

ROMENA Newsletter

Quarterly Newsletter from the Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa

1/19

Dear Readers,

Welcome to UNODC ROMENA’s 2019 first quarter Newsletter!

The world celebrates health on the 7th of April of every year to raise awareness on how health remains a global concern. On this occasion, UNODC ROMENA dedicates this quarter’s Newsletter to health and the work done towards health-oriented solutions.

Guided by its mandates, Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, and its Regional Programme for the Arab States, UNODC is implementing a number of programmes to assist Member States, in line with their national policies, in applying comprehensive and integrated health responses and providing evidence-based drug and HIV prevention packages; two of these projects are highlighted below.

UNODC believes in the right to health for drug users. Through Goal 3, we recognize drug use as a public health problem – not a criminal behavior. Our work focusses on supporting Member States’ public health responses through prevention and treatment services for people who use drugs and live with HIV/AIDS within a gender-responsive framework. This also includes actions to end the epidemics of tuberculosis and hepatitis, particularly in prison settings.

Furthermore, reaching universal health coverage under Goal 3 also means access to and availability of quality essential services and medicines, for example palliative care based on internationally controlled substances, such as morphine. UNODC works with Member States to make this right a reality to people who need it.

A number of achievements have been reached post the launch of ROMENA’s health-related projects such as the implementation of Voluntary Confidential Counselling, Testing, and Aftercare (VCCTA) services of HIV, HBV, HCV, and related training activities targeting prison staff and inmates.

A lot of work remains to be done. Follow our upcoming Newsletters, Webstories, and Twitter to be part of our journey towards a healthy and sustainable world. I hope you enjoy reading this Newsletter.

Cristina Albertin,

UNODC Regional Representative for the Middle East and North Africa

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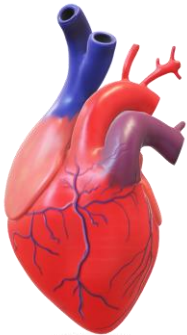


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Fact-check: Health



**Almost 11 million people inject drugs.
1.3 million people who inject drugs are living with HIV.
5.5 million are living with hepatitis C.
1.0 million are living with both hepatitis C and HIV.**



**7.8 Million HIV- related deaths have been averted in the last 15 years.
16 Million people are receiving antiretroviral treatment; 21 million are not yet.
AIDS/HIV related deaths dropped by 42% since 2004.
35% new infections have been recorded since 2000.**



**27 million people are problematic drug users, i.e. they use drugs regularly and suffer from drug use disorders or dependence.
Only 1 of 6 of these problem users has access to drug treatment services.
Injecting drug use continues to drive the HIV epidemic in many countries around the world.**



**People who use drugs can constitute up to 50% of the prison population.
Prisoners are 5 times more likely to be living with HIV than adults in the general population.
HIV and tuberculosis are among the main causes of death in prisons.**



UNODC supports 34 high priority countries in addressing HIV in prisons with the aim of achieving Sustainable Development Goal target 3.3: to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030, including people in prisons.

World Drug Report 2018
UNODC HIV in prisons factsheet
UNAIDS Data Report 2018
WHO World Aids Day Data
UNODC Strategy To End AIDS By 2030

HEALTH

Projects in the Middle East and North Africa

1) **HIV/AIDS Prevention, Treatment, Care, and Support in Prison Settings in The Middle East and North Africa Project**



Access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support for people who are living in prisons and other closed settings, is urgently needed. This project aims to support Member States in the overall prevention strategies in prison settings by building, strengthening and ensuring continuity of HIV prevention, treatment and care services for people in prisons in the MENA region. The overall strategic goal is to promote human rights-based, gender responsive, public health centered, and evidence-based approaches and to build the capacities of government

officials and civil society organizations to deliver a comprehensive package of HIV/AIDS services in prisons and closed settings.

2) **Supporting the establishment of an evidence-based drug dependence treatment and rehabilitation system for the Palestine National Rehabilitation Center Project**



Upon request from the State of Palestine, and in support of its efforts to establish the first drug dependence treatment center in Palestine, UNODC is providing technical support, especially about the development of a comprehensive, integrated and safe response to the problem of drug dependence in Palestine.

This project aims to:

- Support the Palestinian Authority by developing a comprehensive system of drug dependence treatment and care, fully integrated into the health system;
- Strengthen the institutional and human resource capacity of the Palestine National Rehabilitation Center for it to provide a comprehensive package of drug dependence treatment and rehabilitation services with continuum of care through community-based services;
- Develop a comprehensive study on the trends, size estimation and prevalence of illicit drug use and non-medical use of prescription drugs including size estimation study, drug dependence treatment demand and service delivery gaps.

Towards Health Care Improvements in Prisons

A Step Towards Health Care Improvements within Tunisian Prisons



UNODC signed an [agreement](#) with the Tunisian Association to Combat Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS (ATL MST/SIDA Tunis), on the implementation of Voluntary Confidential Counselling, Testing, and Aftercare (VCCTA) services of HIV, HBV, HCV and related training activities targeting prison staff and inmates in selected Tunisian prisons. In cooperation with the General Directorate of Prison and Reeducation (DGPR) and the Ministry of Justice, a group of 3 Civil Society Organization (CSOs) was selected to implement the services, namely ATL/SIDA Tunis (lead CSO), Beity, and the Tunisian Society of Addictology (STADD).

The selected CSOs will provide harm reduction activities in four adult prison facilities and two juvenile rehabilitation centers. As a result, 6,000 inmates will have access to drug prevention services, HIV/AIDS, TB, Viral Hepatitis and STI prevention, treatment, and care services, and will promote the reintegration of around 2000 inmates. In addition, the CSOs will build the capacities of 500 prison staff members, 75 medical doctors and nurses, and 20 psychologists and social workers on the provision of harm reduction services.

UNODC inaugurated first-ever prison Voluntary Confidential Counseling, Testing and aftercare services in Egypt



UNODC launched first-ever VCCTA services inside three prisons in Egypt. At present, these services are provided in three prisons and in 2018 approximately 1,500 inmates were screened for HIV, HBV and HCV and 18,000 for tuberculosis. Inmates who were confirmed HIV positive are receiving ARV treatment, in cooperation with the national AIDS programme and the Prison Administration. Additionally, the Ministry of Interior (MOI) has agreed to extend VCCTA services to the Kanater women prison. In this context, UNODC, in close coordination with the MOI and the Ministry of Health and Population, conducted a three-day workshop

inside the Kanater Prison on "Women Health in Prisons Settings."

Drug Treatment and Forensics

Palestine - Leveraging Capacities in Drug Treatment and Forensics



UNODC has been partnering with the State of Palestine since 2007 supporting the development of comprehensive demand reduction interventions including the implementation of the ever-first opioid substitution treatment center, a drug use survey and the first drug treatment and rehabilitation center. The newly constructed center is the first Palestinian National Rehabilitation Center operated by the Ministry of Health. It has a total capacity of 58 beds for both men and women and is equipped with modern medical equipment, diverse facilities for the patients using the UNODC-developed [TreatNet package](#) which provides for

comprehensive experts, guidance and advice in drug use prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration.

Forensic Science Laboratory at the Civil Palestinian Police



Another key intervention supported by UNODC in the State of Palestine is the establishment of the Forensic Science Laboratory at the Civil Palestinian Police, where drugs, chemicals, firearms, tool marks and documents can be analyzed. The Forensic Science Laboratory is the first of its kind in the State of Palestine and it received more than 2,800 cases since its opening in November 2016. Within the framework of this project, forensic experts were intensively trained including study tours to other countries. The support also included the training of seven specialized forensic medicine doctors, among them the first female forensic doctor in

Palestine. In this regard, evidence collection and analysis in violence against women cases is key to ensure successful court cases and female doctors are instrumental in ensuring these.

More from UNODC ROMENA

Morocco - A Thriving Partnership in Support of the Rule-of-Law, Justice and Health



UNODC and the Delegation in charge of Moroccans Residing Abroad and Migration Affairs organized a workshop in Rabat (Morocco) with national and international partners to encourage reflection on a future National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Human Trafficking in support of Morocco's new law on human trafficking. In addition to a variety of national stakeholders, including the General Prosecutor's Office, Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Solidarity and Social Development as well as local Civil Society Organization platforms, the meeting brought together experts from Bahrein and Nigeria where UNODC had supported a similar mechanism. Also, seasoned experts from the Council of Europe and the OSCE provided valuable insights on the prerequisites for establishing a national referral system as well as good practices from countries with a long-standing legislation on anti-human trafficking. The meeting is part of a broader package of cooperation between UNODC and the Government of Morocco encompassing country-specific activities in the following

areas: (i) terrorism prevention focusing on the criminal justice response to Foreign Terrorist Fighters and countering terrorism financing (ii) countering human trafficking and smuggling of migrants (iii) HIV prevention in prisons through trainings, provision of Voluntary Counseling and Treatment (VCT) and vaccination campaigns in cooperation with the prison administration and civil society organizations.

Egypt: Engaging Judges in Countering Violence against Women



UNODC concluded, for the first time, a national [workshop](#) in Egypt on "Judicial Challenges and Responses in the field of Violence against Women." In the presence of Assistant Minister of Justice for the Center of Judicial Studies and the Assistant Minister of Justice for the Department of Human Rights, Women and Children. 25 Egyptian judges, participated in this workshop, where the newly

produced manual for judges titled "Judges' Standards for Handling Crimes of Violence Against Women" was introduced.

The workshop focused on discussing the legal framework for combating violence against women with reference to international instruments, and relevant provisions in the Egyptian Penal Code, in addition to the practical challenges related to sentencing cases of violence against women. The sessions were conducted by UNODC expert and guest speakers from the Egyptian Ministry of Justice. Judge Jorge Luis Fernández Vaquero, international expert, who has been working on Violence against Women for the past 11 years in Spain, presented the justice system in Spain outlining the evolution of the system and the challenges that led to the establishment of the specialized Violence against Women Courts within the Spanish Judicial System. He also shared practical experiences on real cases handled by the Spanish courts.

Regional - MENA Prosecutors General Commit to Enhance International Cooperation to Prevent the Emerging Terrorist Financing Threats



In the framework of the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNODC and the Prosecutor General's Office of Egypt, UNODC supported the Prosecutor General (PG) of Egypt in organizing the “First Middle East and North Africa Conference to Counter the Evolving Threat of Financing of Terrorism and its Nexus with Money Laundering,” bringing together Prosecutors General,

Attorneys General and Public Prosecution Officials from 41 countries from MENA, Africa and Europe as well as international partners and donors. 26 Prosecutors General (PGs) participated highlighting the great importance attached by participating countries to the emerging terrorist financing threats, notably the funding of foreign terrorist fighters. The Conference focused on best practices and challenges in investigating the financing of terrorism and the connected money laundering operations; prevention and precautionary measures carried out by the prosecution authorities; cooperation between PGs and Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs), related international and regional instruments and ways to strengthen international cooperation in these areas.

UNODC supports Parliaments in the Middle East and North Africa to address the threat of Foreign Terrorist Fighters



Parliamentarians from 16 countries in the Middle East and North Africa met in Egypt at a high-level regional conference, co-organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), to discuss combatting terrorism and violent extremism. The conference focused particularly on the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). Around 40,000 such fighters from 110 countries are estimated to have travelled to join the conflicts in Iraq and Syria.

The high-level event aimed to improve parliamentary cooperation and facilitate the exchange of relevant experiences and good practices regarding this phenomenon. It sought to get views from parliamentarians on the challenges in implementing United Nations resolutions, contribute to establishing a Global Parliamentary Network on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism, and raise the awareness of members of parliament with regards to the recent developments related to foreign terrorist fighters. The event was part of the joint IPU-UNODC-UNOCT programme which seeks to support parliaments in implementing international counter-terrorism instruments and obligations. Furthermore, it also aimed to provide them with the necessary tools and training as guided by the IPU High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism.

Reinforcing judges' capabilities in investigating and prosecuting human trafficking and migrant smuggling cases



To assist Egypt to strengthen its criminal justice response to Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and the Smuggling of migrants (SOM) UNODC, under the framework of the Global Action to address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants ([GLO.ACT](#)) and in collaboration with the National Coordinating Committee on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (NCCPIM-TIP) and the National Centre for Judicial Studies, organised a seminar for 20 judges from major governorates in Egypt in Sharm El Sheikh.

The aim of the workshop was to strengthen the role of Egyptian senior judges to effectively prevent, investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cases of TIP and SOM. The training therefore included sessions on the national laws on TIP Law No. 64 of 2010 and Law 82 of 2016 on SOM and on international standards with regards to TIP and SOM. More specifically,

during the workshop judges considered international legal frameworks for combating transnational organised crime, more specifically the UN [Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the protocols thereto](#). The changing patterns and trends with regards to TIP and SOM in Egypt were also discussed. The representative from the Court of Cassation, the supreme court of Egypt's common court system, spoke about the adoption of national legislation and how it strengthens work on TIP and SOM cases and associated crimes in Egypt. Discussions related to victim assistance and witness protection, especially in criminal proceedings resulted in a high level of engagement by the participants. UNODC experts also presented on the role social media can play in TIP and SOM cases and how this relates to actual investigations. The experts also provided the participants with tools to build a foundation in gathering information and evidence through open sources.

The three-day workshop concluded with the judges studying important material on actual TIP and SOM cases and the exchange of information on the difference between the two crimes. A key outcome of this workshop is that it built the practical knowledge of the judges to enable them to better distinguish between TIP and SOM cases and to share this knowledge with junior judges in their respective provinces.

Upcoming Events

- Workshops on the National Referral Mechanisms and Standard Operating Procedures on identification and protection for victims of human trafficking, May 2019 (Morocco).
- Border Control Programme training on develop scenario-based, algorithms and operational scenarios to custom IT department, May 2019 (Tunisia).
- Mock investigation/mock training on Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking of Persons, June 2019 (Algeria).
- Container Control Program practical training, June 2019 (Lebanon).
- Regional event on the Blue Heart Campaign, June 2019 (Regional).
- Line Up Live Up training, June 2019 (Palestine).
- Workshop on the rehabilitation of prisoners, June 2019 (Palestine).
- Training of national stakeholders of new psychoactive substance, August 2019 (Egypt).



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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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