



Mr. Ghada Waly
Executive Director
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
Vienna International Centre
Wagramer Strasse 5
A-1400 Vienna, Austria

January 1, 2026

Urgent Call for UNODC Leadership in Renouncing Cannabis Prohibition: Aligning Drug Policy with Human Rights and the Rule of Law

Dear Executive Director Waly,

On behalf of the Alliance for Rights-Oriented Drug Policies (AROD), I write to urge UNODC to realign its mandate with the promotion of human rights and the rule of law by advocating for the explicit renunciation of cannabis prohibition. This communication builds on AROD's longstanding engagement with UN mechanisms, including our 2019 submission to the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), our 2018 report to the Human Rights Committee documenting large-scale ICCPR violations, and recent letters to the High Commissioner for Human Rights (January 1, 2026) and Special Rapporteurs on Arbitrary Detention, Health, Torture, Judicial Independence, and Truth/Justice (July 2025–January 2026). Regrettably, these appeals have gone unanswered, perpetuating the harms of a policy that UNODC has historically enforced but which increasingly conflicts with human rights obligations.

In alignment with UNODC's evolving role in integrating human rights into drug policy—as seen in joint initiatives with OHCHR—we submitted a communication to the International Criminal Court (ICC) on December 29, 2025, alleging prohibition as crimes against humanity under Article 7 of the Rome Statute. We implore your leadership to coordinate with human rights bodies and advocate for renunciation, ending 60 years of undermining rights law and fostering a new course focused on sustainable development, health, and justice.

Factual Background: A Regime of Moral Panic and Systemic Harm

Cannabis prohibition, imposed globally through UN conventions and enacted domestically in Norway since the 1960s, has inflicted profound and enduring harm without yielding demonstrable public health benefits. Far from fostering a safer world, this regime equips tyrants with potent tools for social control and empire-building, while systematically eroding open societies and the rule of law. As meticulously documented in *Human Rising: The Prohibitionist Psychosis and Its Constitutional Implications* (2020) (see AROD's ICC submission,



Appendix A), which critiques UNODC's role in sustaining this delusion, alongside our 2025 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, the "war on drugs" has devastated justice systems worldwide. Mirroring witch hunts of the 15th to early 18th centuries, Nazi campaigns of the 1940s, and South Africa's apartheid regime, it emerges as an ideological construct fueled by fear and delusion that overwhelms reason and corrupts justice. By warping the natural law of supply and demand into a divisive narrative of victims and aggressors, jurists have become instruments of oppression, and prohibition incarnates Voltaire's prescient warning: those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.

These atrocities stem directly from the utopian ideal of a "drug-free society," which anchors policies in extremist wishful thinking rather than empirical reality. In Norway, around 1 million punitive sanctions have been imposed over 60 years, fueling a 1.75 billion NOK black market and approximately 300 annual overdose deaths while disproportionately affecting marginalized groups. Judicial failures—such as the Norwegian justice system's 17-year denial of effective remedies since 2008 and the ECtHR's dismissals in *Mikalsen v. Norway* (2012, 2023, 2024) as "manifestly ill-founded" without reasoned analysis—have entrenched impunity, violating ECHR Articles on liberty, fair trials, and non-discrimination. Similarly, in the United States, over 100 constitutional challenges have been mishandled, rejecting liberty claims under flawed reasoning and perpetuating systemic bias (see AROD's ICC submission, Appendix B, *To Right a Wrong*, part three). On a global scale, our Report estimates 400,000 annual deaths and 5 million wrongful imprisonments, sustaining a \$300–500 billion illicit market that exacerbates violence and corruption. Expert analyses like NOU 2002:4, NOU 2019:26, and PACE Resolution 2277 (2019) confirm inefficacy, yet CoE bodies ignore appeals since 2012. Moral panic persists despite professional opposition, perpetuating mass-scale death, disease, stigmatization, and societal unrest.

The UN's Role in Perpetuating Violations

UNODC, as the guardian of the single convention framework, has historically prioritized control over rights, resisting evidence-based reforms and undermining human rights law for 60 years. Despite joint UN efforts like the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document and WGAD's A/HRC/47/40¹ calling for decriminalization, UNODC's inertia sustains violations. Norway and CoE justice systems have sabotaged AROD's truth and reconciliation mission through biased rulings, denying reparation and non-recurrence. This demands UNODC's pivot to advocate for explicit renunciation, aligning with sustainable development (SDGs 3, 16) and human dignity.

¹ A/HRC/47/40, "Arbitrary detention relating to drug policies" (July 2021), to which AROD contributed via our submission on civil society perspectives, available at https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Detention/Call/CSOs/Alliance_for_rights-oriented_drug_policies.pdf.



Request for Action

We urge UNODC to:

1. Publicly advocate for the UN to renounce cannabis prohibition as incompatible with human rights, emphasizing its contribution to systemic violations and rule-of-law erosion, in line with A/HRC/47/40 and A/HRC/54/53,² while coordinating with OHCHR and relevant Special Rapporteurs.
2. Recommend a comprehensive UN review of drug conventions, incorporating:
 - a. Truth and reconciliation mechanisms to document harms, ensure reparation, and address judicial sabotage;
 - b. Guarantees of non-recurrence through decriminalization, alternatives to incarceration, and responsible regulation of drug markets to dismantle black markets, reduce youth criminality, and protect public health.
3. Issue a thematic report or statement addressing prohibition's violations, drawing on our evidence, the ICC submission, and WGAD findings for global mobilization, including post-2021 events like Germany's legalization and Colombia's 2025 advocacy.

AROD stands ready to provide further documentation, including our full ICC complaint and annexed materials, available at <https://www.arodpolicies.org/international-criminal-court-submission>. We enclose copies of our July 2, 2025 letter, 2019 WGAD submission, 2018 HR Committee report, and the ICC communication for your reference. As moral panic continues to undermine justice systems worldwide, confronting this crisis through your office can propel the UN toward evidence-based policies that uphold human dignity and the rule of law.

We await your prompt response and collaboration to terminate this era of systemic injustice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Roar Mikalsen'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Roar' and last name 'Mikalsen' clearly legible.

Roar Mikalsen

President of the Alliance for Rights-Oriented Drug Policies (AROD)

² A/HRC/54/53 (2023), in which the High Commissioner recommends responsible regulation of drug markets to protect health and undermine illegal economies.