

A conference to understand drugs dealing phenomenon



Speakers at the Geneva conference. Photo: Wakida

The “What’s behind deal and dealers?” conference organised by Hospice Général on October 15, 2010 at the Associations House in Geneva was indeed a success. *Voix d’Exils’* writers were there.

The day began as quite a cold day but many braved the coldness and turned up in big numbers: the Rachel Carson’s hall at the Associations House in Geneva was packed to the maximum, to the extent that a good number of us had nowhere to sit and rather chose to stand as the conference went on.

To start with, the Head of Strategic Studies at Geneva Cantonal police, Didier Froidevaux, was invited to present some statistics on drugs traffic. Mr. Froidevaux said that the police is trying as much as they can to arrest and bring to book the dealers. He said that the police arrested 447 dealers in the month of September 2010 alone. He stretched that the police is not only targeting foreigners, like it has been heard, but really fighting the dealers. The police has also

put in place methods of educating those who might fall trap of drugs dealing.

Asked why the police kept on arresting drugs dealers and releasing them after two weeks, he responded by saying that the police releases them on grounds of not enough evidence or just because the dealers were caught with a small quantity of grams, a statement which was contested by a majority of the forum participants.

One lady who works with Hospice général asked him why the police continued arresting dealers with just ten, twenty, fifty grams and not arresting the real mafia behind those grams. She even gave a proverb in Africa which says that to kill a tree, you have to get it by the roots, not the leaves. "The police is doing a great job and we are indeed arresting big mafias behind the deal, answered Mr. Froidevaux. Just two weeks ago we arrested one of the big mafias who had been on our wanted list as the big boss in Suisse Romande."

A speaker from *Voix d'Exils*

Voix d'Exils' writer Gervais Njinga Dongmo was then invited on the floor to present his "The deal and the asylum applicants: a mysterious reality" speech at 11:15 am. He started by saying that in his opinion, cocaine is very little known to Africans seeking asylum until they leave their country of origin. He also said that once in Switzerland in a precarious situation, many sell it but they have never consumed it. Why don't they use it? He paused. "It's because they measure the danger of this product. They also don't have the money to consume on a daily basis like the Swiss people do." He also said that it's because they depend on someone else who exploits them. And he believes that for those reasons many African dealers can't consume it.

He agreed that the deal is on but it's not easy in terms of climate: the summer favours the dealers but when the winter

season comes, it's not always easy for the dealers to brave the coldness. He also said that the balls are at times placed under the tongue, so it's not easy for the dealers to speak or laugh. The other places they usually transport it is the rectum, but Gervais also warned that this product packaging, if not done well, can explode in the stomach and cause death.

Why many African Immigrants are pushed into the deal? The Swiss harsh laws on asylum have pushed so many young foreigners into the hands of mafias because they seem not to have any choice with their lives. The Mafias recruits by reminding them that they are suffering harassments from the Swiss government and that they should always remember the fragile status they are in.

Gervais added that African asylum seekers are everyday harassed by consumers in public places and even in accommodation centres where these clients are regular, hard to escape the scourge.

Many immigrants are making efforts to resist the temptation. However, the surroundings, an inability to work and emergency assistance that Swiss provides for the people without papers are major obstacles to this. He gave the example of his Burkina Faso friend who was given a negative response on his asylum case and still tries his best to avoid dealing in drugs, but he is reminded everyday that whether he sells drugs or not, he will be deported to his country since he has no right to live in Switzerland.

One of the speakers, a journalist by profession, said that since he started working with *Tribune de Genève*, he has seen that the majority of the people in drugs dealing business are Albanese. Every time he writes a story about arrested dealers, he is always mentioning their residence, age and nationality in his story. But the public is wondering if it is really necessary for him to write such details about the dealers. He responded by saying that for him as a journalist, he first

wants to know someone better before he can write something about this person, because he finds it disturbing to see someone of a sound mind involving himself in dubious business or dealings.

Health consequences

Later on, Dr. Daniele Zullino, head of Addiction medicine, Dept of Psychiatry at Geneva Hospital, was also invited on the floor to give his speech on "Outlaw medicine". He said that drugs are used as a dependency. They act as a stimulant and increase resistance to fatigue.

He said many people start taking drugs when they don't know that they are really going to become addicts. And most of the time they are introduced to it by friends, relatives or in rare cases offered by the dealers themselves. And when they try it for three or four times, it becomes interesting to them and thus more irresistible. He said treating addicts is a challenge because some of them need serious psychological treatment rather than just mere drugs and he stressed that at times they have to use some sceptical methods of treatment that are out of the law. He finally said that the most important way not to go through all this is to avoid getting involved in drugs usage. And he warned that these drugs can cause diseases like cardiac arrhythmias, hypertension, cancer, seizures or epilepsy, to mention but a few. And also not to mention the dangers of overdose that can cause death if not attended to immediately.

And everyone agreed with him that people should indeed be educated every day on the dangers of using drugs.

Shawn Wakida