

Position Statement on Support Don't Punish

Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (CSSDP) stands behind the mandate of the [Support Don't Punish](#) campaign.

Support Don't Punish is a global advocacy campaign calling for better drug policies that prioritize public health and human rights. The campaign aims to promote drug policy reform, and to change laws and policies which impede access to harm reduction interventions.

CSSDP's mandate coincides with Support Don't Punish. We consider problematic drug use in society primarily a health issue rather than a criminal justice issue, and we advocate for appropriate responses to reduce and prevent harm from drug use.

The key messages of the Support Don't Punish campaign are:

- The drug control system is broken and in need of reform.
- People who use drugs should no longer be criminalised.
- People involved in the drug trade at low levels, especially those involved for reasons of subsistence or coercion, should not face harsh or disproportionate punishments.
- The death penalty should never be imposed for drug offences.
- Drug policy in the next decade should focus on health and harm reduction.
- By 2020, 10% of global resources expended on drug policies should be invested in public health and harm reduction.

CSSDP believes that drug policy should be focused on human rights, harm reduction, and scientific evidence. For us to punish and criminalize humans for using substances, is a violation of human rights. We must look at substance use and adverse substance abuse as a health based issue, with health based consequences, and health based solutions.

A recent study conducted by The Lancet and John Hopkins University has called for all minor drug offences to be decriminalised as a "first and urgent step". (Csete et al, 2016) The study indicates by not doing so countries are, "neglecting their legal responsibilities to citizens" (Csete et al, 2016), and that our current Drug Policy enforcing prohibition has caused "detrimental effects on the health, wellbeing, and human rights" (Csete et al, 2016) of drug users and the public population.

Studies have demonstrated that drug related offenders have the greatest criminogenic effect when they enter or are prosecuted by the legal or penal system. (Spohn et al, 2002) Statistics Canada has shown that 50% of all criminal offenses are drug related offenses. Of that 50%, 67% are marijuana possession charges, youth (12-24) being the most prosecuted demographic. When we combine these two notions, it paints a picture for us, a picture that demonstrates the production of criminals, rather than the recovery of human beings who are self medicating.

The main premise for prohibition and punishment is to deter and reduce drug use from all populations, but especially youth. When we analyze Statistics Canada's trajectory of drug related offenses from the years 2003-2013, we see a 13% increase in drug-related offenses. From the years 1991-2013, we see a 52% increase in drug related crimes. These statistics suggest to us that drug use is not reducing, rather it is increasing. They also demonstrate that the ideology of prohibition is failing its main premise.

It is time for us to support humans who choose to consume substances, not punish them.

June 26th is the "Global Day of Action" - an opportunity to highlight how people who use drugs continue to be abused, stigmatised, tortured, beaten, and even killed in the name of the war on drugs.

On 26th June 2015, 160 cities worldwide came together to call for drug policy reform.

Click here to view photos and videos of the event!

Individuals can take action in the campaign by:

- Sharing the message on social media
 - Liking and sharing the campaign [Facebook](#) page.
 - You can also use the hashtag #supportdontpunish and [tweet@SDPcampaign](#).
- Take a photo
 - Download the campaign poster, take your photo and then send it to [campaign@idpc.net](#)
- Use the logo
 - The **SUPPORT. DON'T PUNISH.** logo is free to use, and can be [downloaded here](#). If you have a report, video or statement that fits with our campaign, then please use the logo and send a link to [campaign@idpc.net](#) so that we can help promote it.
- Wear the logo

- You can purchase the campaign t-shirts and other merchandise [here](#).
- Sign-up Online
 - Visit <http://supportdontpunish.org/>, click the “Click Here to Support the Campaign” button, login with your social media account, and sign-up to indicate your support.

CSSDP will also be hosting a public gallery of chapter members, leaders, board members, and executive staff submitted photos. You can upload and submit your photos directly on [our site here](#)