



# UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



## Justice Section

Crime prevention and  
criminal justice reform

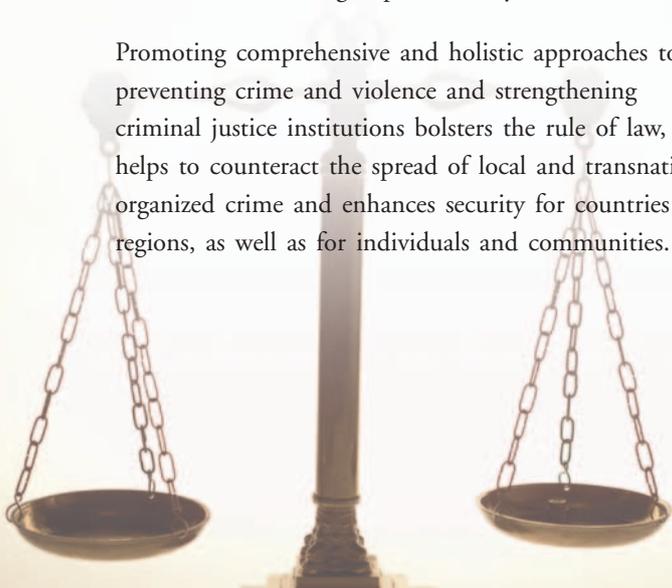
# Effective and fair criminal justice systems

## a cornerstone of the rule of law

The rule of law is a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and that are consistent with international human rights standards and norms.

The rule of law requires measures to ensure adherence to principles such as equality before the law, accountability to the law and fairness in the application of the law. A weak criminal justice system cannot effectively guarantee the application of those principles. Rather, it allows crime and violence to prevail, encourages corrupt practices, hampers social and economic development and contributes to political instability. And, where lawlessness and instability prevail, the most vulnerable groups of society suffer the most.

Promoting comprehensive and holistic approaches to preventing crime and violence and strengthening criminal justice institutions bolsters the rule of law, helps to counteract the spread of local and transnational organized crime and enhances security for countries and regions, as well as for individuals and communities.



## Criminal justice systems: more accessible, accountable and effective

An effective, fair and humane criminal justice system is based on the commitment to uphold human rights in the administration of justice and the prevention and control of crime. Over 50 standards and norms covering crime prevention, criminal justice and victim protection currently exist. These instruments guide the work of the Justice Section of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in promoting effective action to strengthen national responses in crime prevention and criminal justice and in responding to the needs of the international community in the face of both national and transnational criminality.

The Justice Section assists States, particularly developing countries and countries emerging from conflict or with economies in transition, to develop strategies to prevent and investigate crime, and prosecute offenders. We build the capacity of justice systems to operate more effectively within the framework of the rule of law, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups. Key components of the work of the Justice Section include providing assistance to victims and witnesses of crime, improving access to justice (including access to legal aid), promoting restorative justice, preventing gender-based violence, promoting justice for children and supporting prison reform and alternatives to imprisonment. We also promote professional standards of conduct among criminal justice practitioners, including police officers, prosecutors and judges, and we help States improve criminal justice case management and monitoring and oversight systems.

## Examples of impact



### Skills training and employment opportunities for disadvantaged youth in Honduras

Rates of youth crime and victimization are high in Latin America and the Caribbean. Associated factors include insufficient educational and professional opportunities for socio-economically disadvantaged youth. In Honduras, UNODC, the National Institute of Professional Training (INFOP) and the Honduran Institute for the Prevention of Alcoholism, Drug Addiction and Pharmaceutical Dependence (IHADFA) have been supporting strategies to reintegrate young unemployed Hondurans into the labour market since 2004. Aged 16-23, these youths lack professional training and have dropped out of school, making them at risk of becoming involved in criminal activities. Over 100 young people in Tegucigalpa have benefited from professional skills training and received support in finding a job. Currently activities are being extended to the municipality of San Pedro Sula.



**Preventing domestic violence in Viet Nam** In Viet Nam, as in many countries, domestic violence is widely considered a private issue, not a crime. Yet many women suffer serious harm at the hands of partners or former partners. UNODC is working to raise awareness of domestic violence and promote behavioural change among law enforcement agencies and the general public. We have been working with the Ministry of Public Security, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, to train national and provincial law enforcement officials to prevent and respond to domestic violence incidents more effectively and with greater sensitivity. We have also helped the Ministry of Justice assess various forms of punishment for domestic violence and are evaluating the quality of criminal justice services available to victims of domestic violence. To enhance public awareness of these issues, UNODC produced a 10-part television series, *Breaking the Silence*, that shows the consequences of domestic violence.



### Promoting prison reform and rehabilitation of prisoners in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Correctional centres and prisons in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in the region face the same challenges: dilapidated buildings, overcrowding and insufficient budgets. Activities inside rehabilitation centres are very limited. Since April 2009, with funds from the Government of Canada, UNODC has been supporting the General Administration of Reform and Rehabilitation Centers (GARRC) to strengthen the management, operation and oversight of civil prisons. A vocational training programme has been designed to provide pretrial detainees with opportunities to gain useful skills that can be used when they return to the community. UNODC also provides assistance for building restoration, leadership training and health care, and general staff training in issues such as human rights standards in prison settings, the role and tasks of correctional officers and modern prison management. In July 2010 GARRC presented its medium-term strategic plan for the period 2011-2013, which provides a comprehensive development road map structured around the vision of achieving “secure, safe and humane reform centres to change the behaviour of inmates, as well as to improve their ability to effectively and productively reintegrate into society”.



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## Some of the services we offer:

- Specialized advice to policymakers and practitioners in the area of crime prevention and criminal justice reform, including high-level technical advice and capacity-building
- Crime prevention and criminal justice system assessments
- Justice reform support to countries in transition and peace operations, including through the provision of expertise, training and technical advice
- Capacity-building for staff of ministries of justice and the interior
- Crime prevention support to Governments and civil society (i.e. sector-specific support such as skills programmes for at-risk youth and comprehensive multisectoral interventions)
- Capacity development for police officers to improve accountability and integrity and respond to the needs of victims
- Training for judicial officials on the use of non-custodial measures and the appropriate treatment of victims and witnesses
- Training for policymakers and practitioners on justice for children
- Promotion of measures to stop violence against women
- Support for improving prison management and the treatment of prisoners, including special categories, in line with United Nations standards and norms
- Support for reducing prison overcrowding, including through improving implementation of alternatives to imprisonment
- Tools and publications to assist States in implementing the standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice

“We recognize that an effective, fair and humane criminal justice system is based on the commitment to uphold the protection of human rights in the administration of justice and prevention and control of crime” (Salvador Declaration, April 2010)