

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing to you on behalf of the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) in consultative status with ECOSOC, with reference to the letter sent to NGOs on April, 16th, 2015 to call for input on "Impact of the world drug problem on human rights."

ODVV has prepared a report reflecting the negative impacts of drug problem on human rights of people.

Regards

Siyavash Rahpeik

ODVV Director

Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV)
Contribution for
Report of the High Commissioner –
"Impact of the world drug problem on human rights"

Introduction

Harmful effects of drug abuse are known to the world. Countries can hardly escape the bitter consequence of drugs addiction that involved people in countless number of problems including, domestic violence, child abuse, physical and mental health problems and even death.

However, some countries, are more seriously affected by the human tragedy due to their geographical characteristics. For example, Iran is neighbor to Afghanistan, the greatest illicit opium producer in the world, which make Iran suffer from the bitter consequences of drug abuse much more than the other countries.

Afghan opium cultivation have risen to historic levels. At the moment, the country produces about 80 percent of the whole world opium. According to the released figures the poppy fields have grown by 1925% since fall of Taliban, that is, the production is 192 times more than that time.

In addition, the fact that Iran is considered as the main transit route for the smuggling of drugs from Afghanistan to Europe adds to the complexity of drug problems in the country. As a result, dealing with devastating effects of drugs addiction has turned to a daily challenge for many Iranian people, including vulnerable women and innocent children. Drug abuse inevitably, deprive people from their fundamental human rights.

The present report attempts at summarizing the deteriorating effects of drug abuse of Iranian people on their human rights.

Drug Abuse and Human Rights

Poverty and the right to a decent living standard:

Drug abuse causes *poverty* in many families, since a considerable amount of the family income is spent on drugs, the drug abusers' and their families right to a decent living standard is violated as a result of drugs addiction, in many cases the drug addicts or their family members become *homeless* which in itself can negatively affect their right to physical and mental health and lead to serious

social problems such as street children, child labor, abandoned wives, street women, and prostitution.

In Iran's society and culture, men consist most of the family bread winners and their addiction to drugs negatively affect the whole family which in many cases is solely dependent on the father's income.

Suicide, murder and the right to life:

According to research results, drug abuse can contribute to negative social problems which can further increase the risk of suicide, and drug related crimes such as violence, murder and homicide. According to the experts, drug addiction in Iran is the cause of %25 of murders.¹ Drug abuse, before driving, increases the risk of accidents leading to death and disability.

Also, drugs addiction is associated with diseases that could be causes of death including, HIV infection, pneumonia, mental illness and hepatitis.

In addition, in countries such as Iran, many border guards lose their lives in armed conflicts with drugs smugglers. According to an Iranian judiciary official more than 3760 lives are lost in the fight against the smugglers and about 12 thousand people have become injured and handicapped in the struggle so far².

Child abuse and the rights of the child

Vulnerable children are the ones who suffer the most from parents or guardian drug addicts. Parents' drug addiction can negatively impact the children's right to food, right to education, right to play, right to health, right to have a family, and the right to enjoy a decent living standard. In worse circumstances, parents' addiction can lead to child abuse, child addiction, child labor, sale of children or

¹ <http://www.khouznews.ir/fa/news/71679/اع-دايتع/لم-د-صرد-۵۶-لم-اع-دايتع>

² <http://shabestan.ir/detail/News/269964>

even child murder. According to country officials, parents' addiction is the root cause of 30% of child abuse cases.³

Drug abuse domestic violence and women's rights:

Officials have announced drug abuse to be the cause of 55% of divorces and 65% of domestic violence cases.⁴ In many cases, men's drug abuse results in female headed households many of whom suffer from multiple problems such as: low income, the challenge of balancing work and family and even sexual harassment by other men who tend to harass single women.

In Iran, 65% of women drug addicts are drawn into drug abuse by their addicted husbands. Women's addiction can increase risks of children's rights violation, women's health problems or even prostitution. According to the available statistics the number of women drug addicts is alarmingly increasing.

Physical and mental diseases and the right to health:

World statistics announce intravenous drug use and needle-sharing as the cause of 12 percent of HIV transmissions. However, according to the physicians' database, in Iran, 31% of HIV transmissions is caused by needle-sharing.

Personality problems leading to violence are also caused by drug abuse, negatively affecting the drug addicts and their families especially children.

Unemployment and the right to work:

Most drug addicts find it difficult to continue with their jobs and face unemployment which brings about poverty and family problems. Some drug addicts get involved in begging or crimes such as robbery and murder. According

³ <http://masalnews.ir/News/print/3711/>

⁴ http://www.dchq.ir/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7663:65-55&catid=90&Itemid=5512

to the released statistics, %46 of the country's prisoners are imprisoned for drug related crimes.⁵

In addition, illicit financial flows into the country bring about certain economic problems. The problem lies primarily in the underlying criminal activities that such flows promote, the crimes that would not have been committed without the prospect of the forthcoming financial benefits, such as robbery, theft, murder and rape.

The right to a safe environment:

In many suburban areas, the needles used by intravenous drug users, dumped in the nature or outside buildings, are used by children as toys, which considerably increases the risk of certain diseases such as HIV or Hepatitis being transmitted to children. Also, the used needles and other types of garbage left by drug addicts are sources of natural environment pollution.

In Iran Drugs Problem is Extremely Serious

The bitter reality that there is an alarming increase of drugs production in Afghanistan and most of the drug products are trafficked through Iran into Europe and the world forces Iran to get involved in the inevitable lonely battle with drug traffickers and tolerate the dreadful consequences of drug addiction.

Lives are being lost in the struggle with drugs smugglers, many border guards are killed and injured in the armed conflicts and drug addiction leads to violation of various human rights.

In addition, illicit financial flows into Iran bring about certain economic problems, primarily in terms of criminal activities that such flows promote, such as robbery, theft, murder and rape.

⁵<http://www.a-sasw.com/>

Recommendations

Teaching and awareness raising

Our country needs assistance in order to raise public awareness about the deteriorating effects of drug abuse, methods of preventing and treating addiction, including, informing the public on how to behave toward the addicted family members, how can the addicts be treated and what are the personal skills needed to protect people against the danger.

Reducing the flow of drugs trafficked into the country

Iran is in the front line of the fight against drugs trafficking, fighting a lonely battle against drugs for decades, paying high expenses, sacrificing human lives to control and prevent the products from being transited through the country.

Determined in its efforts to stop the most prolific flow of drugs in the world, Iran needs more international support to control the flood of opium into Persian Gulf and Europe.

Supporting Afghani farmers who stopped growing poppies

Afghanistan government is making attempts to decrease poppy fields and encourage farmers to grow other plants such as wheat. However, the farmers who have stopped growing poppies face serious financial problems and need national and international support in order to earn a living.

Suggestion for establishing a “Think Tank Coalition”

A coalition can be established consisting NGOs from three groups of countries: (a) the drug producer countries, (b) the countries that are considered as drug transit routes, and (c) the destination countries. The coalition members can co- operate with each other to find ways to reduce the production, transit and consumption of all narcotics. They can raise awareness about the negative effects of drug abuse on human rights and share the best practices and the lessons learned with each other. The NGOs can also recognize the existing challenges and share them with their country administrative bodies, national and international organizations.