

Ad Hoc US Coalition for Global Drug Policy Reform

We, the undersigned US and international non-governmental organizations that work on drug policy issues in the United States, and supporting organizations from other countries, call for a significant shift in global drug policy in line with international human rights standards, and that prioritizes health, including access to medicines, security, and development.

Existing US and global drug control policies that heavily emphasize criminalization of drug use, possession, production and distribution are inconsistent with international human rights standards and have contributed to serious human rights violations. The criminalization of personal drug use and possession for personal use infringes on the right to privacy and basic principles of autonomy on which other rights rest.

Criminalization of the drug trade has dramatically enhanced the profitability of illicit drug markets, fueling the operations of groups that commit abuses, corrupt authorities, and undermine democracy and the rule of law in many parts of the world. And both in the US and internationally, enforcement of drug laws has often involved large-scale abuses and discriminatory practices, including disproportionately harsh sentences for drug offenses in the US (which have a disparate impact on African Americans than on whites), the use of the death penalty for drug offenses in several countries, and extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances in others. Existing drug policies have also caused other injuries to the public's well-being, such as the proliferation of infectious diseases and the suppression of essential and promising medicines.

Concerned that drug prohibition may be incompatible, in practice if not in principle, with principles of human rights or public health, some countries – or jurisdictions within them – have begun to pursue policies that depart from that model and to seek alternative means for addressing the health and human safety concerns associated with drug use.

Following votes in several states within the United States to legalize or otherwise regulate cannabis for non-medical use, the US State Department – as part of a "Four Pillars" approach enunciated by Ambassador William Brownfield – has called for flexibility and tolerance for countries to pursue innovative drug policies, including legal regulation.¹ Considering the serious human rights and health harms drug policy approaches focused on criminalization have caused in the past decades, we believe that experimenting with new, less harmful approaches, to drug policy is essential.

Accommodating some of these experiments, including with legalization and regulation of internationally controlled substances, may require that the UN drug conventions are interpreted in light of countries' international human rights and other obligations. We believe that in case of irreconcilable conflict, human rights principles, which lie at the core of the United Nations charter, should take priority over provisions of the drug conventions. UN Member States should initiate a process of reforming and modernization of the drug conventions.

¹ William R. Brownfield, Trends in Global Drug Policy (US State Department 2014) (speech at UN Foreign Press Center, UN Plaza, New York), <http://fpc.state.gov/232813.htm>.

We also support the US Department of Justice's guidance of August 2013, in which it specified conditions under which it would accommodate state-based systems of legal regulation for cannabis, despite the continuing federal prohibition of cannabis.² As then Deputy Attorney General James Cole laid out in testimony for the Senate Judiciary Committee, this approach represents the government's most realistic strategy for pursuing federal priorities (which are also treaty priorities), in light of the small percentage of law enforcement agents in the US who are employed by the federal government, and the constitutional restraints which prevent Congress from forcing states to enforce federal laws. Among the priorities listed in the guidance are preventing violence and preventing revenue from the sale of marijuana from going to criminal organizations.

To address the injustices and the harms that are currently associated with drug policy in much of the world, we call for an open dialogue on these matters, and for action on them, at the April 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS) and during upcoming sessions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and related proceedings, including the convening of a Committee of Experts to review the issue of treaty reform. Additionally, we call for substantive efforts to address the human rights abuses and other social problems resulting from many jurisdictions' current drug policies, including but not limited to the following measures:

- Essential medicines that contain or are made of controlled substances, the availability of which is currently limited in much of the world, including opioids for pain management, should be made available and accessible to all patients with a legitimate medical need. The United Nations should work with its member states to address the regulatory, legal and educational obstacles that have caused this scarcity and the resulting needless suffering.
- Governments should ensure that drug control measures do not interfere with medical and scientific research involving controlled substances, as is currently the case in the United States with substances included in "Schedule I."
- Given the growing body of evidence for the effectiveness of medical cannabis in treating certain medical conditions, states should review and, where necessary, amend regulations or adjust scheduling in order to improve medical access and facilitate research into medical uses.
- Governments should repeal laws that criminalize personal use and possession *per se* of drugs, taking into account their legal obligations under international human rights standards.
- Governments can criminalize negligent or dangerous behavior, such as driving under the influence, to regulate harmful conduct by individuals who use drugs, without criminalizing drug use itself. Governments should also address the policies and other factors that have driven disproportionate sentencing, over-incarceration and discriminatory policing.

2 James M. Cole, Memorandum for All United States Attorneys: Guidance Regarding Marijuana Enforcement (Office of the Deputy Attorney General 2013), <http://www.justice.gov/iso/opa/resources/3052013829132756857467.pdf>.

- The United Nations and its member states should take steps to reduce the costs of current policies toward drug production and distribution, including overhauling policies such as aerial fumigation of drug crops, that may carry unnecessary risks to health and the environment; exploring alternatives to current approaches that emphasize the use of criminal law enforcement to regulate the drug trade; and where appropriate, by adopting new legal and regulatory frameworks and adjusting enforcement practices.
- The United Nations should work with its member states to end the human rights abuses occurring in drug enforcement, giving immediate priority to ending the death penalty for drug offenses.
- The United Nations and its member states should adopt drug policy evaluation metrics that focus on health, security, development, access to medicine, and human rights, rather than simple or derivative measures like use rates or quantities of drugs seized by authorities – and work to reallocate their budgets based on the evidence that such metrics reflect, for example by shifting some drug enforcement expenditures into public health programs or to other areas of law enforcement.
- The United Nations should endorse the concept of harm reduction, including but not limited to needle exchange programs, safe injection sites, medication assisted treatment (including opioid substitution or maintenance programs), and non-prosecution policies for persons seeking help for overdoses.

END –

signatories as of April 12, 2016:

Global NGOs

Broken No More
 Global Exchange
 Global Network of People Living with HIV North America (GNP+NA)
 GRASP: Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing
 Human Rights Watch
 International Centre for Science in Drug Policy
 International Drug Policy Consortium
 International HIV/AIDS Alliance
 Law Enforcement Against Prohibition
 Nonviolent Radical Party transnational and transparty
 Students for Sensible Drug Policy
 Transnational Institute (TNI)

US NGOs

AIDS Alabama
 AIDS United
 Alternet

The American Alliance for Medical Cannabis
American Civil Liberties Union
Amity Foundation (AZ, CA, NM)
Atlanta Harm Reduction Coalition (GA)
A Better Way Foundation (CT)
A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing)
BOOM!Health (NY)
Break the Chains
California NORML
CAN-DO Foundation
The Cannabis Alliance (WA)
Cannabis Consumers Campaign
The Center for Law and Justice (NY)
Center for Living and Learning (CA)
The Center for the Study of Cannabis and Social Policy
Chicago Recovery Alliance
The CHOW Project (HI)
Cincinnati Exchange Project (OH)
Citizens Opposing Prohibition
Civic Trust Lobbying Company
Coalition for Cannabis Standards & Ethics (WA)
Coalition for Medical Marijuana-New Jersey, Inc.
Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition
Committee for Adult Use Standards and Ethics for Marijuana (CAUSE-) (WA)
Common Sense for Drug Policy
Council on Responsible Cannabis Regulation
Crack Open The Door
DC Cannabis Campaign
DCNORML
Drug Policy Alliance
Drug Policy Committee of the National Lawyers Guild
Drug Policy Forum of Hawaii
Drug Policy Forum of Texas
Drug Truth Network
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Empire State NORML (NY)
Fair Shake (WI)
Family Council on Drug Awareness
Family Law & Cannabis Alliance (MA)
FedCURE
Harm Reduction Action Center (CO)
Harm Reduction Coalition
Harm Reduction Michigan
HelpNotHandcuffs
Hepatitis Education Project
Hispanic Health Network
Housing Works
Human Rights and the Drug War

Illinois Consortium on Drug Policy, Roosevelt University
Institute for Policy Studies Drug Policy Project
Intercambios Puerto Rico
Justice Strategies
Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice
Latino Commission on AIDS
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (CA)
Life for Pot
The Libra Foundation
Marijuana Majority
Marijuana Policy Project
Michigan NORML
mommieactivist and sons Online Radio
Moms United to End the War on Drugs
Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies
National Advocates for Pregnant Women
National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD)
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Cannabis Bar Association
National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws
New York Harm Reduction Educators (NYHRE)
North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition
Northwest Producers, Processors & Retailers Association (NWPPR) (WA)
The November Coalition
One Million Americans, Ltd.
Our America Initiative
Partnership for Safety and Justice (OR)
Pico International
Positive Health Project (NY)
Prevention Point Pittsburgh
Project Inform
Protect Families First (RI)
Reentry Central
Remove Intoxicated Drivers
Safe Streets Arts Foundation (DC)
St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction (NY)
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
San Francisco Drug Users Union
Santa Fe Mountain Center (NM)
Sensible Colorado
Sonoran Prevention Works (AZ)
Southern Coalition for Social Justice (southeast)
StoptheDrugWar.org
Texas Criminal Justice Coalition
The Prodigal Child Project (For Human Rights)
(T.O.P.S.) The Ordinary People Society
Treatment Action Group (TAG)
Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago

T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Trystereo/New Orleans Harm Reduction Network
Veterans for Compassionate Care LLC (WA)
Veterans for Medical Cannabis Access
Virginians Against Drug Violence
Viva Rio (US)
VOCAL New York
Washington Marijuana Association
William C. Velasquez Institute (WCVI)
Witness to Mass Incarceration
WOLA (Washington Office on Latin America)
Women Who Never Give Up
Women With A Vision (LA)

Businesses

The ArcView Group
Berkeley Patients Group (CA)
Capitol Hemp (DC)
Denver Relief Consulting (CO)
Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps
Elixinol LLC (Australia)
4Front Advisors
Greenbridge Corporate Counsel (CA, WA)
Harborside Health Center (CA)
Hemp Foods Australia
Hempoint, s.r.o. (Czech Republic)
iComply Cannabis
Northwest Patient Resource Center (WA)
Oaksterdam University
Revista Cañamo México
Social Justice Law Collective

Supporting NGOs from Other Countries

Acción Semilla Bolivia
Asian Network of People Who Use Drugs
Asociación Costarricense para el Estudio e Intervención en Drogas (ACEID)
Asociación Mexicana de Estudios sobre Cannabis (AMECA)
ASUD (Autosupport des Usagers de Drogues) (France)
Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation
Alliance of Women to Advocate for Change (AWAC) (Uganda)
Beckley Foundation
The Black Initiative for a New Drug Policy (Brazil)
Brazilian Drug Policy Platform
Canadian Drug Policy Coalition
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network
Canadian Positive People Network (CPPN) /

Réseau canadien des personnes séropositives (RCPS)
Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy
Cannabis Sans Frontières (France)
Caribbean Drug & Alcohol Research Institute
Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition
Center for Supporting Community Development Initiatives (SCDI) (Vietnam)
Centro Cáritas de Formación para la Atención de las
Farmacodependencias y Situaciones Críticas Asociadas A.C. (CAFAC) (Mexico)
Chanvre & Libertés – NORML France
Colectivo por una Política Integral hacia las Drogas (CUPIHD) (Mexico)
Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos
CommonUnity Foundation (Australia)
Comunidades de Fe Organizadas para Acción (COFOA) (Central America)
Corporación Humanas (Chile)
Deutscher Hanf Verband (DHV) - German Hemp Association
Diogenis Association, Drug Policy Dialogue South East Europe
Double Positive Foundation (Suriname)
Equis Justicia para las Mujeres (Mexico)
ERIE (Entheogenic Research, Integration, and Education)
Espolea, A.C. (Mexico)
Estudiantes por una política sensata de drogas México (EPSD)
European Coalition for Just and Effective Drug Policies (ENCOD)
FAAAT.net - French Alternatives on Addiction And Toxicomanies (France, Spain)
Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform (Australia)
FED UP! Canada – Canadian Coalition for Drug Policy Reform
Fields of Green for ALL NPC (South Africa)
Forum Droghe (Italy)
Foundation Against Illicit Drug and Child Abuse (FADCA) (Liberia)
420 Guadalajara (Mexico)
Ganja Growers and Producers Association of Jamaica (GGPAJ)
Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+NA)
Grüne Hilfe e.V. - Hessen (Germany)
Hands Off Cain (Italy)
HIV and AIDS Support House (HASH) (Philippines)
Hungarian Civil Liberties Union
ICEERS International Center for Ethnobotanical Education Research & Service (Uruguay)
Iglesia Evangélica Protestante de El Salvador (IEPES)
India HIV/AIDS Alliance
Institute of Cannabis Regulation Slovenia
Intercambios Asociación Civil (Argentina)
Jac's Voice – on living with addiction and mental illness (Canada)
Konopa z.s. (Czech Republic)
Krytyka Polityczna / Political Critique (Poland)
Luca Coscioni Association for Freedom of Scientific Research (Italy)
Mainline (Netherlands)
MamaCoca (Columbia)
Mambo Social Club (Belgium)
mumsDU – moms united and mandated to saving the lives of Drug Users (Canada)

Netherlands Drug Policy Foundation
Newsweed (France)
NGO Comunidad Tawantinsuyu (South America)
NoBox Transitions Foundation (Philippines)
NORML Canada
NVO 4 Life (Montenegro)
Observatorio Latinoamericano de Políticas de Drogas, Asuntos del Sur
Occupy Regina (Canada)
PILS (Prévention Information et Lutte contre le SIDA) (Mauritius)
Pivot Legal Society (Canada)
PKNI (Indonesian Drug Users Network)
Plantaforma para la Defensa de la Ayahuasca (Spain)
Psicotropicus - Brazilian Drug Policy Center
Reachout Centre Trust (Kenya)
REDUC - Brazilian Harm Reduction and Human Rights Network
Release (United Kingdom)
Rights Reporter Foundation (Hungary)
Rumah Cemara
St. Catherine Ganja Growers and Producers Association (Jamaica)
Skoun, Lebanese Addictions Center
SOCIO Pakistan (Society Of Collective Interests Orientation)
Stichting Patienten Groep Medicinale Cannabis (Netherlands)
Students for Sensible Drug Policy-UWI, Mona Chapter (Jamaica)
Svenska Brukarföreningen / Swedish Drug Users Union
TB/HIV Care Association
Thai Civil Society Coalition on Harm Reduction (12D)
Transform Drug Policy Foundation (United Kingdom)
Uganda Harm Reduction Network
Union C (Nepal)
Viva Rio (Brazil)
West Africa Drug Policy Network
West Africa Drug Policy Network-Ghana Chapter
Youth Organisations for Drug Action (YODA) (Europe)
Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network

This statement is coordinated by StoptheDrugWar.org on behalf of the Ad Hoc US Coalition for Global Drug Policy Reform. For information or to endorse, please contact David Borden at borden@drcnet.org, +1 202-236-8620, fax +1 202-293-8344, P.O. Box 9853, Washington, DC 20016.