



26th June 2016

Support and empowerment *for and by* people who use drugs

So far, a bad year for drug policy?

The 26th June is the *International Day against Drug Abuse*. It is a day that embodies laws and policies that have criminalised, subjugated, excluded, and violated the human rights of people who use drugs and the communities in which they live. It is a day that stands for an ideology that has done untold harms. And it is a day that perhaps well-reflects a difficult half-year in global drug policy.

Not least of all was the *United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs 2016*, with the UNGASS outcome document failing to take into account the needs and human rights of people who use drugs. Indonesia has announced plans for a new round of executions for drug-related offences, while the Philippines' President-elect has made the horrific call for people who use and/or sell drugs to be killed extrajudicially, both by citizens and the police. Then there was the UK introducing a blanket ban on *all* psychoactive substances.

Exclusion, Violence, Discrimination

Though it seems that in many corners of the world things are moving backwards, though the exclusion of the voices of people who use drugs in the formation of law and policy has continued, though the violence, stigma, and discrimination to which people who use drugs are subject have been encouraged, though the criminalisation of people who use drugs in some regions has been ramped up, **we must persevere**.

On this day, the International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD) emphasises that people who use drugs are not the problem. **We are a fundamental part of the solution**, a solution to the so-called 'world drugs problem'. The problem is not drugs themselves, nor the people who use them. **The problem is driven by punitive prohibition**; it is driven by criminalisation; it is driven by stigma, discrimination, social exclusion, and violence; it is driven by a systemic denial of human rights to people who use drugs and their communities. And **things are beginning to move in the right direction**. More countries than ever before are pushing in the direction of drug policy reform; momentum is building for positive change, for an end to prohibition.

An End to the War on Drugs on Our Terms

Though today is the ill-conceived *International Day Against Drug Abuse*, it is also the day of [Support Don't Punish](#), a campaign that emphasises that punitive prohibition is counterproductive, that harm reduction interventions for people who use drugs must be supported, and that the drug using community should be empowered and included in discussions that relate to our lives.

The status quo cannot, will not, continue. For this year's *Support Don't Punish* campaign, we say: **the solutions to the problems driven by the war on drugs are our inclusion, our solidarity, and our working together with our partners and allies**. We call upon the drug users of the world to unite in solidarity, and we call upon other organisations to support our inclusion first and foremost in discussions and debates that pertain to us.

Meaningful change must meaningfully involve and be led by those most affected by the war on drugs which is, in reality, a war on people who use drugs. The war on drugs must end, and it must end on the terms of people who use drugs.

International Network of People who Use Drugs

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