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ORAL STATEMENT

**Item 3: ID with WG on Arbitrary Detention on its study on drug policies**

2 July 2021

UN Human Rights Council  
Forty-seventh Session  
21 June – 15 July 2021

Madam President,

I speak of seven organisations. We welcome this opportunity for the Council to reckon with the widespread human rights violations enabled by punitive drug control.

Hundreds of thousands of people are detained, today, in private or public drug rehabilitation facilities - some in application of sanctions, some after being coerced, others under the false pretence of consent. As denounced by the Working Group, detainees often undergo non-evidence based treatment centred around violence, humiliation, and abuse; their right to health is systematically violated, and governments themselves acknowledged the ineffectiveness of such approach.

We welcome the Working Group position that courts – including drug courts - should never be tasked with diverting people to treatment, and that drug rehabilitation as an alternative to incarceration is in itself coercive and thus arbitrary.

Madame President,

Already in 2012, and again in 2020, 12 UN Agencies urged governments to permanently close compulsory drug rehabilitation centres and implement voluntary, evidence and rights-based services in the community. This call is reiterated today by the Working Group, and made even more urgent by the crisis COVID-19 brought to detention settings.

We urge all Member States to heed to this call, and OHCHR to work to ensure this recommendation is swiftly implemented. We also emphasize governments' and the UN obligation not to contribute to human rights violations. Consequently, we encourage member states, OHCHR and UNODC to assess their cooperation with States where such centres operate and halt any technical, financial or other assistance that can support the operation of such centres.

Thank you.

**Co-signatories:**

- Harm Reduction International
- Penal Reform International
- International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC)
- Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation
- Acción Técnica Social
- Instituto Ria
- Canadian Drug Policy Coalition