

A Comprehensive Look at the Legalization of Drugs in Iran

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the feasibility of drug legalization in Iran through a multidimensional analysis of its legal, social, and economic consequences. Within Iran's current legal system, the production, distribution, and consumption of drugs are considered criminal offenses and are met with severe penalties. Although these laws were designed with preventive and security-oriented objectives, they have created challenges such as prison overcrowding, a rising number of court cases, and a lack of emphasis on treatment-based programs. Based on official statistics, the estimated number of addicts ranges from 2.8 to 4.4 million, indicating a critical need to re-evaluate existing approaches.

Through a comparative analysis of the experiences of countries like Portugal (harm reduction policy) and the Netherlands (limited legalization), this article seeks to answer whether reforming current laws—shifting the focus towards treating addicts rather than punishing them, and distinguishing between users and traffickers—could lead to a reduction in socio-economic harms. Furthermore, the potential impacts of legalization, such as reducing the costs associated with combating trafficking or generating tax revenue, are discussed.

The findings of this study can assist policymakers in designing practical solutions, including the adoption of a "harm reduction" model and the strengthening of rehabilitation institutions.

Keywords

Drug Legalization, Legal Consequences, Social Consequences, Economic Consequences, Iranian Legal System

Introduction

Drugs are a major social, economic, and health challenge in many countries, including Iran. This issue has not only become a serious threat to individual and public health but has also had extensive consequences for security, economic development, and social cohesion. In response to

this challenge, the Islamic Republic of Iran has established a specific legal framework to combat drug trafficking and consumption, which heavily emphasizes criminal penalties and stringent policies.

Drug laws in Iran, particularly after the enactment of the Anti-Narcotics Law in 1988 and its subsequent amendments, have been introduced as tools to control and reduce the harms caused by this phenomenon. These laws include severe penalties for producers and distributors of drugs, as well as programs for the treatment and rehabilitation of addicts. However, the stringent approaches and severe punishments have attracted significant criticism and raised concerns regarding human rights violations and the increasing prison population.

In today's world, everyone is aware of the devastating harms of drugs; however, the statistics on drug trafficking have shown an increase, and its consumption has risen globally. Some governments, like Iran's, have implemented strict laws, such as the amended Anti-Narcotics Law ratified on 10/25/1988, which in some cases even prescribes the death penalty for drug traffickers. Yet, what statistics and figures show is that severity is not always effective, and this law has failed to prevent and deter the crimes of drug trafficking, drug dealing, and drug consumption. In contrast, other countries such as Uruguay, Canada, the United States of America, South Africa, etc., have prevented this crime by legalizing drugs, although some countries, despite legalizing drug use, have still not succeeded in prevention—a topic we will address in all its dimensions.

This article aims to take a comprehensive look at Iran's severe drug laws, examine their social and economic impacts, and analyze the existing challenges and opportunities for reforming these laws. Given the complexities of this issue, our goal is to provide solutions for creating a balance

between social security and human rights, as well as improving the situation of addicts and reducing the harms caused by addiction.

History of Drug Use in Iran

The Safavid Era

Drug use in Iran expanded during the Safavid era with the proliferation of opium poppy cultivation. Until the reign of Shah Tahmasp, the use of bhang (cannabis), opium, and hashish was an accepted norm in Iran and was prevalent among the public, in coffeehouses, and in the Safavid royal court. After Shah Tahmasp, Shah Abbas the Great took measures to limit opium consumption in Iran. In the year 1005 AH (1596-97 CE / 976 SH), he issued an edict to abandon opium. However, opium poppy cultivation continued in Iran even at that time.

The Qajar Era

During the Qajar era, the production and consumption of drugs in Iran increased, and the government supported it. Opium poppies were cultivated in 18 provinces of Iran, and there were seven types of opium. During the reign of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar, addiction existed as a phenomenon in Iran. At the same time, opium exports were a source of foreign currency income for Iran. In the Safavid period, opium was mostly consumed orally, and opium smoking in its modern form took shape during the Qajar era. Following the victory of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution in 1324 AH (1906 CE / 1285 SH), the Iranian government came under internal and external pressure to combat drugs. As a result, the "Opium Restriction Law" was passed by the National Consultative Assembly.

The Pahlavi Era

The cultivation and sale of opium by the government continued until 1941 CE (1320 SH) and the departure of Reza Shah from Iran. In 1952 CE (1331 SH), the "Law Prohibiting the Preparation, Purchase, Sale, and Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages and Opium and Its Derivatives" was passed by the National Consultative Assembly. In 1945 CE (1324 SH), the government presented the "Bill to Prohibit Opium Poppy Cultivation" to the National Consultative Assembly, which was passed the same year. This law, in addition to prohibiting poppy cultivation, required addicts to take steps to quit drug use within six months. In 1968 CE (1347 SH), the government passed the "Law on Limited Poppy Cultivation and Opium Export" through the parliament.

After the Revolution

After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, criminal laws to combat drugs were passed, and poppy cultivation in Iran was halted. The current law for dealing with drugs was passed in 1988 (1367 SH) with 45 articles. Currently, drug trafficking in Iran can lead to execution. Approximately 70% of executions in Iran are related to drug offenses. However, due to the failure of the policy of intensifying punishment, an article was added to the current law on July 16, 2017 (25 Tir 1396 SH) to reduce the punishment to less than execution. There have also been discussions about the government distributing diluted drugs like methadone.

Legal Definition of Transporting and Possessing Drugs

From a legal perspective, transporting and possessing drugs means having or being in possession of drugs in any way or form. This crime includes the following:

- Transporting drugs inside the body.
- Transporting drugs in personal belongings.
- Possessing drugs at home.
- Possessing drugs in the workplace.
- Possessing drugs in any other location.

Drug Trafficking and the Increase in the Number of Addicts

According to some statistics from the year 1400 SH (2021/22 CE), there are over 12 million drug addicts in Iran, 4.5 million of whom are regular users. Furthermore, 10 percent of the addicts are women, and thousands of them are children.

Iran is one of the most significant transit routes for drug trafficking in the world.

Statistics from the year 1403 SH (2024/25 CE) regarding the number of addicts in the country indicate an urgent need for more serious measures to control and reduce addiction in Iran. This problem not only endangers individuals' health but also directly and indirectly impacts the economy, security, and culture of society. Effective solutions require comprehensive cooperation between the government, civil institutions, and the public to confront this crisis sustainably.

Elements Constituting the Crime of Transporting and Possessing Drugs

- Knowledge and Intent (Scienter): The perpetrator must be aware of the type and

quantity of the drugs and must intend to transport and possess them.

· Discernment Capacity: The perpetrator must have the power to distinguish right from wrong at the time of committing the crime.

· Material Element (Actus Reus): Having or being in possession of drugs in any way or form.

Penalty for Aiding and Abetting in Drug Transportation in 2025/26 (1404 SH) Aiding and abetting in drug transportation refers to any form of assistance or support provided to an individual who intends to transport drugs. This assistance can be in the form of physical acts, providing equipment, supplying information, deception, or instigation and encouragement. The penalty for aiding and abetting is related to the extent and type of assistance provided, as well as the quantity of drugs transported by the principal offender.

Latest Update to the Anti-Narcotics Law

The Law Amending the Anti-Narcotics Law and Adding Articles to it, ratified on 10/25/1988 (1367.8.3) by the Expediency Discernment Council.

Article 1: The following acts are criminal, and the perpetrator shall be sentenced to the penalties prescribed by this law:

1. Cultivation of opium poppy and coca under any circumstances, and cultivation of cannabis for the purpose of producing narcotics.
2. Importing, dispatching, exporting, producing, and manufacturing all types of narcotics.
3. Possessing, transporting, purchasing, distributing, concealing, transiting, offering, and selling narcotics.
4. Establishing or operating a place for narcotics consumption.

5. Consuming narcotics in any form or manner, except in cases exempted by law.
6. Producing, manufacturing, purchasing, selling, possessing tools, instruments, and equipment related to the manufacture and consumption of narcotics.
7. Harboring or giving refuge to accused or convicted individuals in narcotics cases who are under prosecution or have been arrested.
8. Destroying or concealing evidence of the criminals' offenses.
9. Placing narcotics or consumption tools and instruments in a location with the intent to accuse another person.

Note: The term "narcotics" in this law refers to all substances enumerated in the decree regarding the list of narcotics ratified in 1959 (1338 SH) and its subsequent amendments, or those recognized and declared as narcotics by the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education.

Article 2: Anyone who cultivates opium poppy or coca, or cultivates cannabis for the purpose of producing narcotics, in addition to the destruction of the crop, shall be punished according to the amount cultivated as follows:

1. For the first offense: A fine of 10 to 100 million Rials.
2. For the second offense: A fine of 50 to 500 million Rials and 30 to 70 lashes.
3. For the third offense: A fine of 100 million to 1 billion Rials, 1 to 70 lashes, and two to five years of imprisonment.
4. For the fourth offense: Execution.

Note: If it is proven that the cultivation of opium poppy, coca, or cannabis was carried out on the order of the property owner, tenant, or their legal

representative, the person who gave the order (the instigator) shall be subject to the penalties prescribed in this article, provided they are more powerful than the perpetrator (mubāshir). The perpetrator (mubāshir), who was tasked with the cultivation, shall be sentenced to a fine of 10 to 30 million Rials and 15 to 40 lashes.

Article 3: Anyone who possesses, conceals, or transports opium poppy seeds or bulbs, coca seeds or leaves, or cannabis seeds shall be sentenced to a fine of 1 million to 30 million Rials and 1 to 70 lashes. In the case of cannabis seeds, intent to produce narcotics from them must be established.

Article 4: Anyone who imports into the country, exports, dispatches, produces, manufactures, distributes, sells, or offers for sale Bang, Charas (hashish), opium, its syrup, residue, or dross in any manner, shall be punished proportionally and according to the quantity of the mentioned substances as follows:

1. Up to fifty grams: A fine of up to 4 million Rials and up to 50 lashes.
2. More than fifty grams up to five hundred grams: A fine of 4 million to 50 million Rials, 20 to 74 lashes, and if the court deems necessary, up to three years of imprisonment.
3. More than five hundred grams up to five kilograms: A fine of 50 million to 200 million Rials, 50 to 74 lashes, and three to fifteen years of imprisonment.
4. More than five kilograms: Execution and confiscation of property, except for the cost of providing a conventional livelihood for the convict's family.

Note: If it is established that the perpetrators of the offenses under Clause 4 of this article have committed this crime for the first time, have not

succeeded in distributing or selling the drugs, and the quantity is twenty kilograms or less, the court, considering all the mentioned conditions, shall sentence them to life imprisonment, 74 lashes, and confiscation of property (except for the cost of providing a conventional livelihood for their family). For quantities above twenty kilograms, perpetrators shall be executed under any circumstances.

Article 5: Anyone who purchases, possesses, conceals, or transports opium and the other substances mentioned in Article 4, considering proportionality and the quantity of the substances and the note below this article, shall be punished as follows:

1. Up to fifty grams: A fine of up to 3 million Rials and up to 50 lashes.
2. More than fifty grams up to five hundred grams: A fine of 5 to 15 million Rials and 10 to 74 lashes.
3. More than five hundred grams up to five kilograms: A fine of 15 million to 60 million Rials, 40 to 74 lashes, and two to five years of imprisonment.
4. More than five kilograms up to twenty kilograms: A fine of 60 million to 200 million Rials, 50 to 74 lashes, and five to ten years of imprisonment. Upon the second repetition, in addition to the mentioned penalties, confiscation of property (except for the cost of providing a conventional livelihood for the convict's family) shall replace the fine. For the third repetition: Execution and confiscation of property (except for the cost of providing a conventional livelihood for the convict's family).
5. More than twenty kilograms up to one hundred kilograms: In addition to the penalty prescribed in Clause 4, two million Rials shall be added to the criminal fine for each kilogram. In case of

repetition: Execution and confiscation of property (except for the cost of a conventional livelihood for the convict's family).

6. More than one hundred kilograms: In addition to the fines and lashes prescribed in Clauses 4 and 5: Life imprisonment. In case of repetition: Execution and confiscation of property (except for the cost of providing a conventional livelihood for the convict's family).

Note: "Perpetrators of the above offenses, if they have acted as part of a chain and the drugs are for domestic consumption, shall be subject to the penalties of Article 4. If one of these two conditions is not met, they shall be sentenced to the penalties of this article."

Article 6: Perpetrators of the offenses mentioned in Clauses 1, 2, and 3 of both Articles 4 and 5, upon repetition of the offense in the same clause or any other clause, shall be sentenced for the second time to one and a half times, for the third time to two times, and for subsequent instances to two and a half, three, three and a half times, etc., the penalty for the new crime. The penalty of lashes from the second time onward is a maximum of 74 lashes. If, as a result of repeating offenses under the mentioned clauses of Article 4, the quantity of drugs exceeds five kilograms, the perpetrator shall be sentenced to execution and confiscation of property. If, as a result of repeating offenses under Articles 4 and 5 or the mentioned clauses of Article 5, the quantity of drugs exceeds five kilograms, the perpetrator shall be sentenced to twice the penalty prescribed in Clause 4 of Article 5.

Article 7: If the perpetrator of the offenses mentioned in Articles 4 and 5 is a government employee or an employee of state companies, institutions, organizations, and affiliated companies, and according to employment laws is not subject to dismissal from government service,

they shall, in addition to the penalties mentioned in the previous articles, be sentenced for the first time to six months suspension, for the second time to one year suspension, and for the third time to permanent dismissal from government service.

Article 8: Anyone who imports heroin, morphine, cocaine, and other chemical derivatives of morphine and cocaine into the country, or engages in their manufacture, production, distribution, export, dispatch, purchase, or sale, or offers them for sale, or possesses, conceals, or transports them, considering proportionality and the quantity, shall be punished as follows:

1. Up to five centigrams: A fine of 500,000 Rials to 1 million Rials and 20 to 50 lashes.
2. More than five centigrams up to one gram: A fine of 2 million to 6 million Rials and 30 to 70 lashes.
3. More than one gram up to four grams: A fine of 8 million to 20 million Rials, two to five years of imprisonment, and 30 to 70 lashes.

Note: If the location mentioned in this article is a production, commercial, or service unit, in addition to the penalty prescribed in this article, the initial permit and operating license of the production unit, as well as the business license of the commercial and service unit, shall be suspended for a period of one year. If the crime is repeated, the said unit shall be confiscated by the government.

Article 15: Addiction is a crime. However, all addicts are permitted to go to centers designated by the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education and take steps for their treatment and rehabilitation.

- Note 1: The aforementioned addicts are exempt from criminal prosecution for the crime of

addiction during the period of treatment and rehabilitation.

- Note 2: The costs of diagnosis, treatment, medicine, and rehabilitation shall be paid by the addict to the relevant units based on approved tariffs. Costs related to indigent addicts shall be provided by the government annually.
- Note 3: The government is obliged to take necessary action to revive and establish rehabilitation camps for drug addicts.

Article 16: Addicts to the narcotics mentioned in Articles 4 and 8 shall be sentenced to a fine of 1 million to 5 million Rials and up to 30 lashes. In case of repetition, they shall be sentenced to up to 74 lashes for each instance. If the perpetrator is an employee of the government, state institutions, or state-affiliated organizations, in addition to the fine and lashes, they shall be sentenced to permanent dismissal from government service. However, if it is proven that the convict has quit addiction, they can again go through the employment process and serve in government agencies.

Article 17: Deleted.

Article 18: Deleted.

Article 19: Non-addicts who consume narcotics shall be punished according to the type of substance as follows:

1. Consumption of substances mentioned in Article (4): 20 to 74 lashes and a fine of 1 million to 5 million Rials.
2. Consumption of substances mentioned in Article (8): 50 to 74 lashes and a fine of 2 million to 10 million Rials.

Article 20: Anyone who imports, manufactures, buys, or sells tools and equipment specifically for the production or consumption of narcotics, in

addition to their confiscation, shall be sentenced to a fine of 1 million to 5 million Rials and 10 to 50 lashes. Perpetrators who possess, conceal, or transport tools and equipment for narcotics consumption, in addition to their confiscation, shall be sentenced to a fine of 100,000 to 500,000 Rials per item or 5 to 20 lashes. Antiques are exempt from this article.

Article 21: Anyone who knowingly and intentionally harbors or gives refuge to an accused person under this law who is being prosecuted or is in the process of being arrested, or cooperates in harboring or helping them escape, shall in each case be sentenced to one-fifth to one-half of the penalty for the crime of which the accused they helped escape or gave refuge to is charged. In the case of life imprisonment and execution, the perpetrator shall be sentenced respectively to four to ten years imprisonment and ten to fifteen years imprisonment and 30 to 74 lashes.

· Note 1: The penalty for first-degree relatives of the accused shall in no case exceed one-tenth of the penalty for the principal accused.

· Note 2: If the perpetrator is a law enforcement officer, prison official, or judicial official, in addition to the mentioned penalty, they shall also be dismissed from government service.

Article 22: Anyone who harbors or helps escape an accused person under this law after their arrest, or a convict under this law, or cooperates and participates in their escape, shall be sentenced to half the penalty of the principal accused or criminal. In the case of life imprisonment and execution, the perpetrator shall be sentenced respectively to ten years and twenty years imprisonment and 30 to 74 lashes.

· Note 1: If the perpetrator is a law enforcement, security, prison, or judicial official, they shall be sentenced to the penalty of the principal accused

or criminal and also dismissal from government service, except in the case of execution where the official's penalty shall be twenty-five years imprisonment and permanent dismissal from government service.

· Note 2: In cases falling under Articles 21 and 22, if the principal accused is acquitted after arrest, the execution of sentences shall immediately proceed to their release. Also, if the principal accused is convicted of a lesser crime, in any case, the conviction of the person who helped them escape or gave them refuge is subject to review according to Article 32 of this law.

Article 23: Anyone who knowingly and intentionally acts to destroy or conceal evidence of a narcotics crime shall be sentenced to one-fifth to half the penalty of the principal accused. In the case of life imprisonment, the perpetrator shall be sentenced to four to ten years, and in the case of execution, to eight to twenty years imprisonment.

Article 24: Each member of the Islamic Rural Council is obliged, upon becoming aware of the cultivation of opium poppy, coca, or cannabis within the village's jurisdiction, to inform the village head (Dehdar) and the nearest police station or precinct in writing. The commanders of police stations and precincts are obliged to immediately, and simultaneously with reporting the matter to their superior commander, go to the cultivation site together with the village head (Dehdar) or district head (Bakhshdar) and a representative of the Islamic Rural Council, destroy it, prepare a report of the action, and hand it over along with the accused or accused persons to the competent judicial authorities.

Note: If opium poppy, coca, or cannabis is cultivated or growing within urban jurisdictions, the responsible officers (Law Enforcement Force, Municipality, Basij Resistance Force of the

region) are obliged, upon becoming aware, to inform the nearest police station or Basij Resistance Force base of the region, and the relevant officials shall act together with a representative of the competent judicial authority according to the provisions of this article.

Article 25: The persons mentioned in Article 24 and its note who, without justified excuse, refuse or neglect to perform their duty shall be sentenced for the first time to six months to one year deprivation from government positions and for the second time to permanent dismissal from government service. Members of Islamic Councils shall also be deprived of membership in Islamic councils for six months to one year for the first time, and permanently for the second time.

Article 26: Anyone who places narcotics or consumption tools and instruments in a location with the intent to accuse another person shall be sentenced to the maximum penalty for that same crime.

Article 27: If a person intentionally and falsely accuses another of one of the crimes subject to this law for the purpose of prosecution by competent authorities, they shall be sentenced to 20 to 74 lashes.

Article 28: All property obtained through drug trafficking, as well as the property of fugitive accused persons under this law if there is sufficient evidence for confiscation, shall be confiscated by the government and is not subject to Article 53 of the Constitution regarding state property.

· Note: Vehicles obtained from armed engagements with drug traffickers shall be confiscated by the court for the benefit of the operating organization.

Article 29: Fines and other funds resulting from the implementation of this law shall be deposited

into a centralized account opened at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance. These funds shall be expended with the approval of the Headquarters mentioned in Article 33 and the confirmation of the President.

Article 30: Vehicles identified as carrying narcotics shall be confiscated by the government and, with the approval of the Anti-Narcotics Headquarters, placed at the disposal of the discovering organization. If the transportation of narcotics occurred without the permission and knowledge of the vehicle owner, the vehicle shall be returned to its owner.

· Note: All individuals who in any way construct or install hidden compartments for transporting narcotics in vehicles shall, if a crime occurs, be considered accomplices to the committed crime; otherwise, they shall be sentenced to three to six months imprisonment and, depending on the case, a fine of 10 million to 50 million Rials.

Article 31: Convicts unable to pay all or part of the imposed monetary fine must reside in semi-open or open prisons, or employment and vocational training centers, at a rate of 10,000 Rials per day. If the conduct and behavior of the convicts during the mentioned period of residence is deemed appropriate, upon request and assessment by the center administration officials and with the agreement of the sentence execution authority, the aforementioned amount may be calculated at a rate of 20,000 to 50,000 Rials per day.

· Note 1: Installment payment of the imposed monetary fine after serving the imprisonment term is subject to obtaining collateral equivalent to it and a valid guarantee from a third party, the duration of which shall not exceed three years.

· Note 2: The duration of imprisonment in lieu of a monetary fine shall in no case exceed ten years.

Article 32: Death sentences issued under this law are final and enforceable after confirmation by the Head of the Supreme Court or the Attorney General. In other cases, if the Head of the Supreme Court or the Attorney General deems a sentence to be contrary to religious law (shar) or the law, or that the issuing judge was not competent, the Head of the Supreme Court or the Attorney General has the right to review and overturn the sentence; however, the existence of this right does not prevent the sentence from being final and enforceable.

Article 33: To prevent addiction and combat drug trafficking of all kinds, including production, distribution, purchase, sale, and consumption, as well as other matters mentioned in this law, a Headquarters chaired by the President shall be established. All executive and judicial operations, prevention programs, public education, and propaganda against narcotics will be centralized in this Headquarters. The members of the Headquarters are as follows:

1. The President
2. The Attorney General
3. The Minister of Interior
4. The Minister of Intelligence
5. The Minister of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education
6. The Minister of Education
7. The Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB)
8. The Commander of the Law Enforcement Force
9. The Head of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Iran

10. The Head of the Prisons, Security and Corrections Organization

11. The Commander of the Basij Resistance Force

12. The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance

Note 1: The President may appoint one representative on his behalf to manage the meetings of the Anti-Narcotics Headquarters.

Note 2: To prevent the commission of drug crimes, the government is obliged to allocate an annual budget for this purpose and notify the relevant agencies mentioned in this same article.

Article 34: The Anti-Narcotics Headquarters is authorized to prepare and draft necessary executive regulations based on requirement.

Article 35: Deleted.

Article 36: In all cases where, under this law, perpetrators are sentenced to the confiscation of all property (except the cost of providing a conventional livelihood for the family) in addition to the prescribed penalties, the court is obliged to specify the exact details of the confiscated property, including a detailed list of items considered exempt based on the opinion of an expert or specialist, precisely in the sentence or in an amended sentence. Violation of these provisions results in disciplinary prosecution and a conviction of grade 4 or higher.

Note: Courts are obliged to send a copy of all issued sentences to the Anti-Narcotics Headquarters after they become final.

Article 37: The duration of temporary detention shall in no case exceed 4 months. If within this period the criminal case has not resulted in a sentence, the issuing authority is obliged to revoke or reduce the aforementioned bail order, unless there are legal grounds or justifiable

reasons for maintaining the detention order, in which case the order is maintained with a statement of those reasons and grounds.

Article 38: The court may, in the presence of mitigating circumstances, reduce the discretionary punishments (Ta'zir) prescribed in this law by up to half of the minimum penalty for that crime. If a penalty has no minimum, that same penalty is reduced by up to half. The reduction for life imprisonment sentences shall be 15 years. In the case of the death penalty, a request for pardon and commutation of the sentence shall be sent to the Clemency Commission.

Note: All convicts who, after the issuance of the sentence, cooperate with the Law Enforcement Force or the operating organization in a way that leads to the discovery of networks, the court that issued the verdict may, upon the request of the Law Enforcement Force or the operating organization and based on relevant documents, reduce their penalty by up to half by amending the previously issued sentence.

Added Article 39: For the aggravation of punishment due to the repetition of a crime in all cases specified in this law, convictions or records after the implementation of the 1988 Anti-Narcotics Law are the basis for consideration.

Added Article 40: Anyone who knowingly and intentionally, with the intent to convert or produce narcotics, engages in the manufacture, purchase, sale, possession, transport, import, export, and offering of industrial and chemical substances such as Acetic Anhydride, Anthranilic Acid, Phenylacetic Acid, Acetyl Chloride, and other substances listed in Tables I and II annexed to Article 12 of the 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and its subsequent amendments and additions; and also anyone who engages in the

import, purchase, sale, manufacture, consumption, possession, or export of Codeine and Methadone, shall, considering proportionality and the quantity of the substances, be sentenced to the penalties prescribed in Article 5 of the Anti-Narcotics Law.

Article 41: The manufacture, production, purchase, sale, dispatch, possession, import, export, consumption, and transport of prohibited substances for medical, research, and industrial purposes, with a permit from the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education, is exempt from the provisions of this law.

Article 42: The Judiciary is authorized to hold a portion of drug convicts in special camps (with harsh and normal conditions) instead of prison.

The government is obliged to provide the necessary credits, facilities, and regulations for the establishment and administration of these camps within one year.

Note 1 - The administration of these camps is the responsibility of the judiciary.

Note 2 - Courts may specify confinement in these camps as a penalty for convicts instead of imprisonment.

The above law, comprising 42 articles and 25 notes, was presented in multiple sessions of the Expediency Discernment Assembly in implementation of Clause 8 of Article 110 of the Constitution and was finally approved by the Expediency Discernment Assembly on February 6, 1998.

Number of addicts in the country in 2024

According to published statistics, the number of addicts in the country is estimated to be between 2.8 million and 4.4 million. This discrepancy in

statistics is due to different data collection methods and varying definitions of addiction. For example, some statistics only consider regular users, while others include occasional users as well.

Rehabilitation of overt addicts and homeless individuals

In 2024, the Tehran Municipality rehabilitated 13,130 socially vulnerable individuals, of whom 6,193 were overt addicts and 5,513 were homeless.

Prevalence rate of addiction in age groups

According to available statistics, 58% of Iran's addicts are under 34 years old, indicating that a significant portion of the addicted population is young.

Number of overt addicts in the country

According to the Anti-Narcotics Police, approximately 50,000 to 65,000 overt addicts have been identified across the country.

Given the above statistics, addiction remains one of the major social challenges in Iran. It is essential to develop and implement more comprehensive programs for the prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of addicts to effectively address this issue.

Substances Used

The variety of substances used in Iran includes opium and its derivatives such as heroin, as well as cannabis. Additionally, synthetic substances like crystal meth and crack have become

prevalent in Iran due to their lower cost compared to traditional drugs. Unlike heroin and cannabis, opium is not explicitly prohibited by Shia clerics. However, it is considered forbidden for general use by genuine Shia scholars. Approximately 52% of addicts use opium, while around 48% consume substances such as heroin and crystal meth. The use of heroin, crystal meth, and the psychoactive substance "Gol" (weed) is on the rise.

Opium - A dried extract of the opium poppy plant, obtained by scoring the plant. Approximately 12% of opium consists of morphine, an opioid alkaloid used for pain relief.

Heroin - Known medically as diamorphine or diacetylmorphine, it is a highly addictive narcotic derived from morphine. It typically appears as a white or light to dark brown powder.

Crystal Meth - A stimulant drug that affects the central nervous system, leading to a sharp increase in the neurotransmitters dopamine, serotonin, norepinephrine, and adrenaline in the brain. Prior to the 1990s, crystal meth use in Iran was extremely limited. In a rapid situation assessment of drug abuse conducted in Iran in 2004, no cases of its use were detected.

Hashish and Gol (Weed) - Hashish is derived from the resin of the cannabis plant. The difference between hashish and marijuana lies in the fact that marijuana is obtained from the dried leaves and flowers of the cannabis plant.

Addiction Statistics

General Population

In February 2018, the total number of addicts was reported to be over 2.5 million. 17% of the

population expresses a desire to use narcotics, with 5% being current users and the remaining 12% likely to gravitate toward drug use if connections between users and traffickers are not severed and if there is inadequate management of the supply and demand market.

Women

Tobacco use among girls has increased, with "Gol" (weed) being the most commonly used substance among Iranian girls.

Universities

In the "Epidemiology of Addiction" study conducted by the Office of Cultural Studies of the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology during the 2002-2003 academic year on a sample of 5,321 students across 21 universities under the ministry's supervision, 586 students, or approximately 11%, were found to be regular users of narcotics.

Afghanistan

The proximity of opium cultivation areas in Afghanistan to Iran has had a significant impact on the rate and statistics of addiction in Iran.

Solutions

a) Enhancing surveillance of Iran's borders, particularly the Iran-Afghanistan border, through measures such as wall construction, landmining (similar to the minefields on the Uzbekistan-

Tajikistan border), and increasing monitoring outposts.

- b) Reducing the unemployment rate.
- c) Promoting public awareness and education about addictive substances from foundational levels within the education system.
- d) Combating corruption.
- e) Taking decisive action against distributors and sellers of addictive substances.
- f) Legalizing narcotics.

Review of Narcotics Legalization Worldwide

Legalizing non-industrial narcotics is proposed as a solution to control drug consumption in Iran. This would involve limiting the sale of narcotics to each individual to a specified amount.

Drug liberalization refers to reducing or eliminating restrictions on narcotics in national laws, which can be implemented through three approaches: re-legalization, legalization, and decriminalization of narcotics.

Arguments in favor of drug liberalization include the failure of the war on drugs, the inability to monitor the quality standards of narcotics available to consumers without legalization (leading to significantly higher fatalities), and the government's inability to tax this extensive trade, resulting in substantial economic losses. Additionally, proponents argue that individuals should be free to live as they choose, and drug restrictions infringe on personal freedom while also contributing to a significant increase in crime.

Opponents of drug liberalization argue that it would lead to widespread addiction in society, jeopardize public health, and deprive children of

the right to live in a drug-free society. Narcotics are classified as drugs, but unlike beneficial medications prescribed by doctors, their harm far outweighs any potential benefits.

Policies

The United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988) requires all signatory countries to "establish as criminal offenses under their domestic law" the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as related activities such as production, distribution, and transportation, as defined in the 1961 Narcotic Drugs Convention and the 1971 Psychotropic Substances Convention. Additionally, "the cultivation of opium poppy, coca bush, or cannabis plant for the purpose of producing narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances is criminalized." It is important to note that the convention distinguishes between large-scale drug production and production for personal use, with the latter also considered a criminal offense. However, "the severity of penalties and the nature of criminalization depend on each country's domestic law and the individual freedoms it upholds."

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) defines decriminalization as the removal of drug-related acts or omissions from a country's criminal laws. Similarly, depenalization means exempting individuals from punishment for such acts or omissions. Decriminalization typically applies to offenses related to drug consumption and may involve lifting restrictions on specific drugs (particularly those amenable to government control) or all drugs. Following decriminalization, non-criminal regulations are established to control and monitor issues related

to decriminalized drugs. Depenalization (exemption from punishment) applies only to personal use or small-scale drug sales, even if such behavior remains technically illegal. Legalization, on the other hand, entails the complete removal of all drug-related activities—including consumption, possession, cultivation, production, and distribution—from criminal laws.

Relegalization of Drugs

Prior to the 20th century, all drugs were legal worldwide. Proponents of drug legalization argue that we should return to this state by eliminating all prohibitions enacted in national laws. Some suggest that, if not fully, certain drugs could be legalized for personal use under government supervision. Proposed measures include:

- Mandatory labeling of dosage and warnings on drugs
- Restrictions on commercial advertising of drugs
- Age limits for drug purchases
- Limits on the quantity of drugs per purchase
- Restricting sales to licensed pharmacies
- Prohibiting sales to addicts
- Issuing special permits for certain types of drugs

It is important to note that re-legalization involves limitations based on the risk level and type of drug. Not all drugs would be available in pharmacies, as some pose higher risks and require special permits for purchase and consumption, along with monitoring of users to prevent greater harm. Examples of substances classified by risk level in various countries include caffeine (tea and coffee), nicotine (tobacco), and ethyl alcohol (beer, wine, and other alcoholic beverages).

The full re-legalization of all drugs is often advocated by libertarians who view any restrictions on drugs as morally unjustified. Meanwhile, moderate supporters argue for the re-legalization of only certain substances. Each group presents its own ethical reasoning. It is also important to emphasize that re-legalization does not imply moral endorsement of drug use.

Decriminalization of Drugs

Proponents of drug decriminalization argue that drug-related offenses should face significantly lighter and more controlled penalties compared to current laws. For example, instead of imprisonment, fines could be imposed without criminal records for users or low-level drug offenders. The primary goal of decriminalization is harm reduction.

Decriminalization occupies a middle ground between prohibition and full legalization. However, critics argue that it combines the worst aspects of both approaches. Some believe that law enforcement should focus on large-scale production and trafficking, allowing police resources to be allocated more efficiently against professional traffickers and producers rather than being wasted on apprehending minor sellers and users.

Portugal

was one of the first countries to decriminalize all drugs, yielding positive results. In Portugal, if an individual is found with drugs for personal use, they are not sent to prison. Spain and Italy have since followed similar paths.

Economic Discussions

The criminalization of drugs has numerous negative social and economic effects. Drug prohibition leads to issues such as theft, violence, and corruption, which in turn drive up drug prices. In many developing countries, drug production is a means of escaping poverty. Milton Friedman estimated that over 10,000 annual deaths in the United States are due to drug criminalization, and if drugs were legalized, the number of innocent casualties in police clashes with traffickers would significantly decrease. This inefficiency in governments' handling of drugs has been criticized by advocates of legalization. The war on drugs has also been criticized for these reasons.

Price and Its Effect on Drug Consumption

Most discussions on the economic outcomes of drug legalization revolve around the bell-shaped demand curve and the sensitivity of consumers to price fluctuations in the illegal market. Proponents of legalization assume that the consumption of addictive drugs is unaffected by price changes. However, studies on other legal addictive substances, such as cigarettes and alcohol, indicate that consumption is influenced by their prices. Economists like Michael Grossman and Frank J. Chaloupka estimate that a mere 10% decrease in the price of cocaine would lead to a 14% increase in its consumption. This increase suggests that cocaine consumers are sensitive to price changes. There is also evidence that consumers' sensitivity to drug prices is greater in the long term than in the short term. It is important to note that other studies present differing results.

Considering that drug legalization would increase the supply of these substances, an increase in consumption and associated risks should be

expected in the future. However, Andrew I. Clark, an economist who has studied the effects of drug legalization, argues that legalizing drugs while imposing a special tax on them—often referred to as a "sin tax"—could prevent an increase in consumption.

Other Associated Costs

Proponents of drug prohibition argue that the consumption of illegal drugs carries numerous negative side effects and exorbitant costs, including increased violence, adverse environmental impacts on neighborhoods, heightened health risks, and rising healthcare expenses. Opponents of this view contend that most of these costs and negative outcomes stem from flawed current policies. They argue that the violence associated with the drug trade is a direct result of its illegal status, which forces those involved to resort to violence to resolve disputes in the absence of a legal intermediary in this vast trade. Additionally, the illegality of drugs negatively impacts users' health. For instance, injection drug users, due to limited access to clean needles, often share syringes, facilitating the spread of diseases such as AIDS or hepatitis.

Prominent economist Milton Friedman argued that drug prohibition leads to numerous negative consequences, including a surge in prison populations, inadequate treatment of chronic illnesses, increased corruption in societies and governments, widening disparities in the incarceration rates of African Americans, complex health issues for users, and the devastation of cities and countries. Proponents of legalization also highlight that the quality of illegal drugs is often poor, leading to greater physical harm, such as unintentional overdoses or poisoning from impure substances. Steven Levitt and Iliana Kuziemko point to prison

overcrowding as another negative effect of prohibition. They argue that incarcerating drug offenders occupies prison space that could be used for other criminals, not only increasing maintenance costs but also exposing non-drug offenders to drug-related criminal influences, potentially escalating drug-related crime.

Direct Costs

Jeffrey Miron, an economist from Harvard University, estimated that ending the war on drugs alone could inject \$76.8 billion into the U.S. economy in 2010. He also stated that this would save the government \$41.3 billion in law enforcement costs, while tax revenue from drugs alone would amount to \$46.7 billion. Since the war on drugs began under President Richard Nixon, the U.S. federal budget for this effort grew from \$100 million in 1970 to \$15.1 billion in 2010. Over these 40 years, the total cost exceeded \$1 trillion. During this period, over 37 million individuals were incarcerated for drug-related offenses, costing \$121 billion for their arrest and \$450 billion for their imprisonment.

Scale of the Illegal Drug Market

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2013 and the European Crime Agency, the global drug trade is valued at approximately \$456 billion annually, with \$84 billion of that attributed solely to the cocaine trade.

Global Drug Liberalization

1) Europe

a) Czech Republic

Until 1998, drug possession "for the purpose of selling to another person" was considered a crime in the Czech Republic. Production, distribution, and trafficking of drugs have always been and remain criminal offenses, while possession for personal use is permitted.

In the 1999 amendment to drug-related laws, possession of drugs even for personal use became a criminal offense if it exceeded the "small permissible amount." Under this law, "exceeding the permissible amount" is defined as 5 to 10 times the typical single-use dose of any drug. For example, an individual is allowed to possess up to 15 grams of marijuana or 1.5 grams of heroin for personal use. Since these limits are higher than those in other EU countries, the Czech Republic, along with Portugal, is considered one of the most liberal nations in Europe regarding drug policies. Czech youth aged 15–34 have the highest marijuana usage rate (18.5% in 2012) among EU countries.

According to the updated laws, possession of drugs in the quantities listed below is considered a "small amount" and penalized similarly to traffic offenses:

- Marijuana: 15 grams
- Hashish: 5 grams
- Psilocybin mushrooms: 40 pieces
- Peyote: 5 plants
- LSD: 5 tablets
- Ecstasy: 4 tablets
- Amphetamine: 2 grams
- Methamphetamine: 2 grams
- Heroin: 1.5 grams
- Coca: 5 plants

- Cocaine: 1 gram

However, selling drugs in any quantity remains a criminal offense. Possession of marijuana "exceeding the permissible amount" may result in up to one year of imprisonment. For other drugs, this penalty can extend to two years. Drug trafficking (except for cultivating up to 5 marijuana plants) carries stricter punishments.

Medical use of marijuana has been legal since April 1, 2013.

b) Ireland

On November 2, 2015, Aodhán Ó Ríordáin, Ireland's Minister of State for Drugs Strategy, announced the country's intention to establish government-supervised injection rooms. He also stated that while drug possession for personal use remains decriminalized, drug production and distribution would continue to be criminal offenses.

c) Netherlands

Dutch drug policies are based on two principles:

1. Drug use is treated as a public health issue rather than a crime.
2. A distinction is made between medicinal drugs and illicit substances.

Possession or production of marijuana, even for personal use, is technically illegal and punishable. Similarly, "coffee shops" selling cannabis to customers are subject to penalties. However, due to non-enforcement of these laws, courts have occasionally ruled in favor of individuals in cases against the government.

d) Norway

On June 14, 2010, the Stoltenberg Commission recommended the use of medical heroin for treatment under specific considerations. On June 18 of the same year, Justice Minister Knut Storberget announced that his ministry was drafting new drug laws inspired by Portugal's decriminalization model, with a bill expected before the next election. He later retracted this statement, clarifying that such discussions were merely academic. In early March 2013, Health Minister Jonas Gahr Støre proposed legalizing heroin inhalation by 2014 to reduce overdose risks. In 2011, 294 people died from drug overdoses in Norway, compared to 170 traffic fatalities, highlighting the urgency of the issue.

e) Portugal

In 2001, Portugal became the first European country to decriminalize all drugs for personal use. Instead of arrest, drug users are offered services such as therapy and medical treatment. A Cato Institute study led by Glenn Greenwald found that within five years of decriminalization, illegal drug use among adolescents significantly declined, HIV infection rates among users dropped sharply, heroin-related deaths halved, and the number of people seeking addiction treatment doubled. According to Peter Reuter, a criminology and public policy professor at the University of Maryland, while the decline in heroin use may partly reflect broader epidemic cycles, the policy achieved its goal: preventing an increase in drug consumption.

f) Mexico

In April 2009, the Mexican Congress approved amendments to the Public Health Law,

decriminalizing the possession of small quantities of illegal drugs for personal use (but not for trade). For example, individuals are allowed to possess up to 5 grams of marijuana or 500 milligrams of cocaine. The only restriction is that individuals cannot carry these substances within a 300-meter radius of schools, police stations, or rehabilitation centers. Opium, heroin, LSD, and other drugs were also decriminalized, and possession within legal limits is not considered a crime. Many have questioned this decision, noting that cocaine is as addictive as heroin and both are derived from plants. However, the law remains strict: if a person is caught with quantities exceeding the legal limit, they may face long-term imprisonment, as it is assumed they intend to engage in retail trafficking.

g) Uruguay

Uruguay is one of the few countries that has never criminalized personal drug use. Since 1974, its laws have not set specific limits or thresholds for drug offenses, leaving it to judges to determine whether the drugs were intended for personal use. If a judge determines that the quantity was solely for personal use, the individual is not punished.

In June 2012, the Uruguayan government announced its intention to legalize state-controlled marijuana sales for personal use to combat drug-related crimes. The country's leaders also urged other nations to follow suit. On July 31, 2013, the Uruguayan Congress passed a bill (56 votes in favor, 42 against) legalizing the cultivation, distribution, and consumption of marijuana for personal use, and the Senate approved it on December 10, 2013 (16 votes in favor, 14 against). Following Uruguay's legalization of marijuana in 2012, the U.S. states of Colorado and Washington also legalized it. John Walsh, a drug policy expert in Washington,

stated, "Uruguay acted at the right time. We cannot criticize them for this."

2) North America

a) Canada

Cultivating marijuana in Canada is illegal, except for medical purposes. However, the consumption of marijuana is widely tolerated across the country based on local regulations. A campaign to legalize marijuana has gained momentum, though selling cannabis seeds remains legal.

In 2011, a *Globe and Mail* study claimed that 47% of Canadians supported the "legalization of marijuana" in 2000, compared to only 26% in 1975. A more recent study found that over half of Canadians support legalization. However, in 2007, then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper proposed Bill C-26 to reform drug prohibition laws and impose stricter penalties for drug-related offenses.

h) Argentina

In August 2009, the Argentine Supreme Court ruled that prosecuting individuals for personal drug possession is unconstitutional. "Adults must be free to make lifestyle choices without government interference." This decision invalidated Article 14 of the country's Drug Law (Law 23,737), which had criminalized personal drug possession with penalties ranging from one month to two years in prison. However, this applies only to individuals who possess drugs solely for personal use and not for distributing to others.

i) Brazil

In 2002 and 2006, Brazil passed laws decriminalizing certain drugs for personal use. Prison sentences were replaced with rehabilitation and community service. However, the 2006 law did not clearly distinguish between small-scale trafficking and personal use, creating a contradiction: while possession was decriminalized, selling even small quantities could lead to up to five years in prison. Many incarcerated sellers were low-level offenders or users forced to sell drugs to sustain their livelihoods. Since 2006, debates have continued over whether decriminalization aligns with the constitution and individual freedoms. In 2009, the Brazilian Supreme Court began deliberations on the issue. As each justice can take unlimited time to research, the process remains ongoing. In 2015, three justices voted in favor of decriminalization, but due to opposition from one justice, no resolution was reached.

j) Colombia

Guatemalan President Otto Pérez Molina and Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos proposed drug legalization to address the repeated failures of the war on drugs, arguing that it incurs high costs with minimal benefits.

k) Costa Rica

Costa Rica has decriminalized drugs for personal use. However, drug production and distribution remain criminal offenses.

l) Ecuador

Under Ecuador's 2008 Constitution, drug use is treated as a public health issue rather than a crime. In June 2013, the Ecuadorian Drug

Control Agency (CONSEP) published a table specifying legal possession limits for personal use (without intent to sell). Examples include: 10 grams of marijuana or hashish, 4 grams of opium, 100 milligrams of heroin, 5 grams of cocaine, 0.020 milligrams of LSD, and 80 milligrams of methamphetamine.

m) Honduras

On February 22, 2008, Honduran President Manuel Zelaya requested that the United States legalize drugs to reduce drug-related murders in Honduras. Cocaine is trafficked through Honduras between Colombia and the U.S. In this country of only 7 million people, 8-10 homicides occur daily, with 70% linked to the global drug trade. Zelaya noted that Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Mexico face similar issues.

b) United States of America

Numerous groups and individuals across the United States advocate for the legalization of marijuana for medical use. Organizations such as NORML and MPP are working to legalize the possession, use, cultivation, and sale of marijuana even for non-medical purposes. In 1996, approximately 56% of Californians voted in favor of legalizing the cultivation and use of marijuana for medical purposes, creating significant tension between the federal and state governments. Since then, 20 U.S. states and the District of Columbia have legalized medical marijuana. Although marijuana remains illegal under federal law, the laws of these states, which do not prohibit its medical use, take precedence over federal regulations.

In 2012, Colorado and Washington legalized the possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use and are currently drafting laws to decriminalize its cultivation and even commercial trade. In 2014, voters in Oregon, Alaska, and the District of Columbia also approved the legalization of personal marijuana use.

3) Oceania

a) Australia

Australia has one of the highest rates of marijuana use in the world. Calls for the legalization of marijuana have existed since the 1970s. In 2010, HEMP, a group advocating for marijuana legalization, was officially recognized as a political party. In 2011, the campaign regained momentum through social media activism. Although Australia was one of the first countries to provide free needle exchanges for addicts, the government continues to lead a war on drugs.

4) Asia

a) Iran

Drug use in Iran became prevalent during the Safavid era with the spread of opium cultivation. Until the reign of Shah Tahmasp, the use of bhang, opium, and hashish was an accepted norm in Iranian society, common among the public, in coffeehouses, and at the Safavid court. After Shah Tahmasp, Shah Abbas took measures to limit opium consumption and issued a decree in 1005 AH (1596 CE) banning opium. Despite this, opium cultivation continued in Iran during that period.

During the Qajar era, the production and consumption of drugs increased, and the

government supported it. Opium was cultivated in 18 provinces of Iran, with seven varieties available. By the time of Naser al-Din Shah, addiction had become a widespread phenomenon. Opium exports were also a source of foreign currency for Iran. While opium was primarily consumed orally during the Safavid era, the modern method of opium smoking emerged during the Qajar period.

After the Constitutional Revolution in 1324 AH (1906 CE), the Iranian government faced internal and external pressure to combat drugs. As a result, the "Opium Restriction Law" was passed by the National Consultative Assembly. However, due to the government's reliance on revenue from drug sales, the fight against drugs was not pursued rigorously.

Opium cultivation and sales by the government continued until 1941 (1320 SH), when Reza Shah was forced to abdicate. In 1952 (1331 SH), the "Law Prohibiting the Preparation, Purchase, Sale, and Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages and Opium and Its Derivatives" was passed by the National Consultative Assembly. In 1945 (1324 SH), the government submitted the "Opium Cultivation Prohibition Bill" to the assembly, which was approved the same year. This law not only banned opium cultivation but also required addicts to cease drug use within six months.

-State Opium Sales in 1968

In 1968 (1347 SH), the Iranian government passed the "Limited Opium Cultivation and Export Law" through parliament. This law was based on the rationale that providing opium syrup to addicts unable to quit quickly through state-run centers would sever their ties with traffickers. However, the failure of this idea soon became apparent. Farmers were unwilling to sell opium to the government and instead sold it to traffickers at higher prices, while addicts exacerbated the

situation by fraudulently manipulating ration cards for opium coupons. The Revolutionary Council ultimately terminated state opium sales in July 1980 (Tir 1359 SH).

After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, criminal laws were enacted to combat drugs, and opium cultivation in Iran ceased. Currently, drug trafficking in Iran can result in the death penalty. According to Majid Mohammadi, legalizing non-industrial drugs is a proposed solution to control drug consumption in Iran, meaning the sale of drugs to individuals would be limited to specific quantities. In recent years, the works of Mohammad Khazari, a researcher in drug policy, on reforming Iran's drug policies with an emphasis on liberalizing natural drugs have sparked significant debate in academic circles.

Nowrouzi, spokesperson for the Judicial and Legal Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, announced on July 21, 2017 (30 Tir 1396 SH) that, in line with the emphasis in national policies on severing ties between addicts and traffickers, the government would provide diluted drugs to addicts to enable gradual withdrawal and redirect them from traffickers to official channels.

b) Thailand

In 2018, Thailand became the first Asian country to legalize marijuana for medical use. In 2022, marijuana was also legalized for recreational use.

c) Malaysia

While Malaysia generally enforces strict drug laws, some medications containing narcotics are permitted under specific conditions and medical supervision.

d) Hong Kong

Marijuana is illegal for recreational use, but medical use is allowed under specific circumstances.

e) Nepal

In Nepal, marijuana use has traditional roots, and local authorities have occasionally tolerated it.

Political Parties

Political parties support drug liberalization to varying degrees and for diverse reasons, ranging from libertarian to leftist and conservative ideologies. For most libertarian parties, drug liberalization is considered a fundamental principle.

In 2011, the Liberal Democrat Party of the UK adopted a policy to shift from prosecuting drug offenders to providing treatment for addicts, inspired by Portugal's approach.

In some countries, movements have emerged to legalize specific drugs, such as marijuana.

Prerequisites for Drug Legalization in Iran

Drug legalization in Iran is a complex and multifaceted issue requiring consideration of social, economic, health, and legal dimensions. Below are some prerequisites for drug legalization in Iran:

1. Legal Reforms

Amendments to existing laws are necessary, including changes to regulations on drug trafficking and the treatment of users.

2. Education and Awareness

Implementing educational programs to increase public awareness of the harms and potential benefits of drug use, particularly for substances that may be legalized.

3. Global Experience Review

Studying and analyzing the experiences of countries that have legalized drugs can provide insights into the consequences of such decisions.

4. Healthcare Infrastructure Development

Establishing counseling and treatment centers for individuals harmed by drug use, alongside expanding addiction prevention programs..

5. Regulatory Framework:

Creating a robust regulatory system to control the production, distribution, and consumption of legalized drugs to prevent abuse and social harm.

6. Cultural and Social Considerations

Acknowledging cultural beliefs and values and assessing how legalization might impact them.

7. Economic Analysis

Evaluating the economic pros and cons of legalization, including its effects on labor markets, tax revenue, and healthcare costs.

8. Community Engagement

Involving diverse societal groups, including health experts, sociologists, families, and users, in the decision-making process.

Does Drug Legalization Reduce Drug Use?

1. Global Experiences

In countries like Canada and some U.S. states where specific drugs have been legalized, consumption of certain substances has either decreased or increased. For example, marijuana legalization has in some cases led to reduced use of more dangerous drugs.

2. Access and Control

Legalization can increase access to drugs. If managed properly, users may turn to legal and regulated sources instead of the black market, potentially reducing harms associated with drug use.

3. Education and Awareness

Legalization creates opportunities for education and awareness campaigns about the risks of drug use, potentially reducing consumption among youth and vulnerable groups.

4. Treatment Programs

Legalization can facilitate the development of treatment and counseling programs, ultimately reducing addiction and drug use.

5. Cultural and Social Considerations

Societal acceptance of legalization is crucial. If society rejects these changes, counterproductive outcomes may occur.

6. Data Analysis

Thorough study and analysis of data are needed to assess the impact of legalization on drug use in Iran. Iran's unique social, economic, and cultural context may yield different results compared to countries with distinct cultures and legal systems.

Conclusion

According to official statistics provided by the head of the Anti-Narcotics Police of Iran, 65% of illicit drugs trafficked into the country enter through the border with Pakistan, while 35% are smuggled via the border with Afghanistan. These figures highlight that despite stringent policies, Iran's geographical location has made it a major transit route for drug trafficking. Under these circumstances, adopting innovative approaches

based on harm reduction appears to be a more effective strategy.

Studies indicate that implementing regulated frameworks for less harmful traditional drugs (such as opium) under the supervision of specialized medical institutions, while identifying and guiding addicts toward rehabilitation centers, would reduce the role of intermediaries and trafficking networks. Programs such as sterile needle distribution and the establishment of safe consumption sites not only improve public health but also prevent the spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS.

Although these policies could generate new revenue for the government, it must be emphasized that this income should not be the primary objective. Instead, the main focus should be on reducing consumption and prevention through educational programs in schools, universities, and cultural centers. The successful experiences of countries such as Portugal, Canada, and Switzerland demonstrate the effectiveness of these approaches in controlling and managing drug use.

For these programs to succeed, the following measures are necessary:

1. Rehabilitation centers must be equipped with adequate funding and resources.
2. Job creation programs for youth and recovering addicts should be developed.
3. Public sports facilities should be made more accessible at lower costs.

It is important to remember that limited legalization of traditional drugs does not imply endorsement of drug use, and dangerous synthetic drugs (such as methamphetamine) must remain illegal. By implementing these strategies simultaneously and maintaining continuous

expert oversight, we can hope for a gradual reduction in addiction and the creation of a healthier society.

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