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## **Press release of the Czech civic initiative "Cannabis Is Medicine" of March 28, 2008**

Olomouc, Czech Republic.

About a hundred of Czech citizens daily continue to express their support of our request to Czech legislators of March 21, 2008. We are demanding them to modify the Czech Penal Code in such a way, that growing and using of cannabis for medical purposes would not be criminalized.

The support of our request addressed to legislators has been signed in the course of this week by following personalities of the Czech art and science scene: physician and former rector of the Palacky University in Olomouc Prof. MUDr. et PhDr. Jana Macakova PhD., director of the Ecological Institute Veronica in Brno RNDr. Yvonna Gaillyova PhD., artist-painter Jiri Suruvka or specialist on quality in agriculture Doc. Ing. Lubos Babicka PhD. from the Czech Agriculture University in Prague, Dalibor Strasky, adviser to the Minister of Environment and Jakub Jezek, head of the section on addictive substances of the Czech Green Party (member of the government coalition). A few drug policy regional coordinators equally supported our request.

The text of our request to legislators, an evidence of the fact that the Czech legislation in force is violating constitutional rights of our citizens, our proposal of the new text of paragraphs on medical use of cannabis for new Penal Code presently discussed in the Parliament, an overview of scientific studies and literature on medical effects of cannabis, the list of our signatories and supporters is available in Czech on our website: [www.konopijelek.cz](http://www.konopijelek.cz). We are planning to run an English version of our website within a week or so.

For [www.konopijelek.cz](http://www.konopijelek.cz),

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***Our comments on a few media news saying that we were supporting drug mafias and "potheads":***

Due to the introduction of restrictive drug laws in the second half of the 90' in the Czech Republic we have got the highest percentage of young people smoking cannabis (marihuana) in Europe. They are used to smoke marihuana with high content of THC distributed by mafias and cultivated under artificial light. Naturally grown cannabis (marihuana) with only about a quarter of content of the psychoactive substance THC, which was common until then, has been practically supplanted by the high potent strains, while illegal drug business is making great profits.

How shall we differentiate "potheads" from patients, if it would be possible to grow cannabis (marihuana) only on the basis of a simple announcement to the Ministry of Health? We shall not. It is not important.

And if "potheads" will applaud our proposal to change the drug laws, all the better! "Potheads" will get out of the reach of criminal structures and drug mafias will make no more profits on them. If they get the possibility to grow their own weed, then it is very probable that the number of "potheads" would decrease, especially of those smoking strong, indoor grown marihuana. And there is no doubt that drug criminality will decrease as well as needless public expenses and drug mafias' profits.

It is truly sad, that our legislators take no interest in the fact, that the drug budget of our country is distributed in such a way that 90% share goes for the repression with its ridiculous kilograms of seized drugs, and only a 10% share of the budget is used for the prevention and therapy, which effectiveness has been corroborated by hard evidence. It would be possible to bring forward clear evidence that every Czech crown invested into prevention and therapy pays off many times over.

The governmental proposal of the new Penal Code that is now under its way to the second reading in the Lower Chamber of the Czech Parliament, is more accommodating to drug mafias and "potheads" than to patients. Those 20 joints that the proposal would allow for without penal sanctions are not interesting for patients at all. Ill people need a much larger quantity of cannabis (marihuana).

Decriminalization is not legalization – coffee shops, sale and business. We just do not want to let drug or pharmaceutical mafias to decide on the medical use of cannabis (marihuana) and to let innocent people to be punished. This is what we want to change.

For [www.konopijelek.cz](http://www.konopijelek.cz), Dusan Dvorak (e-mail: dekriminalizace at konopijelek.cz) and Bushka Bryndova (e-mail: bushka at volny.cz)