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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Regional Office for the
MIDDLE EAST AND
NORTH AFRICA

UNODC in Iraq 2022 Snapshot

In 2022, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) focused on supporting Iraq in strengthening international and regional cooperation in areas such as border management as well as national efforts to face drug trafficking, criminal networks, terrorism, trafficking in persons, and more.

UNODC Regional Representative visits Iraq to enhance cooperation

UNODC Regional Representative, Ms. Cristina Albertin, visited Iraq to conduct a series of important meetings with the Iraqi Government to discuss current areas of collaboration and expand upcoming efforts. The mission included meeting the Minister of Health, the Minister of Justice, and the Chairman of the High Judicial Council as well as meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, amongst other relevant national entities.

The mission also included vital discussions

on addressing drug trafficking, holistic drug treatment and prevention, victim support, children rehabilitation, and asset recovery as well opening of a workshop on the role of media in countering terrorism and supporting the rights of victims of terrorism.



Iraq and Egypt exchange expertise on addressing drug use

H.E. Dr. Hani Al-Oqabi Minister of Health and Chairman of the Supreme National Authority for the Control of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances visited Egypt as part of the partnership with UNODC to exchange expertise and knowledge with the Egyptian counterparts with a focus on drug use prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration. Meetings included meeting with H.E. Nivine El-Kabbag, Egypt's Minister of Social Solidarity and Dr. Amr Osman Assistant Minister of Social Solidarity and Director of the National Fund for Drug Control and Treatment of Addiction (FDCTA). Meetings helped reach a concrete understanding of joint future steps and cooperation on the subject.

Specialized investigations techniques to dismantle the threat of transnational criminal networks involved in drug trafficking

The use of traditional investigative methods to combat illicit drug trafficking has proved to be ineffective as it usually leads to arresting only low-level drug dealers, not drug lords and their networks. Hence, employment of the specialized investigative tools is inevitable to counter the ever-growing threat of transnational organized criminal groups.

With generous support from the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), UNODC is implementing a project titled "Strengthening the Capacities of Iraqi law Enforcement and Criminal Investigation Services." As part of this project, UNODC, in close coordination and cooperation with the Governments of Iraq, rance and U.S.A, delivered training to 15 senior Investigator



Officers from the Anti-narcotics and Anti-Crime directorates at the Iraqi Ministry of Interior on “Surveillance and Investigative Skills,” which is a cornerstone element of the specialized investigation techniques. The training highlighted the limitations of targeting the hand-to-hand street deals and simple physical surveillance of suspect drug dealers as not the most efficient use of resources and mostly not leading to the arrest of the drug lords.

Alternatively, the use of informants and undercover operations is an essential investigative tool in drug trafficking cases as in any area of law enforcement.

The electronic surveillance investigative method was also discussed as a law enforcement tool to be used when an organized criminal group cannot be penetrated by an outsider, or where physical infiltration or surveillance would represent an unacceptable risk to the investigation or the safety of investigators.

In this regard, 21 officers from the anti-narcotics and anti-crimes directorates were trained on operational criminal intelligence analysis and basic and advanced use of the information analysis software “i2 Analyst Notebook.”.

The use of criminal intelligence analysis will complement traditional investigative methods and enable investigators to rapidly collect, analyse and visualize data originating from disparate sources to identify, plan, prevent and/or halt criminal activities.

Iraqi Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Health enhance their forensic services to identify illicit drugs

Tackling drug trafficking brings to the forefront the invaluable role of forensic services within law enforcement. Forensic services are facing an increasingly difficult task of responding to the threat of drug trafficking, due to the challenges of identifying the large number of drugs seized and the lack of skilled forensic specialists.

In response to the needs of the Iraqi forensic services, UNODC provided two workshops, within the facilities of the Criminal Evidence Investigation Directorate (CID), Ministry of Interior, and the Medical Legal Directorate (MLD) within the Ministry of Health in Baghdad.





This was part of UNODC's project on "Strengthening the Capacities of Iraqi Law Enforcement and Criminal Investigation Services (2019-2023)," funded by the U.S. Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

The workshop targeted specialized technical forensic experts from within the Ministries and was provided by international expertise on the Gas Chromatography–Mass Spectrometry (GC–MS) techniques, an efficient method of choice in routine laboratory drug identification. Participants were exposed to the fundamentals of the operation and maintenance of the GC–MS equipment and the interpretation of results, through theoretical and practical work.

The trainings ensured the development of sustainable and efficient forensic expertise within the Iraqi law-enforcement services. Such effective forensic bodies achieve better results and hence help restore confidence in law enforcement institutions while ensuring full respect for human rights and the rule of law.

The efficient use of GC-MS systems in law enforcement forensic laboratories enables a sustainable process to identify drugs and extends to the disciplines of explosives investigations, fire investigations, and counterfeit-drug detection. GC-MS techniques are utilized by the forensic services of the Ministry of Interior in Iraq, thereby provision of training for the GC-MS devices' operation and maintenance is of critical importance.

High-level Meeting to present assessment findings and foster national ownership to address threats posed by terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters prisoners

The Government of Iraq and UNODC are collaborating on prison reform. UNODC, as an implementer of a capacity building initiative funded by the U.S. Government, presented to key stakeholders from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the High Judicial Council, and the National Security Advisory a review of its recent assessment of Iraqi correctional facilities. UNODC presented the findings as part of the "Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Detention" programme, which enhances the capacity of countries to develop tools to address radicalization and terrorist recruitment in prisons.

The presentation focused on understanding imprisonment issues from a system's perspective, looking at organizational functions, inmate well-being, infrastructure, and security. The report's findings are based on comprehensive coverage of three major adult male reformatories and one female reformatory facility under the jurisdiction of the Iraqi Ministry of Justice.

The meeting concluded with detailed feedback from the participants to be considered in the endorsed report. Through this partnership, UNODC aims to strengthen Iraq's institutional capacity to manage and mitigate the threats of terrorists and FTF prisoners. International corrections best practices will be utilized, including classification and case management, contraband control, access control between cells and prison buildings, and the development of intake processes.

UNODC enhances the role of Iraqi media in countering terrorism and supporting the rights of victims of terrorism



The media speak to national and international audiences on the most urgent topics and have the power to fill information vacuums with credible and coherent knowledge; vacuums that otherwise could be used by terrorist groups. Media also show stories of victims of terrorism and hence have an obligation to protect the rights of victims and avoid secondary victimization. UNODC delivered a workshop on "The role of Iraqi media in combatting terrorism and supporting the rights of victims of terrorism in line with human rights" in Baghdad. The event is part of the project "Strengthening the criminal justice response to terrorism in Iraq through supporting victims of terrorism to participate in criminal proceedings," funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

This workshop brought together actors from main media outlets, the Ministry of Culture, the National Security Advisory, the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers,

the Media and Communications Commission, the Iraqi Media Network, the Martyrs Foundation, and Civil Society Organizations.

The workshop focused on enhancing the participants' knowledge of (i) the importance of the rights of victims in receiving accurate information, (ii) the interest and coverage of mainstream media and social media networks following terrorist attacks, (iii) the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for media in regard to identities of victims and their families and possible secondary victimization, and (iv) promoting and implementing a more victim-sensitive approach by the media.

Iraqi authorities visit Romania for an exchange visit on the operationalization of the Passenger Information Unit (PIU)

As part of the Airport Communications Project (AIRCOP), UNODC organized a study visit for Iraqi authorities to the Romanian General Inspectorate of Border Police to gain expertise in identifying high-risk passengers in airports. The visit was funded by Canada and aims at supporting the buildup of establishing Iraq's own PIU.

The visit was a fruitful opportunity to gain knowledge on the foundations of Standard Operating Procedures, methodologies, legal framework and best practices in the establishment and functioning of PIUs. The visit also allowed for the demonstration of the available software on identifying high-risk passengers.



Building the capacities of Iraqi frontline officers at Trebil land border crossing and at Baghdad International Airport to prevent cross-border movement of illicit goods

Through its Container Control Programme (CCP), UNODC trained a group of frontline officers from the Border Ports Commission, the General Commission of Customs and the Iraqi National Intelligence service working at Trebil land border crossing and at the Baghdad International Airport (BIA). Trainings focused on building skills to undertake risk profiling, targeting, and inspection of containers and cargo with the aim of seizing illicit goods. In parallel, UNODC established a Border Control Unit (BCU) at Trebil land border crossing in which the trainees are working.

After having implemented a series of trainings for frontline officers working at BIA, UNODC and Iraqi authorities are working on the establishment of the same type of unit at the airport.



In conversation with Judge Mohammed Salman Mohammed, Criminal Court of Al-Karkh in Bagdad as part of the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT)



“I’ve been a judge since 2008. My father was a judge as well. He encouraged me to pursue a law degree. I dreamed of being like him when I was in primary school, wearing his robes. “I will give you my robe once you become a judge,” my father always said,” Judge Mohammed Salman told UNODC.

Judge Mohammed is part of an ongoing collaboration between UNODC and the Government of Iraq within the framework of the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants – Asia and the Middle East (GLO.ACT-Asia and the Middle East) project. GLO.ACT is a four-year joint initiative by the European Union (EU) and UNODC being implemented in partnership with IOM in Iraq, amongst other countries.

Judge Mohammed told UNODC that the role of an investigating judge in Iraq often includes “a leading role in criminal investigations, including interviewing witnesses. They are responsible for issuing arrest warrants, determining appropriate charges, weighing the evidence, issuing findings, and passing sentences. Investigating judges may receive information about a case from law enforcement and decide on the next steps. They may also have the information and direct law enforcement to investigate.”

He also noted that “collecting evidence in criminal cases can be challenging, especially in complex cases involving human trafficking. The experience and expertise of the investigating judge are important in ensuring that the evidence is collected and analyzed properly...Enforcing the laws related to trafficking in persons can be challenging, especially when cultural or societal attitudes view victims as perpetrators rather than as people who need support and protection.

Law enforcement must be aware of these attitudes and approach their work with a victim-centred focus, recognizing that people who have been trafficked are victims and should be treated as such. This may require additional training and support for law enforcement officers to understand the unique challenges and needs of trafficking victims. It is also vital to ensure adequate resources, such as shelters and other forms of support, are available to assist victims and help them rebuild their lives.”

Noting the UNODC GLO.ACT project, Judge Mohammed affirmed that it “has had a significant impact on the judicial system in my country, providing information and training that has helped to improve the understanding and application of the 2012 TIP law. It is encouraging that law enforcement and judges are now more aware of how to apply this law and are taking steps to do so. I also believe that continued capacity building and training are essential to ensure that law enforcement and judges can effectively investigate and prosecute cases related to trafficking in persons. I've noticed that after training, trafficking investigations are much more successful.”

Building professionals’ capacity to plan for the effective rehabilitation and reintegration of children and juveniles associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups



UNODC conducted a capacity-building workshop on ‘Psychosocial Assessment Processes for Children and Juveniles associated with Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups’ in coordination with the High Judicial Council (HJC), the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA). The workshop represented a unique opportunity to strengthen the capacity of qualified professionals engaged in supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of children and juveniles in Iraq with regard to psychosocial assessment.

Professionals face multiple challenges in relation to the provision of rehabilitation and reintegration services, including understanding how to prepare, conduct, coordinate and use psychosocial assessment to respond to an essential duty: that of protecting society by meeting the needs of every child.

The STRIVE Juvenile team designed a capacity-building workshop with the aim of enhancing multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder cooperation in this area. Throughout the three-day discussions, social workers, police investigators, and judges were able to work together on child and juvenile assessments; share their experience and knowledge and lay the foundations for future cooperation.

Cross-coordination between agencies and institutions is crucial for the implementation of a child- and gender sensitive approach to individual assessment processes that supports effective planning for rehabilitation and reintegration.

Key learning from the workshop included how to ensure that individual assessment processes promote and preserve protective factors; and recognize children and juveniles’ specific rights, developmental stages and experiences of violence.

Children and juveniles associated with terrorists and violent extremist groups must urgently be treated in accordance with their rights and supported to rehabilitate and reintegrate so that they may become constructive citizens and, ultimately, contribute to long-lasting peace and security.

STRIVE Juvenile is a five-year project supported by the European Union that aims to address child association with terrorist and violent extremist groups and its consequences for the lives of children and society at large.



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