

Unfair Police Quota Part of Drug Problem in Colombia: Drug Policy Researcher



Bogotá, May 31 (NNN-RHC), --Police drug enforcement strategies in Colombia that encourage a focus on arrest numbers are part of the continuing problems the country has in reducing the prevalence of drug addiction and its related criminal activity, according to a Colombia-based researcher.

Colombia relies excessively on punishment for drug use at the cost of improving health care and rehabilitation for users, Diana Guzman told 'Colombia Reports' in an interview on Thursday.

Guzman co-authored a report from the Research Consortium on Drugs and the Law Think-Tank about drug policy in Latin America and her section on Colombia revealed that although personal drug use is decriminalized in Colombia, there are practices which criminalize drug users.

Police efficiency targets often focus on maximizing the quantity of arrests, meaning that the national police allegedly detain drug users unnecessarily: "some police officers in Colombia interpret this as an authorization to seize illegal substances," said Guzman, "Interviewing drug users, we found that, when arrested for carrying substances, people are normally let off after money is exchanged."

Guzman identifies Colombia's main problem in tackling drug consumption as the insufficient budget for health care: while investment in accessible and high-quality rehabilitation services is an urgent priority, the Colombian government has "not invested in sufficient resources to address the situation from a health standpoint."

Released on Wednesday, the report brings together researchers from 8 Latin American countries to evaluate state responses to drug consumption in Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Bolivia.

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