# Ethnic minorities never ever made problems in the history

By Tin Maung Lwin and Min Htet Aung

Responsible officials from Interfaith Friendship and Unity Group (IFUG) led by U Nyi Pu, Rakhine State Chief Minister and U Khin Maung Tin, Deputy Minister for the State Counsellor's Office visited Yathedaung, Buthidaung and Sittway on 7 and 8 September, meeting local residents to inquire about their requirements.

Here are voices of the dignitaries from interfaith friendship and unity group, in the interview.

Dr Khin Maung Htoo.

Dr Thar Nyan.

U Nyunt Maung Thein.

U Ragu Nay Myint.

PHOTO: MAUNG HMWE

**Dr Thar Nyan, General Secretary, Christian representative in the Interfaith Friendship and Unity Group**

I came here under the arrangement of the Ministry of the State Counsellor Office, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture and Rakhine State government. The main objective was that we held the IFUG meeting with regard to the event of 25 August, making decisions to help solve local people's difficulties. So, we formed a 10-member group to go to Maungtaw, consisting of 2 Buddhists, 2 Muslims, 2 Hindus, 2 Christians and I myself as the general secretary and another one as chairman—10 altogether.

If and when something happens, there will be refugees and they need to be fed and accommodated. Following this, rehabilitation and resettlement are essential. In this region, the task of performing rescue is of great importance. And, there is a need to get rid of misunderstanding among each other. Maungtaw events were not based on religion and race. It is harming the national sovereignty.

In the world, today, there are similar cases, for example in southern Thailand and Indonesia. In our country, we still have time to prevent. So, our government, Tatmadaw and the people need to cooperate hand in hand with each other. We felt considerate for our national ethnic people. It is necessary for all the local populace to pay mutual respects so that there will be no difficulty for peaceful living and stability. Mutual understanding is also of great importance. I hereby would like to say that we came here to help our national brethren.

**Dr Khin Maung Htoo, Buddhist representative in the Interfaith Friendship and Unity Group**

We came here with a view to help people over the events in Maungtaw, as to how much and how we can help them. On arrival we learn that they try to get what they want, through terrorism, on the wrong pretext of religion. We told the local people to live on awareness, keeping 4 Cardinal Virtues in mind. All must not believe in rumours, to be united after careful consideration. We will come again for health, if we are assigned. We will give medical doctors and subsidies including food.

**U Nyunt Maung Thein, a Muslim and Vice Chairman of the Interfaith Friendship and Unity Group**

We came here to find how we can assist the displaced people, how we can refute the fake news spreading over the world, how we can help all the people here and how we can resettle them as soon as possible. We discussed with local people from different faiths in Yathedaung, Buthidaung and Maungtaw. We found in Maungtaw that displaced people are suffering a lot due to terrorist attacks. We don't accept terrorism.

**U Ragu Nay Myint, a Hindu and member of the Interfaith Friendship and Unity Group**

International media have portrayed the issue in Rakhine State as a genocide and Bengalis as a minority in this state. In fact, about 98 per cent of the population in Maungtaw is Bengalis and just 2 per cent is ethnic Rakhine. Hindu is also one of the minorities in Maungtaw. They were killed by terrorists. Some were raped. Some were forced to covert to Islam. International media turned a blind eye to suffering of Hindus.

When we enquire about the terrorist attacks in Maungtaw, Muslim villagers also expressed their sympathy to ethnic Rakhine villagers. In the history, ethnic minorities never ever made problems, Muslim villagers do not reject this fact. Regardless, we do not accept terrorism. ■

**Correction**

Please read "assistance" in the headline of the news story "Ready to render assistance" on front page of 11 September Issue of the Global New Light of Myanmar.— Ed

PRESS STATEMENT

# The Situation in the Rakhine State

The situation in Rakhine State has been the focus of the world attention in recent weeks. The Government of Myanmar fully shares the concern of the international community regarding the displacement and suffering of all communities affected by the latest escalation of violence ignited by the acts of terrorism committed by the extremist group known as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in Northern Rakhine State on 25 August 2017.

The fresh round of violence was the result of simultaneous and coordinated attacks by the terrorists on 30 police outposts in Northern Rakhine State. The ARSA, which has been independently verified to be externally funded and inspired organization, has claimed responsibility for the attacks. The same group has also claimed responsibility for the attacks initiated on 9 October 2016. The brutal acts of terrorism which targeted not only the Myanmar security forces but also innocent civilians must be unequivocally condemned. Acts of terrorism cannot be condoned for any reason.

The Government of Myanmar strongly condemns the vicious acts of terrorism and has declared the ARSA a terrorist group. The Government welcomes the statements issued by the United Nations and a number of countries firmly condemning the terrorist attacks.

The attacks of August 2017 were deliberately timed to coincide with the release of the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine led by Mr. Kofi Annan. It is evident that the latest terror campaign is an attempt to undermine the efforts of the Government to find a lasting solution to the issue of Rakhine through the speedy implementation of the Advisory Commission's recommendations.

The security forces have been instructed to adhere strictly to the Code of Conduct in carrying out security operations, to exercise all due restraint, and to take full measures to avoid collateral damage and the harming of innocent civilians in the course of carrying out their legitimate duty to restore stability.

Human Rights violations and all other acts that impair stability and harmony and undermine the rule of law will be addressed in accordance with strict norms of justice.

The recent attacks have led to widespread fear and the subsequent displacement of all communities, including Rakhine, Hindu, and various smaller ethnic minorities such as the Mro, Daingnet and Kaman, whose fate is sadly overlooked by the world.

The Government has granted media access to northern Rakhine to both local and international media in order to provide a balanced and comprehensive view of complex situation. The government provided prompt relief aid to alleviate the plight of displaced communities.

Humanitarian assistance will be provided to all displaced inhabitants without discrimination. A Government-led mechanism established in cooperation with the Red Cross Movement has already started its humanitarian assistance activities. Myanmar welcomes the offers of ASEAN members as well as other countries to contribute toward the assistance programme.

The Government brought out a statement welcoming the recommendations of Mr. Kofi Annan's Advisory Commission on 24 August 2017. A Ministerial-led Committee to monitor the progress of the implementation of the recommendations will be established speedily and an Advisory Board comprised of eminent persons from home and abroad will also be constituted to assist the Committee in its work.

The international community can best help by supporting the Myanmar Government in its efforts to bring stability, peace and development to Rakhine State.

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General poses for a documentary photo with RCSS/SSA's chairman and party in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

# Vice Senior General Soe Win receives RCSS/SSA's chairman and party

DEPUTY Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General Soe Win received U Yawd Serk, Chairman of the Restoration Council of Shan State/ Shan State Army (RCSS/ SSA) and party at Bayintnaung Guest House in Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday.

During the meeting, the understanding and different ideas from Union level peace implementation agreement signed by the working Committees on Implementation of Peace and RCSS/ SSA on 16 January 2012 were discussed in details.

This was followed by exchanging views on peace and stability within Shan State, needs for people to live peacefully and without tension, engagement conversely with trust and respect between both sides, friendship over sustainable performing of meeting and discussion, and trust building on both, it is learnt. —Myanmar News Agency ■

# Police on full alert in Maungtaw to restore rule of law

WHILE a resident living in Aung Mingalar ward of Sittway illegally left the designated place for shopping, local nationals detained him. The police dispersed the crowd who gathered to see him at a local police station.

The event was that Isuz (a) Paing Pyae Sone residing in Aung Mingalar ward of Sittway left the designated place by bike to go shopping in other area, 3 local nationals found him leave and they arrested Isuz. While keeping him in the police custody, some people gathered to witness the event, amounting to some 30 people. So, the police kept the situation under control and handed over Paing Pyae Sone to village elders, it was learnt.

On September 11, at 3:30 am a flame was found on the roof of the house of U Nyunt Tha Aung of Thingazar village in Minbya township. On receipt of the information, the combined force came to investigate the event, finding that the seized two cans was a kind of explosives stuffed inside.

Isuz (a) Paing Pyae Sone.

At about 6 am on 10 September, a dead body arrived at the Taungpyo Letwe hospital. The corpse was learnt to be a man named Dimar Mauk (a) Battar aged 49, living in 1st ward of Taungpyo Letwe. On 26 August at about 4:40 pm security forces searched for 3 terrorists who arrived at the ward, ARSA extremist terrorists started to fire at security forces. During the security forces' counter attack, he was said to have been shot dead.

It was learnt that on September 10 at about 1:15 pm security forces of Kyee Kyun outpost in Maungtaw township seized two long boats with 16 people and a corpse on board. The 16 people included 1 man, 3 women and 8 children and 4 other suspects including Zarhat Tusaung living in Gone Nar village.—Myanmar News Agency ■

# Campaign launches on anti-quid and tobacco leaf products via media

A ceremony to launch a media campaign on anti-betel quid with tobacco and tobacco products was held at Ministry of Health and Sports.

First, a message sent by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to launching ceremony was read by Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint.

In his opening address at the ceremony, Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe warned rising deaths rate from non-infectious disease, blaming on betel quid with tobacco and tobacco products.

The ministry would raise awareness on danger of tobacco and tobacco products so that people can avoid health hazards, he said.

The Union minister also stressed the important role of media in the campaign, pledging to reduce the consumption of betel quid with tobacco and tobacco products in the country.

The six-week media campaign will be jointly conducted by Ministry of Health and Sports and related ministries together with People's Health Foundation and will raise awareness of the danger and hazards of consuming betel squid with tobacco and tobacco products. An educative video entitled "Avoid quid to avoid regret" was shown to the attendants of the ceremony. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Ye Aung and Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu meet with local residents in Maungtaw. **PHOTO: MNA**

# Site visit to Maungtaw region for security and other matters

UNION Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Ye Aung and Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu conducted a site visit yesterday afternoon to Maungtaw region from Sittway for Maungtaw region security and area domination, repair and reconstructing basic infrastructures and resettlement of displaced local populace due to ARSA extremist terrorist attacks.

In the visit the Union Minister, Chief Minister and party went by helicopter to Angumaw, Kyaukpandu, Alethankyaw, Udaung, Kaing-gyi, Thayaykonbaung, Kyikanpyin, Laungdon, Kyeinchaung, Trane, Wetkyein, Thetkaingnya, Nanyakaing, Khamaungseit in Maungtaw District and met with Lt-Gen Aung Kyaw Zaw of Commander-in-Chief (Army) Office in Buthidaung to discuss regional security, area domination, border fence, border road, and approach road repair.

During the visit the Union Minister, Chief Minister and party provided food, clothing and utensils for people living in the region it is learnt.—Myanmar News Agency ■

# Specific ethical principles and standards of media

Khin Maung Oo

NEWS and information on ARSA extremist terrorist attacks in Northern Rakhine State are moving round the world, as against the truth, that is, actual events, in abnormal appearances. In other words, the truth has plunged into a deep hole, because of the one-sided news and information based on partial and unconfirmed facts from unreliable sources, rather than the news and information which the national-level information committee is releasing in accord with the changing times.

By manipulating the presentation, approach, perspective and choice of words, some professional journalists have posted or broadcast news and articles. Consequently their postings and articles have been shared on social media such as Facebook. Thus the events that occurred in northern Rakhine State have been depicted as grave violations of human rights and inhumane tortures committed on the Muslim population in that area. Whereas the voice of the local media, national ethnic people from Rakhine State, innocent people who had been victimized by extremist terrorists, the reports written by a handful of respected journalists and scholars from the international community who reported on the actual events, nearly disappeared under the overwhelming and powerful influence of foreign media. They include racial agitations, resulting in protests and demonstrations against Myanmar and Myanmar diplomatic missions and Myanmar nationals in some countries, which can be said to be greater than protests against nuclear threats.

In regard to the affair of northern Rakhine State, unbiased news, information and researches conducted by interested researchers from foreign countries have come out recently. From these findings, we came to know that some matters need to be questioned, as to specific ethical principles and media standards of some international journalists. In the article written by Nicholas Kristof in the New York Times, the writer gave a wrong pretext that his writing included only a few voices of local Rakhine nationals for fear that the long article would make readers bored. Out of the two sides, he laid stress on one side only. This is surely tantamount to giving priority to making profit rather than laying stress on truth and fairness. And, in the news coverage of BBC on September 7 presented by Reporter Jonathan Haidt who accompanied the Press team to Buthidaung and Maungtaw, the reporter said that some national ethnic people got involved in arson cases. His writing was found to have been based on unconfirmed news and information, by neglecting actual events on the ground. He has neglected to report about the Rakhine ethnic nationals and innocent people suffering from great difficulties, mine attacks planted by ARSA extremist terrorists, the brutal killing of innocent ethnic nationals, abduction and arsons.

Honesty, fairness and endowment of abilities to deal with any problem are real qualities of excellent journalists. Journalists should perform their duties with genuine Cetana, in trying to find out the solution to a problem, by reporting news with detailed facts, without bias and without any desire for sensationalism. ■

# Will Myanmar lead drug policy reform in Southeast Asia?

Renaud Cachia
Transnational Institute

*A commentary on a draft bill recently proposed at Parliament*

MYANMAR is better known for its serious drug problems - including large-scale illicit drugs production and trafficking and high rates of heroin use - than for implementing progressive drug policies that prioritise the health of its population. However, this could change in the near future.

## Change is in the air

Myanmar is better known for its serious drug problems - including large-scale illicit drugs production and trafficking and high rates of heroin use - than for implementing progressive drug policies that prioritise the health of its population. However, this could change in the near future. Last year, Police Colonel Myint Aung, head of the International Department of the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC), commented in an interview that legislative changes were being considered to "make [drug use] a health issue, rather than a criminal one". More recently, Major General Aung Soe, the military-appointed deputy Minister for Home Affairs, declared to a Member of the Parliament that "prevention and judicial strategies are not enough to solve drug problems," and that "the economy, social affairs, health and development must [also] be taken into consideration".

This changing approach to tackling drug issues is reflected in a draft bill that was approved by the upper house of the Parliament ("Amyothar Hluttaw") on the 16th of August. The text proposes to introduce several amendments to 1993 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law and, most notably, to eliminate prison penalties for drug use. In a country where failing to register as a drug user can lead to 3 to 5 years imprisonment, and where up to 74% of all inmates are in prison for – mostly minor – drug-related offences, the step is significant. However, if Myanmar policy makers really want drug users to be seen as people who need help and support, rather than as merely criminals, it is fundamental that they also extend the exemption from prison penalties to include the possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use.

The decriminalisation of drug use has long been advocated for by numerous organisations, including several local and international NGOs and UN Agencies. In February this year, the Drug Policy Advocacy Group – Myanmar (DPAG), a civil society platform, also released a briefing that recommended ending the criminalisation of drug use and increasing access to health, harm reduction and voluntary treatment for drug users, among other interventions. Indeed, extensive evidence from around the world shows that, while the fear of prison penalties is not an effective deterrent against drug use, it does have a substantial negative impact on the health of drug users and the community at large.

## What benefits can be expected from the current drug law reform?

The elimination of prison penalties for drug use will no doubt generate a debate in Myanmar. Already numerous people, including parents and teachers, are raising an important and legitimate question: what will happen if Myanmar stops arresting and incarcerating drug users? Won't the country witness a further increase of drug use, especially among young people?

The best way to answer this question is to look at what has happened in the more than 30 countries that have already conducted similar reforms, albeit using very different models. Among those, the case of Portugal is emblematic, as results have been closely monitored and speak for themselves.

In 2001, the Portuguese Government announced that it would decriminalise drug use and scale up health and social interventions for drug users. Opponents strongly criticised the Government's decision and predicted a rampant increase of drug use among the youth, or even the impending transformation of Portugal into a haven for "drug tourists". More than 15 years later, none of these predictions have materialised. Instead, Portugal's policy has been saluted as one of the most successful in the world due to overwhelmingly positive results: the transmission of HIV and other blood-borne diseases sharply decreased; the number of deaths by overdose dropped; the number of drug users entering drug dependence treatment programmes increased dramatically, while the number of drug users and problematic drug users, especially among adolescents, fell. Finally, overcrowding in the criminal justice system reduced and crimes related to drug consumption, in particular petty thefts, declined.

Several countries in Latin America have also carried out legal reforms that pursued the same objective and decriminalised drug use. In Southeast Asia, neighbouring Thailand is considering introducing similar changes to reduce prison overcrowding and respond more effectively to drug use related problems. Myanmar's decision to prioritise a public health and human rights approach, in line with the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document, is a highly encouraging move that sharply contrasts with the intensification of the war on drugs and the increase of violence observed in the Philippines and a few other countries in the region.

Of course, every context is unique, and it is always difficult to anticipate the impact of a given policy change. However, the numerous experiences around the world clearly show that the harms of criminalisation far outweigh those of decriminalisation. The Myanmar government's intention to eliminate prison penalties for drug use is therefore excellent news and must be applauded.

A closer look at the proposed changes, nevertheless, reveals that the draft bill recently approved by the upper house of the Parliament still contains problematic aspects. Four of them, in particular, require special attention: the continued criminalisation of drug possession for personal use; the imposition of compulsory treatment for drug users; the heavy criminalisation of small-scale subsistence poppy farmers; and the continued possibility of using the death penalty for drug related offences.

Fortunately, it is not too late to incorporate additional amendments to the text. The following sections propose calibrated but essential changes that Members of the Parliament could consider as priorities. These would assuredly help to improve the lives of tens of thousands of people suffering from drug related problems in the country.

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## Union Supreme Court sits to pass judgment on special civil appeal cases

Chief Justice of the Union U Htun Htun Oo and the other Union Supreme Court judges ruled on four special criminal appeal cases and five special civil appeal cases.

The court also heard a special criminal appeal case and four special civil appeal cases. —Myanmar News Agency ■

## State Counsellor receives RCSS/SSA . .

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Also in attendance were Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe, National Security Advisor U Thaung Tun, Deputy Minister for the President's Office U Min Thu, Deputy Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Khin Maung Tin and Director General U Zaw Htay, Secretary 3 U Sai Ngin, Central Executive Committee Member U Sai Mane, U Sai Lyen from PMC and office staff U Kham San and U Hao Kham.—Myanmar News Agency ■

## Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker leaves for Sittway to provide cash assistance

AMYOTHA Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung and six other parliamentarians left Yangon by air for Sittway to provide cash to displaced people who fled violence and unrest in northern Rakhine State, yesterday.

The deputy speaker and party were welcomed in Sittway by Rakhine State Minister for Electricity, Industry and Transportation U Aung Kyaw Zan and officials at the airport.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung and party arrive Sittway Airport to provide cash to displaced person. **PHOTO: MNA**

# Will Myanmar lead drug policy reform in Southeast Asia?

FROM PAGE 9

Local and international NGOs provide health services, such as needle and syringe exchange programmes or HIV testing and treatment, in regions most affected by drug use. However, coverage is still largely insufficient, and numerous barriers continue to exist for drug users attempting to access these services. In addition, several international donors who had traditionally funded harm reduction programmes in Myanmar announced their intention to significantly reduce their financial support. In this context, it is all the more important that the Myanmar Government reaffirms its commitment to ensuring an adequate provision of harm reduction services in the country. Concretely, this should translate into the Government allocating dedicated resources to the provision of such services, either directly or indirectly. In addition, the Government should express clear political support and back the work of NGOs that operate in this sector, which often face opposition from local communities or authorities.

Besides harm reduction, the number of hospitals and specialised facilities that offer evidence-based drug dependence treatment services is disproportionally low, especially in regions that are severely affected by injecting drug use. As a matter of priority, methadone programmes, which have proved to be highly effective and are hugely appreciated by drug users, should be urgently and massively scaled up across the territory. The introduction of other types of substitution treatment options, such as buprenorphine, could be considered too. In a similar way, the opening, under the technical supervision of the Ministry of Health, of voluntary, evidence-informed and community-based treatment programmes offering behavioural therapies would immensely benefit the increasing number of amphetamines users throughout the country. Voluntary rehabilitation programmes for drug users formerly run by the Ministry of Social Welfare should also be re-activated and resourced adequately.

Last but not least, all law enforcement agents, from top ranking to field level officers, should be systematically sensitised to the changes brought in by the amended law, and in particular to its concrete implications and the practice on the ground.

**Promote alternative development projects in opium growing areas**

Despite an intensification of poppy eradication efforts in the past few years, opium cultivation in Myanmar has almost tripled since 2006. These apparently paradoxical results highlight the importance of addressing the driving factors of illicit crops cultivation, described above. Although the need for rural development is often endorsed in principle, very few communities have so far received any concrete support. In their last statement, the Myanmar Opium Farmers Forum invited "government officials to provide basic services and long-term support to develop communities, instead of only eradicating poppy fields and demanding bribes and illegal taxation".

As the example of Thailand mentioned above illustrates, achieving a sustainable reduction of opium cultivation will require the Myanmar Government to make a considerable and sustained investment in rural development projects in impoverished poppy growing areas. Ideally, such development programmes should be integrated within a broader national rural development strategy. Clear policies stating that forced eradication of illicit crops should be avoided at least until people have access to sustainable alternative livelihood opportunities should also be adopted.

**Conclusion: will Myanmar become the leader of progressive drug policy reform in South East Asia?**

The myth that tough punishment is the only way to, once and for all, "eradicate the drug problem", remains deeply entrenched in South East Asia. Several countries such as Thailand and the Philippines have implemented their own "war on drugs", using a combination of heavy prison penalties, harsh law enforcement, forced treatment, the death penalty and even extra-judicial killings of drug users. However, these methods are increasingly showing their limits: far from reducing the health related harms of drug use or protecting communities, they are only proving to exacerbate violence, fuel corruption, and severely undermine the rule of law. The uncomfortable truth is that there are no easy fixes or miracle policies that would address all drug-related problems and issues. There are, however, drug policies that can significantly reduce those problems and bring immense benefits to both people using drugs and the community at large. The Myanmar Government has acknowledged that criminalising drug use has been counter-productive in many ways and that public health should be a central element of its drug policies. This is significant progress. However, by choosing to exclude possession for personal use from the exemption from prison penalties, Members of the Parliament risk undermining the stated objective of prioritising public health and could even jeopardise the entire reform. Making drug treatment a compulsory requirement for all drug users is also problematic, and could result in simply reproducing the mistakes made by other countries in the region. Similarly, continuing to criminalise subsistence poppy farmers would mean reasserting unfair policies that have already proved to be a huge failure. Effective drug policies should be largely based on public health considerations. But they also need to consecrate human rights and development as equally important pillars. The provisions mentioned above, which are all still contained in the draft bill, directly contradict these two aspects.

Legal reforms are not conducted on a yearly basis, but only occasionally. The Myanmar Government has, now, a unique opportunity to put aside the failures of the past, and adopt evidence-based policies that can improve the lives of thousands of people. The important changes underway undoubtedly represent major progress. Nevertheless, further amendments to the 1993 drug law, in line with the suggestions above, should be seriously considered in order to make sure these changes have the desired impact. In addition, those legal changes will need to be accompanied by serious health and rural development interventions led by the Government.

The old "repressive reflex" may be embedded into many people's minds. Yet there is nothing inevitable about it. Enlightened leaders and Governments are often at the forefront of legal changes that precede important social transformations. Experience shows that when ambitious reforms are conducted with determination and strong political will, the public rapidly embraces change and soon transitions towards more progressive views.

The real risk for the Government of Myanmar does not lie in its people opposing changes considered "too progressive," but rather in merely conducting a partial reform, which will fail to deliver tangible results and ultimately backfire on those who approved it. Myanmar has a unique opportunity to make history and take the lead in drug policy reform in Southeast Asia. But in order to do so, it must not hesitate to complete its transition from a repressive to a supportive model, based not only on public health, but also on human rights and development.

**(The Transnational Institute (TNI) is an international research and advocacy institute committed to building a just, democratic and sustainable planet. For more than 40 years, TNI has served a unique nexus between social movements, engaged scholars and policy makers.)**