, as an organization advocating for the rights of women who use drugs in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA), is concerned with the member states' drug policy, which is underpinned by the deliberate stigmatization of people who use drugs, obstruction of access to evidence-based drug treatment and aggressive policing of women who use drugs, which increases women's risks of physical and sexual violence from law enforcement agents. This policy contradicts states' commitment to prevent acts of violence as laid out in the [UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#).

EHRN calls on the Special Rapporteur and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that international human rights norms are applied at the national level and those national policies and practices are in full compliance with international commitments protecting women who use drugs. This can be achieved through the following steps:

- In order to prevent acts of violence and ill-treatment against women who use drugs, call on member states to provide wide access to evidence-based health

services for women who use drugs, including opioid substitution therapy, as well as to other health care and harm reduction programs, rather than relying on punitive methods towards women who use drugs.

- In order to punish acts of violence, to set up commissions, in cooperation with national human rights institutions, investigate acts of violence against women who use drugs committed by law enforcement, as well as acts of torture and abuse committed in health care settings.
- In order to encourage women who use drugs to report acts of violence, make sure that there are safe mechanisms for them to do so without fear of repercussions, humiliation, or breach of confidentiality.

Full text of submission can be accessed [here](#).

### **About EHRN**

*Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN) is a regional network of harm reduction programs, groups of people who use drugs and their allies from across 28 countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (CEECA), who work to advocate for the universal human rights of people who use drugs, and to protect their lives and health. EHRN's mission is to promote humane, evidence-based harm reduction approaches to drug use, with the aim of improving health and protecting human rights at the individual, community, and societal level.*

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