



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on May 15, 2014

## End “Failed” UN Drug War, Urges Panel of Global Experts

The [global United Nations-mandated “war on drugs”](#) has been a horrific “failure” and must end so nations can set their own policies without UN interference, according to a recently released report by the London School of Economics’ IDEAS Center. Endorsed by an impressive roster of experts, economists, and insiders, the document highlights the exploding consumption of illegal substances under the “failed” planetary prohibition regime while detailing a wide range of consequences associated with the war. Among the most troubling: exploding violence, human-rights abuses, criminal empires, corruption, unprecedented incarceration rates, and more.



The report, entitled “[Ending the Drug Wars](#),” argues that the UN’s global war on banned substances “has failed on its own terms.” Citing declining drug prices and increasing purity “despite drastic increases in global enforcement spending,” the “expert group on the economics of drug policy” said it was therefore time for a new strategy. “The United Nations has for too long tried to enforce a repressive, ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach,” said the authors, adding that the UN must accept that different policies will work for different countries. “It is time to end the ‘war on drugs’ and massively redirect resources towards effective evidence-based policies underpinned by rigorous economic analysis.”

The report was signed by a broad range of political leaders, academics, and five Nobel prize-winning economists. Others signatories who backed the findings include some of the world’s top insiders, such as former Reagan administration Secretary of State George Shultz, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Schultz also served as Treasury secretary under President Richard Nixon. British Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and former NATO and EU foreign policy boss Javier Solana also endorsed the report, along with the former president of Poland and sitting senior Latin American officials.

“The pursuit of a militarized and enforcement-led global ‘war on drugs’ strategy has produced enormous negative outcomes and collateral damage,” the report authors explain in the foreword. “These include mass incarceration in the United States, highly repressive policies in Asia, vast corruption and political destabilization in Afghanistan and West Africa, immense violence in Latin America, an HIV epidemic in Russia, an acute global shortage of pain medication and the propagation of systematic human rights abuses around the world.” Ending prohibition would also save taxpayers a great deal, they said.

The [planetary drug war traces its origins](#) to a series of decades-old UN agreements purporting to impose a worldwide ban on substances that the global outfit does not approve of. A major supporter of the effort at the time was the U.S. government, which has [no constitutional authority to ban or regulate substances in the first place](#) — hence the constitutional amendment required for alcohol prohibition. Authors and supporters of the LSE report’s findings hope that the 84-page document will help spark a



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conversation about global prohibition ahead of an upcoming UN “Special Session on Drugs” set for 2016.

Of course, it is hardly the first time the UN’s planetary drug war has come under fire from heavyweight figures. In 2011, on the 50th anniversary of the UN prohibition regime, top U.K. officials, experts, and legislators from multiple parties [declared the war a failure and launched a commission](#) to explore alternatives. The chairwoman of the “All-Party Parliamentary Group on Drug Policy Reform,” Baroness Meacher, pointed to nations such as Portugal, which decriminalized all drugs more than a decade ago and reportedly saw a plunge in addiction rates, drug abuse by youth, and the prison population. “Criminalizing drug users has been an expensive catastrophe for individuals and communities,” she said.

A global coalition of lawmen known as [Law Enforcement Against Prohibition](#) (LEAP), meanwhile, has been playing an active role on the front lines in trying to end the UN-mandated prohibition regime. “The world has suffered too long and too much under the thumb of UN prohibition treaties,” argued LEAP officers, directors, and members in a letter to world leaders. “Rather than a blanket policy of prohibition, the world should reclaim control of dangerous substances from the drug gangs and drug cartels. Each nation should exercise autonomy over its own drug problems.”

Former prosecutor James Gierach, who now works as an attorney in Chicago and serves as LEAP’s executive board vice chairman, has attended the last three annual sessions of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (UN CND), which purports to create global drug policy. “I was shocked by what I saw during my first year,” he told *The New American* about his 2012 experience, pointing to the refusal of officials to consider alternatives to the global war. The fact that delegates at the convention refused to address what LEAP considers to be the primary “culprit” at issue — drug prohibition — was “stunning.”

The organization brings together more than 100,000 current and retired police, prosecutors, judges, corrections officers, and supporters united on one point: ending the prohibition of drugs. Among the group’s priorities is calling off the UN-mandated global war so nations can try new approaches. At the UN drug conventions, LEAP has been lobbying to have its [own amendments](#) added to the UN prohibition agreements. If approved, the LEAP-backed changes would, among other points, radically reform the role of the global body’s various drug-oriented programs and offices.

For example, instead of acting as a “global drug policeman,” as Gierach described it, the UN International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) would gather information on dangerous drugs — including tobacco and alcohol. It would also examine data on efforts to deal with the harm caused by those substances. The UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, meanwhile, would be required to release a ranking of the most dangerous drugs in the world each year. The measures would also, as a top priority, work to revitalize national sovereignty in drug-policy matters. Several senior officials from Latin American and European governments have expressed strong interest in the comprehensive reforms already.

“The United Nations is the fountainhead for drug prohibition for the world. LEAP strongly supports ending global drug prohibition and allowing the nations of the world the right to substitute a drug policy that fits their local needs and concerns, including the legalization, regulation and control of substances if that be the choice,” Gierach said. “We need to restore national sovereignty to individual nations rather than this failed one-size-fits all policy. It’s obviously not working and has been extraordinarily harmful — crime, healthcare, corruption, you name the problem or crisis, the war on drugs makes it worse. Prohibition actually causes what it was meant to prevent.”



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In recent years, authorities in some countries have increasingly been defying the UN prohibition regime. Most recently, for example, Uruguay legalized marijuana, sparking outrage from top [UN drug warriors who claimed the nation was not allowed to do so](#). The socialist president of Bolivia has also [bucked the UN system](#), pointing to the traditional indigenous uses of certain plants found in South America that the global body does not tolerate. Multiple European countries have also been taking varying approaches to the issue outside of outright prohibition.

The trend has been accelerating recently across the United States as well. Voters in Colorado and Washington State, for example, [defied both the federal government and the UN by legalizing marijuana for recreational use](#). The move prompted [furious and ridiculous demands from international drug czars to have the Obama administration quash the effort](#) in violation of the U.S. Constitution. The UN's drug warriors have also been [fiendishly attacking the right](#) of roughly two dozen American state governments, so far, to end prohibition of cannabis for medical purposes. However, even Attorney General Eric Holder has [acknowledged the fact that federal statutes do not always trump state law](#) — much less UN mandates.

Few dispute the notion that many currently illicit substances can wreak havoc on individuals and society. The question of how and where to address those real problems, though — and whether prohibition adds even more harm — ought to be discussed. Regardless of one's opinion on the wisdom of a drug war, under the U.S. Constitution, the decision about whether or not to wage one belongs to the people of each state and their elected representatives in the legislatures. Neither the UN nor the federal government has any legitimate authority to interfere.

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