The Paris Pact Initiative
A partnership to counter the trafficking and consumption of opiates originating in Afghanistan

Drug Situation Analysis Report
Islamic Republic of Iran

2010 Report
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Drug Situation Report in the Islamic Republic of Iran provides the data necessary to assess illicit drug trends, and provides a brief analysis of the drug situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Data and information are being provided to the UNODC Country Office in the Islamic Republic of Iran (COIRA) on a regular basis by the Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ), the Anti Narcotics Police (ANP) and the Ministry of Health. The data collected and presented in this report includes:

- Drug seizures
- Drug trafficking
- Precursors
- Drug Prices
- Arrests
- Drug Abuse
- HIV/AIDS

OPIUM PRODUCTION

Production of opium has not been reported in the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, small scale production has been reported by the press in very remote locations in the first quarter of 2007.

It is noteworthy to mention that Iran is a signatory to the Protocol for Limiting and Regulating the Cultivation of the Poppy Plant, the Production of, International and Wholesale Trade in, and Use of Opium – New York, 23 June 1953. Although the protocol permits the country to cultivate poppy for purely scientific purposes and drug manufacturing, Iran has announced that it will never make use of the protocol.
DRUG SEIZURES

The geographical location of the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly its 1,845 km long porous eastern border with Afghanistan, the world’s largest illicit opium producer, and Pakistan, has turned it into a major transit country for illicit drugs. It is estimated that 380 metric tons of heroin was produced in Afghanistan in 2008.

According to the 2009 annual report of the Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ), Iran seized 579 metric ton (mt) of opium, 23 mt of heroin and 16 mt of morphine in 2009 which shows an increase of 3% in opium seizure, 1.13% in heroin seizure (63% decrease in seizure of low purity heroin and 386% increase in seizure of crack heroin) and 80% increase in the seizure of morphine, compared to 2008).

In 2010, Iran seized 393,210 mt of opium, 26 mt of heroin and 8 mt of morphine which shows an decrease of 32% in opium seizure, 13% in heroin seizure (55% decrease in seizure of low purity heroin and 45% increase in seizure of crack heroin), 50% decrease in the seizure of morphine and 54% increase in the seizure of Amphetamine compared to 2009.

Table 1 shows a comparison of narcotics seized in 2009 and 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narcotics seized (kg)</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>heroin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heroin</td>
<td>3,261</td>
<td>7,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crack</td>
<td>23,280</td>
<td>16,072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crystal</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>morphine</td>
<td>8,098</td>
<td>16,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opium</td>
<td>393,210</td>
<td>579,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shireh*</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sukhteh**</td>
<td>6,227</td>
<td>2,267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burned during operation</td>
<td>1,363</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannabis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hashish</td>
<td>60,378</td>
<td>69,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grass</td>
<td>10,262</td>
<td>8,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stimulants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amphetamine</td>
<td>1,371</td>
<td>891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cocaine</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>508,666</td>
<td>702,152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Shireh: Opium residue (purity 4–5 times more than opium), fluid format.
** Sukhteh: Used opium remnants

TRAFFICKING

The Islamic Republic of Iran’s eastern border with Afghanistan and Pakistan is 1,845 km long and consists of mainly mountainous or harsh desert terrain. There are obvious challenges to achieving even partial control over this area, although 35,000 anti-narcotics police and border guards are reportedly deployed at these long borders.

Iran is the strongest counter-narcotics partner in the region. The considerable amount of seizures by the Iranian drug control agencies is a proof to this claim. Most of the opium seizures continue to be made in the Islamic Republic of Iran (87% in 2008-World Drug Report 2010), neighboring Afghanistan. The global rise in opium seizures thus largely reflects the growing opium seizures made by the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran. (Graph 1)

![Graph 1 – opium seizure in Iran and in the world, 2000-2008](image)

The highest volumes of morphine and opium seizures were reported by the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, Afghanistan’s immediate neighbors. In 2008, the Islamic Republic of Iran seized 9 mt of morphine, 52% of global morphine seizures. (Graph 2)

![Graph 2 – morphine seizures in Iran and in the world, 2000-2008](image)

Of the estimated 380 mt of heroin produced in Afghanistan, 375 mt are exported internationally via routes flowing into and across the neighboring countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran (105 mt). According to the UNODC World Drug Report 2010, the Islamic Republic of Iran was leading among all countries with 31% of all heroin interceptions in 2008. (Graph 3)
Entry trafficking routes

There are four major entry trafficking routes used by drug traffickers in Iran, namely the Northeast, East, Southeast, and Southern routes. These routes are somehow inevitable and cross precarious border areas as well as the “Loote” and “Namak” Deserts. The lion’s share of the drug trafficking into Iranian territories for domestic distribution and re-export is carried out by organized narco-criminal groups linked with international organized crime and in some cases backed by local links. The major entry illicit corridors and routes cover Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Khorasan, Sistan and Baluchestan and Kerman provinces. Domestic distribution at the provincial level is then separated from cargoes destined for central, northern and southern provinces. Smuggling illicit drugs into Iran by swallowing and using human mules has become common practice. In many cases, this is done by Afghans who leave and return to Iran for seasonal work in the major cities. Lower strata of the Iranian poor at the border areas enter into individual petty drug trafficking.

Central trafficking routes

The trafficking gangs that operate from the Iranian border areas to the outskirts of the Kerman Province / City of Bam – outside the boundaries of the Khorasan and Sistan and Baluchestan province – do not enter into the central trafficking theatres of operation. The central trafficking operation has an acute carcinoma nature with systematically expanding narcotics trafficking, drug depots, local consumption distribution, and dispatching cargo for re-export to other destinations in a short period of time. Major drug routes run through Tehran, Qom, Semnan, Golestan, Yazd, Esfahan, Shiraz, and Hormuzgan (Southern route)
Exit trafficking routes

The organized traffickers still use the traditional exit points with Turkey via the Iranian Western provinces of West and East Azerbaijan, Urumiye and Ardebil. These routes are vulnerable to be abused by a number of buses and TIR trucks for trafficking illicit drugs and goods. The organized groups have added several routes to the exit corridors namely (i) Chahbahar and Hormuzgan in the South enroute to the Persian Gulf States; ii) West Azerbaijan province en route to Turkey.

New trafficking methods and trends

The new trend in drug and ATS abuse specifically amongst youth has opened new complex corridors for organized traffickers. Iran’s international airports are now used more frequently for smuggling amphetamine and meta-amphetamine, ecstasy, and small cache of cocaine to Iran from South East Asia and Europe. Meanwhile, a complex exchange of heroin hydrochloride with cocaine between narco cartels in South America and Iranian gangs has been revealed during recent arrests of traffickers by the Iranian Anti Narcotic Police. African-Pakistani-Iranian gangs have become more active in trafficking of white heroin to Africa, South East Asia and Europe via the United Arab Emirates.

According to the Head of the Anti Narcotic Police of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 129 crystal meth laboratories have been identified and 1,151 kg of crystal methamphetamine seized since 21 March 2010 (the beginning of the Iranian calendar year).

PRECURSORS

In May 2008, one cargo of 15,900 liters of acetyl chloride shipped from People’s Republic of China and purchased by an Iranian Company for en-route transit to Afghanistan was confiscated at Bandar Abbas Customs. The reason provided for seizure was that the container’s documentations did not match with the consignment.

In July 2008, Drug Control Headquarters reported that two containers with the illicit cargo of 5,000 liters of acetic anhydride had been confiscated in Bandar Abbas port. The seizure was due to an intelligence report provided by the South Korean Police and Embassy in Tehran to DCHQ. These containers had been shipped from Posan Port in South Korea to Iran. Both containers had arrived at Bandar Abbas port on 29 February 2008 and 30 March 2008 and

2 Tehran Times, 27 January 2011
were meant to be released from Customs, however, ultimately they were kept at the Customs warehouse for transit shipment to Afghanistan.\(^4\)

In 2009 and 2010, the Anti Narcotic Police of the Islamic Republic of Iran seized three precursor consignments with links to each other with the following specifications by making use of previously received information and intelligence. Due to intelligence investigations and the process for completion of detailed information on seized consignments, no official announcement on precursor seizures was made at the time of operation.\(^5\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seizure date</th>
<th>Type of precursor</th>
<th>Seized amount (litre)</th>
<th>Place of seizure</th>
<th>origin</th>
<th>destination</th>
<th>Place of concealment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 September 2009</td>
<td>Acetic Anhydride</td>
<td>79,500</td>
<td>Salmas (West Azarbaijan)</td>
<td>North of Iraq</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 November 2009</td>
<td>Acetic Anhydride</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Qom</td>
<td>North of Iraq</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 May 2010</td>
<td>Acetic Anhydride</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>Piranshahr (West Azarbaijan)</td>
<td>North of Iraq</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 April 2010</td>
<td>Acetic Anhydride</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>West Azarbaijan Province</td>
<td>Kurdistan/ Iraq</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 May 2010</td>
<td>Acetic chloride</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>Hormozgan</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Container</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 June 2010</td>
<td>Acetic Anhydride</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>West Azarbaijan Province</td>
<td>North Kurdistan/ Iraq</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 September 2010</td>
<td>Acetic Anhydride</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>West Azarbaijan Province</td>
<td>North Kurdistan/ Iraq</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Controlled Delivery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^4\) Drug Control Headquarters Report, 6 July 2008.
\(^5\) Drug Control Headquarters report, 31 August 2010.
ARREST STATISTICS

In January 2007, the Police of the Islamic Republic of Iran stationed in Shiraz seized 2.20 kg of heroin from a Kenyan passenger who was travelling to Dubai.\(^6\)

In June 2007, Police Force Units, stationed in Shiraz International Airport, seized 3.504 kg of crack heroin and arrested two Tanzanian men who, by swallowing, intended to transfer the consignment to Dubai.\(^7\)

In another operation on the same date, the Police Force Units, stationed in Shiraz International Airport, stopped a suspicious Tanzanian passenger of a Gulf Air flight to Bahrain during luggage inspection and seized 150 grams of cocaine. He intended to transfer the consignment by swallowing.\(^8\)

In August 2007, after 5 months of intelligence operations regarding an international narcotic trafficking gang and identifying its key members, its methods of operation and methods of narcotic transit, the Anti Narcotic Police of the Islamic Republic of Iran arrested 90 traffickers in different provinces. 85 of them were Africans (Tanzania, Nigeria and Ghana), 2 were Pakistanis and 3 were Iranians. Their method of transit was through swallowing the drugs. They would enter the country through Dubai and on their way back they would traffic narcotics (heroin, crack and crystal) to Dubai, China, Hong Kong, Thailand, East Asia and parts of European countries by swallowing. More than 55 kg of different types of narcotics have been seized from members of this gang. According to confessions made by the convicted, the above-mentioned gang had been active under the title of a transporting company and USD 5000-6000 were paid to each trafficker.\(^9\)

Table 2 shows drug-related arrests in 2008 as reported by Drug Control Headquarters. No report is available for the arrests in 2009 and 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Arreestes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distributor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>246,657</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2- drug-related arrests in 2008

\(^6\) Drug Control Headquarters report, 10 May 2007.
\(^7\) Drug Control Headquarters report, 13 August 2007.
\(^8\) Drug Control Headquarters report, 13 August 2007.
\(^9\) Drug Control Headquarters report, 22 August 2007.
DRUG PRICES

Table 3 shows the average wholesale price\(^\text{10}\) for 1 kg of different types of narcotics (opium, heroin and morphine) in the eastern border provinces of the country. There is no certain criterion for determining the purity level of opium and morphine but the purity level of heroin is 7-15%, which is referred to as Afghan heroin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of narcotics</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>opium</td>
<td>USD 390.8</td>
<td>USD 420.5</td>
<td>USD 648</td>
<td>USD 1,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heroin</td>
<td>USD 2,073.7</td>
<td>USD 2,121</td>
<td>USD 2,896</td>
<td>USD 3,954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>morphine</td>
<td>USD 1,849.1</td>
<td>USD 1,958.3</td>
<td>USD 2,341</td>
<td>USD 5,052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 – Average wholesale price of 1 kg of opium, heroin and morphine

ESTIMATES OF DRUG ABUSE

Drug abuse represents a big challenge for Iran. Opiate use prevalence in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1999 was reported as 2.8% of the population, and more than 2 million people were estimated to be opiate users.

The most recent rapid situation assessment (RSA) carried out in 2007 estimates the number of drug dependents in Iran to be 1,200,000, 1.71% of the general population of all ages. The same study raises concerns on the increase in the use of heroin as well as the use of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS) in the country. During the same period the use of methamphetamine has grown from negligible percentage (none) in 2004 to 3.5% in 2007, a new survey is under way regarding the ATS. The dependence age of opiate users is of great concern as most abusers fall in the age category of 20-34.

\(^{10}\) It is very important to consider the purity of the wholesales. Otherwise it would be very hard to reach to an evidence-based data. Opium in southern Iran is quite different from that of Northern provinces in terms of the level of purity. This is why opium prices are different in these two regions.
HIV/AIDS

A HIV epidemic was first reported in 1987 with the first case of an infected recipient of blood products and has since progressed with different slopes and scenarios until today. It entered a rapid progression phase with the findings of outbreaks in two prisons and subsequent findings of relatively high levels of HIV prevalence among injecting drug users. Iran currently has a concentrated HIV epidemic, meaning that while the prevalence among pregnant women is well below one percent, in some parts of the population, especially among injecting drug users, the prevalence is consistently above five percent. According to different studies across the country, the average HIV prevalence among injecting drug users is up to 14.3%.  

According to official reports from the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Education, there were 21,435 registered HIV/AIDS cases in the country by 22 June 2010. Until now, there are 2,431 identified AIDS cases and 3,763 death cases. At the time of infection, 46.6% of people infected with HIV, were of the age range of 25-34 years, which is the highest percentage among all age ranges.

Among all registered cases of people living with HIV in the country since 1986, the following factors were involved in contracting HIV: injecting drug use (69.9%), sexual intercourse (9.1%), blood and blood products (1.1%) and mother to child transmission (0.6%). In 19.3% of the cases the method of transmission could not be identified. (Graph 4)

Graph 4- HIV/AIDS cases according to method of transmission until 22 June 2010

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12 HIV/AIDS control report of the Centre for Disease Control, Ministry of Health of the Islamic Republic of Iran.