

Statement delivered by Ms. Judy Chang, Board member, International Network of People who use Drugs (INPUD), on the occasion of the Fourth Intersessional Meeting of the 59th Commission on Narcotic Drugs

11 October 2016, Vienna, Austria

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*Excellences,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,*

I am making this intervention on behalf of the International Network of People who use Drugs.

Firstly I'd like to thank the Chair and the CND for the opportunity to participate in proceedings.

The International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD) is a global peer-based organisation seeking to promote the health and defend the rights of people who use drugs. We achieve this through international-level advocacy, whilst supporting advocacy at community, national and regional levels. We are, and remain committed towards respecting, protecting and promoting the human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of our community.

We welcome the inclusion of human rights as a cross-cutting theme in the UNGASS Outcome Document. Paragraph 4 commits to “respecting, protecting and promoting all human rights”.

We thus urge member states to adopt measures to ensure drug enforcement remains in line with core human rights obligations. Member states have specific obligations to fulfill under international human rights law, which cannot be suspended in the name of drug control.

We welcome paragraph 4(o) of the Operational Recommendations, which urge for ‘practical measures to uphold the prohibition of arbitrary arrest and detention and of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and to eliminate impunity’. Current approaches to drug control are driving human rights abuses, which include the right to liberty and security, the prohibition of torture, and the right to a fair trial. Our community faces the:

- Death penalty: Over 500 executed worldwide for drugs in 2013, with many hundreds more on death row
- Compulsory drug detention centres: Up to 500,000 detained
- Denial of the right to health, particularly in regards to HIV and harm reduction services
- Mass incarceration. Approximately 8 out of 10 people in prison for drug-related offences are imprisoned on a simple drug possession charge
- Extrajudicial killings. Since June, 3,500 people who use drugs have been summarily executed in one country alone. This is happening with total impunity, and disregard for human life.

This must end. Those responsible must be held to account under international law.

Whilst we urge states to enact measurable progress targets towards ending arbitrary arrest and detention, the death penalty for drug offences, and other human rights violations carried out in context of drug enforcement, we know that as long as people who use drugs continue to be criminalized, stigmatized and discriminated against, justice will continue to be denied to our communities.

A commitment to undertake an assessment of the failures of the drug control conventions, and a commitment to a genuine review is paramount in the lead up to the next Political Declaration on Drugs in 2019.

In closing, we emphasise the need for the international community and member states to place the principle of the meaningful involvement of communities front and centre in responses to drug use. A key point missing from the UNGASS Outcome Document. People who use drugs understand the impact of policy on real, individual lives. We can advise on whether, and how policies can be implemented effectively. A new course on drug policy needs to be set; one that places human rights and community involvement, and recognizes people who use drugs as full citizens with the right to participate in the decisions that affect us.