

60th SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: DRUG POLICY OPPORTUNITIES

September 2025

The upcoming [60th Session of the Human Rights Council](#), to be held between 8 September and 8 October 2025, presents critical 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. More information about civil society participation during the session can be found [here](#).

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS OF DRUG POLICIES

Colombia, together with an inter-regional group of countries, will table a resolution on the impact of drug policy on human rights. If adopted, this would be only the 4th resolution of the Human Rights Council on the topic, at a time of unprecedented scrutiny of the global drug control regime. The draft resolution will, among others, request the OHCHR to present a report on the impact of drug policies on the rights of women and girls, in line with the UNGASS Outcome Document 2016 and the 2019 Ministerial Declaration.

This is a valuable opportunity for civil society and State Members to shape the process and safeguard the resolution's core content, including the periodic reporting on the impact of drug policy on human rights. Civil society can join informal meetings where the resolution will be discussed and reach out to delegations with specific proposals or amendments.

More information on draft resolutions can be found [here](#); dates of informals can be found [here](#).

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE QUESTION OF THE DEATH PENALTY

A core group consisting of Belgium, France, Mexico, Mongolia, the Republic of Moldova, and Switzerland is tabling a biennial resolution on the question of the death penalty. The resolution aims to promote a substantive discussion on the death penalty from a human rights perspective. The draft will draw from the Secretary-General's most recent report (A/HRC/60/47), as well as reflect the OHCHR's summary of the high-level panel discussion held in February 2025 (A/HRC/60/48).

In line with previous iterations, the resolution will lay the groundwork for future dialogue by identifying key topics for the next high-level panel discussion on the question of the death penalty, scheduled for March 2027. It will also define the focus of the next Secretary-General's supplement to its quinquennial report on capital punishment.

This is a key opportunity for civil society and State Members to shape the process and to ensure that drug-related offences are addressed by the resolution. Civil society can join informal meetings where the resolution will be discussed and reach out to delegations with specific proposals or amendments.

More information on draft resolutions can be found [here](#); dates of informals can be found [here](#).

ID WITH SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON TRUTH, JUSTICE, REPARATION AND GUARANTEE OF NON-RECURRENCE

Item 3, 10 September at 10 AM GVA

The Special Rapporteur on truth, justice, reparation and guarantee of non-recurrence, Bernard Duhaime, will present his report ([A/HRC/60/32](#)) outlining key activities carried out during the reporting period and examining the issue of the documentation of gross violations of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law. Documentation of rights violations is often overlooked in transitional justice, despite being essential for truth-seeking, accountability, and reparations. While civil society plays a key role in collecting evidence, lack of early and coordinated involvement leads to gaps in data, especially in conflict-affected areas.

Civil society can use this opportunity to highlight the relevance of this issue in the context of punitive drug policies, which often lead to or fuel systemic human rights violations. These include arbitrary detention, the imposition of the death penalty for drug offences, and extrajudicial killings, which have been documented in countries waging militarised “wars on drugs.” Additionally, civil society can call on the Special Rapporteur and Member States to pay attention to this issue including in conflict and post-conflict settings, and ensure the integration of comprehensive documentation and archiving processes – including for violation of rights in the name of punitive drug policies – into transitional justice strategies from the outset; ensuring adequate resources, trained personnel, ethical and inclusive practices, secure storage and accessibility, protection of victims and data, legal safeguards against tampering or destruction, and meaningful support for civil society.

ID WITH WORKING GROUP ON ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Item 3, 16 September at 3 PM GVA

The Working Group will present its thematic study ([A/HRC/60/35](#)), which highlights how enforced disappearances are used as a tool to target human rights defenders, communities, Indigenous Peoples and other actors who advocate for the preservation of their land and natural resources or resist or protest against environmentally harmful projects, its impact on families and communities, and the role of various actors in enforced disappearances.

Member States and civil society can highlight how enforced disappearances in the context of land preservation affect human rights defenders and indigenous peoples whose activity or work are related to drugs, including as farmers, and call for the protection of indigenous peoples against such practices.

ID WITH WORKING GROUP ON ARBITRARY DETENTION

Item 3, 16 September at 3 pm GVA

The Working Group will present a report ([A/HRC/60/26](#)) containing a thematic study on alternatives to pretrial detention. The study underscores the international legal principle that pretrial detention must be the exception rather than the rule, aligning with the global consensus to reduce its use and promote alternatives. These alternatives—such as non-custodial measures or bail—are critical for protecting the right to liberty, addressing prison overcrowding, and preventing the disproportionate impact of detention on vulnerable populations. However, when improperly applied, they can lead to unnecessary detention and perpetuate inequalities, especially when financial conditions are unrealistic or not based on a person's ability to pay. This study is highly relevant for drug policy discourses, as the Working Group has previously raised concern for the overuse of pretrial detention for drug offences, and other related issues ([A/HRC/47/40](#)).

The Working Group will also present a report ([A/HRC/60/26/Add.1](#)) on its visit to Canada, which addresses drug rehabilitation facilities in the country and risk of involuntary detention; and recommends investing in evidence-based, voluntary programmes.

Member States and civil society can use this opportunity to stress the importance of alternatives to pretrial detention for addressing prison overcrowding and call on legislative reform to adopt a sufficient number and variety of non-custodial measures, particularly non-financial ones, to protect liberty while ensuring court appearances.

PRESENTATION OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL/HIGH COMMISSIONER THEMATIC REPORTS ON THE QUESTION OF THE DEATH PENALTY

Item 3, 18 September at 10 AM GVA

The Human Rights Council will consider thematic reports by the Secretary General, including the report on the question of the death penalty ([A/HRC/60/47](#)). The report (soon to be available [here](#)) is expected to pay specific attention to equality of arms, the need to prevent miscarriage or failure of justice, and the irreversibility of the death penalty.

The summary report of the high-level panel discussion on the question of the death penalty ([A/HRC/60/48](#)) held on 25 February 2025 at the fifty-eighth session of the Council will also be presented. The panel discussion addressed the contribution of the judiciary to the advancement of human rights and the question of the death penalty. During the panel, the High Commissioner had underscored that the proportion of executions for drug-related offences has risen sharply over the past two years, accounting for more than 40 per cent of executions during that period. The High Commissioner also reminded that drug-related

offences do not meet the “most serious crimes” standard set by international human rights law, which only permit executions for crimes of extreme gravity involving intentional killing. The presentations will be followed by a General Debate, which presents a valuable opportunity for Member States to express their commitment to respecting and protecting the right to life, and to call for the total abolition of the death penalty. Particular attention should be given to the role of punitive drug control in driving executions globally, and the urgency of abolishing the death penalty for drug offences, as a first step towards total abolition.

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEWS

Item 6, 25 – 29 September

During the session, the outcomes of reviews carried out at the 49th UPR session on 28 April – 9 May 2025 will be adopted. 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 [Lao PDR](#) – which received recommendations relevant to the use of the death penalty for drug offences, [Kuwait](#) – for recommendations on the abolition of the death penalty in general, and [Armenia](#), [Guinea](#), [Guinea-Bissau](#), [Grenada](#), [Kenya](#), and [Lesotho](#) – for recommendations related to combating stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS and vulnerable groups, and increasing access to services and investment for HIV.

OTHER RELEVANT OPPORTUNITIES

- **Draft resolution on the right to health.** Brazil is putting forward a draft resolution on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. If adopted, the resolution will renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health for another three years. As a key mandate to drug policy reform, civil society and Member States should encourage its adoption.

More information on the draft resolution can be found [here](#) and dates of informals can be found [here](#).

- **ID on OHCHR report on Sri Lanka (Item 2, 8 September at 1 pm GVA).** The Council will consider OHCHR’s report on the situation of human rights in Sri Lanka, which – amongst others – notes multiple instances of arbitrary arrests in the context of drug law enforcement, and other violations by security forces and in contexts of deprivation of liberty. The ID is an opportunity to reflect on ongoing abuses in the context of punitive drug control in the country and call for accountability.

SIDE EVENTS

DRUG POLICY REFORM: A POWERFUL TOOL TO PREVENT SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

16 September at 2 PM GVA, Concordia 5, A Building or online [at this link](#)*

The side event, co-hosted by the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) and the Global Commission on Drug Policy, seeks to position drug policy reform as a central human rights issue, beyond its traditional framing within health discourses. Coinciding with the Council's first-ever drug policy resolution under its own authority, the event emphasises the need to address how punitive drug control measures contribute to systemic human rights abuses, including the death penalty, torture, extrajudicial killings, and arbitrary detention. It aims to foster constructive dialogue among states, experts, and civil society on reform pathways such as decriminalisation, abolition of the death penalty for drug offences, and safeguarding of civil society space. The event also seeks to integrate stronger human rights language into the tabled resolution and promote greater involvement of UN human rights mechanisms in addressing abuses related to drug control.

THE ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN ASIA: EMERGING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFORM

17 September at 1 PM GVA, Concordia 5, A Building

The side event, co-hosted by Open Society Foundations, Switzerland, and Harm Reduction International, will explore recent shifts in capital punishment policies across Malaysia, Indonesia, and Pakistan. While the death penalty remains entrenched in much of Asia, often tied to political signalling and public concerns around crime, notable reforms are emerging. Malaysia has abolished the mandatory death penalty and begun resentencing over 900 cases; Indonesia has reclassified capital punishment as a provisional measure with possibilities for commutation; and Pakistan has removed the death penalty for drug offences and made strides in protecting vulnerable defendants. Despite this progress, reform remains fragile, constrained by political dynamics, inconsistent legal safeguards, and limited regional collaboration. The event will bring together national practitioners to share experiences, identify common challenges, and foster regional solidarity to advance the movement toward abolition.

** Please note this is an access link to be used at the date and time of the side event, not a registration link.*

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DRUG POLICY: INSIGHTS FROM DIVERSE NATIONAL CONTEXTS

18 September at 2 PM GVA, Room VIII

The side event, co-hosted by OHCHR and the International Centre on Human Rights and Drug Policy, University of Essex aims to showcase how various countries are using the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy to align drug policies with human rights obligations. It will feature national experiences from Brazil, Colombia, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Africa, and Czechia, highlighting diverse strategies such as legal reforms, harm reduction, community-based interventions, and decriminalisation. These case studies reflect efforts to adapt the Guidelines to local contexts and challenges, promoting health-centred, rights-respecting drug policy approaches.

THE DEATH PENALTY, WITH A FOCUS ON CHILDREN

Date and time TBC

Italy, together with Switzerland, France, Chile, and Zambia, is organising a side event on the death penalty with a focus on children, co-sponsored by OHCHR and members of the core group of HRC on the issue of the death penalty. The side event aims at sharing and disseminating positive developments and good practices for the abolition of the death penalty, especially for children and young people, and putting forward effective solutions to safeguard the rights of children whose parents or other close family members are facing the death penalty.