



JOINT STATEMENT

Compulsory drug detention and rehabilitation centres in Asia and the Pacific in the context of COVID-19

JUNE 1, 2020

Against the backdrop of COVID-19, recalling the 2012 Joint Statement on compulsory drug detention and rehabilitation centres¹ and the 2020 Joint Statement on COVID-19 in prisons and other closed settings², United Nations entities urgently appeal to Member States to permanently close compulsory drug detention and rehabilitation centres and implement voluntary, evidence-informed and rights-based health and social services in the community as an important measure to curb the spread of COVID-19 and to facilitate the recovery and reintegration of those in the centres back into their families and communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic is posing multiple challenges to countries in Asia and the Pacific in designing and implementing response and recovery measures that are efficient and respect the rights of all people, with the objective of leaving no one behind. Among the groups particularly at risk of contracting the virus are people in compulsory drug detention and rehabilitation centers. They are often comprised of people who are suspected of using drugs or being dependent on drugs, people who have engaged in sex work, or children who have been victims of sexual exploitation.

Criteria for detention in these centres vary within and among countries, but people are often detained without sufficient due process, legal safeguards or judicial review in the name of “treatment” or “rehabilitation”. They face higher vulnerabilities, including HIV, TB as well as COVID-19, as a result of sub-standard living conditions, including massive overcrowding and related challenges in maintaining physical distancing. Moreover, detention in these centres has been reported to involve forced labour, lack of adequate nutrition, physical and sexual violence, and denial or comparatively lower access to and quality of healthcare services.

1. http://files.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/document/2012/JC2310_Joint%20Statement6March12FINAL_en.pdf
2. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Events/COVID-19/20200513_PS_COVID_and_Prisons_EN.pdf

During this global health emergency, United Nations entities reiterate their call on Member States that operate compulsory drug detention and rehabilitation centres to close them permanently without further delay, to release individuals detained as an important additional measure to curb the spread of COVID-19 and to refrain from the use of any other form of detention.

The United Nations entities stand ready to work with Member States as they take steps to permanently close compulsory drug detention and rehabilitation centres and to transition to an evidence-informed system of voluntary community-based treatment and services that are aligned with international guidelines and principles of drug dependence treatment, drug use and human rights.

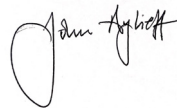
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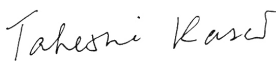
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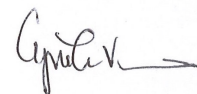
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