



#Narcofeminism: Expected and unexpected risks of the movement campaign “16 days to end violence against women who use drugs” in the EECA region

25 November – 10 December 2019

We are writing the story of our campaign to document our experience, understand our mistakes and share the finding, which can help the Narcofeminism movement to come back to the public space better equipped and able to stand the blow.

The initiative group of [Narcofeminism movement](#) brings together women who are ready to publicly speak about the impact of drug repressions on their lives, talk about why the system is interested in continuing the “war on drugs” and about the social, economic and public health benefits of eliminating disproportionate punishments for people who use psychoactive substances.

Inspired by the support of our sisters from [AWID¹ in Germany](#) and [in Spain](#), as well as our sisters from the [movement for humane drug policy](#), we decided to join the international campaign [Orange the World: 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence](#).

A team of women prepared [14 leaflets](#) to answer the question – why we, women, support legal regulation of the psychoactive substances and changing the attitude to women who use psychoactive substances for pleasure, treatment or to unlock their potential. We wanted to show the effects of the repressive drug policies, impunity of violence and violation of the rights of people who use drugs by law enforcement agencies, health and social services, our neighbors and teachers of our children.

БОЛЬ ПУБЛИЧНЫХ ВЫСТУПЛЕНИЙ С ОТКРЫТЫМ ЛИЦОМ, СТРАХ ЕСТЬ ВСЕГДА.

Этап принятия себя - это прожить вновь те 20 лет, и принять то, кто на получила тогда. И не так сложно допустить решение о принятии, научиться жить и говорить публично с этим. Это ведь и есть то самое **ХАРАКТИРИ** - восприятие себя на благо себе, и как заставить выходящих порицания другим. Больше этого только смерти мужа, побитие от передозировки. Эта потеря составляющая часть моего усталости здесь, вернее базовая.

Наркофеминизм на вдохе принятия рождает во мне, в женщине, самурай, в широком его значении, доверяя и ища поддержки на «скрытие» того, что разрезает меня. Тем, кто готов принять меня, где я приемлема с моей личной и доброй инструкцией, с которой мне только пришлось познакомиться, не смотря на то что мы живем вместе всю жизнь.

В нацистской Германии в конце 1920-х годов с целью обучения молодых женщин быть «идеальными нацистскими невестами» им навязывали принципам нацистской идеологии, в которой место женщины определялось принципом трех «К» (Kinder, Küche, Kirche) - дети, кухня, церковь. Прошло 100 лет, но роль женщины в обществе и семье все та же. Для меня, любя, навязанная идеология порождает свободу себя и меня не надо уничтожать.

Я ЯВЛЯЮСЬ ЖЕНЩИНОЙ, УПОТРЕБЛЯЮЩЕЙ НАРКОТИКИ И Я НЕ ПОРИЦАЕМА, Я ЗАЩИЩЕНА, ДАЖЕ ЕСЛИ РЕШИЛА «ВСКРЫТЬСЯ».

ПУБЛИЧНОЕ ХАРАКТИРИ

Our idea was for all Narcofeminists to publish leaflets on their personal pages in social media to start the dialogue with their followers. We expected that people would start asking questions, engaging in discussions, so we would invite them from personal pages to the open Facebook group “How the War on Drugs Leads to Violence against Women.” Our task was to find allies from among our followers and create a social media platform to continue discussions all together in the same information space,

В РАМКАХ МЕЖДУНАРОДНОЙ КОМПАНИИ КО ДНЮ БОРЬБЫ ЗА ЛИКВИДАЦИЮ НАСИЛИЯ В ОТНОШЕНИИ ЖЕНЩИН С 25 НОЯБРЯ ПО 10 ДЕКАБРЯ

ГОЛОСА НАРКОФЕМИНИСТОК

КАК ВОЙНА С НАРКОТИКАМИ ПРИВОДИТ К НАСИЛИЮ В ОТНОШЕНИИ ЖЕНЩИН

awid

eасв

mtz

¹ AWID is a global feminist membership organization supporting the movement and striving to achieve gender justice and human rights for women all over the world.



inviting people interested in promotion of the campaign and the Narcofeminism movement to join our open Facebook group. **On 25 November 2019, we opened our Facebook group.**

The topics that we raised within the Narcofeminism 2019 Campaign in EECA:

Within the campaign, we started to discuss the following topics on our personal pages in social media:

- Why we support regulation of the substance use and the right of women to accept themselves and their way of life, including their use of psychoactive substances;
- Why we support [the Barcelona Declaration 2019](#) “War On Drugs is a War on Womxn Who Use Drugs”;
- Who will defend the defenders. “I could have been put behind the bars for a case fabricated by the police”. Evidence of a Narcofeminist.
- Public hara-kiri. What are the consequences for the life and health of women who present personal evidence about the system acting against us.
- The most violent environment for women is health system and law enforcement bodies. How programs for women are initiated in Spain or “Do as Metzineres”.

НАРКОФЕМИНИЗМ: НАША ПОЗИЦИЯ

Мы за регуляцию всех психоактивных веществ и свободный выбор образа жизни для женщин.

Регуляция - это значит, законно выращивать для себя марихуану дома.
Регуляция - это когда героин может быть медицинским и выдаваться в поликлинике с уважительным и профессиональным отношением врачей к женщине, которая обратилась за помощью.

60-летняя стратегия войны с наркотиками на сегодня стали политической, легализующей убийства и другие вопиющие нарушения прав людей, употребляющих наркотики. Для всех нас, и мужчин и женщин, насилие, унижения, давление стереотипов и стигмы приносит боль и страдания, которые сказываются на самооценке и значат, поступках. И хотя в прогрессивном мире уже как тридцать лет назад начали менять подходы к регуляции веществ: Португалия, Канада, Чехия, Швейцария, Уругвай, США (федеральные законы), в нашем регионе Восточной Европы и Центральной Азии всё ещё дикая репрессивная наркополитика и обуживающие её чиновники, полиция, криминальные структуры держатся за власть и влияние. Более 80% женщин в тюрьмах мира находятся за «преступления», связанные с употреблением нелегальных веществ.

Изменения начинаются с нашего осознания ценности жизни каждой женщины и реальной помощи и поддержки друг друга.

Мы НАРКОФЕМИНИСТКИ поддерживаем идеологию ФЕМИНИЗМА, в частности интерсекционального феминизма, который фокусируется на пересечении различных женских идентичностей и пытается взглянуть на то, как женщины с различающимся опытом сталкиваются с дискриминацией.

ДОБРАЯ ИНСТРУКЦИЯ ПРИМЕНЕНИЯ МЕНЯ :) КАК НАДО И КАК НЕ НАДО И ГОВОРИТЬ И ДЕЛАТЬ, ЕСЛИ ВЫ ХОТИТЕ ПОДДЕРЖАТЬ ЖЕНЩИНУ - ПСИХОНАВТКУ

Начиная с 1996г по сей день мне в жизни так или иначе приходится говорить о ВШЧ и наркотиках. И я всегда испытываю стыд. Я начинаю думать, о том, что обо мне думают вы и впадою в паранойю. Мой стыд усиливается, если вы рассматриваете шрамы от инъекций на моих руках и ногах и говорите, что я социально опасна. Мысли о том, что открытие лица навредит моей пятнадцатилетней дочери, ограничивают меня в действиях.

НАРКОФЕМИНИЗМ - это как лекарство в принятие себя для меня, с возможностью безопасного участия в процессах принятия моих решений, а значимое участие женщин в принятии решений должно происходить без болезненного «вскрытия» и оценки меня, тогда я чувствую себя в безопасности и могу принимать правильные решения, эффективно реализовывая себя в поддержку моим сестрам.

Права - как ценность человека на частную жизнь в принятии решений, должны быть защищены и не порицаемы.

Valentinia Mankieva
Казахская Сеть снижения вреда.

ПУБЛИЧНОЕ ХАРАКИРИ

Личное - это политическое



The results we expected to achieve, when we launched the Narcofeminism Movement Campaign “How the War on Drugs Leads to Violence against Women”:

- We opened our faces to invite people to think about the impact of repressive drug policies on the level on violence against women.

- Inviting people on our personal social media pages to think about the problems of women.

Posts on our personal pages received likes, however, there were people who wanted to use us to achieve their own goals. We got **accusations in mass media and threatening, we were intimidated and humiliated.**

For several weeks, we made attempts to answer those comments, hoping to make our discussion constructive and talk about the need to change drug policies. We failed, we did not have enough resources and did not have any professional human rights organizations or friendly journalists who could support us. Narcofeminists got depressed. To protect the safety, we rolled down the campaign.



А это, видимо, главные наркофеминистки движения. Все в сборе. Фото с их сайта. Алла Бессонова крайняя слева во втором ряду.

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Brief summary of the events within the Narcofeminism Movement Campaign in the EECA region in 2019

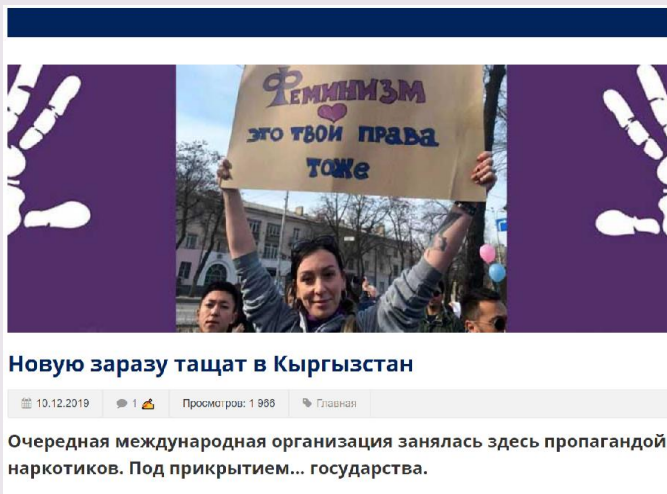
- On 25 November 2019, Alla Bessonova, a Narcofeminist who lives in Kyrgyzstan, posted the first leaflets on her personal Facebook page, and a local journalist Ulyana Kopytina shared her post with a comment representing her own view of the topic. Quote: *“Fuck me. That’s what it’s all about, why we kept hearing all these ‘songs’ that junkies are poor sick guys, just like cancer patients! Their right to use drugs for pleasure (c). Not the right to cure and become a sober, full-fledged member of society, but this ...”* Under the post of this journalist Ulyana Kopytina there were many negative comments and calls to violence against the participants of the Narcofeminism Movement and women who use drugs.

- In several days, Ulyana Kopytina’s brother, journalist of the newspaper “Case #...” started communicating with local non-governmental organizations asking them about their attitude to the campaign “How the War on Drugs Leads to Violence against Women.”

- On 7 December 2019, the open group “How the War on Drugs Leads to Violence against Women” **was deleted** from Facebook for safety reasons.



- On 4 December (a printed version) and 10 December 2019, an online [article](#) called “A new plague is being dragged into Kyrgyzstan” was published in the Kyrgyz newspaper “Case #...”², where our stories and personal photos were presented with negative messages, distorting the facts. Author of the article asked local law enforcement representatives to pay attention to Alla Bessonova, member of the Narcofeminism Movement, to hold her accountable for the propaganda of drugs. The author was supported by Aleksandr Zelichenko, coordinator of the CADAP program in Central Asia: “We have the official authorities responsible for anti-drug activities. I think they have to react. React severely, as only a state can.”³ (English translation of the article is enclosed below in Annex2)



- The activist was able to come out of her psychological crisis only two months later thanks to the support of other Narcofeminists from her country as well as other countries. She did not receive any professional support.

- 10 February 2020 – the activist from Kyrgyzstan still lives under the threats of causing her physical harm or planting drugs: “Ungrounded attacks from the side of local journalists had a negative impact on my life. I am an activist and a woman who uses drugs. Because of my public stance, I faced a number of problems from the side of the society. The newspaper “Case #...” is rather popular in Kyrgyzstan. I faced judgmental and negative attitudes from my neighbours. There are 200 apartment in my apartment building and there are also many other houses around us. My neighbours are very sociable people. For nine years that I lived in the house, we had very good relations with them, but they spoiled right after the article was published. I am a mother of two underage daughters. One of them goes to the kindergarten and another one goes to the elementary school. In the kindergarten, my daughter’s educators were asking me questions about my lifestyle. After the article was published, their attitude also changed for worse.



As the article was published just before the New Year, I was not able to attend the New Year’s celebration at my older daughter’s school as many teachers and parents would recognize me and it would have negative consequences for my daughter. The situation was made a little better by the fact that my daughter was going to a new school, so her teachers and other children’s parents did not know me very well.

² [Newspaper “Case #...”](#) is one of the leading republican newspapers in Kyrgyzstan distributed all over the country. It has been published for 27 years. People read electronic version of the newspaper abroad as well.

³ <https://delo.kg/?p=39686>



Some colleagues were also criticizing our campaign, blaming me in destabilizing the situation for NGOs, which has already been very unstable due to the periodic attempts of the government to approve a law on foreign agents and make the third sector accountable to the government.

Kyrgyzstan is one of the leading countries of the world in terms of corruption.⁴ There were documented cases when law enforcers were extorting money.^{5,6} The law enforcement system does not observe human rights, with convicts facing tortures and total lawlessness.⁷ Law enforcers actively use the practice of drug planting as a tool to get rid of people they want to get rid of.⁸ In April 2019, Daniel Azimov, a 19-year-old student from the Academy of the Ministry of Interior was arrested allegedly for drug dealing. His defense team is sure that drugs have been planted on him and there is no evidence to prove that Azimov is guilty.⁹

The situation is the same as in all post-Soviet countries. As an example, we can remember the well-known case of the Russian journalist Ivan Golunov¹⁰. The question of security remains open. At any moment, law enforcement can plant drugs on the activists, and resistance to their actions can lead to the negative consequences both for us and for our families. But I can no longer remain silent. Psychological violence against the activists protecting the rights of women who use drugs and the situation I found myself in will be described in the shadow report to be submitted by the civil society to Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2020.”

⁴ Kyrgyzstan ranked 132 among 180 countries included to the Corruption Perceptions Index 2018, prepared by Transparency International <https://knews.kg/2019/01/29/kyrgyzstan-zanyal-132-e-mesto-v-indekse-vospriyatiya-korruptsii-nichego-ne-izmenilos/amp/>

⁵ Head of the Department of Anti-Drug Trafficking Service at the Ministry of Interior in Bishkek has been arrested. https://kaktus.media/doc/401572_zaderjan_nachalnik_ypravleniia_slyjby_po_borbe_s_narkotikami_mvd_po_bishkeky.html

⁶ Cases of receiving bribes from people convicted for less serious crimes were systematic. <https://ru.sputnik.kg/society/20200120/1046816576/kyrgyzstan-gknb-osuzhdennyj-zaderzhanie-vzyatka.html>

⁷ "I was held at gun point." A 16-year-old boy complained about the police violence. https://kaktus.media/doc/393762_menia_derjali_pod_dylom_avtomata_16_letniy_paren_pojalovalsia_na_nasilie_mili_cii.html

⁸ Officers of the Anti-Drug Trafficking Service at the Ministry of Interior were arrested for the abuse of office and evidence tampering. Reported by the State Committee for National Security. https://24.kg/proisshestviya/132552_predprinimatelju_vbishkeke_podbrosili_narkotiki_organizovala_vse_byivshaya_je_na/

⁹ https://kaktus.media/doc/406334_narkotiki_emy_podkinyli_19_letnego_stydena_hotiat_posadit_bez_dokazatelstv_ego_viny.html

¹⁰ <https://tinyurl.com/vrdxmy>



At the same time with the case of Alla Bessonova, another one occurred in Kyrgyzstan related to violence against women:

- Since 28 November 2019, there was a [Feminnale](#) exhibition held in Bishkek. It was dedicated to the memory of 17 women who burned alive in a fire at a printing warehouse in Moscow on 27 August 2016. Fourteen of them were labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan. The event ran for 17 days at the Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts named after Gapar Aitiev hosting a large exposition with the works of 56 artists from 22 countries. The ultra-right group Kyrk Choro thought that the performance with a naked activist was outraging and demanded the director of museum, Mira Djangaracheva, to resign. The Minister of Culture accepted resignation of Mira Djangaracheva, while some exhibits were banned from the museum with a note “censored.”¹¹

- On 4 December the newspaper “Case #...” told about the two campaigns – Feminnale and “How the War on Drugs Leads to Violence against Women” in one article called “Dirt brought to Kyrgyzstan”.



- On 27 December 2019, an activist of the Feminnale campaign reported that she had been attacked.¹²

Активистка Карабалина сообщила о нападении — у нее сотрясение мозга



¹¹ <https://elgezit.kg/2019/12/27/kuratora-feminnale-v-bishkeke-izbili-do-sotryaseniya-mozga/>

¹² <https://kloop.kg/blog/2019/12/27/aktivistka-karabalina-soobshhila-o-napadenii-u-nee-sotryasenie-mozga/>



Campaign's conclusions

The goal of the Narcofeminism Movement is to influence public opinion, raise urgent topics and open new prospects unknown for many people in the society, and scale up public debate on the matters strongly associated with bias. Campaign of women for humane drug policy within 16 days of activism against violence **has shown** that can be one of the tools to conceptualize this topic and initiate public dialogue.

To build the capacity of the women's movement for humane drug policy, it is necessary **to overcome the risks** by demonstrating mutual support, which is the basis of all strong public movements; it is also necessary to develop solidarity, which is an important lesson for the future. Thereby,

Check list "Getting ready for the campaigns" of the Narcofeminism Movement in EECA was developed:

1. Get a consultation and proceed with the practical steps to ensure digital security and protection of the communication channels – for activists, colleagues and family members if needed. (e.g. [Access Now](#) digital security support service).
2. Make a safe communication channel for all the campaign participants to remain in touch.
3. Sign a contract with a lawyer in your country. Inform him/her about the risks of being planted drugs on. The lawyer's phone number must be in the speed dial list. Carry the lawyer's business card with you so that if you are arrested you do not have to get your phone out to demand the police call your lawyer.
4. Contact the supporting human rights organizations, in particular, who have a vast experience in risky situations and English or Russian - speaking staff members (e.g. [Front Line Defenders](#)). It is better to tell them straight away that you are planning to go public in the countries where the freedom of speech and the human rights only exist on paper.
5. Have (or prepare) foreign passports with valid visas for women and children to be able to go to the countries where human rights are implemented in practice. For the period of your campaign, it is better to take children to stay with your parents or friends, where they can be safe.





6. Ensure professional psychological support for women for the period of the campaign available 24/7.
7. Carry out mapping of your allies, inform them about the campaign in advance, show them the materials, tell about the goals and objectives of your campaign, give them contact details of the person responsible for communication. It can be useful in cases when journalists start calling the numbers of partner organizations, so they are aware of what we are doing and can prepare proper answers.
8. Inform friendly journalists in the country about the start of your campaign, prepare a publication to shape the public opinion about it.



We learned those lessons through pain. We receive threats. Repressive measures are taken to stop us. However, we will be smarter and stronger, we will use new safety precautions, support each other and continue doing what is important to us. They thought they buried us. They just didn't know we were [seeds](#).



У каждого сообщества есть своя история проявления внутренней силы людей, когда эти слова проникают под кожу и становятся смыслом жизни. Со мной это случилось в Наркофеминизме, вместе с каждой женщиной рядом.

У нас невозможно нарушить правила даже случайно. Потому что их нет. Только ценность жизни и свободы каждой из нас, реализуемая на практике простыми и навсегда трансформирующими действиями.

With love,

Narcofeminists from EECA



ANNEX 1

Translation of illustrations

Page 1. Illustration 1

“THE PAIN OF GOING PUBLIC WITH AN OPEN FACE, THERE IS ALWAYS FEAR”

PUBLIC HARAKIRI

A stage in accepting yourself is to relive those 20 years, accept what you have not got back then. It is not so hard to make a decision to accept, learn to live with it and publicly speak about it. That’s the HARAKIRI as it is – opening yourself up for your own benefit, which often leads to the disapproval by others. Only the death of my husband who overdosed was more painful than that. This loss is a part of my engagement here, the fundamental one.

When I breathe in and accept myself, narcofeminism gives a rise to a samurai in me as a women, a samurai in a broad meaning, trusting and looking for support to “open up” what is eating me from the inside. From those who are ready to accept me, following my personal kind instruction, which I have just come up with, though we have been living together for all our lives.

In late 1920s, in the Nazi Germany young women were educated to be the “perfect Nazi brides” by forcing them to accept the Nazi ideology, where the place of a woman was defined by three K’s (Kinder, Küche, Kirche) – children, kitchen, church. After 100 years, the role of the woman in the society and in the family has not changed. For me, any imposed ideology enslaves the freedom of one’s own self and I do not have to be destroyed.

I AM A WOMAN WHO USES DRUGS AND I AM NOT JUDGED, I AM PROTECTED EVEN IF I DECIDE TO “OPEN UP”.

Page 1. Illustration 2

WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN DEDICATED TO THE DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

VOICES OF NARCOFEMINISTS

SUPPORT

NO EXCUSE FOR VIOLENCE

HOW THE WAR ON DRUGS LEADS TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Page 2, Illustration 1

NARCOFEMINIST’S PRINCIPLES

- Safety and peace of mind of each one of us is above all
- Our movement is taking care of each other: sharing the resources and opportunities to lift the spirits, improve health and wellbeing

Narcofeminist’s Values:



We do not need patriarchy. And it hurts us to live in patriarchy. Our world is the woman's freedom to unlock her potential.

Narcofeminists make every step to bring closer the future, where we, women, are free and help each other here and now to be happy and to maintain our health, dignity and wellbeing.

We support regulation of all psychoactive substances and free choice of the lifestyle for women.

Regulation means lawfully growing marijuana for your own use at home.

Regulation is when heroin can be used for medical purposes and can be dispensed in a clinic with respect and professional attitude of doctors to the woman seeking help.

The 60-year strategy of the war on drugs today became a policy legalizing murders and other blatant violations of the rights of people who use drugs. To all of us, men and women, violence, humiliation, pressure of stigma and stereotypes brings pain and suffering, which affect our self-esteem and, thus, our actions. Although in the progressive world – Portugal, Canada, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Uruguay, USA (federal laws) – regulation of substances is implemented for thirty years already, in our region of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia we still have wild repressive drug policies, with their servants – public officials, police, criminals – hanging on to power and influence. In the world, over 80% of women are in prisons for the “crimes” related to illegal drug use.

Changes start from us realizing the value of each woman's life, helping and supporting each other.

We, NARCOFEMINISTS, support the ideology of FEMINISM, in particular intersectional feminism focused on the intersection of various female identities and trying to look into how people with different experiences face discrimination.

NARCOFEMINISM: OUR POSITION

Page 2, Illustration 2

PUBLIC HARAKIRI

Personal is political

KIND INSTRUCTION FOR MY USE :) WHAT TO DO AND NOT TO DO, TO SAY AND NOT TO SAY IF YOU WANT TO SUPPORT A WOMAN PSYCHONAUT

Starting from 1996, I have been talking about HIV and drugs in this or that way. And I always feel ashamed. I start thinking about what you think about me – and get paranoid. My shame becomes stronger if you look at the track marks on my arms and legs and say that I am socially dangerous. Thoughts that opening my face will harm my five-year-old daughter restrict my actions.

Narcofeminism is like a remedy for me to accept myself, being able to safely take part in my decision-making processes, while meaningful participation of women in decision-making should happen without painful “opening” and assessment of me, then I feel that I am safe and can make the right decisions, effectively fulfilling myself to support my sisters.

Rights – as a human value of privacy in making decisions – should be protected and not judged.

Valentina Mankieva



Kazakhstan Harm Reduction Network

Page 3, Photo 1

Those are apparently the main narcofeminists. Everyone is there. Photo from their website. Alla Bessonova is on the far left in the second row.

Page 4, Photo 1

A new plague is being dragged into Kyrgyzstan

Another international organization started drug propaganda here. Under the shelter of... the government.

Page 4, Illustration 1

“USING DRUGS CAN BE CIVILIZED”

The story of creating @Pachamama Cannabis Club – a social cannabis club in Spain. Pachamama Cannabis Club is a women’s club. As well as other cannabis clubs, it was created thanks to the law allowing growing and using marijuana on the private territory.

Barcelona, social cannabis club for women 18+. There are certain rules, which are not to be violated as they are right. After reaching full legal age, one can buy a membership card to buy weed on weeknights and relax with other nice women in cozy comfortable atmosphere. Listen to music, talk, drink tea with your favorite chocolate. There is no violence or judgment. No one bothers you and you bother no one.

THIS IS WHAT DRUG USE SHOULD BE LIKE:

INFORMED, CONSCIOUS, COMFORTABLE AND SAFE

Page 6, Illustration 1

The first page of the newspaper “Case #...”, two campaigns – Feminnale and “How the War on Drugs Leads to Violence against Women” are in one article called “Dirt brought to Kyrgyzstan”.

Page 6, Photo 1

Activist Karabalina reported that she had been attacked and received brain concussion.

Page 7, Illustration 1

In 2016, I had to flee Russia to save my life from police prosecutions.

I COULD HAVE BEEN PUT BEHIND THE BARS FOR A CASE FABRICATED BY THE POLICE

As many other activists, I was prosecuted by the authorities for telling the truth.

We are women who use drugs from all over the world. We are those who are isolated from the society and discriminated against. We are killed, we are harmed with no need, we are put in jails, we are depicted as some evil, and we are all considered dangerous outsiders, with no exceptions.

Larisa Solovyova, Organizer of the Berlin Union of People Who Use Drugs – BerLUN!



It is time to unite and make our voices stronger. Great women are breaking the silence and are ready for change. Current laws not only ruin the lives of thousands of women but are also a heavy burden on the budget of any state with repressive drug policies.

Who will defend the defenders?

Page 7, Illustration 2

WHO WILL DEFEND THE DEFENDERS?

Every woman can tell her story of drug-related violence

But most often it is a story of silence, a story of expulsion, running away from persecutions. Thousands of women are silent. In the eyes of society, they “deserve their suffering.” Most often, they silently believe that they are guilty, that they are flawed and deserve punishment, mostly because the society rejects them, does not recognize their rights to private life, to use substances, to be themselves.

For many years, I tried not to tell anyone in Russia that I am a person who uses drugs. All my life, I tried to change, to live like everyone else, blaming myself in my failures and sorrows. I was prosecuted and judged for the use and possession of drugs. I was treated with violence and imprisonment as well as thousands of other Russian women who are convicted for drug-related offences.

I knew that the Russian drug policy is based on stigma, discrimination and humiliation of drug users. Long sentences are used to women as well as men, with no exceptions made for women with children, pregnant or sick women.

Russian drug policy leads to ruined families, health risks, infections, deaths and growth of the prison population.

I had to live a big life, start working in civil society organizations, find like-minded people, unite with them, and start advocating for the rights of people who use drugs to realize that the protection of our rights is in our hands!

Page 8, Illustration 1

WE NEED OTHER HELP!

There is no problem with syringes in the streets. If I can buy drugs, I will find money for WHAT to inject with. A clean syringe will not save me or resolve my problems. When I do not have a safe space where I can stay. Where I can use drugs under the observation of doctors or friends, where I can do laundry, if my parents do not let me in their house, or if my son grew up and kicked me out to lay his hands on the property. I meet such women every day.

In sunny Barcelona, there is a social center for women METZINERES.

In METZINERES you can be yourself, there you can get what YOU need, not what someone DECIDED to give you to check the box that the support has been provided and the government did its job. There women help women, and each of them does what she can and loves to do.

A woman who seeks help in Metzineres will not leave without getting what she needs. She will get a roof over her head, she will get a social job to be useful, to make her contribution. Someone draws, someone sews,



someone makes souvenirs for a fair. There is a doctor and there is Aura Roig. She is a miracle, she inspires and leads Metzineres.

Page 8, Illustration 2

BE AS AWID

AWID ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN DEVELOPMENT

AWID's mission strengthen the voice, impact and influence of women's human rights activists, organizations and movements working at the international level to effectively promote the women's rights.

AWID strives to build a world where women's rights are respected and where all people can enjoy their human rights.

MESSAGE: if you want to be understood – find ways to be heard. Our colleagues from AWID provided convenient interpreting into three languages even under a bridge and in a van for safe injections during our study tour to Spain.

BE AS AWID.

Page 8, Illustration 3

Every community as its own story of the growing internal power of people, when the words get under your skin and become your reason to live. It happened to me in [Narcofeminism](#), together with all the women around me.

We cannot break the rules even accidently. Because there are no rules. Only the value of life and freedom of each one of us, implemented in practice with simple and ever-transformative actions.



ANNEX 2

English translation of the article in the Kyrgyz newspaper “Case #...”

Shock! A new plague is being dragged into Kyrgyzstan

Yet another international organisation started promoting drugs here. Under the cover of... the state.

“Drugs are good! They help reach the heights in literature, science and arts!” How will you, dear readers, react if tomorrow your own child tells you this? Your reaction will definitely be more than just surprise. Having recovered from shock you will most probably ask: “Who taught you this?” Sweet ladies from the Internet, fighting for the rights of women, did. Feminists [did]. More precisely their new movement of narcofeminism [did], the one that has just come rolling into Kyrgyzstan.

“No comments. [We are] working...”

When you think that there is nothing left to be surprised at, the social networks for the umpteenth time throw something new under.

Last week the Facebook users were shocked by yet another such find: “Narcofeminism” group created by Bishkek citizen Alla Bessonova. Referring to herself as an activist of the drug legalization movement, she is using this online community open for everyone to disseminate the ideas, describing which as “strange” would be the understatement of the century, as they are clearly dangerous.

For example, one of the slogans of the movement, Bessonova claims to belong to, reads: “War on drugs is the war on women who use drugs!” Or here is another example of the promotional posters that she herself distributes over the internet. Quote: “We are fighting for the right to use drugs and to enjoy it!”

You may say this is drivel. We, just like our readers who had stumbled on this group, first thought the same too. [It must be] somebody’s ridiculous prank or stupid provocation. After all nobody sane in Kyrgyzstan or any other country, where the laws still operate, will be calling for this. However all of it emerged to be a real provocation, and not a stupid one, but a calculated and carefully thought through one, the dangerous consequences of which are hard to overestimate.

“The right to take drugs and enjoy [the process]. Not the right to heal and become a sober, fully functioning member of society, but this... Maybe one should start paying you benefits for [financing] dope?! Getting wasted is your sacred RIGHT!? I demand that the law enforcement authorities pay attention to this little movement. Children must not see and believe this. If a person knowingly and willingly sticks their fingers in an electric socket, it is exclusively their problem” was the fair reaction of one of the social network users to the propaganda surfacing in the Kyrgyz segment of Facebook.

Female activists, of which there proved to be quite a few, paid attention to this commentary.

“The message is incompetent; they are trying to draw us into aggression or excuses. [I suggest] we give a pass on the commentary. No answering. Continue working” wrote a narcofeminist from Ukraine Olga Belyaeva. Her colleagues, however, aggressively pelted the woman, who tried to appeal to their good sense, [with abuse]. They called her a “she-misogynist”, a “she-patriarchy supporter” and a “she-homophobe”. If we translate all this into normal language, the woman was accused of hating other women, supporting patriarchal family values, not liking gays and lesbians. In a word, they changed the topic of a conversation they found



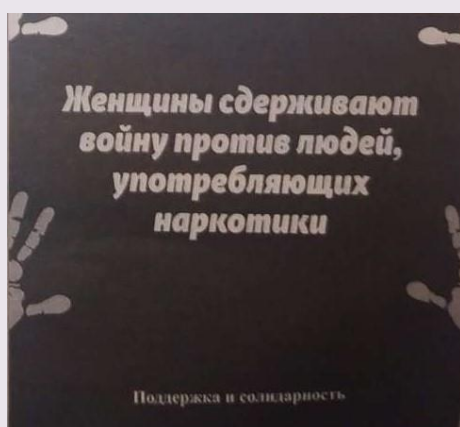
inconvenient. And not a single word was offered to explain why the hell they, the female activists, are so boldly and openly promoting drug abuse among Kyrgyz people?!



“Drugs are good”

We tried to ask Alla Bessonova this question, but she did not want to talk to the journalists. However even without her answers there is more than enough information about narcofeminism on the Internet. The very first search brought us to the site of a non-commercial organisation “Eurasian Harm Reduction Association” with their headquarters in Vilnius (Lithuania), who, as we found out, reared this dubious movement and is now actively entrenching it in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

“We are aspiring to the establishment of a powerful community of the people using drugs and its support for the purposes of promotion of a progressive drug policy in the region, in the foundation of which lies observance of human rights, and also advocating for stable financing of harm reduction programmes of proper quality in accordance with the community needs” – this is how the organisation abstrusely describes its goals. And it is asking the donors, who would finance such goals, to respond.



Illustrations:

Photo in the upper right corner, poster on photo reads “Feminism means also your rights”. Caption: “Alla Bessonova got spotted at the meeting of NGO workers and gay activists held this spring in the centre of Bishkek under the guise of the march for the protection of the rights of women.”



Poster reproduced in the upper left corner reads “Voices of narcofeminists. Within the framework of the international company (sic) by the day of struggle for liquidation of violence towards women. 25 November – 10 December. How war on drugs leads to violence towards women.” The child in the centre is holding poster “Support”. Woman in the centre is holding poster “There is no excuse for punishment”. Caption: “One of the posters distributed by the female activists. Happy women, depicted on the poster, are holding syringes and marijuana cigarettes.”

Poster in the lower left corner reads “Women deter war on people who use drugs. Support and solidarity.” Caption: “Cheeky manipulation: lobbying for legalization of drugs under the guise of the women’s rights”.

Continued on page 8 (in the original – EHRA comments).



Ukraine, alongside their thoughts. We shall quote a few.

The same site provides the clearest possible definition of the movement in question that has sneaked into Kyrgyzstan: “Have you seen women who calmly and with dignity say: “I use psychoactive substances and this allows me to live and to create”? Pleased to make your acquaintance, this is us, narcofeminists”.

Further down, the same site publishes photos together with the surnames of female activists – narcofeminists from various countries: Estonia, Kazakhstan,

Larisa Solovieva, activist (or as she refers to herself a “she-leader”) from Germany writes: “I believe that women shall make this world more humane and kind, that the intrusions upon privacy, repressive drug policy and degrading treatment of the society will become things of the past. I believe that achieving considerable heights in literature, science and art shall be possible thanks to the use of drugs”.

And here are the thoughts of the abovementioned Alla Bessonova from Kyrgyzstan: “Why drinking a couple of glasses of wine is [considered to be] normal? Or downing a bottle or two of beer? And then someone says: “I blow (smoke marijuana) in the evenings”. [It is considered] unacceptable. [It is] immoral. You will be labeled a drug addict. However I do not see the difference in how you spend your evening: with a wineglass in your hand, with a joint (cigarette with marijuana) between the fingers or at all without them. You are the woman first of all. Woman, how resonant is this word! Girls and narcofeminism allowed me to understand it and not to be afraid. To be free. To be myself.”



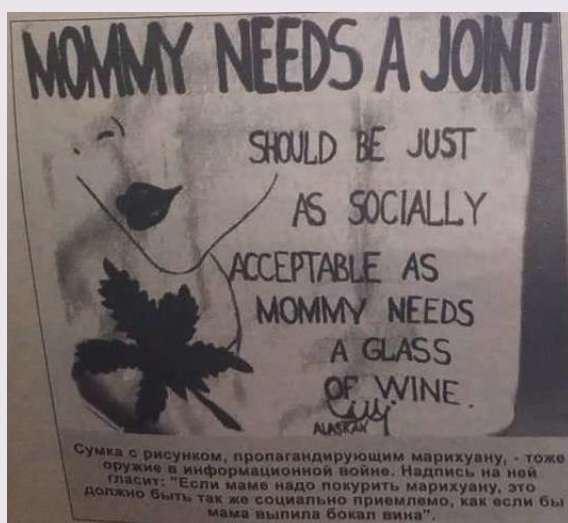
The same site offers photos from trainings and other criminal gatherings of narcofeminists. The aforementioned Alla, for example, ordered and had made for her sisters-in-arms, as well as for everyone else interested, bags with an unmistakable imagery of a female face and marijuana leaf with a sign in English: “If mom needs to smoke marijuana, this must be as socially acceptable as if

mom drank a glass of wine”.

Here are some more quotes from the site: “We stand for the regulation of all psychoactive substances and for the free choice of the lifestyle for women. Regulation means growing dope at home and giving a leaf for the school herbarium to the daughter or the son. Regulation is when heroin can be medicinal and would be distributed through the polyclinics with respectful and professional attitude of the doctors towards the woman who comes for help.”

This is actually the answer for that reader who asked the question: “Don’t female drug addicts want the state to start paying them benefits for [the purpose of enabling] their drug abuse?!” It is clear that they do indeed want it and even count on it.

The movement of female drug abusers-feminists was established relatively recently, in 2017. However it has already managed to get firmly established and rooted in the post-Soviet territory. Including Kyrgyzstan. It goes without saying that it was done with the support of the Eurasian Harm Reduction Association. It seemed like all this madness was happening somewhere far in Europe. However here it is: annoyingly persistent, loud and aggressive, banging on our doors. And it is bringing here the idea that giving drugs to children is the norm, it is even good.





“The words are kinda wrong...”

While studying the website full of drug propaganda, we have found yet another connection to Kyrgyzstan. Among the many members of its governing committee the Eurasian Harm Reduction Association lists Aibar Sultangaziev – the Head of the Public Council of the Ministry of Health of KR. A person who is anything but some ordinary [actor] within the system of the Ministry of Health and state management.



We have turned to him for the commentaries to try and understand who and why is lobbying such dangerous ideas in our country. First we sent him the photos of the narcofeminist poster depicting happy female drug abusers calling for equal rights and freedom.

“Haven’t seen such poster”, replied Aibar Sultangaziev. “Let me check... Checked. What is the question?”

“Don’t you think this is open propaganda of drug use?”

We hear laughter instead of an answer.

“Well, isn’t it so?”

“I have no opinion regarding propaganda, but I do not understand the contents of the poster. Law-enforcement officers apprehend not only women, but men also”.

“We are astonished not by this, but by the thought that using drugs is good. “I am a female drug abuser and I am proud!” Isn’t that the actual idea behind this poster?”

“Most probably the meaning is different. The idea is that the use of psychoactive substances is reality. For example, I equate alcohol with marijuana and heroin. However one of them is allowed, the others are prohibited. But all of them are drug users.”

“So what, psychotropic drugs should be made as easily accessible as alcohol?”

“If you ask me, I am for legalization of marijuana, but against heroin and various salts and spices. The latter ones cannot be made accessible. However we must recognize the fact that people use drugs and are dependent on them. For example, Iran punishes drug dealers by death, but the country still has almost one million users of hard drugs. Even their spiritual leadership has accepted this fact and opened substitution therapy points in the mosques. And I didn’t like this poster either. It seems they are talking about women and genders, but lumped everything together. It seems that I now started understanding the point of the poster. It speaks [of the fact] that women suffer more in the war on drugs. There is more violence towards them and so on.”

“I believe that women shall make this world more humane and kind, that the intrusions upon privacy, repressive drug policy and degrading treatment of the society will become things of the past. I believe that achieving considerable heights in literature, science and art shall be possible thanks to the use of drugs” – this is what one of your female activists is saying. What do you think of that as the member of the governing committee of the organisation?”



"I fully support the first statement, but not the second one. I believe that the world will become more humane and kinder. I will probably tell the people responsible for the site that they are publishing kinda wrong words..."

"Who finances Eurasian Harm Reduction Association?"

"Financing comes from different sources. Global Fund, Robert Carr Fund, European Union and others".

"Here is the last question. You probably have children of your own. How will you react if they, having read sites like this and thoughts of female activists, believe that drugs are good, that drugs help people become better? And will become drug addicts themselves."

"Here is my answer to this question. Children use the Internet a lot better than we do and for them it is the main source of information. For example, some morality zealots prohibit conversations about sex in schools, but children have already seen all the porn sites on the Internet. Therefore bans do not work, they don't work anywhere. However there are principles of the freedom of speech and freedom of personal expression. So with children we need to sit down and talk, tell them about drugs, speak about love, and then they will not have to try them. However, most probably, they will still try them. I am sure that you and those who will be reading your article are at least consuming alcohol. Why don't you film yourself to see who you turn into and then make a decision to judge anyone or not. Best of luck!" - Aibar Sultangaziev, who represents the organisation promoting drugs in Kyrgyzstan, appeared nervous and ended the conversation. Judging by his answer he is absolutely fine with the fact that his own children can get hooked on drugs.

This is how our conversation with him ended. Questions still remain, and there are a lot of them. We hope that not only journalists will be looking for the answers to them now, but the law enforcement agencies will join.

Protecting the rights of women is important. However there is yet another right that should not be forgotten. This is the right of the people to protect themselves from drug garbage by any means available to them. It is because the families of drug addicts, families who went through all circles of hell, families tormented and destroyed, did not choose a destiny of such kind. Such destinies were shoved down their throats. Shoved by those who indoctrinate future female drug addicts in the belief that there is nothing dangerous in the drugs, that they are good for you and wonderful.

Yury Kopytin

P.S. The most astonishing fact is that Kyrgyzstan citizens – including minors – are indoctrinated in all of this, essentially, on the STATE level! With the approval of the Ministry of Health.

[Just look at] what sort of junk is dragged into Kyrgyzstan from the West under the hypocritical guise of human rights protection. And they are finding support from Kyrgyz officials, they are penetrating the state authorities...

The editorial board of the "Delo No..." newspaper shall investigate why this is happening. And we shall return to this topic.

Continued on page 9 (in the original – EHRA comments).

Illustrations:

Photo in the top left corner. Caption: "These must be the top female narcofeminists. All present and accounted for. Photo from their site. Alla Bessonova top far left."



Illustration top left. Logo “narcofeminism”, “NARCOFEMINISM for the rights of women, who use drugs”.
Caption: “Yet another poster with the narcofeminism insignia. The meaning is crystal clear.”

Photo bottom. Picture of a bag, signage in English: “MOMMY NEEDS A JOINT. Should be as socially acceptable as mommy needs a glass of wine.” Illegible designer’s logo. Caption: “Bag carrying a picture promoting marijuana is yet another weapon in information war. The sign reads: “If mom needs to smoke marijuana, this must be as socially acceptable as when mom drinks a glass of wine.”

Expert commentary. “This is dangerous drive!”

The editorial board of the “Delo No...” newspaper asked famous expert Alexander Zelichenko, retired militia Colonel, head of the Central Asian Center for Drug Policies to comment on the activities of narcofeminists and their European partners in Kyrgyzstan.



- Alexander Leonidovich, what is Eurasian Harm Reduction Association? What kind of harm reduction can we talk about when the organisation’s activists are openly promoting drugs?

- This organisation was established in Lithuania in the beginning of the 1990s. However it all started a long time before that. Some forty years ago Europe came up with what we today call “harm reduction practices”. They understood that saber-rattling and packing prisons with drug dependent people is the road to nowhere long before we did. The number of drug addicts will not be reduced this way. Drug addiction is a huge social problem that cannot be solved through the use of force only. One needs a set of measures. What is harm reduction? This is the understanding that people have to be pulled out of drug dependence, but if it does not work, then the harm they receive from using drugs has to be reduced. This is a set of measures aiming at prevention of drug overdose deaths, at prevention of needles reuse to stop HIV spread, at overcoming fear of coming to the hospitals for medical help.

- How did Kyrgyzstan become part of this programme and why?

- This programme started working in Kyrgyzstan in the middle of the 1990s, on the back of HIV epidemics. At that moment it was actual nightmare and horror. 80 percent of all new infected were drug addicts. Prisons were overflowing with them. Out of 16 thousand prisoners 40 percent were convicted for the drug-related crimes. At the same time the majority of those people were not drug dealers: they were common users who would get arrested with a dose in their pocket, they were actually sick people. We, Soviet militia, were taught simple things: the more drug addicts are imprisoned, not allowed to roam free, the better it is for the society, for their families and even for themselves. I started understanding that we have to work with them. In the territory of the former Soviet Union, and I am not bragging, I became the first militia officer who acknowledged and accepted the harm reduction philosophy, became the member of this programme. We organised seminars, taught young interior ministry specialists, established a proper study course at the interior ministry Academy, and wrote a textbook. I was the member of the Board of Directors of the Association representing Kyrgyzstan. We did everything to change the attitude of the militia officers towards the drug dependent people and of the drug dependent people towards the officers. [We did everything] so that the drug addicted patients



would come out of hiding and turn to the doctors. We managed to achieve a lot of changes. [We] decreased the burden of prisons. [We] introduced the concept of daily or single use dose into the Criminal Code, the dose that does not make the person criminally liable.

- However you never taught people that drugs are good, did you?

- At that moment this matter was treated by Eurasian Harm Reduction Association completely differently. If anyone mentioned legalization of drugs in those years, I would not have worked with them. No matter what good goals would be used to explain and justify it. Nobody even mentioned it then.

- When did everything start changing?

- Closer to 2015 I started noticing changes in the policy of this programme. We used to hold large events in Bishkek, we discussed new changes in legislation. We started inviting sensible drug dependent people to such events, those who were in recovery or already clean and sober. Once at an event like this some of those invited started openly attacking us, internal ministry officials. "Who are you to tell us anything?" they said. "You are the representatives of punitive agency! We shall decide ourselves how to live and what to do!" By that time a European network of people who use drugs had already been established. They started laying down their demands, lobbying legalization of drugs. Today there is such a network also in Kyrgyzstan. I realized that something wrong started going on. It was some kind of the beginning of consolidation of drug users and they started championing the right to use drugs, and this is unwarrantable! So I said goodbye to this organisation!

- What's your view on narcofeminists?

- They are neither feminists nor fighters against drugs. What are they fighting for? For the right of women to use poison? Drug addiction knows no race, no gender. I know a number of women from among former drug dependent people and activists, who became mothers and refused the drugs. They have created a centre for female drug addicts, those who get released from penitentiaries and have nowhere to go. [At this centre such] women are fed, helped with the documents and treatment. This is the real protection of the rights of drug dependent women! And narcofeminists and their own policy of harm reduction is an attempt to loudly make a name for themselves. They have gone too far. Certain figures decided to build their personal fortunes on this, including political fortunes. The amounts of money rotating in this sphere are impressive.

- What should the state do?

- We have the official authorities responsible for anti-drug activities. I think they have to react. React severely, as only a state can. I myself have told some of such activists and NGO workers: "You are damaging yourself; you will antagonize the state, militia and society. You will break what took years to build." The drug addicts will again go into hiding, the number of HIV infected will again explode... Harm reduction programme is a good instrument, it is another question who and how uses it, - concluded the expert Alexander Zelichenko