



Joint Position Statement on Detention Centres for “Drug Treatment”

It is well-recognised that blood transfer through the sharing of drug injecting equipment increases the risk of HIV infection. Of an estimated 16 million injecting drug users in the world, three million are living with HIV.¹ Reducing harm during injection drug use is an essential HIV prevention measure. People who inject drugs are therefore crucial partners in devising effective responses to HIV.

The growth of the phenomenon of detaining people for drug treatment, particularly in the Asia Pacific region, is a profound concern to both GNP+ and INPUD. In general, detention increases risk of infection by HIV and other blood borne viruses and complicates or makes impossible the effective management of HIV treatment, care and support.² Detention centres for so-called drug treatment (detention centres) pose elevated risks for detainees of infection by HIV and other diseases. In many cases, detention in such centres causes interruptions or cessation of life-saving HIV treatment, care and support. INPUD considers the proliferation of such detention centres an affront to people who use drugs and calls for an end to this outrage.

The most principled and effective manner to reduce these risks is to prevent people from being forcibly detained in such centres in the first place. Systems that, as a matter of course and *en masse*, forcibly detain people who use drugs in the name of drug treatment violate international human rights law and are not supported by scientific evidence, nor international standards on what constitutes effective drug dependence treatment. As with any medical procedure, drug dependence treatment should not be forced on patients. There is no scientific basis for using detention or forced labour as treatments for drug dependency.

Protective laws and policies for people living with HIV and people most at risk of infection are essential in promoting effective HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for people who inject drugs. The human rights to due process, freedom from arbitrary detention, and medically and ethically acceptable health services on a voluntary basis are the most effective means of preventing HIV and other diseases.

¹ Mathers B.M. et al. (2008, September 24). *Global epidemiology of injecting drug use and HIV among people who inject drugs: a systematic review*. The Lancet (online edition).

² Stark, K., Bienzle, U., Vonk, R., Guggenmoos-Holzmann, I. (1997). History of syringe sharing in prison and risk of hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV infection among injecting drug users in Berlin. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 26, 1359-1366.

GNP+ and INPUD support the immediate closure of these detention centres. The two networks urge governments and policy makers to expand access to voluntary, community-based drug dependency treatment and ensure that such treatment is medically appropriate and comports with international standards. The legal framework establishing drug dependence treatment services should be in full compliance with international human rights law. Governments and policy makers should work with health professionals and NGO partners to create environments that reduce people's vulnerability to injecting drug use and consequently HIV infection.

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The Global Network of People living with HIV is a global network for and by people living with HIV. GNP+ advocates to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV. As a network of networks, GNP+ is driven by the needs of people living with HIV worldwide. Based on emancipation and self-determination, GNP+ works with independent regional and national networks of people living with HIV on all continents. www.gnpplus.net

The International Network of People who Use Drugs is a global network of people who believe that citizens do not forfeit their humanity and human rights simply because they choose to use substances covered by the international drug control system. www.inpud.net