



Drug Law Reform Should Be Among the Priorities of The Lebanese Parliament

On the occasion of the “Support Don’t Punish” Global Day of Action, which falls on June 26, the signatories of this Joint Statement address the Lebanese Parliament to demand the reform of local drug policies, specifically the revision of the Lebanese Drug Law (673/1998), in order to effectively respond to drug use and addiction. While the Lebanese Law on Drugs recognizes the use of illicit substances and addictions as public health matters, it continues to criminalize people who use drugs.

To that effect, the statement signatories would like to highlight the following:

First, the Lebanese state arrests 3000 individuals a year on substance use charges and interrogates another 2000 to 6000 people a year on the basis of the same charge.

Almost 80% of the individuals charged with substance use are aged between 18 and 35 years. Since the promulgation of the law in 1998, an estimated 100,500 individuals have been sentenced by a court of law for their use of drugs, and have thus been deprived of their right to treatment and to support, and have seen their chances of employment and education hindered as a result of their conviction.

Second, in 2016, the Inter-ministerial Substance Use Response Strategy for Lebanon was launched by a number of key ministries; five years after its launch, the majority of its objectives have yet to be met, notably the objective related to the revision of the Lebanese law on drugs.

Finally, the reform of drug policies can constitute a part of the solution to the many challenges currently faced by Lebanon, and that by:

- Decreasing the number of files for non-violent offenses before an already overburdened judiciary.
- Creating job opportunities for young people by removing criminal penalties attached to the use of illicit substances which facilitates access to employment and thus allows young people to contribute to economic growth, noting that 60% of young people are currently unemployed in Lebanon.
- Diverting resources spent on repressive drug policies into a health-oriented response aimed at preventing chronic illnesses that often accompany drug use and that constitute considerable costs to the state.
- Reducing the incidence of human rights violations, notably violations to basic fair trial rights.

The co-signatories of this statement call on the new members of Parliament to prioritize drug policy reform and to revise the Lebanese Law on Drugs, taking as a starting point the draft law submitted to the legislative body in 2016, and revising it in line with global developments and the Lebanese State’s own commitments and strategy, notably towards the decriminalization of drug use.



Statement Signatories:

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- The Middle East and North Africa Harm Reduction Association (MENAHRRA)
- Legal Agenda
- MENA Network of People who Use Drugs (MENANPUD)
- Society for Inclusion and Development in Communities and Care for All (SIDC)
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