



ROMENA Newsletter

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

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Message by Ms. Cristina Albertin, UNODC Regional Representative for the Middle East and North Africa



Transnational organized crime and terrorism continue to pose grave threats worldwide and particularly to the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA). Regional cooperation and coordination are essential to tackle such threats.

In view of this and UNODC’s mandates, the UNODC Regional Programme for Arab States (2016-2021) pays increasing attention to working with member states on providing operational and practical approaches to Member States’ efforts in countering transnational organized crime and terrorism and their nexus.

Consequently, in the context of UN’s [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), UNODC ROMENA’s support aims at mainstreaming crime and drug control in the development

agenda, enhancing the policy dialogue with national and regional stakeholders in promoting the rule of law to address transnational organized crime and terrorism, furthering the dialogue and cooperation with civil society, and supporting “knowledge networks” across the region.

This Newsletter focusses on UNODC’s work in the region in support of Member States to enhance capacities in border management and control by land, air, and sea. I hope you enjoy reading this Newsletter.

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UNODC support to Member States' on Border Security in the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA): A Brief Overview

UNODC assists national authorities, upon request, such as Ministries of Interior, Ministries of Justice, Customs and other law enforcement agencies in the MENA region to enhance their capacities to interdict trafficking and to address organized crime, covering land, air and sea border controls. In this regard, UNODC ROMENA is currently implementing **three projects**:

1) Land: Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Border Control against Illicit Trafficking Project,

UNODC launched the project in 2015 as a step towards supporting the capacity of national authorities in the MENA region to tackle illicit trafficking and to address the connection between transnational organized crime and terrorism. Member States focus on securing borders through processes of searching, identifying, and intercepting suspected individuals and bodies (identification and interception) and procedures of dismantling criminal networks through investigation and in-depth inquiry (investigation). Under the project, UNODC continued its support to the Algerian and Tunisian authorities to establish a new coordinated management approach for customs and police controls between the two countries with the objective to facilitate the operational cooperation of Algeria and Tunisia in addressing cross-border criminal and/or terrorist activities.



2) Air: Airport Communications Project (AIRCOP),



targets since its launch in the MENA region in 2016 in cooperation with INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO), to enhance the capacities of airports in the region to detect and interdict high-risk/suspicious passengers (foreign terrorist fighters, passengers using counterfeit documents, smuggled migrants, persons subject to an Interpol Red Notice) as well as illicit trafficking by air. Through this project, UNODC promotes an intelligence-led approach to airport control, inter-agency cooperation and real-time operational communication among law enforcement authorities operating at international airports through the establishment of a Joint Airport Interdiction Task Force (JAITF) or by improving similar existing structures. UNODC facilitated the participation of airports in Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia in two joint operations where thousands of messages and searches were exchanged over WCO's CENcomm network (Customs Enforcement Network Communication Platform) and INTERPOL's I-24/7 global police communications system.

3) Sea: The UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme,



aims since its launch in the MENA region in 2014, at supporting Member States' capacities to facilitate and secure its containerized cargo and freight trade supply chain. CCP works

jointly with competent national authorities to establish, equip and train interagency teams, comprised of customs officials, law enforcement officers and other specialized agency representatives and facilitate supportive public-private partnerships with implicated corporate sector companies. In 2018, building on the ongoing efforts in Jordan, Morocco, Oman and Tunisia, CCP was launched for the Port of Aden in Yemen and the land border crossing of Karameh in Jordan. UNODC also delivered technical capacity building with a specific focus on profiling, selection and inspection of wildlife trafficking, counterfeit and falsified medicine, cultural heritage and strategic trade and export control to officers at the PCU and ACCU in Jordan and to the PCU at the Port of Radès in Tunisia. Because of the assistance provided under CCP to date, Jordan and Tunisia have made important seizures at the national level in the areas of illicit drugs, such as amphetamine and cocaine, wildlife, intellectual property rights infringements, counterfeit medicine and products, cigarettes, weapons, and explosives. At the regional level, CCP has facilitated exchange of information and alerts between countries on illicit trafficking cases and joint operations and organized study visits between the region's countries.

Projects' Key Achievements

- Officials at land border crossing points use skills and techniques allowing them to more efficiently profile and search suspicious persons and cargoes;
- Officials posted in key hub cities along smuggling routes and Border Crossing Points (BCPs) collect key information on organized criminal networks allowing States to progressively uncover their structure and better know their modus operandi;

- National and regional cooperation mechanisms are improved to better respond to illicit trafficking.

- The establishment of a regional committee and two technical sub-committees in charge of unifying customs legislation and harmonizing operational customs procedures in order to reach a so-called 'One-Stop Border Posts' model (OSBP) at two selected pilot sites.

- Operational Port Control Units (PCUs) and Air Cargo Control Unit (ACCU) established in Jordan (Port of Aqaba, Queen Alia International Airport and land border crossing of Karameh); Morocco (where the CCP supports Customs' risk analysis units in the Ports of Agadir, Casablanca and Tanger-Med); Oman (Port of Sohar); Tunisia (Port of Rades) and Yemen (Port of Aden).

- Considerable seizures have been made in the areas of illicit drugs, counterfeit medicine, intellectual property rights, cigarettes, arms and explosives including regional and international cooperation cases.

Reinforcing Tunisia's Border Control Capacity



Under the assistance provided to Tunisia to establish the National Risk and Threat Analysis and Management Centre (RTAMC), UNODC delivered on 19 December 2018

hardware and software equipment to the Tunisian Ministry of Interior (General Direction of Special Service). The first phase of the project focuses on connecting six pilot Border Crossing Points (BCPs) by covering the three different types of BCPs (land, air

and sea) and focusing on different types of fluxes. The hardware and software equipment are expected to be connected to all Tunisian BCPs allowing the RTAMC to improve the feasibility of screening of travelers entering Tunisia through the identified BCPs. Moreover, the Centre will facilitate analyzing Advanced Passenger Information (API) from Air Carriers operating within Tunisia; passport data of travelers at land borders and either API/PNR or passport data and cargos at sea ports. The second phase of the project will cover the control and management of passengers at the three types of BCPs and will extend to vehicles and cargoes at sea and land BCPs.

During the last quarter in 2018, ROMENA started the launch of its series of trainings in Tunisia on “the Fight against Document Fraud using Profiling Techniques and Indicators to Detect Suspicious Travelers”, by training 35 participants from the Tunisian Customs (frontline Customs officers from different airports, ports and land borders). Through these trainings, ROMENA aims at supporting Tunisian Customs to analyze risk profiling and to more effectively identify fraudulent document and suspicious travelers.

UNODC-League of Arab States Third Annual Steering Committee Meeting



On 7 and 8 November 2018, UNODC/ROMENA and the League of Arab States held the third Steering and Follow-Up Committee of the [Regional Programme for the Arab States to Prevent and Combat Crime, Terrorism and Health Threats, and to Strengthen Criminal Justice Systems in Line with International Human Rights Standards \(2016-2021\)](#), at the

Headquarters of the League of Arab States (LAS) in Cairo.

Representatives of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health, Interior and Justice from the Arab countries covered by the Regional Programme (RP) gathered for the third time since the launch of the new RP in 2016 to discuss progress in the implementation of the RP and to facilitate effective cooperation between UNODC, LAS and the concerned Member States. The discussions focused on countering organized crime, corruption and terrorism while enhancing the criminal justice and health response. UNODC Regional Representative, Ms. Albertin, denoted the continuous grave threats to the region and the world posed by transnational organized crime and terrorism but also the increasing problem of drug use. Following the working group discussions of the five sub-programmes of the RP, the Steering and Follow-Up Committee agreed on a set of [Recommendations](#) to improve the collaboration and the implementation of the RP.

UNODC and the League of Arab States Agree to Enhance Work to Prevent and Treat Drug Use and HIV/AIDS



On 3 October 2018, ROMENA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the League of Arab States, that provides a policy framework for cooperation between the two entities in the areas of HIV/AIDS prevention and care, drug use prevention, care and treatment of drug disorders.

Ms. Cristina Albertin, Regional Representative of UNODC for the MENA region and Dr. Haifa Abu Ghazala, Assistant Secretary General, Head of Social Affairs Sector of the League of Arab States signed the MoU highlighting the importance of the collaboration considering the pressing issues that affect vulnerable people's lives in the Region. The MoU will support the work that both entities are doing across the region in addressing drug use and HIV/AIDS by supporting Member States' national responses.



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Supporting the reintegration of released inmates in Tunisia



In partnership with the Tunisian General Directorate of Prisons and Reintegration (DGPR), ROMENA concluded in September a national workshop on "Mapping of the Healthcare and Reintegration Services for Former Prisoners", where 70 representatives from ministries, civil society organizations and international organizations participated. The workshop was an opportunity to present the mapping of government institutions besides national and international non-governmental organizations providing services in areas of healthcare

such as the prevention and the treatment of drugs, HIV, tuberculosis, hepatitis in addition to the social inclusion of vulnerable groups and the economic reintegration of former prisoners. Through the discussions, the importance of effective interventions was emphasized with the aim to assist ex-prisoners in reintegrating into the community and desisting from crime, particularly considering that high recidivism rates carry significant costs for society, both in terms of financial cost and public safety. Also, the reintegration of released prisoners is an important step towards the fulfillment of their human rights.

Using Alternatives to Imprisonment to Address Overcrowding in MENA Prisons



For the first time ever, 34 representatives from the Ministries of Justice, directors of prison administrations, judges, prosecutors and Attorney Generals, from six countries, i.e. Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco, came together in the UNODC-supported regional workshop on "Promoting Effective Use of Alternatives to Imprisonment in the Middle East and North Africa" under the UNODC Global Prison Challenges Programme. The participating delegations shared their national legislative context and current practices on the use of alternatives to imprisonment, challenges faced and specific needs to improve both theoretical and practical alternatives to imprisonment.

The participating delegations agreed on a general set of recommendations to improve the effective use of alternatives to imprisonment in their countries. The workshop concluded with initiating national action plans for each participating country to initiate and/or improve the effective and efficient implementation of alternatives to imprisonment.

Helping Children in the MENA to Rehabilitate



Since 2015, under the [Global Programme on Violence against Children](#), UNODC has addressed efforts to prevent and respond to the recruitment and exploitation of

children by terrorist and violent extremist groups. Relying on its dual mandate in counter-terrorism and violence against children, the Office has provided specialized technical assistance in this area to over 20 countries through global, regional and national activities. Recognizing that child recruitment is an old phenomenon, but that strategies and tactics of terrorist and violent extremist groups are posing new global challenges for the protection of children, [UNODC published a Handbook](#) providing comprehensive guidance, anchored in international law, and identifying numerous promising practices to work in this area .

In December, UNODC concluded a regional capacity building training event, focusing on rehabilitation, reintegration, and justice for children recruited and exploited by terrorist and violent extremist groups. 35 judges, lawyers, social workers, personnel of detention

facilities and civil society representatives from Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia participated in the training's interactive sessions, practical examples and exercises, that focused on promoting accurate assessments of both the context in which children are recruited and exploited, and the situation of each individual child, to favor the adoption of tailored responses. Additional sessions focused on planning and implementing comprehensive reintegration and rehabilitation strategies, addressing disengagement from violence, recognizing the role of a specialized justice system for children to fulfil child rights while promoting the safety of society from the serious threats associated with terrorism. The training also served as a privileged platform to exchange experiences, practices and challenges across different countries, and with a multidisciplinary perspective.

A Wind of Change for Prisoners with Mental Illnesses in Lebanon



For a long time, prisoners with mental illnesses in the “Blue House” in Roumieh prison were suffering from neglect. With the high rate of overcrowding, and the security challenges

encountered by prison management in Lebanon, the prisoners were not seen as a priority. Their situation degraded severely as they were suffering from a lack of basic needs, care and treatment. Within the framework of “Improving Detention Conditions” project, several services were provided to meet

prisoners' basic needs through ensuring decent sleeping conditions and providing a range of services that include recreational and rehabilitation activities as well as occupational therapy. The "Blue House" was turned into a breathing space for those prisoners who were able during the Christmas season to be part of a pilot income generating activity aiming at making Christmas decorations. Prisoners were very motivated to work, to feel productive, and to gain some money for the first time in prison and spend it on items of their choice (snacks, cigarettes, etc.). They were excited to break their daily routine, focus on the present moment, release stress and detach from their difficult reality for a while.

Prisoners with mental illnesses are now benefiting, not only from an income generating activity, but also from a renovated space with adequate beds, a "blue future" full of hope, now that they feel less stigmatized and more valued.

ROMENA Welcomes the Adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

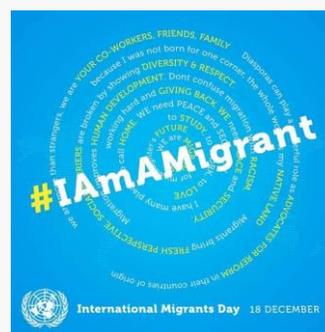


UNODC Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa welcomed the historic agreement of Member States to adopt the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) during the Intergovernmental Conference which took place in Marrakech (Morocco) from 10 to 11 December 2018.

As guardian of the [United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime](#) and its protocols against the Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants, UNODC is well-placed to assist states in implementing objectives 9 and 10 of the Compact's 23 goals. Objective 9 focuses on enhancing the transnational response to smuggling of migrants, and objective 10 on preventing, addressing trafficking in persons in the context of international migration. Both reinforce the existing international legal framework, referencing the UN Smuggling and Trafficking Protocols as relevant, actionable instruments.

As a member of the Executive Committee of the UN Migration Network that has been established to assist states' implementation of the objectives contained in the Compact, UNODC emphasized that it stands ready to engage with all actors to take up this historic opportunity.

International Migrants Day – 18 December



The 2018 International Migrants Day came just days after the adoption of the landmark [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular](#)

[Migration](#). As the United Nations Secretary-General said, the Compact is people-centred and rooted in human rights and points the way towards stronger action to address migration challenges, such as cracking down human trafficking and migrant smuggling crimes.

UNODC/ROMENA joins the UN system and partners in supporting the Middle East and North Africa

countries to implement the Global Compact, to stop smugglers from putting lives at risk, increase identification of trafficking victims in flows of migration and refugees and bring criminals to justice.

Working together through the Global Compact, UN agencies, Member States and partners can improve prevention, stop violence, abuse and exploitation at the hands of criminals and ensure that people on the move have the protection they deserve.

World Day of Arabic Language – 18 December



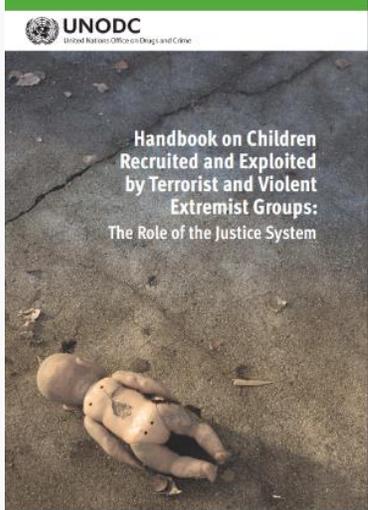
The Arabic language is a pillar of the cultural diversity of humanity. It is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, used daily by more than 290 million people. World Arabic Language Day is celebrated every

year on 18 December since 2012. The date coincides with the day in 1973, in which the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted Arabic as the sixth official language of the Organization.

In the diversity of its forms, classic or dialectal, from oral expression to poetic calligraphy, the Arabic language has given rise to a fascinating aesthetic, in fields as varied as architecture, poetry, philosophy and song. It gives access to an incredible variety of identities and beliefs and its history reveals the richness of its links with other languages. Arabic has played a catalytic role in knowledge, promoting the dissemination of Greek and Roman sciences and philosophies to Renaissance Europe. It has enabled a

dialogue of cultures along the silk roads, from the coast of India to the Horn of Africa.

Photo Gallery



Upcoming Events

- Training on the delivery of harm reduction services to prisoners, January 2019 (Egypt).
- Train of trainer session on document fraud, February 2019 (Tunisia).
- Regional workshop on enhancing regional cooperation for countering the financing of terrorism, February 2019 (Egypt).
- Workshop on financial investigation and financial analysis, February 2019 (Egypt).
- Training on UNODC Data Management System for Detention Centers for children in conflict with the law, February 2019 (Egypt).
- Training workshop for prosecutors on addressing crimes of violence against women in Egypt, February 2019.
- Training of women prison health staff on the delivery of gender sensitive prison health services, February 2019 (Egypt).
- First training for Tunisia Customs on information analysis and operational intelligence at land, air and sea borders, March 2019 (Tunisia).
- Regional workshop on cash smuggling at airports, March 2019 (Egypt).
- Basic and intermediate strategic and tactical intelligence analysis training, March 2019 (Tunisia).
- National workshop on implementing effective international cooperation and mutual legal assistance in terrorism matters, including in procedures against foreign terrorist fighters, March 2019 (Egypt).
- Two training workshops on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism, March 2019 (in Morocco and Sudan).
- Training of selected NGOs to provide psychological and reintegration services to released inmates, March 2019 (Egypt).

The activities and projects described in this Newsletter are funded by the following partners:



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Email us:

unodc-egyptfieldoffice@un.org

Address:
14 Road 280, Postal No. 11435

Maadi, Cairo, Egypt