

55th SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: DRUG POLICY OPPORTUNITIES

February 2024

The [55th Session of the Human Rights Council](#), to be held between 26 February and 5 April 2024, presents opportunities for reflecting on the impacts of drug control policies on human rights worldwide and on States' obligations to promote and protect people's rights, while discussing pathways for reform.

Below are some key moments where drug policy will or can be addressed, and suggestions for mainstreaming drug policy in the session.

HIGH COMMISSIONER GLOBAL UPDATE

Item 1, 4 March at 10 am GVA

The Human Rights Council will consider the annual report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights A/HRC/55/2 ([soon to be published here](#)). It is expected that the High Commissioner will consider the human right situation in **Colombia** and may touch on the impact of drug policies in the country.

Pursuant to resolution 51/1, the High Commissioner will also provide an oral update on the human rights situation in **Sri Lanka**, including progress in reconciliation and accountability and the impact of the economic crisis and corruption on human rights. Given the context of severe repression and human rights violations in the name of drug control [recently reported](#) in the country, it is hoped that the High Commissioner will highlight this issue and pathways towards the protection of civilians, particularly people who use drugs and their communities.

This presents a valuable opportunity for States to reaffirm their commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of drug control, while calling to apply an evidence-based and human rights-based approach towards drug policy. Civil society can also use the Interactive Dialogue to call on all Member States to align their drug policy with their human rights obligations.

ID WITH THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

Item 3, 7 March at 3 pm GVA

Pursuant to resolution 52/7 the Human Rights Council will consider two reports of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, Alice Jill Edwards. The first report ([A/HRC/55/52](#)) analyses current issues and good practices in prison management globally. The report raises concerns about the disproportionate length of

imprisonment and the overrepresentation of people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and marginalised communities, including people convicted for “low-level” drug or related offences. Special attention is paid to the conditions of and lack of tailored services for women, who are mostly incarcerated for non-violent minor offences such as drug offences. Additionally, the report analyses challenges associated with prison management, highlighting the need to incorporate the special situation of persons deprived of liberty in national responses to health emergencies as well as in all stages of the drafting and negotiating process of the so-called Pandemic Treaty.

In her second report ([soon to be published here](#)), the Special Rapporteur will present the findings of her visit to **Ukraine**. It is expected that she will address relevant issues that have been highlighted by civil society and advocates since the Russian invasion; such as the deteriorating conditions of detention and lack of health services and medicines and illegal transfer of detainees.

Member States and civil society can use this space to highlight the need for alternative responses to incarceration and for guaranteeing special protection to marginalised groups among the prison population, while reaffirming the importance of implementing tailored and integrated harm reduction services in prisons. The Interactive Dialogue can also be a key space to call on the international community to protect people deprived of liberty in contexts of war and health emergencies.

THEMATIC REPORT ON MINORITY ISSUES

Item 3, 14 March at 10 am GVA

During this session, the Human Rights Council will consider the annual report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([A/HRC/55/35](#)), which expresses concern about the disproportionate use of the death penalty against members of minorities in Iran and calls upon the authorities to ensure that the death penalty is imposed only for the most serious crimes.

Member States and civil society can use this space to condemn the disproportionate impact of punitive drug control on minority groups in many countries, particularly the discrimination faced by minority groups in Iran in the application of the death penalty and to urge the country to halt executions, including for drug offences, which constitute a significant portion of executions globally.

ID WITH THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Item 4, 15 March at 3 pm GVA

The Special Rapporteur, Javaid Rehman, will present his report on the human rights situation in Iran ([soon to be published here](#)). Particularly relevant will be the awaited updates regarding the use of the death penalty and any progress made towards the protection of the rights of people persecuted and incarcerated for drug offences.

Member States and civil society can use this space to condemn the alarming increasing in executions for drug offences and urge Iran to halt all executions and impose a moratorium as steps towards abolition, while further reviewing the domestic Anti-Narcotics Law to bring it further in line with the country's international obligations.

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEWS

Item 6, 22 - 26 March at 3pm GVA

During the session, the outcomes will be adopted of reviews carried out at the 44th UPR session in November 2023. For the countries under review, it will be an opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights. Particularly relevant to drug policy-related issues will be the adoption of the outcomes of the reviews of [Colombia](#), [Bangladesh](#), and the [Russian Federation](#).

SIDE EVENTS

High-level side event on States' experiences in ratifying and implementing the Convention Against Torture over the decade.

27th February, 3.30 pm GVA

The event organised by Denmark and supported by Chile, Fiji, Ghana, Indonesia, and Morocco, will focus on best practices arising from becoming a party to the Convention. It will also be an opportunity for the Convention Against Torture Initiative (CTI) to highlight some progress made since its launch in 2014 in supporting states to become party to the convention and to improve its implementation.

Concept note will be available [here](#)

Human Rights and inclusion of persons who have been released from places of detention.

19 March, 3 pm GVA. Room XXV

The event organised by Costa Rica in cooperation with Prison Reform Alliances and supported by Belgium, Gambia, Kazakhstan, and Montenegro, will focus on persons under special regimes of supervision in places of detentions and will address best practices to prevent human rights violations and protect individuals upon release globally.

Concept note will be available [here](#)