

CCHR Reports UN Human Rights Council Condemns Coercion in Mental Health Systems

During Mental Health Month, the watchdog encourages policy makers to implement actions the UN Council recommends to stop coercive psychiatric practices

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EINPresswire.com/ -- The United Nations Human Rights Council issued its report on mental health that condemns coercive psychiatric practices in alignment with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that the U.S. has been a signatory to since 2009.[1] [Citizens Commission on Human Rights International](#), a mental health industry

watchdog, said for years the Council has called for reforms to abusive and torturous practices being committed in mental health systems. May being Mental Health Month should address this, it says.

Key points raised in the Council's report include:

- Coercion, involuntary treatment and forced placement are incompatible with human rights.
- Governments should repeal forced institutionalization and end involuntary treatment practices, and developing rights-based mental health services.
- There is an overreliance on mental health drugs which are a "significant obstacle to the realization of the right to health."
- The focus of mental health services should be widened beyond the biomedical model to include a holistic approach that considers all aspect of a person's life.[2]

The Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law in Washington, D.C., "opposes all involuntary outpatient commitment as an infringement of an individual's constitutional rights....



During Mental Health Month, the watchdog encourages policy makers to implement actions the UN Council recommends to stop coercive psychiatric practices and prevent suicides

Such coercion undermines consumer confidence and causes many consumers to avoid contact with the mental health system altogether.”[3]

However, the American Psychiatric Association 2016 position paper on involuntary commitment court-mandated treatment and wants what often amounts to forced treatment for more than five months—with extensions after judicial review.[4]

This is contrary to the CRPD that says forced hospitalization and drugging are violations of basic human rights. Involuntary “treatment” deprives a person of their freedom and bodily autonomy—without being convicted of any crime.[5]

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities says the use of forced treatment, seclusion and various methods of restraint, including physical, chemical and mechanical restraints [rife in the U.S.] are not consistent with the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of persons with disabilities.[6]

The 2020 Special Rapporteur on health highlighted, “Mental conditions are not like other physical conditions (e.g., bacterial meningitis) for which there are essential medicines such as antibiotics. The pathophysiology of mental conditions and the specific mechanisms by which psychotropic drugs may be effective are unknown.”[7] The drugs can cause serious side effects, including some that can induce suicidal thoughts and behavior.

Dr. Dainius Pūras, a psychiatrist and former Special Rapporteur on health told the UN Human Rights Council in July 2020: “The global mental health status quo should move away from the outdated ‘mad or bad’ approach which seeks to prevent behaviors deemed as ‘dangerous’ or provide treatment considered ‘medically necessary’ without consent.” He warned of the exaggerated benefits of psychotropic medications, the effectiveness of which is not comparable to other medicines that are essential for certain physical conditions, such as antibiotics. Further, “there are no biological markers for mental health conditions.”[8]

High-profile celebrity suicides have promoted calls for increased mental health funds and services, which, unfortunately often means powerful psychotropics. But a review of clinical trial data that the Royal Society of Medicine published determined “antidepressants double the occurrence of events in adult healthy volunteers that can lead to suicide and violence.”[9]

Suicide prevention should not be addressed by increased prescription of such drugs Dr. Pūras stated in 2019. “Emotional pain frequently comes from being a victim of violence, discrimination or exclusion. Targeting the brain chemistry of individuals often exacerbates stigma and social exclusion, aggravates loneliness and helplessness and fails to reduce the risk of suicide.” Also, “Pathologizing the diversity of individual responses to adversity as if they were medical conditions disempowers individuals.... We must pursue new routes to suicide prevention that invest in fortifying healthy, respectful and trusting relationships which also include connecting people with communities.”

“To prevent suicide, States should adopt strategies with a rights-based approach that avoids excessive medicalization and addresses societal determinants, promoting autonomy and resilience through social connection, tolerance, justice, and healthy relationships.”[10]

Dr. Pūras added that many residential institutions and psychiatric hospitals too often breed cultures of violence, stigmatization and helplessness. “Efforts should be refocused towards non-coercive alternatives that address holistic well-being, and place individuals and their definition of their experiences, and their decisions, at the center.”[11]

CCHR’s [Mental Health Declaration of Human Rights](#) penned in 1969 emphasizes rights-based protections. There is a need for global implementation of the Mental Health Declaration of Human Rights.

[Read more here.](#)

[1] <http://www.iustitialegalcenter.org/us-ratification-of-the-crpd>

[2] Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General, 49th session, Human Rights Council, “Summary of the outcome of the consultation on ways to harmonize laws, policies and practices relating to mental health with the norms of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and on how to implement them,” 28 February–1 April 2022, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/242/02/PDF/G2224202.pdf?OpenElement>

[3] Aaron Levin, “APA Board Approves Position Statement on Involuntary Outpatient Commitment,” Psychiatric News, 29 Feb. 2016, <https://psychnews.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/appi.pn.2016.3a10>

[4] Ibid.

[5] <https://www.madinamerica.com/2021/12/mental-health-care-consent-human-rights/>

[6] “Third Party Intervention in relation to the European Court of Human Rights’ Advisory Opinion on Oviedo Convention,” Written comments jointly submitted by: Autism Europe, European Disability Forum, Inclusion Europe, International Disability Alliance and Mental Health Europe, Nov. 2020

[7] “A human rights-based global agenda for mental health and human rights,” A/HRC/44/48, Human Rights Council’s 45th session, 15 Apr. 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-health/human-rights-based-global-agenda-mental-health-and-human-rights>

[8] “The world must change the way mental health challenges are addressed, UN expert says,”

UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 6 July 2020,

<https://previous.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26039&LangID=E>

[9] <https://www.cchrnt.org/2018/06/21/cchrs-psychotropic-drug-awareness-campaign-extends-to-suicide-warning/>; Andreas Ø Bielefeldt, et al., "Precursors to suicidality and violence on antidepressants: systematic review of trials in adult healthy volunteers," Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, October 2016, Vol. 109, No. 10, p. 381, <http://jrs.sagepub.com/content/109/10/381.full>

[10] "Major changes to suicide prevention needed, with rights-based approach to make life "more liveable" — UN expert," UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 10 Oct. 2019, <https://previous.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25118&LangID=E>

[11] "UN expert highlights importance of social relationships for mental health and well-being," UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 24 June 2019, <https://previous.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24731&LangID=E>

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