

STATEMENT

1 November 2014

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International Drug Users' Day 2014 - 1st November **'Community. Solidarity. Empowerment.'**

The harms of stigma, discrimination and the 'war on drugs'

The world over, people who use drugs are demonised and stereotyped. People who use drugs are stigmatised as being sick and dangerous, and are vilified, infantilised, and patronised as being unable to take care of themselves or their loved ones. Stigmatising people who use drugs follows through into discrimination and social exclusion, and has corresponding impacts on health and wellbeing. Stigma and stereotypes are what justify the so-called 'war on drugs', which in turn drives gross violations of the human rights of people who use drugs, violations that go, for the most part, unchallenged.

And violations of the human rights of people who use drugs are all too common. People who use drugs are detained and imprisoned. People who use drugs are incarcerated without due legal process in forced labour camps. People who use drugs are subject to torture and execution. People who use drugs are denied access to healthcare, service provision, and harm reduction. People who use drugs are harassed and assaulted by the police. The 'war on drugs', a war that drives these violations of the rights of people who use drugs, has been an abject failure (even by its own misguided objectives): it has failed to reduce drug use, and it has caused enormous harm to the lives of people who use drugs and the communities in which they live.

This 2014 International Drug Users' Day, we assert that to end the war on drugs – the war on people who use drugs – we must move away from the ideas that drive prohibition and criminalisation.

An end to the war on drugs on our terms

The war on drugs must end. But it must end on the terms of people who use drugs. Last *International Drug Users' Day*, we asserted the right of consenting adults to use the drugs they choose, whether it be for pleasure, to self-medicate, to enhance performance, to alter consciousness, or to provide some succour and relief from hard lives. We defended the right of adults to use their drugs of choice in their homes without causing harm or nuisance to others, and to carry them in public without fear of police harassment, abuse, and intimidation.

International Network of People who Use Drugs

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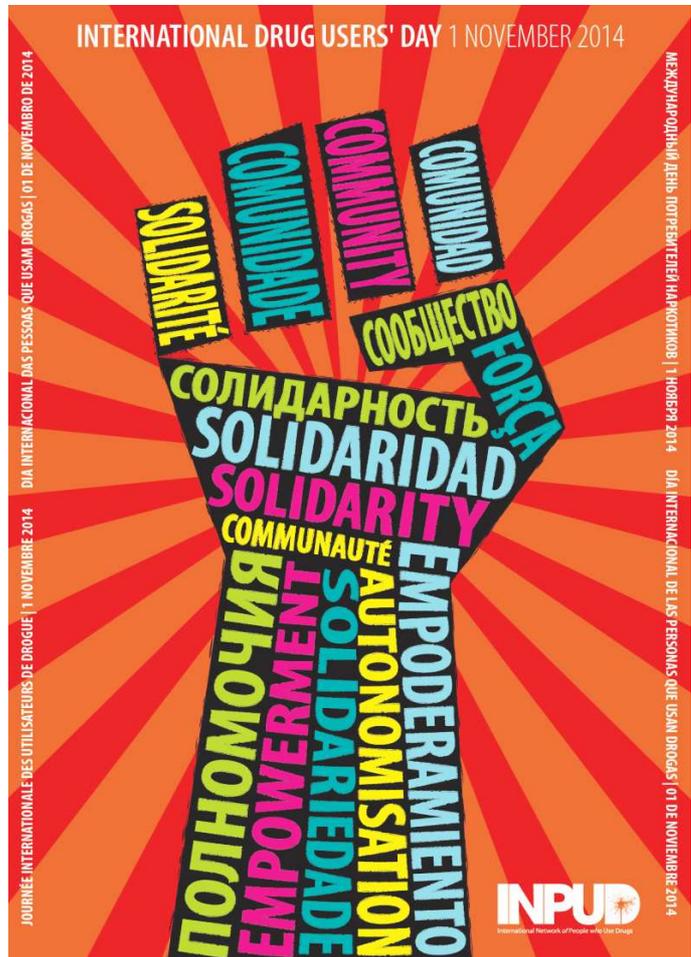


This 2014 *International Drug Users' Day*, we assert that to end the war on drugs – the war on people who use drugs – we must move away from the ideas that drive prohibition and criminalisation: we must challenge and reject stigma and drug-userphobia in all of its forms. We reject infantilising, patronising, and demonising preconceptions. We reject blanket pathologisation of people who use drugs, reject the assumption that to use drugs is to be sick or dangerous or immoral. It is time to discard cruel, pejorative, and discriminatory language and labels. It is time, once and for all, to reject crude generalisations and stereotypes of people who use drugs, and to acknowledge the variability and diversity of our community.

And so, on this *International Drug Users' Day*, we celebrate and emphasise the diversity and strength of our community. The world over, vast numbers of people from every section of society use illicit drugs. They use drugs for different reasons, in different ways, in different contexts. Though we are too often silenced and side-lined in debate and in the formation of policy and legislation that applies to us, we assert our diversity and our ability and right to exercise self-determination and agency. We demand the right to be respected as experts on our own lives, motivations, and experiences. We will not stand by silently whilst decisions are made about us and not with us. In reasserting 'Nothing About Us Without Us', we refer to the inclusion of our diverse community as a whole.

We, the International Network of People who Use Drugs, will fight to defend our human rights, to promote our health, and will fight to end the war on drugs and prohibition together and in solidarity. We recognise the struggles of our peers as our own, in the face of crosscutting stigmatisation, social exclusion, discrimination, silencing, and criminalisation. In 2014, we celebrate the strength of our community, our solidarity and our empowerment.

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