

21 July 2020

INPUD Statement:

Drug Users' Remembrance Day



Remembrance Day Statement:

On International Drug Users' Remembrance Day, we take time to remember the family, friends, peers, and loved ones whose lives have been unjustly and tragically cut short. The criminalisation and stigmatisation of people who use drugs continue to desensitise our society to the callous injustice carried out in the name of the so-called War on Drugs. In a world where the deaths of people who use drugs are treated more like statistics than avoidable casualties of misguided policy, it is imperative for our community to honour those who the rest of the world will not.

This year's Remembrance Day comes at a time where these injustices have been magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic. The fragility of our health systems, economies, and political institutions have been laid bare to the public. Ideas advocated by people who use drugs for decades are now considered as viable and necessary policy changes. While we welcome this discourse, we must remember we are still living through the worst overdose crisis in history. In North America spikes in overdose calls and deaths have been linked to measures put in place to combat COVID-19. Whether it be reduction in safe supply, social distancing guidelines leading to more people using alone, overcrowded prisons and other detention centres, or restricted access to harm reduction services, worldwide we are once again seeing people who use drugs become forgotten casualties amidst a global crisis.

We are also living in a moment where the racist and bigoted nature of drug prohibition is more exposed than ever. The Black Lives Matter movement has spurred global protests calling for reinvestments in communities impacted by decades of state-sanctioned violence fuelled in large part by the War on Drugs. For over a century the criminalisation of drugs has served as one of the primary legal justifications for systemic injustices against Black, Indigenous, immigrant and other minority communities carried out by police and other state agents emboldened by authoritative power.

Our demands from the previous two years of Remembrance Day's are updated to recognize the transformative moment in history we find ourselves in right now. Until all of these demands are met, we will continue to support and amplify communities of people who use drugs around the world advocating for their rights, self-autonomy, and inclusion in a society which treats our lives with reckless indifference.

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 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.
- 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.
- We demand state reviews of COVID-19 emergency measures which are infringing upon the health and rights of people who use drugs
- We demand restitution for Black, Indigenous, and immigrant communities who have been disproportionately targeted and harmed by the War on Drugs