

Overview of Serious and Organized Crime in North Africa

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ANALYTICAL REPORT



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**THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME**

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Executive Summary

Transnational organized crime in Northern Africa poses a substantial threat to the safety and security of all member countries in the region, and poses a significant challenge to law enforcement agencies. As a result, INTERPOL, under the European Union funded ENACT Project, has sought to catalogue and assess organized crime in the region to help drive a more strategic law enforcement response.

International criminal organizations target North Africa due to the significant illicit wealth that can be generated from criminal market opportunities throughout the region, notably but not limited to drug trafficking, arms trafficking, human smuggling and trafficking, the counterfeiting of a range of goods, and the illicit traffic of cultural heritage.

Crime syndicates exploit various social issues and take advantage of state fragility and limited law enforcement policing capacities to conceal and develop their activities. In addition, there are a number of additional facilitating factors bolstering organized criminality throughout the region such as the length of the region's borders with sub-Saharan Africa, the strategic geographic position of the region between sub-Saharan Africa and Europe, the inclusion of North African countries in global trade flows, fragile economies, war profiteering stemming from many of the recent conflicts in the region or its vicinity, as well as corruption to varying degrees.

The threat from organized crime in Northern Africa is therefore substantial, yet often going undetected and underreported, despite various data sources indicating major activities and dynamics of groups and networks active in the region. This mostly stems from limited and unequal capacity amongst law enforcement in the region to manage complex organized crime issues. A greater awareness of the scope and functioning of organized crime in North Africa, nurturing stronger partnerships amongst law enforcement agencies in the region, will contribute to better tackle the threat posed by organised crime.

Key Findings

The following are the key findings derived from analysis of a range of data sources available on organized crime in North Africa:

- ❖ Crime syndicates are a common trans-border criminal element in the region. The long tradition of smuggling in North Africa has entrenched the cross-border trafficking in illicit goods.
- ❖ Poly-criminality is common for crime syndicates throughout North Africa as many criminal activities are often interrelated and interconnected.
- ❖ The region is increasingly connected to global illicit markets via various international criminal organizations, which are targeting North Africa in particular to maximize illicit gains. This involvement is suspected to be on the rise.
- ❖ Analysis shows that North Africa is a consumption, production and transit hub for various illicit drugs, including cannabis, cocaine and heroin. There is also a diversion and trafficking of several psychoactive drugs.
- ❖ North African countries constitute, mainly, source countries and transit hubs for migrants smuggled towards Europe. Local crime syndicates play a key role in this criminal phenomenon; they also operate in conjunction with crime syndicates located outside the region.
- ❖ Available information suggests that North African countries are, at various degrees, source, transit and destination countries for men, women, and children subjected mainly to forced labour as well as sexual exploitation. In addition, trafficking for organ removal has been reported in the region.
- ❖ The conflict situation in Libya and some countries bordering the region has increased the availability, circulation and trafficking of weapons in North Africa and beyond. Weapons, ammunition and explosives stolen from Libyan stockpiles are suspected to be spread across more than 12 countries in the Maghreb, Sahel, Levant, Horn of Africa, and Central Africa regions. Numerous armed groups in the region have been involved in the trafficking of weapons.
- ❖ In the region, the illicit traffic in cultural heritage items and artefacts affects most of the North African countries. The major destinations of the illicitly sourced North African cultural heritage pieces are Europe, North America, and increasingly the Gulf States. Crime syndicates have their own smuggling networks and have been found to work directly with antiquities dealers or collectors. Terrorist groups are also suspected to be involved in this market in North Africa.
- ❖ Counterfeit products are present throughout North Africa. The region is an origin (production), transit and destination point for counterfeit products. North African crime syndicates play a major role in the importation, production and distribution of these products.
- ❖ The trafficking of various types of illicit goods constitutes a source of financing for terrorist and insurgent groups present in the region, which collaborate with crime syndicates that coordinate various trafficking operations.

Introduction

Organized crime is a global issue known to be affecting all countries across Northern Africa. Organized crime manifests as all crimes committed by groups of individuals, working in concert, to generate illicit profits over time. In Northern Africa, groups of individuals are known to be working together to form transnational syndicates that connect North Africa to the rest of the world, and it is estimated that this threat is growing in almost every country in the region.

The free movement of people and goods, varying levels of development and economic prosperity, and the interconnectivity of it all, fuel complex crimes in the region. With an array of political jurisdictions and systems connected through porous borders, combined with differing criminal or penal laws, varying levels of corruption, poverty, high-levels of unemployment, and substantial coastlines, the threat and risk of organized crime across North Africa is estimated to be high.

The nature and dynamic of criminal organizations in Northern Africa jeopardize sustainable peace and political stability, erode trust in public institutions, nurture corruption, and fuel violence. They disrupt the rule of law and undermine economic growth. In many instances, organized crime and associated criminal activities can be linked to armed insurgent groups or terrorist organizations, which highlights the increasing threat posed by organized crime to public safety and social order. In total, organized crime causes significant harm to persons and communities, and negatively impacts all countries across the region.

Criminal organizations reflect the jurisdictions in which they operate, exploiting existing societal weaknesses and entrenching themselves with a range of criminal techniques. They will operate at levels commensurate with a given state's ability to respond, and their nefarious activities may be accepted in varying ways by the public and society. Consequently, criminal organizations form and organize themselves dependent on the given cultural, economic and political realities in which they are based. Accordingly, organized crime will differ and take on unique structures, systems, and practices in Northern Africa, and will pose different and distinctive challenges to law enforcement depending on where they operate.

Consequently, to understand organized crime in the Northern African region better, and to combat it effectively, a thorough understanding of how it is functioning transnationally from country to country is essential.

Law enforcement and decision makers across Northern Africa need to understand how criminal enterprises work locally and transnationally. They need to know in which criminal activities groups are involved and how, and they must understand the various enabling crimes that are being committed to drive these types of crimes. The dynamics of criminal groups operating across the region must be assessed and an understanding of how they facilitate the flow of vast volumes of illicit goods and services is necessary.

Therefore, the Project ENACT (Enhancing Africa's response to transnational organized crime) has undertaken this assessment of serious and organized crime in the Northern African region. This assessment will outline how organized crime operates and carries out an array of criminality, accurate to the level of available data.

Two versions of this report exist. This report is the public version of the completed analysis, which included police information; where specific police information was used, this information has subsequently been sanitized for public distribution.

Scope & Methodology

The primary objective of this report is to provide an assessment of some organized crime activities in the Northern African region, which includes the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia.

This assessment focuses on six crime areas namely: drug trafficking, weapons trafficking, irregular migration, trafficking in persons, counterfeit goods and trafficking in cultural heritage. The report also addresses the issue of the link between organized crime and terrorism.

The assessment follows an all-source intelligence analysis methodology, consisting in integrating multiple data sources with the aim of gaining the most accurate understanding of what is occurring in the region.

Analytical judgments and conclusions about the current nature of organized crime activities in the region were drawn on the basis of information and facts available at the time of writing.

Analysis and Findings

The following analysis covers criminal organizations and networks and their various structures and dynamics. This analysis also examines some of the criminal markets found to be active in the region that pose a real and systemic organized crime threat. It examines the relationship between organized crime and terrorism. This assessment also considers some of the enabling and facilitating factors of organized crime in the region.

Criminal Organizations or networks

Analysis of available data for the region indicates that criminal organizations are active in a range of illicit markets in North Africa. These criminal organizations differ according to specific geographical and national elements, as well as the criminal markets in which they operate.

Crime syndicates in the region are involved in the production, importation, exportation, selling and the facilitation of the transit of illicit goods and services within and throughout the region.

Concerning some criminal markets in the region, the existence of sophisticated networks with well-established hierarchies and membership have been detected. This relates in particular to the crime areas of drug trafficking, people smuggling, and organ trafficking.

Crime syndicates from the region that dominate national illicit markets are often well connected to syndicates operating in neighboring countries. Well-established cross-border smuggling practices in North Africa facilitate the trafficking of illicit goods as it relies on the cooperation with criminal groups. Syndicates in the region have demonstrated links with crime syndicates from South America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, enabling a variety of criminal markets.

North African crime syndicates are likewise well-

connected with their counterparts in other African countries, including in Sahel countries. Based on examined data, consistent links have been identified in five out of six criminal markets reviewed in this report, noting drugs, people smuggling, trafficking in persons, weapons trafficking and counterfeit goods trafficking.

Sub-Saharan crime syndicates appear to operate in the region in connections with local gangs. This is the case for trafficking in human beings for domestic or sexual exploitation purposes.

In some North African countries, ethnicity is a determining factor of group organization and structure and scope of operations, due to the control that some tribes historically exert on certain cross-border smuggling routes. This does not prevent collaboration between crime syndicates of different ethnicity, but rather, entails a geographical division of respective areas of control.

Finally, there is a noted nexus between organized crime groups and terrorist activity in the region. North African crime syndicates are sometimes compelled to cooperate with insurgent or terrorist groups by paying taxes or resorting to their protection services. Criminality plays a complex role in the financial and material support for terrorist operations.

Trafficking and Illicit Markets

As has been noted, crime syndicates are active in a range of criminal markets in the region and are exploiting a variety of social and economic elements in jurisdictions across North Africa. Socio-economic vulnerabilities generate significant opportunities for groups to earn illicit profit, benefiting all crime syndicates involved. The common criminal markets thriving in the region are generally those same illicit markets that fuel criminal enterprises all over the world.

This report specifically covers the following illicit markets in the North African region: drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, people smuggling, trafficking in counterfeit goods, weapons trafficking and the illicit trade in works of art and cultural heritage artifacts. Based on available information, these criminal markets have been identified as significant in the region in terms of prevalence, potential harm, as well as cross-

border and international connectivity.

Drug Trafficking

THREAT OVERVIEW: North Africa is a consumption, production and transit hub for various types of illicit drug commodities. Organized crime groups play a major role throughout each step of the drug trafficking process in the region. Cannabis is the main drug produced and trafficked in the region. Flows of cocaine from South America typically destined to Europe transit through the region. A fraction of cocaine transiting North Africa is consumed locally and trafficked into sub-Saharan Africa. In few instances, Cocaine has also entered the region from Europe, suggesting complex criminal network connectivity. Heroin is also noted in the region. Heroin from Central Asia follows the same pattern of transiting through the region, mainly towards Europe. The region is affected by the trafficking of several types of psychoactive drugs, which are abused locally.

Cannabis

Cannabis is historically the first and main drug produced and trafficked across the region and beyond. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report for 2017 indicates that Egypt, followed by Morocco, have had the largest cannabis herb seizures in the region, while Algeria is second to Morocco as far as cannabis resin seizures is concerned.¹ The majority of cannabis seized in the region is locally produced, yet cannabis from the Middle East has been detected in Egypt and Libya², both for local consumption and further shipment to Europe.

Information suggests that cannabis herb is trafficked mostly within the region, but cannabis resin produced in North Africa is trafficked to Europe, with Moroccan crime syndicates at the center of this illicit trade.

It is estimated that 80% of cannabis resin seized in Algeria alone is bound to Europe, while 20% is destined to local consumption.³ It is very likely that these proportions are typical for the whole region. With an estimated median street value of USD 3 per gram of cannabis resin⁴⁵ in North Africa, the regional cannabis resin market would amount to several hundred million of USD.

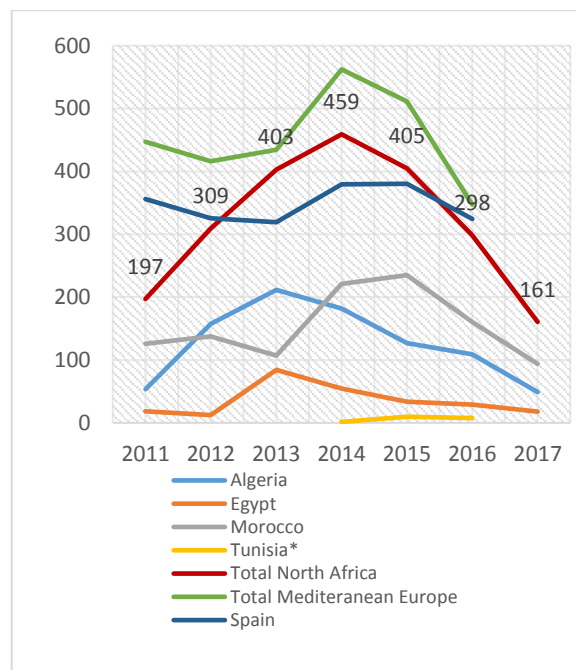


Figure 1: Cannabis resin seizures in tons by North African countries between 2011 and 2017, compared to European and Spanish seizures⁶

The European cannabis resin market, which is the main destination of Moroccan cannabis resin, is much more important in value. The European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) estimates that 1,200 tons of cannabis resin would be needed to supply the European Union (EU) market every year.⁷ With a median typical price of €9.35 (USD 10.79⁸) per gram in the EU in 2015, one can estimate the value of the European cannabis resin market to be around €11 billion (USD 12.65 billion), suggesting a significant economic incentive to import or smuggle resin across the Mediterranean.

Moroccan cannabis reaches its markets in Europe, the Middle East, and the rest of the region through several routes:

- A maritime route that originates from several locations along the Moroccan coast through the strait of Gibraltar, with Spain as a main destination but also France and Italy.
- A southern land route through Mauritania and/or Algeria, then Mali, Niger, Libya and Egypt.
- A combination of land and maritime route, departing from Morocco and following the North African coast from West to East through Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt.

In recent years, the combined maritime and land routes appear to have taken preeminence over the southern land route. There has been a decrease in hashish seizures in the southern part of Algeria, contrasted with an increase in seizures made at sea. According to Algerian authorities, this phenomenon suggests that some drug trafficking networks have shifted their focus to sea routes between Algeria and Morocco as a result of the heightened security at the border between the two countries.⁹

Moroccan crime syndicates play a major role in the trafficking of cannabis resin towards Europe and in the Northern African region. Some of these groups control the whole chain of trafficking, from production to retail sales. Their level of sophistication is significant, and their logistical infrastructures have included naval assets (i.e. small yachts, large vessels and speed boats), air assets (i.e. helicopters and small planes), as well as cars, trucks and other resources.

Open sources highlight that Moroccan criminal groups are major players in the supply of cannabis resin to Europe and that they sometimes build partnerships with European crime syndicates.¹⁰ In addition, the connection with Spanish groups is particularly strong since Spain is the main destination of Moroccan cannabis resin, given geographic proximity. For instance, in February 2018, the Spanish Guardia Civil dismantled a group that transferred cannabis resin by helicopter from Morocco. The head of this network was a Moroccan living in Marbella. Among the 18 people arrested by the Spanish police were Spanish and Moroccan citizens, but also two helicopter pilots of Serbian origin.¹¹ Over the past few years, Spanish police forces have dismantled several similar criminal organizations where Moroccan ring leaders were arrested.

Open sources further highlight an emerging trend: hashish, suspected to be of Moroccan origin, smuggled to South America and the Caribbean, where it is then exchanged for cocaine destined for distribution in Europe.¹² Such a trend indicates, that if indeed the hashish is of Moroccan origin, then Moroccan crime syndicates have greatly strengthened their links with South American and European criminal organizations involved in cocaine trafficking. It also contributes to explain the increase in cocaine seizures within and off the coast of Morocco. This bartering system may reflect the desire of Moroccan based groups to

develop new markets for their cannabis resin in South America, to diversify their offer of products in North Africa and Europe and as a result, increase their profit. This being said, the exchange of cannabis resin for cocaine may partially explain the decrease in Moroccan cannabis resin seizures in Europe and North Africa with part of the production now being destined to South America.

At the regional level, analysis suggests that national crime syndicates dominate their national markets.

At the regional level, the analysis of data provided by Northern African countries for drug trafficking suggests that national crime syndicates dominate their national markets. The analysis likewise illustrates the central role played by crime syndicates in the trafficking of cannabis resin at the regional level and how national crime syndicates are connected to accomplices in bordering countries for the sourcing and transportation of illicit products, hence forming transnational trafficking networks.

Cocaine

North Africa is also an increasingly important transit hub for South American cocaine destined to Europe and to a lesser extent, local markets within the region. International criminal organizations are attracted by the strategic geographic location of Morocco as well as the experience, expertise and networks developed by Moroccan crime syndicates for smuggling and selling cannabis across the region, and into Europe.

The examination of available cocaine seizures in the region indicates that Moroccan seizures are much higher in volumes than other countries in the region, suggesting either more cocaine overall moving through Morocco or higher rates of detection and reporting.

Country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Algeria	-	-	-	1.54	88.28	59.09	6.7
Egypt	1.5	40.41	3	527.54	23	13	2.5
Morocco	57.09	23.53	14.44	632	-	1,480	2,588
Tunisia	-	-	-	-	-	-	63

Table 1: Cocaine seizures in kg by Northern African countries¹³

An assessment of cocaine seizures made at airports of one member country from the region between January 2015 and February 2018, indicates that 97.2% of cocaine couriers arrested had Brazil as their departure point. The remaining cases involved flights with departure points in Peru and Guinea Bissau. In most of the cases, the drug couriers were in transit to several destinations, mainly Western and Central African countries with Guinea Bissau as the preferred destination. Other main destinations included Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Central African Republic and Ghana. The analysis also identifies European countries as final destinations including the United Kingdom, France, Spain and Belgium. In addition, investigations reveal that 34.5% of courier handlers were located in Brazil, 28.5% in Nigeria and 12% in Ghana.

Although the majority of cocaine courier cases in the region are reported by Morocco, instances of cocaine trafficking using courier also occur in other North African countries. For example, in September 2017, a Brazilian woman, arriving on a flight from Ethiopia, was arrested at the Cairo International Airport with 3 kg of cocaine concealed in ampoules hidden under her clothes.¹⁴

Cases of cocaine being smuggled into the region from Europe by air or across the Mediterranean Sea on board ships or ferries have also been reported by Northern African member countries.

The increase in bulk cocaine seizures on land,¹⁵ in ports and off the coast of Morocco is an important development suggesting that international criminal organizations are increasingly resorting to the maritime route for the conveyance of significantly larger quantities of drugs, in addition to air couriers ingesting or transporting cocaine in their luggage. It also confirms the growing role of Morocco as a staging and transformation point for drugs destined to Europe. This increase suggests as well that local crime syndicates play an even more active role in this form of trafficking than in the case of air couriers simply transiting through Moroccan airports.

Transshipment, storage, transportation, transformation and repackaging of large quantities of drugs require the involvement of local expertise and an important infrastructure to sustain the work. In September 2016, Moroccan Law Enforcement dismantled a cocaine conversion laboratory located in the Bouchtat region on the

border strip with Algeria. 200 kg of highly pure Cocaine was seized and seven suspects were arrested, including two Peruvian chemists and one French citizen of Moroccan origins. In the laboratory, authorities seized modern tools and equipment used in the preparation of cocaine for consumption in addition to psychotropic tablets.¹⁶

The central role that Moroccan crime syndicates play in cocaine trafficking and their collaboration with their equally sophisticated South American counterparts, is further demonstrated by the arrest of a 72 years old Moroccan ring leader residing in Malaga in December 2017. The perpetrator attempted to smuggle one ton of cocaine into Spain, concealed in loads of pineapples in containers originating from Ecuador and Costa Rica and bound to Algeciras, a major port city in Spain. He used the commercial flow of one of his companies to export drugs from South America by sea. He laundered the proceeds of his crime through a network of real estate businesses, commercial and financial structures that his four sons and two sons-in-law had helped him create. The man had moved to Malaga in the 1970's, where he began his drug trafficking activities by introducing Moroccan hashish into Spain. He then reportedly devoted himself to cocaine trafficking and became the largest cocaine trafficker in North Africa.^{17/18}

Moreover, the increase in bulk sea shipments of cocaine arriving in and/or transitioning through Morocco, coincides with the emerging trend reported by the United States Department of State of cannabis resin being smuggled to South America and the Caribbean where it is being exchanged for cocaine.¹⁹ This implies the existence of a sophisticated financial compensation system between the various criminal groups operating in both illicit commodities, likely involving an exchange system. Such a system would also make it more difficult for law enforcement to trace the financial flows between the criminal groups involved, given limited financial exchange, except in case of profit. This makes the detection of the financing elements of any network more difficult to detect and dismantle.

Even though Morocco accounts for the majority of reported and documented bulk cocaine seizures in recent years in North Africa, other countries from the region have also recorded significant bulk seizures. According to open sources, in March 2017, Tunisian Coast Guards recovered 31 kg of

pure cocaine off the coast of Cap Bon thrown into the sea by traffickers.²⁰ In May of the same year, another 32 kg of cocaine were found on the Island of Kuriat located in the Gulf of Hammamet.²¹ Links with Sicily-based Italian criminal organizations can be assumed in both cases, given the geographical proximity between the two locations and Sicily, in addition to statements from Tunisian coast guards reporting new forms of trafficking with Italy.

More recently, in May 2018, news sources reported a record seizure of 701 kg cocaine in Oran, a port city in northwest Algeria. The drugs arrived by boat and were concealed in boxes of frozen halal meat originating from Brazil. The importer of the merchandise was noted to be an Algerian citizen located in Algiers. This last case illustrates that bulk cocaine seizures are occurring all over the Northern African coast.

Finally, an estimated 18 tons of cocaine originating from South America and destined for Europe are transferred through West Africa every year. A fraction of this cocaine reportedly transits through North African countries, mostly Libya.²² The country is also likely to receive bulk cocaine shipment comparable to Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Based on the foregoing, one can assume that Northern African cocaine trafficking syndicates have developed strong links with their counterparts in Latin America where the cocaine is procured, and in Europe where it is sold. Their expertise and networks for smuggling and selling cannabis to Europe are being used today to traffic cocaine.

Heroin

According to UNODC, the Northern African region has a very limited level of detected illicit opium poppy cultivation, with small amounts of production found in Egypt and Algeria and no evidence of further processing of opium into heroin.²³ As a result, heroin present in the region comes from other international jurisdictions, mostly Afghanistan.

Heroin originating from Afghanistan enters North Africa mainly via Egypt, through one of the following routes:

- Through the Eastern border via a land route which stretches across the Middle East.²⁴
- Through a maritime route that starts in the Makran Coastal region between Iran and Pakistan, stretches along the Arabian

Peninsula and rejoins the Mediterranean via the Red Sea and the Suez Canal.²⁵

- Through airports, although mostly reserved for the trafficking of limited quantities of drugs.²⁶

The increase in maritime seizures of heroin in recent years, whether in the Red Sea or along the Arabian Peninsula, indicates the growing importance of the Red Sea route for heroin traffickers. Within this framework, Egypt is suspected to be among the transit hubs in the region of heroin bound to Europe or to Turkey to supply Turkish drug trafficking networks. For instance, in April 2018, the Egyptian Navy seized 1.2 tons of heroin on an Iranian boat in the vicinity of Safaga, south of the Red Sea, in Egyptian waters.²⁷ In June 2017, the Turkish Navy and Turkish Coast Guard conducted a joint operation and confiscated 1,071 kg of narcotics on board of a Democratic Republic of the Congo flagged vessel. The ship was on its way from Egypt to Greece when it was intercepted.²⁸ Nine Turkish crew members were arrested,²⁹ suggesting links to Turkish syndicates involved in heroin trafficking into Europe.³⁰

Egypt has also a sizable market for heroin. According to local authorities, an important part of the heroin seized in or off the coast of Egypt is destined for local consumption within the country.³¹ Heroin is often cited as the second or third drug most consumed by Egyptians,^{32/33} and is suspected to be on the rise.

The contribution of Egyptian crime syndicates to heroin trafficking in the region is evident. Firstly, Egyptian groups play a role in the distribution of heroin at a local level. Secondly, the transportation of the drug by land through the Sinai region cannot take place without the involvement of national-level criminal groups, familiar with the terrain. Thirdly, in order to transit heroin through the Red Sea ports, collaboration with local accomplices may be necessary to facilitate the transfer of the commodity. Finally, the sourcing of heroin from Central Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran) suggests the existence of connections between elements from the region and Egyptian organized crime groups.

Open source information indicates that seizures of heroin are low in other Northern African countries. The following table shows heroin seizures in Northern African countries in kg, between 2011 and 2017, and indicates that Egypt reports the

most important quantities of heroin seized in the region.

Country	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Algeria	6.07	0.86	0.33	2.57	1.4	0.99
Egypt	96.06	260	613.3	516	-	-
Morocco	9.72	3.17	7.3	4.49	-	10.3
Libya	-	-	-	-	0.203	-

Table 2: Heroin seizures in kg by Northern African countries³⁴

Egypt is the most affected country by heroin trafficking in the region as a result of a proven local consumption but also, due to the fact that the country is a transit point in an increasingly important maritime trafficking route of heroin through the Red Sea towards Turkey and Europe.

The limited number of heroin seizures made by other Northern African countries suggests that there is a limited local demand for heroin supplied by small scale trafficking networks.

As regards Libya, a 2016 study by UNODC on Afghan opiate trade in Africa³⁵ indicates that heroin seizures in Libya dropped after 2011. It is likely that heroin trafficking in or through Libya, whether for domestic consumption or in transit to Europe, is still ongoing, but has become an under-reported phenomenon.

Cases reported by member countries to INTERPOL indicate instances of trafficking of heroin from Europe, Turkey and Sub-Saharan Africa into the region, demonstrating that local organized crime groups have the necessary connections for sourcing and shipping substantial quantities of heroin. To continue, it appears that each national heroin market has its own trafficking dynamics, connecting local organized crime groups with counterparts outside the region.

Other drugs

In addition to drugs mentioned in the previous section, the Northern African region is affected by the abuse and trafficking of several psychoactive drugs, including, Tramadol, Rivotril, Valium and Captagon. Due to their low prices, these drugs are reputed to be mostly used by lower socio-economic populations.³⁶

Available open source data suggests that there are two main distinct phenomena taking place. On the one hand, the abuse of Tramadol is affecting Egypt and Libya; on the other hand the abuse of “Karkoubi” is affecting Algeria and Morocco. These two substances are profiled below.

Tramadol

According to media reports, Libya and Egypt appear as the main gateways of Tramadol to the region, whether for local consumption or for transit and/or trafficking towards other countries.

Tramadol trafficked into the region mostly originates from India or Sri Lanka.³⁷ In addition, there is indication of Chinese-made Tramadol being increasingly available on the Egyptian market.³⁸ This type of Tramadol is not new in the region and was reported to be present in Egypt as early as 2011.³⁹

The production or exportation of Tramadol from the aforementioned source countries may not be illegal according to their national laws; however, the dosage of the Tramadol produced in these countries, such as 225 mg Tramadol pills, does not correspond to normal medical dosages and is prohibited in the destination countries.⁴⁰

Italy is an important transit point for Tramadol trafficked to Libya,⁴¹ which suggests links with Italian crime syndicates but also groups from India and Sri Lanka. In 2017, two seizures leading to the confiscation of 61 million of Tramadol pills originating from India and destined to Libya were conducted by Italian law enforcement respectively in Genoa^{42 / 43} and the Gioia Tauro port in Calabria.⁴⁴

The involvement of the terrorist group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)⁴⁵, as the organizer of these Tramadol trafficking cases to Libya and the connection of this terror organization to the Italian mafia has been reported by news media, but no confirmation has been provided by law enforcement to corroborate this activity.

Misrata and Tobruk, cities near the Egyptian border, are the most frequently reported destinations of Tramadol bound to Libya.

According to open sources, between 2015 and mid-2016, 226 million Tramadol tablets bound to Libya were likewise seized by law enforcement from Dubai, Greece, Malta, Singapore, Spain, and Egypt.^{46 / 47} This illustrates the multiplicity of routings for Tramadol trafficking destined to North Africa. Libyan cities of Misrata and Tobruk are the most frequently reported destinations of Tramadol bound to Libya. The proximity of Tobruk to the Egyptian border, located some 160 km away, facilitates the cross-border trafficking of Tramadol between the two countries.

In the region, Egypt is not only a destination country, but also a transit hub for Tramadol destined to Libya and other African countries. As an illustration of trafficking from Egypt to Libya, 9 million pills of Tramadol were seized in a container at Port Said in April 2016.⁴⁸ The container destined to Libya came from India and belonged to an Export-Import company based in Alexandria, Egypt. Trafficking from Egypt to other African countries is exemplified by the seizure in Port Said in October 2017, of around 12 million pills of Tramadol, hidden in a 40 feet container coming from India and on its way to Morocco and then to Guinea.^{49 / 50} It is not clear whether the final destination of the drug was Morocco or Guinea, but consumption of Tramadol is on the rise in Western Africa and Nigerian crime syndicates are known to play a major role in this trade.

Nigerian crime syndicates are equally suspected to be involved in Tramadol trafficking from Nigeria to Libya, by means of the smuggling routes used for trafficking a variety of commodities through the Sahel region. Shipments of Tramadol often depart from northern Nigeria towards cities such as Zinder and Maradi in southern Niger. The drug is then transferred further north to Agadez, which is another stashing point where Tramadol is in some instances repackaged, before being transported to Sabha, an oasis city in southwestern Libya, approximately 640 kilometers south of Tripoli.^{51/52} From Sabha, the drug is conveyed to other Libyan cities for consumption or further trafficking.

This route from Nigeria to Libya involves a variety of transport means and a multitude of actors. It connects the various syndicates responsible for the production or importation of Tramadol in Nigeria or elsewhere in Western Africa to their accomplices and facilitators in Niger and further down the line, to their clients in Libya and beyond. Some actors involved in this traffic, notably in

Niger, have indicated that they have converted to Tramadol trafficking to cope with a decline in their income related to migrants smuggling⁵³.

Nonetheless, available open source information did not enable to determine whether crime syndicates involved in Tramadol trafficking from Nigeria or more broadly Western Africa to Libya are the same as those involved in the trafficking of cocaine from West Africa to Europe through North Africa,⁵⁴ even if they appear to use the same facilitators to move their products through the various borders. Similarly, connections between the crime syndicates involved in Tramadol trafficking and criminal networks involved in hashish, cocaine or heroin trafficking in the region, could not be established based on identified open source information. Additional information is needed to build an in-depth understanding of the actors and dynamics at play in this criminal market.

To finish, cases of Tramadol smuggling by air couriers or air freight, to and from Egypt, have also been reported by the media^{55 / 56} and by INTERPOL member countries. These cases are linked to Middle Eastern countries. It is very likely that Tramadol smuggling by air couriers or air freight can be similarly found in Libya and other countries from the region.

Karkoubi

"Karkoubi" is a popular drug in Morocco and Algeria. It is made up of a mixture of psychotropic drugs, hashish, and sometimes alcohol or glue, which causes hallucinations and psychotic behavior. The psychotropic substances such as Rivotril or Valium used in the fabrication of the Karkoubi are trafficked at international and regional levels.

According to open sources, Algeria has been an important destination for psychotropic substances used in the preparation of the Karkoubi for many years. These substances are smuggled in the country by international counterfeited medicine networks active in Italy, France, United Kingdom (UK) and some Balkan countries.⁵⁷ Then, the drugs are trafficked from Algeria to Morocco, mainly through the prefecture of Oujda on the Moroccan border or the province of Figuig, and later to the cities on the coast.⁵⁸

Since 2017, a new supply route bringing the psychotropic substance necessary for the manufacture of Karkoubi directly from Spain to Morocco has emerged, in response to increased control exercised by the Moroccan authorities over criminal networks specialized in smuggling hallucinogenic pills from Algeria to Morocco.

These psychotropic substances, known as “Spanish Karkoubi”, are, in many cases, obtained by Moroccan crime syndicates based in Spain or having their relays in Spain, from local pharmacies by forging and/or diverting medical prescriptions. The drugs obtained this way are then smuggled to Morocco where they are mixed in local laboratories with other components of Karkoubi, such as crumbs of cannabis, flour and red coloring to create several small pills to be sold in Morocco for 10 Dirham (USD 1.06)⁵⁹ per pill.⁶⁰

In June 2018, Spanish police dismantled an international network smuggling Karkoubi from Spain to Morocco using such *modus operandi*. 28 individuals specialized in forging medical prescriptions were arrested at this occasion and 33,000 pills were seized in addition to 581 forged medical prescriptions, 14 health cards as well as around USD 55,477⁶¹ among other things.⁶² Several attempts to smuggle psychotropic pills from Spain to Morocco have likewise been foiled by Moroccan law enforcement in the Port of Tangier all through 2017 and the first months of 2018. According to newspapers quoting official statistics, the Tangier police seized 346,693 psychotropic tablets throughout this period.⁶³

Links between the crime syndicates involved in the trafficking of psychotropic substances used in the preparation of the Karkoubi and criminal networks involved in hashish, cocaine or heroin trafficking in the region, could not be ascertain based on available open source information.

Nonetheless, links with some hashish trafficking syndicates are probable, since hashish goes into the preparation of Karkoubi. Further information is necessary to build a thorough understanding of the actors and dynamics at play in this criminal market.

Weapons Trafficking

THREAT OVERVIEW: The collapse of the Qaddafi regime in 2011 and the ensuing conflicts in Libya have substantially impacted the availability, circulation and trafficking of weapons in North Africa. Libyan weapons depots have been looted, and these stockpiles and arsenals have spread across as many as 12 countries in Africa and the Middle East. To date, small arms and light weapons coming from Libya continue to proliferate, but flows have lessened and even reversed since 2014. Smugglers, as part of a vast trafficking and contraband scheme affecting the whole of North Africa and the Sahel region, as well as individuals or armed groups often linked to terrorism, are involved in the trafficking of weapons from various Libyan stockpiles.

Prior to 2011, weapon accessibility was limited in the region. The fall of Qaddafi's regime has led to the loss of control over huge stocks of weapons, reputed to have been among the largest and most diverse conventional weapon stockpiles in an African country. In a report published in 2013, the UNODC estimated that Qaddafi's army was in control of between 250,000 and 700,000 weapons as of 2011, of which 70-80% were assault rifles.⁶⁴ After the fall of Qaddafi, cities like Ubari, Sabha, and their surroundings, which were among the regime's strongholds and main pre-2011 national weapon stockpiles, became major trafficking hubs.

Another source of weapons trafficked from or within Libya are guns owned by civilians. According to a study conducted by the non-governmental organization Small Arm Survey in 2007, despite the fact that civilians owning weapons was illegal under the Qaddafi regime, it was estimated that around 900,000⁶⁵ firearms of various types were in circulation in the country.⁶⁶ The deteriorated economic situation in the country after the 2011 events drove some civilians to exchange guns and ammunition for daily subsistence goods.⁶⁷

The fall of the regime and the collapse of many government regulatory and control institutions that followed left the borders largely unguarded or open to corruption, and made them more susceptible to a range of trafficking activities, including arms trafficking. From mid-2011, numerous crime syndicates are suspected to have

gained access to large quantities of weapons stolen from military storage facilities. Available reports indicate that ammunition and explosives stolen from Libyan depots were spread across as many as 12 countries in the Maghreb, Sahel, Levant regions, Horn of Africa and Central Africa.^{68/69} In a 2015 report, Europol indicated that some firearms originating from Libya were already available on the European black market. The report also suggested that Libya could emerge as a major source of illegal firearms trafficked to the EU in the future.⁷⁰

Among the key players that became involved in the trafficking of weapons looted from Libyan arsenals, at internal and regional levels, were the numerous militias, brigades, individuals fleeing post-Qaddafi Libya, and tribal armed groups who gained control of city centres and borders, often following traditional cross-border tribal alliances. Also, many of the Tuareg⁷¹ fighters, who were recruited into Qaddafi's military apparatus, left for Mali and Niger with substantial quantities of weapons after Qaddafi's fall and contributed to the illegal transfer and trafficking of Libyan weapons across the region.

Professional smugglers already involved in the contraband economy in the region also intervened. Small arms and light weapons became equally a smuggled commodity and desired item for crime syndicates. Groups and associated smugglers would trade and also retain firearms, given the growing risks for smugglers and their need for protection along increasingly dangerous smuggling routes. Crime syndicates, involved in the trafficking of high value merchandise such as drugs (i.e. hashish, cocaine, prescription pills, etc.), found in the proliferation of weapons from Libyan arsenals the opportunity to heavily arm themselves, and began to demonstrate a growing disposition to confront anyone who posed a threat.

Small arms and light weapons coming from Libya continue to proliferate, but flows have lessened and even reversed since 2014. This is likely due to law enforcement interdiction but is more driven by growing internal demands for weapons.

The decrease in the outflow of weapons from Libya is suspected to be due to increased interdiction efforts on traditional transit routes along the southern border (Chad, Niger and Algeria) and western border of Libya (Egypt).

There is also a growing internal demand for small arms in Libya. This demand originates, on the one hand from, those involved in the infighting between the various factions trying to gain power over the country and, on the other hand, from civilians seeking weapons for self-protection.

This internal demand is a driving factor for what is now an increasing inflow of weapons into Libya. According to Conflict Armament Research, Sudan has been a significant source of small arms ammunitions and combatants entering into Libya.⁷² In addition, in its 2017 report, the UN Security Council Panel of Experts indicated that weapons that are still entering Libya have been of an increasingly sophisticated nature. It should also be noted that this influx of arms is in violation of the arms embargo imposed on the country within the framework of the Security Council 1970 Resolution of 2011.⁷³

It is suspected that the internal Libyan weapons market is still very active and ongoing. In a report published in April 2017, the NGO Small Arms Survey indicated that "the resurgence of illicit arms flows has seen black-market sellers emerge and consolidate in densely populated areas across Libya, including Tripoli and Misrata, as well as in smaller towns in closer proximity to the ongoing fighting. In larger towns and cities, firearms are now traded openly or semi-openly in marketplaces and souks."⁷⁴ In a publication from April 2016, the NGO also noted that important Libyan population centres were among the most active areas for the illicit online arms trade.⁷⁵ These online markets, which offer a great variety of small arms and light weapons, constitute an extension to physical markets previously mentioned. These reports also indicate that purchasers and sellers of these weapons have ties to armed groups.

Immediate neighboring countries are affected by arms trafficking originating from Libya.

Immediate neighbouring countries are affected by arms trafficking originating from Libya. With the exception of Algeria, whose weapons seizure statistics are regularly published in the Ministry of Defence information magazine EL Djeich, unified and comprehensive weapon seizures statistics could not be identified in the framework of this

report, which makes it difficult to build a comprehensive picture of inbound, outbound and internal regional weapons flows. The report “Illicit Firearms Circulation and the Politics of Upheaval in North Africa” published in 2017 by the Flemish Peace Institute, nevertheless, notes that “the proliferation and circulation patterns of weapons vary widely across North African countries. Each country features diverse dynamics mainly due to its geopolitical position and heterogeneous monopoly of force in each country...”⁷⁶

In Tunisia, Libyan firearms first arrived when some refugees from Libya, in particular, members of security forces loyal to Qaddafi, sold their weapons when they arrived in the country. Nonetheless, cross-border firearms trafficking is still taking place between the two countries, carried out by smugglers seeking profit as well as individuals or groups associated with terrorism. The trafficking occurs along the Jeffara plain straddling the southeast of Tunisia and north-west of Libya, notably through the border crossings at Ras Ajdir in the north and Dehiba to the south, in the Nafusa Mountains.⁷⁷ Several important weapons caches have been uncovered in Tunisia, particularly in the Ben Gardane region after a series of attacks targeting security forces in 2016. Weapons originating from Libya are also smuggled to Tunisia via Algeria. Networks involved in the transportation of Libyan arms have been disrupted in the provinces of Tabessa and Annaba, which suggests that armaments may also be circulating through the country along the northern Tunisian-Algerian border.⁷⁸ Some weaponry is also smuggled into Tunisia from other sources, including Europe. In June 2014, at least three arm seizures were made at the port of Tunis, including one involving thirty weapons of different calibers destined for the western town of Kasserine.⁷⁹

Analysis of seizures reported by the Algerian Ministry of Defence magazine EL Djeich for the years 2015-2017 indicate that a substantial number of weapons and ammunition of various types have been smuggled into and out of the country. Table 3 below presents a sample of five (out of more than 80) categories of material reported in the EL Djeich magazine. The information included in the table indicates that the year 2016 was particularly important in terms of seizures, followed by a decline in 2017 in the number of confiscations for almost all types of equipment detected.

Item	2015	2016	2017
Cartridges of various calibers	8,353	18,9362	17,9426
Kalashnikov automatic rifles	132	668	288
Antipersonnel mines	31	2,195	
RPG-7 rocket propelled grenade launcher	7	18	10
RPG-7 rocket propelled grenade	2	338	34
Grenades	160+	792	56
Mortars	2	37	5

Table 3: Seizures reported by the Algerian Ministry of Defence for a sample of weapons for the period 2015-2017

In terms of the geographic distribution of seizures, available reports indicate that most seizures occurred in four different parts of the country:

- Mainly in the south of Algeria, where the arms were part of a traffic flow destined to Mali and other sub-Saharan African countries;
- In the central eastern part of Algeria along the border with Libya;
- In the northeast and north-central parts of Algeria;
- In the Northern coast, where a smaller number of seizures was made.

Available information indicates that trafficking in weapons in Algeria is, similarly to Libya and Tunisia, carried out by smugglers as part of a vast trafficking and contraband scheme affecting the whole of North Africa and the Sahel region, as well as by individuals or groups linked to terrorism. As an example, in August 2017, the newspaper Al-Hayat reported that Algerian authorities have handed over to their Tunisian counterparts a report about a Libyan network based in Tunisia, involved in the smuggling of weapons obtained from Libyan militia to Algeria via Tunisia.⁸⁰ The article indicates that the weapons were smuggled between Ghadames in Libya and Debdeb in Algeria. Cases of weapons trafficking between Algeria and Tunisia have also been reported by these member countries.

In November 2017, open sources reported that Egyptian air forces had destroyed 10 vehicles loaded with arms while attempting to infiltrate into Egypt through its western borders with Libya. The report indicated that Egypt destroyed 1,200 vehicles loaded with arms and ammunition in addition to fighters at the borders with Libya between May 2015 and November 2017.⁸¹ These figures present an idea of the magnitude of weapon trafficking between the two countries.

Many Egyptian Salafi-Jihadi groups have joined radical Libyan organizations operating in the eastern coastal region of Libya, Cyrenaica, and thus, became able to facilitate and take an active part in the smuggling of weapons between the two countries.⁸² Arms smuggled across the 1,200-kilometer long border have in turn enabled the spread of Salafist groups from the Sinai Peninsula into the Nile Delta and Nile Valley regions.⁸³ Analysis suggests that arms smugglers avoid being caught by transporting weapons through desert areas along the Egyptian western border, using the same routes used by drug traffickers. Some of the Libyan arms crossing the Egyptian borders are also trafficked to the Gaza Strip via the Rafah border crossing point. Nevertheless, available reports indicate that arm flows to Gaza have lessened, as a result of increased Egyptian efforts in dismantling networks involved in trafficking of all sorts of goods between Sinai and Gaza.

Finally, Morocco appears to be spared from massive flows of weapons originating from Libya. Nonetheless, media outlets reported in January 2017 that Morocco's Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation (BCIJ) dismantled a terrorist cell in the city of El Jadida, which resulted in the confiscation of several weapons. These weapons were smuggled into Morocco from Libya via Algeria.⁸⁴ Some reports also indicate that increasing numbers of armed drug smugglers are involved in the trafficking along the Moroccan borders.⁸⁵

Irregular Migration and Exploitation

There are two distinct phenomena currently ongoing in the North Africa region. In general, there are those individuals who pay a smuggler in order to gain illegal entry into a country, and who do so voluntarily. This is referred to as people smuggling. In parallel, or sometimes in addition to the smuggling of persons, there is the trafficking in persons who are coerced or forced into some exploitive economic situation upon entering another country. These two crimes are often linked, as illegal migrants can become victims of human trafficking at any point throughout their journey before reaching their final destination.

Smuggling in Persons

THREAT OVERVIEW: More than 726,000⁸⁶ migrants have left North African shores towards Europe between 2013 and 2017. The majority of these migrants were from sub-Saharan Africa. Libya was the main departing point of migrants during the same period. North African crime syndicates and sub-Saharan syndicates are the main actors involved in this crime area. People smuggling generates hundreds of millions of dollars (USD) in profit every year for the various actors benefiting, directly or indirectly, from this criminal market.

People smuggling implies the procurement, for financial or material gain, of the illegal entry of a person into a state of which that person is neither a citizen nor a legal resident. Smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons are strongly connected and often correlate in the context of transnational migration.⁸⁷

Currently, North African countries constitute mainly transit hubs and source countries for smuggled migrants towards Europe.

Smuggled migrants transiting through or departing from the region can be subdivided into four main categories:

- North African migrants hoping to reach Western Europe;
- Sub-Saharan migrants also hoping to reach Western Europe;
- Migrants from other nations passing through North Africa on their way to Europe;
- Refugees and asylum seekers settled in North African countries yet hoping to reach Europe.

Illegal immigration and the ensuing people smuggling often mirror regular migration flows. Factors such as the existence of a diaspora and relatives in destination countries are usually facilitating factors for illicit migration. For instance, the debriefing of migrants who used the Central Mediterranean route in 2015 suggests that many started their journey after receiving information or encouragement from friends or relatives already present in Europe.⁸⁸ Consequently, understanding migration flows as a general phenomenon leads to a better understanding of illicit migration flows.

Migration of North Africans to Europe, especially of those from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, have not stopped since the late 1960s when Western European countries (mostly France, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands) in need of low-cost workforce, called upon North African workers to rebuild European war-torn countries and contribute to their economies.

In the 1980s, Italy, and later Spain throughout the 1990s, became new destinations for Tunisian and Moroccan workers due to several reasons. These reasons include geographical proximity, development of labor-intensive activities such as construction and agriculture and, in the case of Italy, substantial informal economy requiring low-skilled and often irregular migrants.^{89/90}

In the case of Algeria, after decades of restrictions on (regular) outward migration introduced by the Algerian government in 1973,⁹¹ an increase in Algerian labor emigration towards Europe has been observed since the 2000s. This comes in concomitance with the gradual liberalization of the Algerian economy. The new wave consists of highly-skilled Algerian emigrants. They also have new preferred destination countries, such as Canada and Spain and not only France as in the 1960s.⁹²

Egypt is the most populous and largest migrant sending country in North Africa. At the beginning of the 1970s, there was a significant surge in Egyptian emigration mainly towards oil producing countries in need of labor force, such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Libya. As for Europe, Egyptian migration flows increased throughout the 2000s. While Italy became the main destination for low skilled migrants, the UK attracted highly educated Egyptians.⁹³

Concerning Libya, prior to 2011, the country had never recorded significant outward migration flows. However, during the 2011 unrest, there was an upsurge in Libyan nationals fleeing the country to escape violence. However, recent reports provided by authorities of neighboring countries, indicate that the great majority of these Libyans have already returned to Libya.⁹⁴

The table below presents a breakdown of North African migrants per world region.

Region	Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Morocco	Tunisia
North Africa	28,894	24,537	17,541	11,908	6,532
Africa (other)	18,996	29,274	7,592	6,958	1,106
Europe Union	1,603,260	283,686	67,629	2,532,829	578,573
Europe (other)	12,194	10,973	2,355	28,611	13,091
Asia (Western)	45,718	2,765,248	42,663	174,783	33,805
Asia (other)	609	2089	2,404	0	585
America (North)	78,705	243,189	14,989	137,999	131,702
Rest of the world	4,336	53,961	3,622	5,633	1,761
Overall total	1,792,712	3,412,957	158,795	2,898,721	767,155

Table 4: Breakdown of migrants from North Africa per region in the world^{95/96}

As previously established, the existence of a diaspora and relatives in destination countries, as well as illicit migration flows often mirroring regular migration trends, are considered to be facilitating factors for illicit migration. Hence, one can assume that future illicit migration flows, and therefore people smuggling activities, have the tendencies to be directed towards the regions where there is already a strong presence of countrymen.

The migration of sub-Saharan persons to North Africa significantly increased in the 1990s as a result of the open-door policy targeting nationals from the sub-Saharan region. Muammar Qaddafi first instituted the policy in 1992 in the framework of his Libyan Pan Africanism.⁹⁷ This policy ended in 2007 when Libya imposed visa requirements on Arab and African countries and adopted more stringent policies concerning the stay and work of migrants present on its soil. As a result, large numbers of sub-Saharan migrants moved to Maghreb countries or to Europe.

At the same time, the spread of armed conflicts and the economic hardship plaguing many Central Africa, West Africa and Horn of Africa countries drove thousands of sub-Saharan migrants to move towards North African countries looking for work and education opportunities in the region, or looking to obtain refugee or asylum statuses. Some were also looking to transit to Europe.^{98/99}

A substantial number of those failing to enter Europe prefer to stay, legally or illegally, in North Africa, as a second-best option, rather than returning to their home countries, while still hoping that one day they will be able to continue their journey to Europe.¹⁰⁰

Refugees and asylum seekers already settled in North African countries, form another group of migrants, which contributes to irregular migration flows from North Africa. This group is mainly composed of individuals from sub-Saharan Africa (considered as a subset of the sub-Saharan migrants described above) and Middle Eastern countries. Some of these refugee and asylum seekers attempt to reach Europe illegally, by joining the flows of other migrants. For instance, in the first half of 2015, 650 Sudanese and 330 Syrian refugees attempted to depart illegally from Egypt by sea.¹⁰¹

	Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Morocco	Tunisia
Total	100,587	289,191	44,993 ¹⁰²	6,741	742
Sub-Saharan countries	453	80,553	12,709	2,891	43
Arab countries¹⁰³	10,134	207,976	32,273	3,799	678
Other countries	90,000	662	11	51	21

Table 5: Breakdown of refugees and asylum seekers registered by the UNHCR in North African countries as of 25 July 2018¹⁰⁴

Moreover, migrants from other nations residing in North Africa or passing through the region on their way to Europe, form the last group of those attempting to reach Europe illegally from North Africa. This category includes Asian and South East Asian migrants willing to migrate to Europe after having unsatisfactory work experiences in North Africa. It also includes migrants who have Europe as their primary destination from the outset. For instance, there were 44,232 migrants originating from Asian and Middle Eastern countries registered in Libya in April 2018 by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The table below shows the number of international migrants present in Northern African countries, as recorded by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Morocco	Tunisia
248,624	478,310	788,419	95,835	57,663

Table 6: Breakdown of migrants present in North African countries as of 2017¹⁰⁵

As shown in this table, Libya hosts the largest number of migrants in the region. According to IOM, in April 2018, there were 115,184 Egyptian, 6,339 Moroccan, 5,717 Tunisian and 1,882 Algerian migrants in Libya. All these migrants do not necessarily want to cross to Europe. Some are engaged in an economic activity in Libya. However, some of these migrants hope to move to Europe, even if that entails them engaging in illegal activity to get there, such as being smuggled.

Restrictions to labor migration that were introduced in Europe in the mid-1970s triggered the development of irregular migration of North Africans to Europe. Additionally, in the early 1990s, European countries strengthened their visa restrictions and border control, which further compounded irregular migration of North African workers towards Europe.^{106 / 107} Besides, the establishment of the Schengen Area in 1995,¹⁰⁸ increased the number of potential entry points into Europe (i.e. Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal) for irregular migrants departing from Mediterranean countries.

Furthermore, since 2011, several Gulf countries have also tightened their work and migration policies. New policies relating to the indigenization of the workforce were set in place. As a consequence, crackdown on irregular migrants took place in several countries. For instance, in 2013, following a massive regularization campaign of undocumented workers present on its soil, thousands of undocumented workers were deported from Saudi Arabia, including 300,000 Egyptians found to be illegally present in the country.¹⁰⁹

In addition, conflicts, political instability and the economic adversity afflicting many African countries still push thousands of Africans from across the continent to migrate annually, legally or illegally, in search of better living conditions.

Finally, the collapse of the state and security structures resulting from the fall of the Qaddafi regime and the ensuing fighting between groups competing for power, left Libyan borders largely open to people smuggling and human trafficking.

The status of these borders greatly facilitated the arrival of large flows of migrants from sub-Saharan countries to Libya. In addition, the unfavorable and challenging prevailing economic situation in Libya have pushed many Libyans into the smuggling business to earn just enough money to live on or substantially enrich themselves. It should be noted that their income depends heavily on their place in the hierarchy of smuggling networks.

Routes and smuggling networks

Migrants who reach Europe employ various methods to illegally cross borders and stay in a country, such as travelling by air and overstaying visas, falsifying documents, hiding in vehicles being transferred on ferries, and jumping over or swimming around the fences surrounding the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Morocco. However, in recent years, the majority of migrants who reached Europe illegally from North Africa, used maritime routes with the help of organized networks of smugglers.¹¹⁰

Migrants use mainly the following three routes to move from North Africa to Europe:

- The Western African route from Senegal, Mauritania and Morocco to the Spanish Canary Islands;¹¹¹
- The Western Mediterranean route bringing migrants from Morocco or Algeria to Spain;
- The Central Mediterranean route with Italy as a main destination country, Libya as the principal departure point and Tunisia and Egypt as secondary departure points.¹¹²

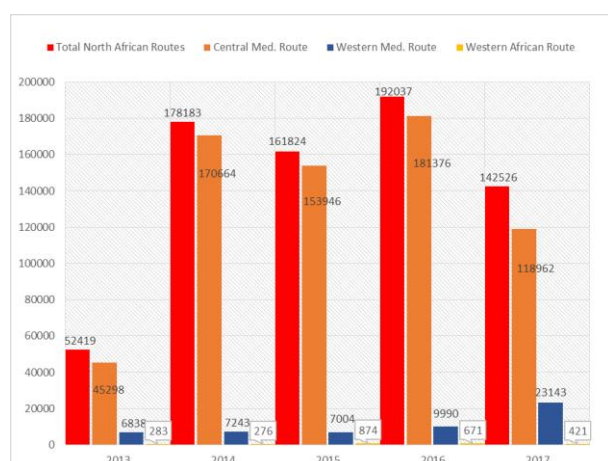


Figure 2: Main migration routes to Europe from North Africa, between 2013 and 2017, in number of detections of illegal crossing of EU external borders.¹¹³

In the last 5 years, the central Mediterranean route has been by far the most used route by migrants hoping to reach Europe.

In this context, Libya has been the main destination for the majority of migrants willing to depart from North Africa. Available information indicates that Niger is the main entry point of western and central Africans to Libya. The city of Agadez is reportedly the main migrant transit hub towards Libya. Some sources report that the prices for the trip from Agadez to Sabha in the Libyan Fezzan area is between USD 200 and 400.^{114/115} Other sources indicate that criminal groups with links to militia in the south can demand between USD 800 to 1,000 to transfer migrants from the Fezzan area bordering Algeria, Niger and Chad to Tripoli.¹¹⁶

Many are also able to cross into Libya from Algeria (after entering Algeria from Mali).¹¹⁷ Sudan and Egypt are other main crossing points into Libya for migrants from Egypt and the Horn of Africa.

From Niger and Mali, some migrants also choose to travel to Morocco through Algeria to take the Western Mediterranean route leading to Spain.

According to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), in order to facilitate the crossing of road checks in Algeria, smugglers rent Malian passports and/or false UNHCR documents to migrants¹¹⁸, which enable them to pose as refugees registered in the country. The leasing of this type of documents costs between EUR 50 for a Malian passport (USD 57.82) and EUR 10 for UNHCR documents (USD 11.56).¹¹⁹ Once in Maghnia, close to the western Moroccan border, smugglers retrieve the documents so that they can reuse them with other migrants.¹²⁰

Human smuggling networks operating in North Africa can easily change the smuggling routes to adapt to border-control strategies adopted by countries, due to the solid knowledge of their environment, proven logistic networks and significant financial resources that they gained from illicit activities.¹²¹ For instance, an increase in the use of the Western Mediterranean route has been observed since 2016/2017 in parallel with a decrease of departures from Libya. In 2017, more Tunisian and Algerian migrants sailed from their respective countries to Sicily and Sardinia.¹²² Partial figures for 2018 suggest that the Western Mediterranean route is still gaining momentum.

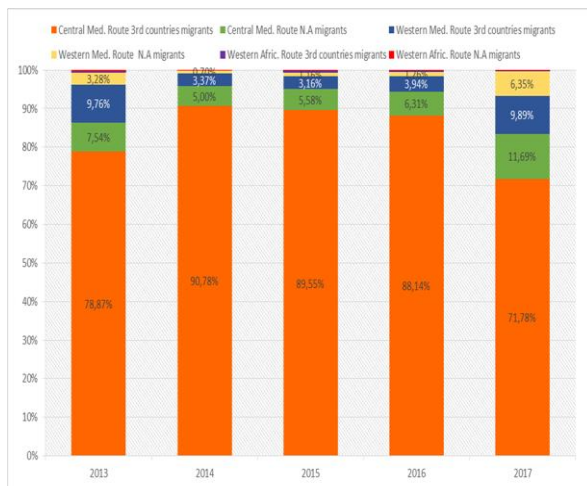


Figure 3: Breakdown of migrants' routes to Europe from North Africa based on their origin, in number of detections of illegal crossing of EU external borders¹²³

Nota Bene: In the chart above, "3rd countries" refer to migrants from countries other than North Africa.

Interviews conducted by Frontex with migrants reaching Europe indicate that 90% of migrants who arrived through the Central Mediterranean route and 75% of those who arrived through the Western Mediterranean route, had their journey facilitated by smugglers. This illustrates the crucial role played by smuggling networks in organizing the irregular migration to and from North Africa.¹²⁴

Furthermore, the 2018 Frontex Risk Analysis report indicates that human smuggling facilitators are active in 41 different countries, which illustrate the international scope of some smuggling networks. According to the report, in North Africa, Libya has the most diverse nationalities of facilitators operating on its soil, which denotes the importance of the country as a major regional hub for irregular migration into Europe. Algeria, Egypt and Morocco also have a significant presence of facilitators from other nationalities. Interestingly, the report notes that facilitators do not necessarily smuggle their fellow nationals more often than other nationalities.

According to a study published by Frontex in 2015,¹²⁵ migrant smuggling networks in Libya that facilitate the crossing of migrants through the Mediterranean Sea are composed of active and former military/law-enforcement officers structured in hierarchical and strict criminal organizations. The most common structure of these smuggling networks has a high level, a medium level and a low level, as explained below:

- High level: this first level comprises the key individuals, mostly of Libyan nationality, and

members of current or former military/law enforcement officers;

- Medium level: this level is composed of intermediaries, known as 'people smugglers', usually of Libyan origins, who take care of organizing and managing the planned journey and shelter in Libya of future migrants. They also handle various aspects of the journey, including the price;
- Low level: members at this level are known as agents, who are in charge of finding new would-be migrants hoping to reach the European continent. They also support the embarkation process of individuals once at the beach. They are mostly of the same nationality of the migrants, which makes it easier for the latter to trust them.

Open source information indicates that the crossing between Libya and Italy would typically cost between USD 800 and USD 1,300.¹²⁶ Crossing from Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia to Europe is reportedly within the same price range. On this basis, the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime reported that migrant smuggling networks were making more than USD 300 million per year in Libya alone.¹²⁷

Available information indicates that sophisticated smuggling networks similarly operate in other North African countries.

In February 2018, police authorities of the coastal city of Sale in Morocco arrested four individuals involved in smuggling migrants to Europe. One member of the group had gathered migrants from several Moroccan cities in an apartment in Sale waiting to smuggle them by boat to Spain. Twenty-one would-be migrants were identified on this occasion. The culprits were reportedly charging MAD 12,000 (USD 1,268) per migrant.¹²⁸ In another case reported by media in December 2017, the Moroccan Royale Gendarmerie dismantled a smuggling network involved in the trafficking of migrants to Italy via Libya. The network had been active since 2015. Five individuals were arrested in the city of Beni Mellal located in the center of the country and MAD 2,500,000 (USD 264,187)¹²⁹ were seized.¹³⁰

Media similarly informed about the dismantling of migrant smuggling rings in Egypt^{131 / 132} and Tunisia.¹³³

Moreover, some criminal rings combine the smuggling of migrants with the trafficking of other merchandise. In April 2018, media outlets reported that Italian law enforcement had dismantled a criminal ring that smuggled migrants from Tunisia to Sicily on speedboats. Seven Tunisians, five Moroccans and an Italian woman suspected of people smuggling and trafficking in contraband cigarettes were indicted in the framework of this case. Migrants were charged between EUR 3,000 and 5,000 (USD 3,469 – 5,781)¹³⁴ for the high-speed trips bringing them to Italy.¹³⁵

A similar *modus operandi* was reported, also in April 2018, by Frontex, which indicated that an organized crime group from Morocco, using jet skis to smuggle migrants and cannabis across the Mediterranean Sea to Spain, had been dismantled by Spanish law enforcement with the support of Europol. 19 Moroccans were detained in Almeria, Spain in the framework of the case and the authorities seized 11,6 kg of drugs and over EUR 15,000 (USD 17,344)¹³⁶ in cash. The criminals charged the migrants EUR 4,000 (USD 4,625)¹³⁷ for the trip, and an additional EUR 500 (USD 578)¹³⁸ if they wanted to be housed in Spain.¹³⁹

Finally, information available in INTERPOL databases also indicates that criminal networks composed of citizens from North African countries facilitate the movement of undocumented migrants within the EU territory.

Trafficking in Persons

THREAT OVERVIEW: North African countries are affected by trafficking in human beings (THB), as defined by the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.¹⁴⁰ North African countries constitute, at various degrees, source, transit and destination countries for men, women, and children subjected mainly to forced labor as well as sex trafficking. In addition, trafficking for organ removal has been reported in several countries from the region. North African crime syndicates as well as sub-Saharan criminal groups, play a major role in the trafficking in persons affecting the region.

North African victims of trafficking in persons

The U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report for 2018 indicates that

Moroccan, Egyptian, Tunisian and in few cases Algerian children, boys and girls, are exploited locally for forced labor. The abuse is taking place in a number of industries including, mechanic shops, agricultural, artisanal, and construction industries as well as the domestic work industry (for girls in particular). Many minors are also subject to forced begging and sex trafficking; and some are even coerced to commit various types of crimes.^{141/142}

Some women from the above-mentioned countries are forced into prostitution within their countries and/or abroad, chiefly in Europe¹⁴³ and the Middle East.^{144 / 145} Tunisia for instance, identified 66 girls as victims of sexual exploitation abroad in 2015.¹⁴⁶ Victims are often lured by false promises of work or are coerced into committing illegal acts by members of their families or other intermediaries who profit from their exploitation.

Moreover, Algerian, Egyptian, Moroccan and Tunisian men are subjected to forced labor in construction, agriculture, and low-paying service jobs within their countries or abroad.¹⁴⁷

In the period 2012-2015, Egypt reported 41 cases of trafficking for organ removal.¹⁴⁸ The press also reported cases of trafficking for organ removal in Egypt in 2016¹⁴⁹ and 2017. For example, in August 2017, an article published in the online newspaper Al-Arabiya revealed that Egyptian authorities have dismantled a criminal network involved in the trafficking of human organs in the area of Abu Nomros in Giza, South of Egypt. Authorities arrested 16 offenders involved in the case, including doctors, nurses and brokers, who exploited victims from poor, rural and popular areas.¹⁵⁰

Several open source reports and newspaper articles indicate that the trafficking for organ removal affects nationals from other countries such as Morocco,¹⁵¹ Tunisia and Algeria.¹⁵²

Cases of trafficking of Libyans victims in their country or abroad have not been identified in the framework of this report. Nonetheless, the 2015 U.S. Department of States (TIP) Report recounts that since 2013, there were numerous reports of militias and irregular armed groups that recruit Libyan children under the age of 18. With this caveat, available information suggests that Libya is a transit and destination country for men and women from sub-Saharan Africa and Asia who are subjected to human trafficking.¹⁵³

The absence of detailed and unified statistics on this topic makes it difficult to build a refined and dynamic understanding of trafficking in persons in the region. However, available data suggests that in addition to the general trends reported above, each country has specific characteristics and approaches in relation to trafficking in persons. For example, in Egypt, 78,6% of reported victims of various forms of trafficking over the period 2012-2015 were minors, while in Morocco, over the same period, minors represented 50% of reported victims. In Egypt, trafficking for begging accounted for the majority of recorded victims (48,84%) followed by sexual exploitation (25,97% of reported victims); while in Tunisia, sexual exploitation and prostitution victims represented 83,49% of the total number of victims.¹⁵⁴ These figures may reflect genuine national specificities in relation to human trafficking dynamics or national priorities as regards reporting and prohibition of a particular type of trafficking.

In Egypt, the majority of victims of trafficking in persons are Egyptians.¹⁵⁵ Reliable data pertaining to the percentage of national victims versus foreign victims in countries such as Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco have not been identified in the framework of this study. Individuals involved in the trafficking of these persons at national levels are mostly locally-based. These culprits may or may not be organized in syndicates, depending on the type of exploitation. For instance, the trafficking of minors for begging or forced domestic work may be carried out by a single individual. As for the trafficking in persons for organ removal, it can only be done in the framework of complex networks, due to the required skills and logistics. These networks are often of transnational dimensions. They target nationals but also migrants or refugees, and then sell their organs to wealthy national and international customers.¹⁵⁶

Furthermore, the transnational trafficking of victims from the region for the purpose of forced labor or sexual exploitation abroad implies, in most cases, the involvement of international organized networks. These networks facilitate the recruitment of victims as well as their border crossing, on a regular or irregular basis, of one or several borders, to the destination where the exploitation takes place.¹⁵⁷ For example, according to media outlets, the Tunisian Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment stated, in 2013, that more than six fictitious employment agencies located in foreign countries were

recruiting young Tunisian girls into prostitution networks by luring them with fake work offers.

Crime syndicates from the country of origin of victims operate in Northern Africa and prey on undocumented migrants willing to reach Europe.

Foreign victims of trafficking in persons in North Africa

In addition to nationals trafficked and exploited locally or abroad, men, women and minors of foreign origins are similarly trafficked and exploited in Northern African countries.

Nonetheless, in Libya there have been extreme cases of trafficking and violent exploitation reported, comparable to traditional or chattel slavery, with victims being auctioned in open markets as documented by some news sources.^{158/159}

Victims include refugees and undocumented migrants entering voluntarily, but illegally, Northern African countries while in transit to Europe. Other victims include migrants arriving legally into Northern African countries under genuine or false promises of work and subsequently subjected to forced labor in the domestic service, construction, farming, cleaning, begging and prostitution.

In addition, cases of trafficking for organs of sub-Saharan migrants or refugees have been reported in Egypt^{160 / 161} and Libya.^{162 / 163} Nevertheless, allegations pertaining to organ trafficking in Libya needs to be further investigated and confirmed.

The most commonly reported victims from sub-Saharan Africa are of the following nationalities: Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan. It should be noted that the flows of migrants trying to reach Europe via the Central Mediterranean, West Mediterranean or West African migratory routes departing from North African shores towards Europe, are typically of these same nationalities.

The U.S. Department of State (TIP) 2018 report indicates that many sub-Saharan migrants, unsuccessful in their attempts to reach Europe remain stranded in Algeria, waiting to be able to continue their trip. Some are forced to illegally work in various types of industries or engage in prostitution to earn money to pay for their subsistence and their onward journey to Europe. Some illegal migrants are also indebted to the smugglers who facilitated their unlawful entry into the country. They often have to repay these debts through domestic servitude, forced begging, and forced prostitution. Available open source information suggests that exploitation mechanisms exist across the region.

Victims include refugees and undocumented migrants entering voluntarily, but illegally, Northern African countries while in transit to Europe.

Some sub-Saharan African migrants are also sexually exploited in bars and informal brothels by members of their own communities, in cities such as Tamanrasset (which is a major transit hub for migrants bound to Europe) and Algiers.¹⁶⁴ In Morocco, some reports suggest that Cameroonian and Nigerian networks force women into prostitution, while Nigerian networks coerce women to beg in the streets.¹⁶⁵ The 2015 edition of the TIP Report similarly described that “trafficking networks reaching into Libya from Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, and other sub-Saharan states subject migrants to forced labor and forced prostitution following fraudulent recruitment, confiscation of identity and travel documents, withholding or nonpayment of wages, and debt bondage.”¹⁶⁶ These examples demonstrate the fact that crime syndicates from the country of origin of victims operate in Northern Africa and prey on undocumented migrants willing to reach Europe.

Migrants arriving legally in some Northern African countries may also fall victim to trafficking networks. In Tunisia in particular, Ivorian-based criminal networks organize the trafficking of Ivorian nationals to Tunisia in view of their exploitation as domestic servants. Recruiters in Ivory Coast target both well-educated and non-skilled women and lure them with promises of good jobs that do not exist when they arrive in

Tunisia. Upon arrival, victims are received by local Ivorian or Tunisian intermediaries and are then taken directly to the homes of Tunisian families. Their passports and money get confiscated and they are forced to work as domestics. Such networks are reportedly active in major urban centres such as Sfax, Tunis, Sousse and Gabès, which are known to be major hubs for the recruitment and employment of sub-Saharan victims.^{167 / 168} According to open sources, 176 victims of trafficking in persons have been rescued in Tunisia between 2012 and 2017 including 150 from Ivory Coast and 12 from Nigeria. The remaining victims were of Tunisian, Bangladeshi, Malian, Congolese, Cameroonian, Ghanaian, Senegalese, Filipino and Colombian origins. Among the 176 victims, there were 152 women and seven girls under the age of 18.¹⁶⁹ A Tunisian 3-month visa waiver for Ivorian nationals seems to be a facilitating factor for this type of trafficking. A similar phenomenon has been reported by open sources in Morocco.^{170/171}

Victims of trafficking in persons from South and Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have been also reported to be found in Egypt.^{172/173} The 2018 TIP Report indicates that some women from the Philippines and Indonesia recruited for employment as domestic workers in Morocco, were subjected, upon arrival, to forced labor. Similarly to sub-Saharan victims, they do not receive promised wages, their passports are withheld from them and they experience physical abuse at the hands of their employers. The report also indicates that a small but growing number of victims from South Asia is coerced into prostitution and forced labor in Morocco.

Counterfeit Goods

THREAT OVERVIEW: Counterfeit goods are largely present on North African markets. Most counterfeited products available in the region reportedly originate from China. Counterfeit goods are also produced locally for internal use or for export purposes. In addition, North Africa is a transit hub for counterfeit and pirated products destined to Europe and the Middle East. Local crime syndicates play a major role throughout each step of the process of trafficking counterfeit goods.

This section examines counterfeiting (trademark infringements) and piracy (copyright infringements). It does not cover smuggling of legitimate products and tax evasion.

In its 2016 study, “Trade in Counterfeit and Pirated Goods, Mapping the Economic Impact”, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimated that the international trade in counterfeit and pirated products accounted for as much as 2.5% of the value of international trade, or USD 461 Billion for the year 2013.¹⁷⁴

Counterfeiting harms businesses that produce and sell legitimate products. It also affects national economies when governments lose tax revenues from products manufactured or sold on the black market, which put consumers at risk from substandard products. Organized criminal groups play a central role in the trade of counterfeit and pirated goods and generate important revenues from such illicit markets.

North Africa is an origin, transit point and destination country for counterfeit and pirated products.

Official data and information reported by the media indicate that a great quantity and variety of counterfeit goods is present on North African markets. Most of the products available on North African markets appear to originate from China, which according to the OECD, is the top producer of counterfeit goods in relation to 9 out of 10 product categories analyzed in the framework of its study on routes of trade in fake goods.¹⁷⁵ Other source countries include Turkey and Bangladesh.¹⁷⁶ In addition to imported counterfeit and pirated goods in the region, there exists a substantial quantity and variety of fake goods produced locally for internal use or for export. Moreover, the region is also a transit hub for counterfeit products originating mostly from Asia and destined to Europe or the Middle East. As a result, North Africa is an origin, transit point and destination region for counterfeit and pirated products. Available information suggests that organized crime groups are involved in the production of counterfeit and pirated goods, the distribution at the local level as well as the shipment of infringing merchandise within the

region and outward.

Origin of counterfeit and pirated products

In its 2017 annual activity report, the Administration of Customs and Indirect Taxes of Morocco indicated that customs seizures of counterfeit goods more than doubled between 2015 and 2016 and doubled again between 2016 and 2017.^{177 /178}

During an international forum on counterfeiting held in Tunis in October 2017, the President of the Tunisian Organization to Inform the Consumer (OTIC), indicated that more than 80% of automotive parts, clothing and cosmetics on sale in Tunisia are counterfeit and represent health and economic risks.^{179 /180}

According to an official of the Algerian Directorate General of Customs (DGD) quoted by media outlets, in 2016, customs services seized 802,700 counterfeit items. He further indicated that 92% of the products seized by customs services came from China. 63% of seized items were sports goods, 28,9% automotive parts, 3,3% hardware devices, 2,5% pairs of glasses, 2,5% watches, 1,2% electronic devices, 0,2% cosmetic products and finally 0,1% school items.¹⁸¹ In 2017, 724,214 presumed counterfeit products were seized by customs in Algeria. Sports articles, food stuff, personal care products such as hair dryers, electric razors, etc., cosmetic products and electronics were among the most frequently counterfeited products seized. China, Turkey, Bangladesh and Tunisia were the main source countries of counterfeit goods seized in 2017 in Algeria.¹⁸² In this context, it could be deduced that cross-border traffic exists between North African countries.

In Egypt, fake and pirated goods are produced locally as well as imported from Asian suppliers. In 2010, the counterfeit industry in Egypt was valued at LE 30 billion (USD 1.67 billion¹⁸³) per year¹⁸⁴. Counterfeit food, pharmaceuticals¹⁸⁵ and personal care products are mostly manufactured in Egypt; while fake electrical devices, garments and tobacco products are produced abroad, mainly in Asia, and later smuggled into Egypt.¹⁸⁶

In Libya, in 2013, the Ministry of Economy warned of the rising number of fake and counterfeit goods being sold in local markets.¹⁸⁷ No figures pertaining to counterfeit markets in Libya were

identified in the framework of this report. Nevertheless, given the importance of the phenomenon in the region, and considering the weak enforcement capacities of current Libyan institutions as well as the intense flow of contraband between Libya and other North African countries, it is very likely that the proportion and variety of counterfeit and pirated products in Libya are similar to its neighboring countries.

Moreover, the analysis of OECD reports on counterfeit and pirated goods provides insight into flows of counterfeit and pirated products arriving into the North African region for local consumption, or transiting through the region for onward shipment to Europe or the Middle East. Algeria, Egypt and Morocco have been reported as major transit hubs for counterfeit products destined for the European Union. Table 7 below provides a synthesis of the data derived from two OECD studies on the trade and trafficking routes of 10 categories of counterfeit and/or pirated products over the period 2011-2013.

Provenance economy	Transit point	Destination	Type of product	Value of the counterfeit global market, In billions of USD
Not indicated	Not indicated	Algeria, Egypt, Morocco	Electronic and electrical equipment	121
China	Hong Kong (China), Saudi Arabia	Morocco	Jewelry (including watches)	40.9
China	Singapore, Hong Kong (China), Kuwait	Morocco, Algeria	Optical, photographic and medical equipment	29.2
China, Thailand, Vietnam	United Arab Emirates (UAE), Hong Kong (China)	Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Egypt	Clothing and textile fabrics	27.7
India, China, Singapore	Yemen, Saudi Arabia, UAE	North Africa	Pharmaceutical	16.2
China, Turkey	Hong Kong (China)	Morocco, Algeria	Footwear	13.3
China	Not indicated	Morocco, Algeria	Foodstuff	12
China, India, Pakistan,	Hong Kong (China), UAE, Bahrain	North Africa,	Toys, games and sports equipment	9.72
China	Hong Kong (China)	Egypt, Morocco	Leather articles and handbags	8.6
China	UAE	Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Libya	Perfumery and cosmetics	5.3

Table 7: Flows of counterfeit or pirated goods destined for or transiting through North African countries, 2011-2013^{188/189}

This table does not provide a comprehensive picture of all counterfeit flows. For instance, it excludes counterfeit and/or pirated automotive parts, which, according to open sources, have been identified as an important category of counterfeited products in North Africa, and are known to be imported into the region.¹⁹⁰ It should also be noted that the examined flows of counterfeit products may have changed, increased or decreased over the years following the studied period (2011-2013).

Concerning the local production of counterfeit and pirated goods, the OECD identifies Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia as producers of some of the main types of counterfeit products shipped worldwide.¹⁹¹

Provenance economy	Type of goods
Algeria	Electronic and electrical equipment
Morocco	Items of leather, bags and footwear; electronic and electrical equipment; toys and games
Tunisia	Items of leather and footwear

Table 8: Main types of counterfeit products shipped worldwide and their producers, 2011-2013¹⁹²

The OECD study does not include domestically produced and consumed counterfeit products, which represent an important share of counterfeit goods available in the region. This includes some automotive parts that are reportedly produced in Morocco.¹⁹³ In Egypt, in March 2018, the media reported that security forces in Minya Governorate shut down an unlicensed factory for pesticides, agricultural fertilizers and counterfeit veterinary medicines run by a chemistry teacher. Hundreds of kilograms of various products were seized, including counterfeit fertilizers and pesticides.¹⁹⁴

Finally, it should be mentioned that there are existing flows of counterfeit products from North Africa to sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, there are indications that sub-Saharan Africans residing in Morocco export counterfeit products found in Moroccan markets towards their home countries.¹⁹⁵ It is likely that such a trend exists in other North African countries where sub-Saharan Diasporas are present.

Modus operandi and Organized crime groups involved

Organized crime groups responsible for the production of counterfeit and fake products at local levels can be of different magnitudes and sophistication, depending on the nature of counterfeited products, their quality¹⁹⁶ and the volume of production.

Criminal groups involved in the counterfeiting business are characterized by their flexibility. They operate from small, unlicensed factories, while others conduct business from their homes. They constantly change locations to avoid being detected and are capable of moving their businesses to a different site within short notice.

They are able to take advantage of affordable technological developments such as high-quality scanners and printers. Such tools have enabled many low-level counterfeiters to successfully imitate the packaging of famous brands.

When the counterfeit goods are sourced abroad, local importers play a key role in identifying the manufacturer or distributor abroad and devise a plan to smuggle the counterfeit products into the country. Often, counterfeiters establish fictitious businesses and front companies to disguise their activities. They forge shipping documents and ship counterfeit products via circumvented routes and several transit points to conceal the original point of departure. In its 2017 report “Mapping the Real Routes of Trade in Fake Goods”, the OECD establishes that in addition to facilitating the concealment of the real origin of the goods, transit points are used to establish distribution centers for counterfeit and pirated goods, as well as repackage or relabel the goods.

In North African countries, low quality fakes and more sophisticated counterfeit products manufactured locally and abroad, are present in local shops and markets. This suggests that organized crime groups of various sizes and levels of sophistication operate in the region.

Furthermore, the massive presence of imported counterfeit products suggests that North African criminal groups are connected to similar groups operating in countries of production of counterfeit goods, or to those active in the main transit points through which fake goods pass before arriving in North Africa (See Table 7).

Similarly, some North African countries are either

producers of or transit points for counterfeit goods destined for Europe and/or the Middle East. This implies that North African organized crime groups have connections with their counterparts in the destination countries.

Finally, counterfeit goods produced or imported in one country, find their way to neighboring markets, through well-established regional contraband routes. For instance, in a report about the Algerian customs seizures published in January 2018, it is indicated that Algerian authorities seized 250,000 bags of counterfeit tobacco in one case as well as 22,000 additional bags of fake tobacco produced in Tunis.¹⁹⁷

Illicit Traffic of Cultural Heritage

THREAT OVERVIEW: North Africa counts 34 UNESCO world heritage sites, and numerous historical and archaeological sites containing priceless ancient treasures, which are highly valued by the art market. Poverty-driven individuals and profit-driven crime syndicates are involved in the robberies of several North African cultural heritage sites. The terrorist group ISIS has been reportedly involved in the trafficking of cultural heritage in North Africa. West Europe and North America are traditional destinations for trafficked North African antique objects. The Gulf Region has emerged, in recent years, as an important market for Islamic objects sourced from North Africa.

The illicit traffic in cultural heritage is a serious and lucrative transnational crime that affects Northern African countries. This type of traffic can take different forms, including but not limited to, theft, illicit excavation, removal of cultural property as well as illicit exportation and importation of works of art. Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria appear to be the most affected by this crime.

A wide range of cultural objects is trafficked, including, prehistoric and ancient Greek objects, Roman and Byzantine statues, coins and mosaics, Islamic, Coptic and Jewish artefacts in addition to cult objects.

The driving forces behind this transnational crime are mainly the degraded socio-economic and

security conditions.

The major destinations of stolen North African cultural heritage are Europe, North America and increasingly, the Gulf states.

The major destinations of stolen North African cultural heritage are Europe, North America and increasingly, the Gulf states. Traffickers use several land, sea and air routes to smuggle the stolen goods. The routing used by smugglers can be direct, leading to main destination countries, or indirect, aiming at concealing the origin of goods.

In 2011, for various crime syndicates and large criminal organizations as there is a high market demand for cultural objects of various types, which makes their illegal commerce profitable. These objects are fairly easy to obtain; and regulation and detection of illegitimate artefacts are not very effective due to the interconnections between the licit and illicit antiquities sectors.¹⁹⁸ As a result, trafficked objects frequently infiltrate the legal and black markets of art.¹⁹⁹

Since 2001, statistical analyses conducted by Sotheby's Auctions²⁰⁰ has established that the market values Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities more highly than cultural goods from other ancient civilizations.²⁰¹ Furthermore, there is an increased demand for ancient Islamic objects in the Gulf region.²⁰²

North Africa counts 34 UNESCO world heritage sites and numerous historical and archaeological sites containing priceless ancient treasures, which are highly valued by the art market. As a result, the region emerges as an attractive target for criminal networks involved in the traffic of antiques and objects of art. Egypt is an example and a benchmark for illicit traffic in cultural heritage in the region. UNESCO estimated the global illicit trade in antiquities to be worth between USD 4 billion and USD 6 billion.²⁰³ Antiquities trafficking is an increasingly attractive crime

Country	Number of World Heritage sites
Morocco	9
Tunisia	8
Algeria	7
Egypt	7
Libya	5
Total	34

Table 9: UNESCO World Heritage sites in Northern Africa

A study published in February 2016 by the Cambridge University Press indicates that the analysis of satellite imagery covering Egypt between 2002 and 2013, shows that "looting escalated dramatically from 2009 with the onset of the global economic crisis and intensified still further with the Arab Spring in 2011. This was mirrored by an increased volume of Egyptian artefacts sold at auction, suggesting that looting is driven by external demand as well as by internal economic pressures".²⁰⁴ In a publication from 2015, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) further explained that "in July 2015, the rate of loss of Egyptian cultural heritage was at its peak and, since the January 2011 events, the rate of illegal excavations in Egypt has been on the rise."²⁰⁵ The emergency of the situation has led ICOM to publish a Red list of Egyptian cultural objects at risk.²⁰⁶

Degraded socio-economic and security conditions affecting the capacity of states to efficiently control and secure their borders and cultural heritage sites have similarly, though at various degrees of severity, affected not only Egypt but also Libya, Tunisia and Algeria. Consequently, these countries have become environments conducive to the intensification of the trafficking of their cultural heritage.

Undoubtedly, the difficult circumstances that Libya experienced in recent years have put its cultural heritage under tremendous stress and high peril. Similarly to the situation in Egypt, this has driven ICOM to publish a Red list of Libyan cultural objects at risk. Available open source information suggests that the situation is as serious in Algeria and Tunisia. In an article from April 2016, the newspaper Al-Watan reported that 3,900 archaeological artefacts including paintings, statues, coins, mosaics and other objects were recovered by Algerian law enforcement in 2015 in about fifteen provinces in the Eastern part of the country.²⁰⁷ Also, the Maghreb edition of The Huffington Post stated that since the popular uprising of January 2011 until December 2015, nearly 4,000 archaeological artefacts have been seized by the Tunisian authorities.²⁰⁸

The INTERPOL database of stolen Works of Art (WoA) and cultural properties, which contains objects officially reported as stolen by member countries, similarly indicates, based on the number of objects officially reported as stolen to INTERPOL by North African member countries, that Egypt and Libya are the most affected countries from the region by the illicit trafficking in their cultural heritage.

Actors involved

Several actors enrich the business of trafficking in cultural heritage in North Africa. These actors can be divided into two main groups. First, the poverty-driven individuals and groups of looters who have good knowledge of local sites but rudimentary equipment; second, the profit-driven organized looting gangs who employ several workers and use heavy equipment, state of the art technology and state registers to target archaeological sites.²⁰⁹ In addition, the proliferation of weapons from Libya after 2011 has enabled organized crime groups, specialized in looting and operating in Egypt to equip themselves with heavy weapons at cheap prices. It has also allowed them to use their firepower advantage during raids of archaeological sites against poorly equipped site guards.²¹⁰

The ICOM indicates that small-scale criminals sell the stolen goods to local antiquities dealers who then sell them to bigger dealers based in Cairo with enough networks to smuggle the objects out of the country. Nevertheless, much of the trafficking is conducted by crime syndicates who have their own smuggling networks or work directly with antiquities dealers or collectors. Information derived from open source media describe similar mechanisms applied in other countries in the region.

The connection between the trafficking in cultural heritage and the trafficking in other commodities has been detected in other parts of the world,²¹¹ which suggests the possibility of its spread in North Africa as well.

Terrorist groups constitute other important actors in the illicit trafficking in cultural heritage in North Africa. The systemic use of trafficking in cultural heritage as a source of income by terrorist groups such as ISIS, in Syria and Iraq, has been largely documented.²¹² A similar phenomenon has been identified in Libya and Tunisia, yet, to a lesser extent.

In an article published by Reuters in May 2016, the Head of Libya's Department of Antiquities indicated that ISIS was involved in the smuggling of antiquities from the country. The report also showed that security forces had recovered pre-historic objects in addition to Roman and Byzantine objects from across Libya, in the house of an ISIS commander in Benghazi.²¹³ Furthermore, the Italian newspaper La Stampa reported in October 2016 that members of the Italian mafia have sold weapons to ISIS in Libya in exchange for stolen antiquities. These antiquities were brought to the Calabrian port of Gioia Tauro by Chinese-operated cargo ships and were later sold to collectors in Russia, China, Japan, and the Gulf states.²¹⁴ ISIS has since lost most of its

ground in Libya; however, the role it plays in the trafficking of cultural heritage cannot be ruled out, especially since the organization still perceives this type of trafficking as an important mean of financing their criminal activities.

In Tunisia, the spokesman of the National Guard indicated during a press briefing held on January 2017 that organized groups and networks involved in antiquities trafficking are linked to organized crime and terrorism.²¹⁵

In June 2018, an Egyptian official called for strengthening control over the different ports in order to stop the smuggling of Egyptian antiquities. He also explained that the illicit trafficking in antiquities is carried out by international networks of smugglers and that the profits gained from this illegal form of trade is considered to be an important funding source for terrorist groups. This call came after the seizure of 118 Egyptian artefacts in the port of Salerno by Italian authorities in March 2018.²¹⁶

Main destinations of cultural heritage trafficked from North Africa

West Europe and North America have traditionally been known as destinations for trafficked ancient Egyptian antique objects. In addition, the Gulf region has emerged in recent years as an important market for Islamic objects sourced from North Africa.²¹⁷ The European Fine Art Fair (TEFAF) Market Report of 2017 notes that private sales through dealers and galleries have shown strong growth in the Middle East in recent years. A fraction of artefacts sold in these markets likely originates from illicit traffic in cultural heritage.

The Gulf region has emerged in recent years as an important market for Islamic objects sourced from North Africa.

In March 2018, the Belgian online edition of the newspaper Paris Match²¹⁸ reported the arrest of a Spanish owner of an internationally renowned gallery in Barcelona specialized in the trading of ancient art objects from Greek, Etruscan, Roman and Egyptian civilizations on 28 March 2018 in Barcelona. The perpetrator was in the company of an alleged accomplice. The arrest took place during a large operation by the Iberian police targeting stolen antiques from Libyan archaeological sites stolen by the ISIS and other armed groups. Several artefacts from the Libyan Cyrenaica region as well as the Tripolitania region were seized in this operation. Objects of Egyptian origins were also found among the confiscated goods. To conceal their illicit origin, traffickers first

smuggled the artefacts from Libya to Egypt by land and sea. They were subsequently shipped to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) via Egypt and Jordan, before reaching their final destination in Spain after a detour in Germany. Some pieces were also shipped to Spain via Thailand. This case illustrates the mechanisms used by criminals to traffic cultural objects from North Africa and later sell them to dishonest art merchants.

Transport methods and Trafficking routes

Identified transportation methods include land, sea and air routes.

Sea shipping using containers is the preferred method of transport for bulky artefacts. Containers allow traffickers to easily conceal the items by mixing them with other commodities. The volume of maritime fret makes it also impossible to check all containers leaving seaports. In Egypt for instance, antiquities inspectors are reportedly allowed to check only 6% of the exported containers.²¹⁹

Small objects such as coins, jewellery and organic materials (textile or parchment) can be trafficked by air. Organic materials, in particular, are difficult to detect on scanners.

There are several possible routes that can be used by traffickers. Routes can be direct to main destination countries in Europe, North America and Gulf states; or indirect, which helps in concealing the origin of goods. Identified transit points of objects trafficked from North Africa include Gaza, Jordan, Israel, UAE and Turkey.

Northern African countries are also transit points of artefacts stolen from neighbouring countries. For instance, Libyan artefacts have been documented while transiting through Egypt.²²⁰ Also, Egyptian cultural pieces have been recovered in Algeria.²²¹

Finally, stolen cultural heritage from Western African countries such as Mali may have been transiting through North Africa along routes of human trafficking and people smuggling.²²²

Marketing of Illicit cultural property

Illicit cultural property is sold through art dealers and galleries, auction houses, newspaper adverts, flea markets, antique shops and online platforms. Online selling facilitates and boosts the trafficking of artefacts in the low-price range by enabling direct transactions between traffickers and collectors²²³. In recent years, ICOM documented sales of Egyptian artefact on eBay, which suggests that selling of Egyptian pieces online have particularly prospered.²²⁴ This goes in line with the general growth of online sales in

connection with the art market.²²⁵ In May 2018, the press reported that a specialised unit of the Tunisian police had dismantled an antiquity trafficking network operating on the dark web. The group, which was composed of six persons based in Tunis, attempted to sell Hebrew manuscripts of great historical value.²²⁶

Finally, the production of fake provenance documentation is an integral part of the illicit trafficking in cultural heritage. This practice aims at concealing the real provenance of trafficked goods to enable their selling on the market. It can take various forms, including, the production of forged documents (i.e. labels, receipts, bills of sales, letters from previous owners, attorneys, notaries, etc.), voluntary undervaluation of goods value and false declarations on customs document.^{227/228} As an example, in March 2015, the British newspaper The Telegraph reported the case of a marble statue worth £2 million (USD 2,587,858) that was stolen from a UNESCO world heritage site in Cyrenaica, in Libya.²²⁹ The Statue was uncovered in a west London warehouse by customs officials in 2013 and handed to the British Museum pending a court's decision over ownership. Investigations revealed that the statue was smuggled to the UK in December 2011, via Dubai. The Jordanian importer of the statue to the UK, falsified importation paperwork after misinforming customs that the sculpture came from Turkey, rather than Libya, and was worth £60,000 (USD 77,635), rather than between £1.5m to £2m (USD 1,940,893 – 2,587,858).²³⁰ A Dubai-based businessman from whom the Jordanian importer acquired the statue, claimed that the sculpture has belonged to his family collection since 1977. This man is suspected to have channelled artefacts from countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa to dealers in the US and the UK since 2008. In 2014, New York prosecutors also accused his Dubai-based trading company of illegally importing five ancient Egypt artefacts into the US.²³¹

Terrorism and Organized Crime

THREAT OVERVIEW: Financing of terrorism through engagement in organized crime activities is one of the most important aspects of the terrorism and organized crime nexus. The two main terrorist organizations active in the region are, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The two organizations have different core strategies, which leads to differences in the funding models. To this date, the AQIM funding model appears to be more successful.

By their very nature, illegal organizations such as

terrorist and insurgent groups revert to illegal activities and interact with criminal groups. Nonetheless, this does not mean that criminal organizations and terrorist groups are structurally connected. Instead, they operate in an interdependent manner that procures both sides benefits.

Often, terrorist and insurgent groups interact with criminal groups in order to:

- Procure essential items such as weapons, ammunitions, explosives, forged documents, etc.;²³²
- Potentially recruit former criminals with clandestine experience and knowledge of illicit markets, through which they may procure weapons, false documents, etc.;
- Fund their operations.

However, terrorism financing through engagement in organized crime activities is one of the most important aspects of the terrorism and organized crime nexus. Within this framework, it is important to examine the core strategies of some terrorist groups, as these strategies influence the way groups interact with criminal networks and finance themselves through illicit activities. The two main terrorist organizations active in the region and which strategies will be shortly examined are, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

AQIM is the main transnational jihadist group active in the Sahel and North Africa. The group is entrenched in northeastern Algeria and operates in a large area of the Maghreb and Sahel.²³³ Throughout its many years of activity, AQIM did not attempt to exercise a strict control over a territory. AQIM and its affiliates have successfully forged alliances with local tribes, some of which traditionally control main smuggling corridors in the region. Some of its prominent members such as Mokhtar Belmokhtar,²³⁴ head of Al-Mourabitoun, have reportedly a long history of involvement in smuggling activities. As a result, the organization has been able to successfully profit from smuggling and trafficking activities occurring between Maghreb countries and the Sahel.

In contrast, ISIS is a more recent player in the region.²³⁵ Its alliances in the North African and Sahel regions are comparatively weak.²³⁶ Its core strategy is based on holding territory and suppressing local enemies. In Libya, where ISIS

first deployed its militants in North Africa, the brutality of the organization against people and opponents backfired and led, in May 2016, to the loss of control over Derna, and Sirte in December 2016. Since then, the organization has been increasingly under pressure. It has also lost much of its territories in the region. Consequently, ISIS failed to control focal smuggling routes. This is further highlighted by some reports that indicate that ISIS had unsuccessfully attempted to generate high revenues from trafficking of licit or illicit merchandise, including drugs, antiquities and migrants through the coastal town of Sirte between February 2015 and December 2016. Nonetheless, it is estimated that ISIS in Libya has earned revenues through extortion of taxes and road tolls from inhabitants, diversion of local citizens' state salaries and looting goods from residents fleeing the city.²³⁷ Not much information is available on Wilayat Sinai, which is affiliated to ISIS and active in Egypt, nor its financing mechanisms.

For the purpose of this report, the AQIM business model will be examined since it is considered to be more successful and better established in the region.

The involvement of AQIM in criminal and trafficking activities

Historically, AQIM's three main alleged revenue generating activities have been smuggling, drug trade, and kidnapping for ransom.²³⁸ Today, its economic model appears to have evolved to include new funding streams while maintaining historical sources of funding.

Kidnapping for Ransom

Historically, AQIM's main source of income was ransoms.²³⁹ According to some estimates, between 2008 and 2012, USD 80 million to USD 120 million had been paid in ransoms to AQIM.²⁴⁰ Nevertheless, some researchers state that the capacity of the AQIM brigades or *katibas* to finance themselves through ransoms from hostage-taking, has been hindered by the military intervention of the French and their African allies in Mali in 2013.²⁴¹ Yet, since 2015, AQIM's *katibas* succeeded in kidnapping seven hostages, six of which are still held in captivity. All the abductions took place in the Sahel countries (Burkina Faso (3), Mali (3) Niger (1)).

In June and July 2017, respectively, a Swedish and a South African hostage held in captivity since 2011 by AQIM were released. Details about the negotiations leading to their release have not been disclosed, but their respective governments denied paying ransoms.^{242/243} Nevertheless, some experts uphold the belief that AQIM's main source of income remains ransoms, and as long as these ransoms are paid, the organization will seek to kidnap new hostages.²⁴⁴

In the case of hostage-taking, the organization does not necessarily interact or resort to other criminal groups, but engages itself in the criminal act. However, it is not excluded that it can "buy" hostages from criminal groups who do not necessarily adhere to the jihadist ideology, and for whom kidnapping for ransom is just a business. Such a pattern was observed in the region in the case of the French hostage Pierre Camatte, abducted in Mali in November 2009²⁴⁵ and released by AQIM in February 2010.

Taxation and securing of the contraband

Many of the Sahel countries have informal economies.²⁴⁶ In this context, a large array and quantity of products are subject to contraband between the Sahel region and Maghreb countries. Terrorist groups and insurgent groups present in the region generate income by imposing transit fees on merchandise transiting through their areas of control and/or by securing the convoys. For instance, it has been reported that Mokhtar Belmokhtar was involved in the smuggling of various subsidized products (i.e. staple foods, medicines, fuel, etc.) from Algeria, to be resold on the black market in Sahel countries or to be exchanged for certain goods and/or services.²⁴⁷ Cigarette smuggling has always constituted a large share of the contraband transiting through the Sahel region. Illicit cigarettes accounted for over 20% of cigarette consumption across the Maghreb in 2016 and up to 93% of all cigarette consumption in Libya.²⁴⁸ A fraction of these illicit cigarettes enters the Maghreb countries from the Sahel region. Mokhtar Belmokhtar, earned his notorious nickname "Mr. Marlboro" from his alleged involvement in the smuggling of cigarettes.²⁴⁹ It is likely that taxing and securing the convoys of cigarettes through the Sahel up to North African countries, remain substantial sources of income for the insurgent groups active in the region.

An estimated 18 tons of cocaine originating from South America arrive every year to West Africa for onward distribution to Europe. A fraction of this cocaine transits through North Africa, in particular Libya, as part of the land route from Guinea Bissau to the Mediterranean and on to Europe.²⁵⁰ In addition, Morocco-based organized crime groups are world-leading producers of cannabis and cannabis resin. A portion of this production is trafficked through the North African and Sahel regions for local consumption and forward transfer to Europe.²⁵¹

There have been many allegations of the involvement of AQIM in the trafficking of drugs, both cannabis and cocaine as a source of financing.²⁵² Nevertheless, there is little empirical evidence to support allegations of direct AQIM involvement in drug trafficking. Many researchers believe that AQIM's role in the trafficking is mostly limited to imposing transit fees or providing security escorts to drug loads transiting through the regions over which the organization has control.^{253/254} It is important to note that in 2013, on the occasion of the merger of his brigade Al-Mulathameen, with men from the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), which led to the creation of Al-Mourabitoun, Mokhtar Belmokhtar allegedly demanded each member of the new group to make their repentance or *Tawba* and commit to no longer engaging in drug trafficking. Indeed, some members of the MUJAO, are infamous for their involvement in drug trafficking.²⁵⁵ This indicates that within the AQIM organization, there are divergent opinions on which activities and sources of funding are ideologically licit or illicit. Also, it cannot be excluded, that some commanders from MUJAO remain directly involved in drug trafficking. Hence, whether by ensuring the safety of convoys or by taxing the traffic, AQIM is an accomplice of drug trafficking and still have links with the cartels involved in drug trafficking in the region.

Arms smuggling is another major illicit good subject to trafficking in the region. Firearms are reputedly smuggled from Libya to Niger in the same trucks that carry migrants, drugs and large sums of cash from Niger to Libya. On their way back from Libya, trucks are loaded with contraband for the return journey, including weapons.²⁵⁶

In addition to securing contraband convoys of licit

or illicit merchandise, AQIM appears to have also derived some revenue from the protection and security of oil infrastructure carried out on behalf of Libyan militias.

Finally, people smuggling and trafficking is perceived as major new sources of income for AQIM. More than 726,000 migrants departed from North Africa towards Europe since 2013. More than 670,000 did so through the Central Mediterranean route with Libya as the principal departure point.²⁵⁷ In December 2016, the head of the EU military task force in the Mediterranean Sea, Rear Admiral Enrico Credendino declared that Libya's coastal cities are generating up to USD 346 million in revenue each year from people smuggling. He further indicated that Islamic extremist groups such as Al-Qaida and AQIM, aligned with the Tuareg tribe in southwestern Libya, are believed to be financially exploiting the smuggling routes leading sub-Saharan migrants into Libya.²⁵⁸ Details on how insurgent groups exploit the smuggling routes were not provided but is likely that here again, generated revenues come from taxes imposed on the traffic rather than organization of the trafficking itself. Notwithstanding, interaction of terrorist groups with the various crime syndicates involved in the organization of the trafficking of various goods and smuggling of migrants is highly likely.

Facilitating Factors

The overview of serious and organized crime in the North African region has shed light on various aspects of the crimes examined, including, the trafficking routes, the actors involved, the development of these crimes over the recent years and their regional effects. Nonetheless, in order to get a comprehensive picture of transnational organized crime in North Africa, the factors enabling and facilitating crimes in the region should be explored.

Long and porous land and maritime borders are factors that facilitate and enable the development of organized crime in the region. On the one hand, the approximate 8,201 km²⁵⁹ coastline on the North Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea makes North Africa vulnerable to transnational organized crime groups seeking to smuggle a range of illicit goods and commodities through the region's maritime front. On the other hand, the approximate 6,305 km²⁶⁰ land borders between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa,

most of which run through desert areas, make the effective enforcement of these borders very challenging which, as a result, form another gate for crime and crime groups out and into the region. Available information demonstrates the existence of a history of smuggling contraband in North Africa. Groups in the region have extensive knowledge of smuggling routes and have developed various techniques to evade detection.

Examining the borders of North Africa as facilitating factors for the spread of crime, leads to another factor, that is the geostrategic position of the region in connecting organized crime groups from different parts of the world. This has been demonstrated by the trafficking in several types of goods, such as weapons, drugs, counterfeit goods, as well as the trafficking in persons, between North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, South America and Asia, with North African countries being points of departure, transit and final destination for the aforementioned illicit activities.

Furthermore, North African economies are increasingly participating in global trade and expanding as a result their export and import activities in which illicit commodity flows can be concealed. Increased economic activity likewise provides more opportunities for illegal actors to benefit from the high demand on the market to conduct illicit economic activities through the region.

At the same time, dire socio-economic statuses affecting numerous North African citizens could be viewed as another facilitating factor that pushes some people affected by unemployment and poverty to engage in illegal activities that are, in some cases, more profitable than legal jobs. The profitable aspect of illegal businesses also raises the level of social acceptability of illegal activities. Such phenomenon has especially been observed in border cities where some people turned to the trafficking of illegal goods to provide for their needs in the absence of better legal sources of income.

Corruption is another facilitating factor of organized crime in the region. According to INTERPOL data, corruption ranks among the most reported offences by member countries from North Africa. Instances of corruption of civil servants and/or law enforcement officials have also been reported by the media in many countries

of the region.²⁶¹

Finally, some North African countries are affected by challenging security situations resulting from terrorists and armed groups' activities. Such circumstances naturally weaken the state and divert available resources away from the fight to protect their territories and institutions to the detriment of the fight against organized crime. The limited availability of resources provided to law enforcement drive them to prioritize certain types and/or modus operandi of crimes over others, which potentially causes negative effects on communities and creates environments favorable to the development of organized crime. In addition, internal difficulties of one country can have harmful effects also on its neighbors. For instance, instability in one country presents favorable conditions for insurgents to infiltrate through borders to traffic goods to support their activities, recruit members and, in some instances, to carry out attacks. This also leads to the weakening of cooperation between countries to secure common borders.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report is to identify organized crime trends or activities that could pose a direct danger or threat to the North African region. It has highlighted organized crime threats to member countries' continuous safety, security, and development. This analysis outlined the threats stemming from criminal networks and the criminal markets they foster.

This report assessed several criminal markets including drug trafficking, weapons trafficking, human trafficking, counterfeit goods, and the trafficking in cultural heritage artefacts. It looked at connections between organized crime and terrorism and noted many factors facilitating the development of organized crime in the region. These factors include the challenging length of the region's borders, the strategic geographic position of the region in proximity to consumer markets in Europe, the inclusion of North African countries in global trade, the history and therefore advanced capabilities of groups active in cross-border smuggling, corruption, and the challenging economic status of large portions of the population.

This report has highlighted that North African

crime syndicates are highly resourceful, know how to take advantage of the environment in which they operate, and are able to leverage the socio-economic drivers for organized crime. Crime syndicates have the intent and capabilities to continue exploiting the region for criminal gain and if left unchallenged, they will continue to widen their scope of criminal market activities, as well as will exploit people and systems in order to maximize their profits. As they continue to develop, their unfair and corrupt practices will hinder legitimate businesses, harm real economies, perpetuate further corruption, increase violence, and will increasingly undermine the rule of law.

It is therefore crucial that North African countries develop appropriate measures to strategically tackle crime syndicates in their region. The increasingly transnational dimension of organized crime calls for a collective response amongst member states and law enforcement. This collective regional response must entail police cooperation and information sharing between countries in order to have a comprehensive picture of crime syndicates, and how they function in and across the region. Such an approach can help identifying the weak points of crime syndicates, and designing accordingly the most effective strategies to suppress their activit

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