

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10118-3299
Tel: +1-212-290-4700
Fax: +1-212-736-1300; 917-591-3452

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August 7, 2015

Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2
Ireland

Re: Submission from Human Rights Watch on Drug Possession

Dear Committee Members,

We write on behalf of Human Rights Watch to submit the attached statement, which offers a series of observations concerning the Committee's review of Ireland's approach to the possession of limited quantities of certain drugs.

Human Rights Watch is a non-profit nongovernmental organization that works to defend the rights of people worldwide. We scrupulously investigate abuses, expose the facts widely, and pressure those with power to respect rights and secure justice. As an independent international organization we work as part of a vibrant movement to uphold human dignity and advance the cause of human rights for all.

Our attached submission recommends that Ireland decriminalizes personal use and possession of drugs, relies instead on non-penal, regulatory and public health approaches to drug control that do not violate human rights, and moves to implement reforms based upon evidence of effective ways to reduce the harms to others that can accompany drug use and drug control. Our recommendations are based on decades of work documenting the high human rights costs associated with approaches to drug policy that rely on criminalization. It is long past time for all countries to reassess their drug policies; should it move forward with decriminalization, Ireland would join a group of leading countries that are now setting an example for others of how to implement a more rational, humane, and rights-respecting policy around drugs.

Should the committee be interested in hearing further from Human Rights Watch in public session at a Committee meeting, we would be delighted to identify the appropriate person from our staff to represent us.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these observations.

Sincerely,

Bruno Stagno Ugarte
Deputy Executive Director, Advocacy
Human Rights Watch

Aisling Reidy
Senior Legal Advisor
Human Rights Watch

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

HRW.org