

18 June 2007

His Excellency Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
UN Headquarters
First Avenue at 46th Street
New York, New York 10017
United States of America
[via e-mail and fax]



Dear Secretary-General:

I am writing to you as the executive director of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, an ECOSOC-affiliated NGO that strives to advance the human rights of people vulnerable to or living with HIV. In view of the concerns expressed by you in your June 11 message on the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, observed annually on June 26, I would like to draw your attention to the exploitation of the International Day by authorities in the People's Republic of China.

As has been reported repeatedly in international media, since 1990 China has "celebrated" the International Day by executing persons convicted of drug crimes. These executions are often held in public venues, such as stadiums, and sometimes shown on television. In addition to the basic due-process questions and other human rights concerns raised by these executions (and the show trials that sometimes precede them), this horrific exploitation of a UN-designated International Day plainly has the effect of undermining the humane treatment of people who use drugs, which you called for in your June 11 statement.

China also has a shameful record of "treatment" for drug addiction that includes such techniques as forced labour, unlawful incarceration, and forcing non-violent offenders to denounce and humiliate themselves publicly (as has been documented by Human Rights Watch, among other experts). As a result, people with drug addictions live in fear, unable to seek essential health services that are guaranteed by the UN drug conventions. These practices also make HIV and hepatitis prevention measures virtually impossible.

The abusive exploitation by China of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking must be of urgent concern to the UN system. It flies in the face of the principles of justice and human rights on which the UN is founded, and makes a mockery of the International Day.

I urge you to denounce these practices publicly and to encourage the directors of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, and the International Narcotics Control Board to do the same. Without public denunciation, the UN risks being associated with activities that are undertaken to

recognize a UN-designated International Day, but which in reality represent the antithesis of the “reaching out to marginalized groups” that you called for on June 11.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,



Joanne Csete

Executive Director

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cc: Ambassador John McNee, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations