

1<sup>st</sup> November 2018  
INPUD Statement  
International Drug Users' Day



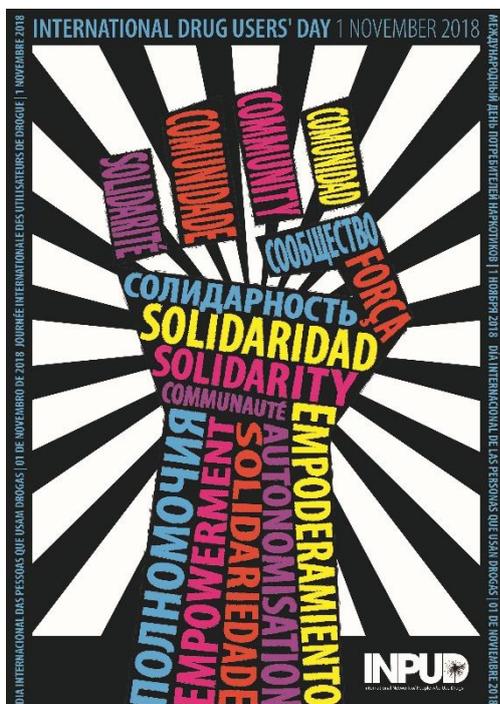
**Human Rights of People who Use Drugs**

The world over, communities of people who use drugs experience endemic violence, abuse, stigmatisation, and discrimination. In the last year alone, tens of thousands of people who use drugs have died as a result of prohibition, as a result of criminalisation, and as a result of the social exclusion they suffer for nothing more than their status as drug users. All over the world, people who use drugs are incarcerated and imprisoned; they are incarcerated without due legal process in forced labour camps; they are tortured and executed; they are denied access to healthcare, service provision, and harm reduction; they are harassed and assaulted by the police. **This is a time of humanitarian calamities for our communities.** Huge numbers of people **continue to die from avoidable opiate overdose** as a result of using heroin that is contaminated or of unknown purity and strength, due to the unregulated black-market of prohibition. Overdose mortalities are rising exponentially globally. **Overdose deaths are now the most prevalent cause of death of under 50s in the USA.** Further to this tragic and unnecessary loss of life are the **tens of thousands of drug users murdered in state-endorsed killings.** Tens of thousands have been killed by the police in numerous contexts in only the last year.

**Shrinking Civil Society Space: The Need for Our Networks**

The injustices inflicted upon the drug using community all over the world continue. If human rights are to be respected and defended, and if health is to be truly prioritised, then prohibition, and the so-called 'war on drugs', must end. As we have insisted, again and again, their dismantling **must be led by those so catastrophically impacted by this senseless war: people who use drugs themselves.**

Yet our organisations are facing increasing restrictions and delimitations on how we function, curtailing our ability to defend the rights and promote the health of people who use drugs all over the world. Repressive **governments have always seen civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, and rights organisations as a threat**, and now many governments are making use of tactics and aggressive approaches to shrink the space in which civil society can exist. Tactics include 'foreign agent' and registration legislation and policies designed to cut organisations' funding and to delegitimise and deregister organisations, marginalising them as illegal, pariahs, and enemies of the state. Other tactics worryingly include violence, displacement, evictions, and police-sponsored harassment. These attacks come at a time when increasingly populist and fascist politicians and governments see shocking popularity, elected on platforms of exclusion, racism, xenophobia, and frequently drug-userphobia, platforms that in turn threaten our communities and our organisations and networks. Now more than ever, our movements are imperative. **Today, on International Drug Users' Day, we call again for a recognition and celebration of our diverse community.**



International Drug Users' Day is a deeply important day for our communities, and for INPUD as a network: **ten years ago, we were formally launched on International Drug Users' Day**, where international drug user rights activists came together to form an international network representing their communities, defending their rights, promoting their health. In the context of state apathy regarding the health and wellbeing of people who use drugs the world over, it has more often than not come down to communities themselves, leading the way in advocacy, activism, and service provision, harm reduction, and the AIDS response, bringing our lived experience to our movement whilst understanding that no intervention can succeed without the meaningful involvement of the community the intervention serves. **Inaction is complicity** and, in the words of ACT-UP, **silence equals death.** International Drug Users' Day is a day to celebrate our communities; to celebrate the importance of our voice in the context of routine and endemic rights violations all over the world; to celebrate the diversity and vibrance of our community as fundamental to our advocacy and voice. All over the world, people who use drugs have organised workshops and events to mark the day in community and in solidarity. Just as INPUD was established to represent the interests of drug users all over the world, **today we call for continued solidarity within our community, between our diverse community members, and between our community and other like-minded, marginalised communities all over the world.**

**We demand to be included in all discussions that relate to our communities, that relate to legislation and policy that impacts our lives, impacts our friends, families, loved ones, that impacts our communities. In these challenging times, we celebrate our diversity, our resilience, and the strength of our community through our solidarity. Through our empowerment.**