



Dear Justine Greening and Theresa May

Human rights, global health and funding for harm reduction: A call for UK action

Every year millions of people around the world are denied human rights, access to lifesaving healthcare and harm reduction.

At the United Nations General Assembly (UNGASS) on Drugs in 1998, global leaders pledged 'a drug free world'. This target has driven an international war on drugs and fuelled human rights violations such as the death penalty, mass imprisonment and compulsory treatment.

Harm Reduction International (HRI) estimates that globally at least one thousand people are executed each year for drug crimes. In several Asian countries, people who use drugs are forced to undertake compulsory treatment in drug detention camps. The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has described these camps as "a form of inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, if not mental torture".

Punitive approaches to drugs hit those who are already marginalised the hardest – poor people, women and racial minorities – but have little impact on the drug trade or the cartels that profit from it. At the same time, drug control strategies have prevented progress on reducing HIV, hepatitis and drug-related deaths. As a result, we are failing to meet the UN target to halve HIV among people who inject drugs by 2015 by more than 80 per cent.

Last year the Department for International Development (DFID) ended five harm reduction projects in middle income countries in Asia, following the 2013 closure of a programme in Vietnam that had averted 31,000 HIV infections. Recently DFID has also pushed the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (the Global Fund) to reduce support to middle-income countries, resulting in further closures.

At the same time, the Government continues to grant millions of pounds to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), despite reports from HRI and Reprieve that UNODC programmes are fuelling death sentences in states such as Iran and Pakistan.

Moreover each year governments spend over \$100 billion on drug control, but just \$160 million on harm reduction. This is just seven per cent of what is needed. Only one tenth of one year's drug enforcement spending would cover global HIV prevention for people who inject drugs for four years.

Over the years the Government has promoted and championed human rights, health and harm reduction globally and in the UK. Let's not stop now! As a Member of Parliament I call on your leadership to take the following steps:

- Ahead of the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS), the UK should join other countries in fighting for strong outcomes on human rights and health and call on governments to redirect a tenth of the resources that are currently spent on the war on drugs to harm reduction.
- The UK must re-evaluate and redirect funding away from abusive and ineffective UNODC supply control programmes, and reinvest it in services that save lives.
- DFID must work with the Global Fund as develops a new five year strategy to sustain services for people who inject drugs in countries where governments do not support harm reduction.

Many thanks for your attention.

Yours sincerely,