

Drug control: the need for thematic human rights focus

Human rights as a framework for understanding the response to HIV/AIDS is now well understood and represented in international guidelines and multiple resolutions at international political fora. Over fifty years into the global fight against drugs and nothing of the sort has been adopted or even attempted. At the UN there are no mechanisms focusing on human rights and drug control and little in the way of human rights analysis of drug policies emanates from mainstream human rights NGOs.

From an international law perspective this is of particular interest as global drug policy is driven by three core UN conventions, all having near universal ratification, all influencing national legislation, and forming an international drug control regime. Its aims and priorities are in some cases at odds with those from the within the human rights system.

It is an international context within which extensive human rights abuses are committed in the name of fighting the drug trade and reducing the demand for drugs and within which those abuses are less likely to be addressed. These abuses include the death penalty, judicial corporal punishment, arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killings, police and military violence, forced labour, denial of indigenous and cultural rights, denial of healthcare and many others.

This talk will discuss these issues and the need for an understanding of drug policy as a thematic human rights concern moving forward.

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