

**Statement for International
Remembrance Day
21st July 2014**



NO MORE DEATHS IN THE NAME OF PROHIBITION

"I would like to meet with Theresa May, Norman Baker [a UK home office minister] and Yvette Cooper [the UK shadow home secretary] to start a sensible dialogue for change, from prohibition to strict and responsible regulation of recreational drugs."

Anne-Marie Cockburn – mother of Martha Fernback

Anne-Marie Cockburn's fifteen year old daughter, Martha, died in the UK in June this year after taking particularly pure ecstasy. Instead of calling for a ratcheting up of failed drug war policies, she called instead for "'sensible' political debate on legalising recreational drugs". Like so many others, she realized that the single greatest cause of so called 'drug related harm' is prohibition and the criminalization of people who use illegal drugs.

International Remembrance Day was founded in Germany seventeen years ago by parents who had suffered a similar loss, when their son, an injecting drug user died of an accidental overdose. In response they launched a call for humane drug policies, for comprehensive access to harm reduction programs (including heroin prescription), and saw their son's death not as an isolated incident but as a direct result of the systemic stigma, repression, and criminalization to which people who use drugs are subject. Ever since, drug user organisations and their supporters in cities across the world will be holding events to remember lost friends and loved ones, to honour their memory and to call for an end to the systemic war that is being waged upon our community.

On this International Remembrance Day, the *International Network of People who Use Drugs*, underlines the pointless deaths caused by the war on drugs and underlines the immense damage that it does to our communities and families. On this day we mourn and remember our lost friends, and recommit ourselves to ensuring that fundamental change comes.

International Network of People who Use Drugs

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According to the report issued by the *Global Commission on HIV and the Law* in 2012 “[i]ntentionally or not, “wars on drugs” are wars on people who use drugs, and these people face police harassment, violence and incarceration; discrimination in health care, housing, employment and schooling; and political disenfranchisement”. There can be no doubt that fifty years since the passage of the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, and forty years since US President Richard Nixon declared his “war on drugs” that the single greatest burden of this war, fought in the name of morality, and supposedly, in the name of health, that this approach to addressing illicit drug use is an unmitigated disaster by every conceivable standard.

The Global Commission on HIV and the Law concluded by calling for countries to take “decisive action, in partnership with the UN, to review and reform relevant international laws and bodies [...] including the UN international drug control conventions [...] and the International Narcotics Control Board”. In spite of this far ranging, damning recommendation that skewers global prohibition as an absolute catastrophe for the rights, health, and citizenship of some of the world’s most marginalized people, why are we still seeing an absolute failure to act?

There can be no doubt that global prohibition, and the criminalisation that it entails, is the principal driver of human rights violations suffered by people who are criminalised and stigmatised for their drug use. There can be no doubt that criminalisation is the single most efficient producer of HIV and hepatitis C transmission amongst people who inject drugs, and lies behind our systemic exclusion from access to health care services. The conclusion that “criminalization of drug use, restrictive drug policies and aggressive law enforcement practices are key drivers of HIV and hepatitis C epidemics among people who inject drugs” reached by the Consensus Statement “Science addressing drugs and HIV: State of the Art” presented at the High Level Segment of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in March of this year is borne out by all evidence. You cannot end HIV, HCV, or mass incarceration without ending the war on people who use drugs

Why then, in spite of this abundance of evidence is the world locked into a system in which human rights violations, stigma, discrimination, isolation, HIV and hepatitis C are the norm for people who use drugs?

REMEMBER FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES LOST TO PROHIBITION.

DEMAND AN END TO DRUG WAR DEATHS.

SHOW SOLIDARITY WITH PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES.

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About INPUD:

The International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD) is a global peer-based organisation that seeks to promote the health and defend the rights of people who use drugs. INPUD will expose and challenge stigma, discrimination and the criminalisation of people who use drugs and its impact on the drug using community's health and rights. INPUD will achieve this through processes of empowerment and advocacy at the international level, while supporting empowerment and advocacy at community, national and regional levels.

For further information, please contact:

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