

'War on drugs' a failure, Nobel winners warn

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The global "war on drugs" has been a catastrophic failure and world leaders must rethink their approach, a group including five Nobel Prize-winning economists, Britain's deputy prime minister and a former US secretary of state said Tuesday.

An academic report published by the London School of Economics (LSE) called "Ending the Drug Wars" pointed to violence in Afghanistan, Latin America and other regions as evidence of the need for a new approach.

"It is time to end the 'war on drugs' and massively redirect resources towards effective evidence-based policies underpinned by rigorous economic analysis," they said in a foreword to the report.

"The pursuit of a militarised and enforcement-led global 'war on drugs' strategy has produced enormous negative outcomes and collateral damage."

The report said "rigorously monitored" experiments with legalisation and a focus on public health, minimising the impact of the illegal drug trade, were key ways of tackling the problem instead.

The report was signed by George Shultz, the US secretary of state under Ronald Reagan, British Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, and former NATO and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana.

It was also signed by Nobel economics prize winners Kenneth Arrow

(1972), Christopher Pissarides (2010), Thomas Schelling (2005) Vernon Smith (2002) and Oliver Williamson (2009).

The report cited the large drug-related prison population in the United States, political repression in Asia, corruption and unrest Afghanistan and west Africa, violence in Latin America, HIV infections in Russia and even a global shortage of pain medication as spin-offs from the war on drugs.

"The drug war's failure has been recognised by [public health](#) professionals, security experts, human rights authorities and now some of the world's most respected economists," said John Collins, coordinator of international drug policy at the LSE.

"Leaders need to recognise that toeing the line on current [drug](#) control strategies comes with extraordinary human and financial costs to their citizens and economies."

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