

21 July 2019

## INPUD Statement:

Drug Users' Remembrance Day



### Remembrance Day Statement:

Today is the International Day to remember our loved ones who have died as a result of the so-called war on drugs. They have died as a result of their unnecessary criminalisation; they have died as a result of prohibition. It is criminalisation and prohibition that make drugs so dangerous. It is the society in which we live that shows such callous indifference to the deaths of so many.

Thousands of people in the last year have been murdered as a result of the war on people who use drugs. They have been killed in extrajudicial killings; they have been executed; they have died as a result of blood-borne infections; they have died unnecessarily from overdose. Our governments – the government in the UK, and governments in almost every jurisdiction in the world – seem entirely indifferent to these countless deaths, to the suffering of the drug using community, their families, their loved ones. Every one of these deaths is a tragedy, and is an avoidable tragedy.

As a result of criminalisation, drugs are produced in the black market, resulting in people who use heroin in the UK, and internationally, dying from heroin contaminated with anthrax, heroin contaminated with fentanyl, and with carfentanyl. Due to prohibition, and due to politicians' failure to adopt comprehensive harm reduction, drug consumption rooms, and drug testing, there is simply no possibility to ensure the content of drugs.

And because people who use drugs are so stigmatised, so socially excluded, so marginalised, governments continue to fail to act. They are not held accountable for their appalling complicity in these deaths. And so, as a result, these deaths are increasing. They are at their highest in decades in Britain, and Scotland's drug-related death toll has increased by 27% over the past year to reach a high of 1,187. These trends are in line with those in all other contexts that continue to pursue criminalisation, stigmatisation, prohibition. These countries' governments continue to ignore and undermine evidence-based harm reduction and service provision for people who use drugs. These are simple and affordable services that save lives.

Our demands from last year's Remembrance Day have, tragically, remained the same: nothing has progressed in policy and legislation here in the UK, and in the vast majority of other states. As long as our communities, families, friends, and loved ones continue to needlessly die, we will continue to demand an end to the very laws and policies responsible:

### Demands:

- Our communities, organisations, and networks demand an end to austerity, an end to the war on drugs and people who use drugs.
- We demand to be decriminalised.
- We demand for our drugs to be legalised so that we do not risk our health and lives every time we use drugs.
- We demand access to comprehensive harm reduction and means with which to test the contents of our drugs, as well as widespread access to life-saving overdose reversing naloxone, and the establishment of drug consumption rooms in the UK.
- We demand an end to social exclusion, and a recognition of our human rights. We do not forfeit our human rights because we use drugs.