

21 July 2016

INPUD Statement: Drug Users Remembrance Day



The Human Rights and Demands of People who Use Drugs

Last year, INPUD published our [Consensus Statement on Drug Use under Prohibition](#). It emphasised the fundamental [human rights of people who use drugs, and the demands which must be met](#) in order for those human rights to be realised. It emphatically stated that people who use drugs are entitled to their human rights, which must be protected by the rule of law, and that we have the right to life and security of person. And it emphasised that people who use drugs have the right not to be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

A Denial of Rights; a Denial of Humanity

Let us not be vague: people who use drugs are being killed. People have continued to die as a result of the drugs they use being of unknown purity and content due to their black market production – which demonstrably and directly results from prohibition. Opposition to harm reduction interventions has continued to drive catastrophically high incidence and prevalence of blood-borne infections like HIV and hepatitis C. And the cost of treatment for hepatitis C – the most important infection affecting people who inject drugs – has resulted in people continuing to die utterly needlessly from an entirely curable disease. Compounding this, the lack of access to antiretroviral drugs for people living with HIV has similarly resulted in ongoing and preventable morbidity and mortality.

In recent weeks, the Philippines has seen the horrific and brutal extrajudicial killing of scores of people who use drugs, killing that has not only been endorsed, but actively encouraged by the state. This murdering has not occurred in a vacuum: killing and torture of people who use drugs occurs in many states, as we have documented time and time again, and Indonesia has, in recent months, executed numerous people for drug-related offences, with more waiting on death row.

All of this is as a direct result of ongoing criminalisation, stigmatisation, and discrimination towards people who use drugs, a result of the human rights of people who use drugs being systemically and repeatedly violated. This moment could have been a time of hope and considerable progress. The *United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs 2016* took place earlier in the year, but instead of marking the beginning of the end of the war on drugs, a war that has wrought untold horrors, the UNGASS outcome document failed to even take specific account of the needs and rights of people who use drugs, the community most considerably impacted by punitive prohibition.

A Day to Remember and Honour our Peers

Today is *International Drug Users Remembrance Day*. It is the day when we honour and remember our friends, loved ones, peers, and comrades who have died as a result of the unjustifiable, fruitless, and absurd war on drugs. The war on drugs is not only a failure by its own misguided metrics and standards; it is also, bluntly, a war on people who use drugs and their communities.

We began this statement with reference to our *Consensus Statement*, and so we end it with a quotation from a respondent who took place in the *Consensus Statement* consultation process. We end this statement by stressing the simple fact that we are people; we are entitled to protection of our inalienable human rights. **We are entitled to life.**

“We are human. Like other humans. So we have a right to live like other humankind.”

International Network of People who Use Drugs

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