

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **"Forcing Psychiatric Drugs Can Increase Violence," Warns New Task Force on Mental Health Legal Advocacy & Activism**

Promising to fight what they call pervasive and harmful violations of mental health clients who are involuntarily drugged and electroshocked in the United States, The Law Project for Psychiatric Rights (PsychRights) and the MindFreedom Shield Campaign announced today a joint Task Force on Mental Health Legal Advocacy & Activism. The new partnership of law and nonviolent direct action has an initial focus in the states of California, Massachusetts and New York.

PsychRights' President Jim Gottstein declared, "People's rights in forced drugging proceedings are ignored as a matter of course, resulting in great harm to them and decreased public safety." David Oaks, Director of MindFreedom International (MFI), noted, "Violence by a few individuals labeled 'mentally ill' has led to a backlash calling for a massive increase in forced psychiatric drugging."

Mr. Gottstein added, "Contrary to public perception, forcing people to take psychiatric drugs can often increase violence, rather than decrease it. If people were warned that both taking and withdrawing from these drugs can at times contribute to committing terrible acts, they and their loved ones can be alert to the possibility and tragedies averted."

Krista Erickson, MFI board member and Chair of the MFI Shield Campaign, said, "I'm excited about MFI and PsychRights expanding our partnership and focusing the combined power of legal advocacy and activism on specific cases." The MFI Shield Campaign supports the wishes of a member to be free of involuntary mental health intervention with an international "Solidarity Network" of advocates. The new Task Force plans to use both the court of law and the court of public opinion.

Task Force organizers say the combination of PsychRights' expertise for strategic litigation and the "people power" of MindFreedom activists around the country will bring a synergy and geographic reach to their demands for people's legal and human rights. Daniel Hazen, Northeast Coordinator with PsychRights, added, "In the United States the 'mental health' industry is a labeling system that often dismisses self-determination, legal capacity and alternatives. 'Treatment' can be forced through the court systems. People ought to 'have their day in court' but this is often far from what actually occurs."

*MFI is an independent nonprofit coalition defending human rights and promoting humane alternatives in mental health. The Law Project for Psychiatric Rights is a public interest law firm devoted to the defense of people facing what they call the "horrors of unwarranted forced psychiatric drugging and other forced psychiatric procedures." PsychRights office is in Anchorage, Alaska: [www.psychrights.org](http://www.psychrights.org). The MFI office is in Eugene, Oregon: [www.mindfreedom.org](http://www.mindfreedom.org)*