

PREVENTION OF DRUG ADDICTION

POLICY PAPER

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, addiction is embraced as a part of many problems such as personally, privately, socially, economically and medical. While addiction, as a major problem out of other social problems, underlies many current politics and applications, local administrations, nation states, international organizations and civil society organizations invest significant economic investments and develop strategies regarding addiction. The strategies to fight against addiction is not just part of politics and applications as it can be understood from recent developments about drug addiction sometimes, they can emerge as main factors that affect the decision making process of politics.

Beside legal industries such as tobacco and alcohol which cause deaths of millions at globally in every year, some new approaches and discussions emerged because of the instability and social problems that caused due to illegal drug industry.

United Nations General Special Assembly of Drugs which was originally planned to hold in 2019, was held in 2016 upon the request of Latin American countries which have overburdened by social and economic responsibilities of drugs. Before the UN General assembly meeting in 2016, many international documents and applications were discussed again and different strategies and politics were discussed in details with inclusion of civil society.

Turkish Green Crescent Society took the territorial responsibility of Eastern Europe and Middle Asia in the meeting of United Nation Civil Society Task Force before the UNGASS meeting in 2016. Green Crescent considers sharing its politics with respect to specify its location and to defend its basic values as a necessity with domestic and international communities in the fulfillment of responsibilities of The Green Crescent's international mission. These politics are not just a document about drugs at national level rather it signals international level with respect to illuminate and direct to total politics that are beyond our national capacity. Turkish Green Crescent Society determined its basic competence about drugs as prevention, rehabilitation and developing a policy. In addition to this, The Green Crescent works about treatment, observation and research with collaboration and cooperation of organizations which work in these fields.

National and International Politics

At the international level, there are three basic agreements about drugs such as 1961 Single Contract, 1971 Psychotropic Substances Contract and 1988 Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. These international agreements provide a sense of direction for nations in terms of their politics related to fight against supply side and these agreements also have ingredients that regulate national politics about drugs. Agreements are formed with the idea of a world without drugs and they also determine general politics of nation states about drugs.

The proliferation of drug use all over the world has brought questions about already existing agreements and the discussions about the inefficiency of these agreements. On the one side there are significant oppositions from different actors considering these international agreements, on the other side there is an approach which supports the sufficiency of these agreements. According to this

approach negative consequences are not results of international agreements but the politics nation states.

The Green Crescent argues that above-mentioned existing international agreements and national politics must be overhauled via detailed strategic applications and approaches. In the determination of politics regarding drugs, an approach which progresses from national level to international level but not from international level to national level should be determined and substantial dynamics should be used according to this approach. Therefore, the international framework of the fight against drugs should not be just a reflection of the strategies of developed countries and it should be formed on the basis of cultural, geographical and regional differences that peculiar to every geography.

Harm Reduction

Harm reduction is based on the dissertation of the hardship of the drug treatment and providing drug use as an option for users. It is being considered as an alternative to the spread of contagious diseases and deaths due to overdose.

To medicate drug users with a certain dose as a substitutive treatment and injection exchange programs for drug users, who use injections for drug use, in order to prevent spread of contagious diseases such as HIV, hepatitis B and C are most common methods of harm reduction.

Harm reduction strategies have been criticized traditionally for reasons such as supporting drug use and making it sustainable. However, it has been observed that drug users consider their addiction as an illness and proceed for treatment and it also provides that users are not labelled by the society as drug addicts when harm reduction strategies are applied properly. In this respect, the harm reduction should be applied by scientific and proof based criteria with consideration of the regional differences and social dynamics in the need for harm reduction, its improvement and its application. On the other hand, the harm reduction strategies should not be considered as an alternative to treatment and rehabilitation but as an integral part of them.

Legal Sanction and Limits

Using drugs, having drugs and selling drugs are considered as crime in many countries' statue law. In present law there are many sanctions rank from probation to execution for both drug users and drug sellers. The Green Crescent, similar to the European Union and the Council of Europe is in favor of practices such as depenalization and decriminalization while sanctions are imposed to drug users and addicted people. With these practices it is aimed to keep drug users out of the sanctions that are not related to treatment or rehabilitation. In the essence of practices, drug users are not regarded as criminals but as victim and patient. Social protection, basic treatment, strengthened health facilities, treatment about addiction and the process of social integration should be highlighted as an alternative to legal sanctions.

Education, treatment, rehabilitation and probation should be provided to all drug users not as a criminal sanction but as an opportunity and alternative. Therefore, capacity improving strategies which would make all these process attractive to all users, should be embraced.

Besides, The Green Crescent supports legal sanctions in the framework of universal norms and international laws against drug smugglers and international carters. It considers drug traffic as a

crime against humanity taking into consideration the total damage of drug trafficking in relation to crime.

Legalization

In recent years, some countries and local governments have taken some actions about liberalization of drugs to a certain point. While some of liberalization actions are regulated by governments all around the world, liberal approach supports a totally free environment for drugs.

The Green Crescent does not consider drug use as a freedom and choice because of the reason that more data is needed liberalization and regulation at the local level. In that respect, the Green Crescent argues that production, sales and usage of drugs at all level would deepen addiction. Thus, drugs should be under jurisdiction of legal sanctions but these sanctions should not target directly users and addicted.

The Basic Approach and Suggestions of the Green Crescent for Drugs

Prevention

The Green Crescent advocates that prevention, which is based on scientific methods, proof based, affordable and supported by international standards which are determined by data, should be regarded as a primary method upon realization that prevention politics are not at a desirable level in the whole world.

Public Health

Public health approach which has become prominent in recent years gives priority to increase in the opportunity and capacity of treatment, rehabilitation and social integration rather than legal sanctions and other processes. Thus, addicted people are being subject to health institutions rather than being expose to legal sanctions and addiction has been taken care in these institutions, which is a health problem in the essence.

Public health approach favors improvement of human rights and alternative policies instead of legal sanctions for drug users. In that respect, the Green Crescent argues that the fight against drugs should be approached similar to other health problem. It regards the right of addicted people to access treatment and rehabilitation without being expose to legal sanctions similar to other patients' right to access treatments.

Human Rights Approach

The Green Crescent points that all applications in the fight against drugs at all levels should be based on human rights. Especially, it adopts principles of not labelling drug users, not being expose to discrimination, not violating basic human rights with respect to universal human rights and medical ethnics. The Green Crescent regards any other sanctions other than treatment such as imprisonment, torture and other kind of penalties as violation of human rights.

Alternative Improvement

Decrease in the supply has been done through the fight against smuggling, penal sanctions and destruction of plants on the land. The destruction of raw material of drugs complicates the situation for producers and deepens socio-economic problems of producers and force producers to continue the production in illegal ways.

In that respect, it has been observed that alternative improvement, which is approved by international community, has been successful. A significant finding has been found by alternative improvement is that the destruction of plants on the field before providing realistic and profitable substitutive products and the access for suitable lands, would be totally harmful for the producers. Instead of destruction of producers planted lands as a method of supply decrease, providing economic and agrarian methods, which would rescue them from the impact of drug cartels, would be beneficial in the long run.

Collaboration, Cooperation and Participation

The Green Crescent regards addiction as an outcome of psychological, psychiatric and socio-economic processes, that is the reason why strategies should include diagnose, early intervention, treatment, rehabilitation and social integration as a whole.

All aspects of the fight against drugs should be determined including many sectors and many separate perspectives but single institution and perspective. Accordingly, inclusion of health, social, law, private sector, public, civil society and media in the policies formation process displays a critical importance.

Multidirectional collaborations not only from civil society to private sector at local, national, regional and international level but also from public institutions to international organizations are needed. Especially, active participation of civil society has a pioneering role for all policies and other applications. Therefore, Civil Society Task Force which includes different regions and separate fields, is a significant example for the participation of civil society at international level in 2016 UNGASS.