



## **Organized crime: its concept, effects, and ways to confront it**

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### **Abstract:**

*Organized crime poses a significant challenge to societies and governments worldwide. It refers to criminal activities that are carefully planned and organized to pursue profit and power through illegal means. Organized crime relies on hierarchical structures resembling military organizations, with leaders making decisions and directing members in carrying out various criminal activities. Its activities range from drug and arms trafficking to human trafficking, money laundering, extortion, and more. These groups collaborate with international networks and transcend national borders, making them difficult to combat. Moreover, organized crime has negative effects on societies, increasing levels of poverty and chaos while threatening political and social stability. Additionally, it undermines national security and erodes trust in laws and government institutions. Effectively combating organized crime requires strong international cooperation and effective coordination among countries.*

**Keywords:** *Crime; Organized Crime; Concept; Effects.*

## **Le crime organisé : son concept, ses effets et les moyens de le combattre**

### **Résumé :**

*Le crime organisé représente un défi majeur pour les sociétés et les gouvernements du monde entier. Il désigne des activités criminelles soigneusement planifiées et organisées dans le but d'obtenir des profits et du pouvoir par des moyens illégaux. Le crime organisé repose sur des structures hiérarchiques semblables à celles des organisations militaires, avec des dirigeants qui prennent les décisions et dirigent les membres dans la réalisation de diverses activités criminelles. Ses activités vont du trafic de drogue et d'armes à la traite des êtres humains, en passant par le blanchiment d'argent, l'extorsion, etc. Ces groupes collaborent avec des réseaux internationaux et transcendent les frontières nationales, ce qui les rend difficiles à combattre. De plus, le crime organisé a des effets négatifs sur les sociétés, augmentant les niveaux de pauvreté et de chaos tout en menaçant la stabilité politique et sociale. Il sape également la sécurité nationale et érode la confiance dans les lois et les institutions gouvernementales. Pour lutter efficacement contre le crime organisé, une coopération internationale forte et une coordination efficace entre les pays sont nécessaires.*

**Mots-clés :** *Crime ; Crime organisé ; Concept ; Effets.*



## Introduction

Organized crime is one of the greatest challenges facing global societies in the 21st century. It is a phenomenon that threatens both public safety and stability, and it impacts economic and social development, hindering the paths of justice and the rule of law, this type of crime involves pre-planned and organized criminal activities, conducted in collaboration among established groups, with the aim of achieving financial, political, or authoritative gains. These activities include drug trafficking, human trafficking, tax evasion, money laundering, terrorism, and cybercrime.

Organized crime is characterized by hierarchical organization, where criminal groups follow complex organizational structures, making investigation and combating them a significant challenge for law enforcement authorities. Additionally, organized crime operates across national borders, necessitating effective international cooperation to combat it, and to make progress in combating organized crime, governments and the international community need to take comprehensive and effective measures, leveraging civil society and technological advancements in their systems.

Based on this context, we can pose the following questions:

- What is organized crime and what are its most important characteristics and pillars?
- What are the effects of organized crime and how are they confronted and addressed?

## **1. The concept of organized crime:**

### **1.1. The concept of crime:**

Crime can be defined as an event that occurs, an incident that happens, an act that is perpetrated, or an experience that is undergone, whether intentionally and premeditatedly, negligently without intention or premeditation, where the actor violates prevailing customs and traditions or acts outside the legal framework that protects people from aggression against each other, and deters them from entertaining the idea of committing crimes. **(Al-Saati, 2005: 23)**

### **1.2. Jurisprudential definition of organized crime:**

Organized crime is defined as unlawful acts committed by a criminal group with a hierarchical organizational structure. It exhibits continuity and operates according to an internal system that assigns roles to its members, ensuring their loyalty and obedience to orders issued by their leaders. The primary objective of these actions is often profit, and criminal groups may use threats, violence, or bribery to achieve their goals. Additionally, their criminal activities may span across multiple countries. **(Hamoudi, 2018: 77-78)**

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**Soumission : 02/01/2025    Acceptation : 05/06/2025    Publication : 15/07/2025**

Some define organized crime as a complex and widespread criminal activity carried out by a group of individuals with a high degree of organization. Its aim is typically to enrich the participants at the expense of society and its members. This type of crime often operates through complete disregard for the law and includes crimes against individuals, often associated with political corruption. (Qishah, 2017: 950)

### **1.3. Interpol's definition of organized crime:**

The phenomenon of organized crime has gained significant attention from the international community, leading to the convening of numerous conferences such as the International Conference on Organized Crime. It has been defined as follows: "It is a group of individuals with an organizational structure that relies on bribery and intimidation, or it is the pursuit of common purposes by a group of individuals based on an agreement, using individuals to profit without considering the consequences of the crime on individuals." The definition agreed upon by states and reiterated by Interpol, after criticism of its previous definitions, emphasizes its continuity, defining it as "an organizational structure composed of a group of individuals who continuously commit crimes to achieve intended profits, using methods of intimidation and corruption". (Ayyad & Bousmaha, 2020: 81)

### **1.4. United Nations definition of organized crime :**

According to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the term "organized criminal group" is defined as follows: "A structured group of

three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offenses established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit". (Al-Shamrani, 2001: 31)

Ahmed Jalal Ezz Eldin, a United Nations expert on combating organized crime, defined organized crime as follows: "Organized crime is based on a stable institutional organization, which has a hierarchical structure, levels, an execution base, fixed roles and tasks, opportunities for advancement within the organizational framework, and a strict internal constitution that ensures loyalty and order within the organization. Most importantly, it is characterized by continuity and non-occurrence, as the organization remains operational as long as it achieves success and law enforcement or competing organizations fail to eliminate it ". (2001, p. 08)

### **1.5. Definition of organized crime by the European Union:**

The European Union's Drug and Organized Crime Unit has defined organized crime as follows: "An organized crime group consists of more than one person engaging in a criminal enterprise involving the commission of serious crimes over a long or indefinite period, with each member having a specific role within the criminal organization, aiming to obtain power or achieve profits ". (Dhanaib, 2009:22)

In 1998, the European Union defined organized crime as "a structured group of two or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of



Soumission : 02/01/2025 Acceptation : 05/06/2025 Publication : 15/07/2025

committing crimes punishable by deprivation of liberty of a maximum of at least four years or a more severe penalty, whether such crimes are an end in themselves or a means of profit, and using, when needed, intimidation to influence public authorities". (2009, p.23)

### **1.6. Definition of Algerian legislation:**

As a result of the scientific progress witnessed by the world, organized crime has spread and expanded internationally, exacerbating its impact in Arab countries. Despite the majority of European and American countries defining transnational organized crime, most Arab countries did not. The Algerian legislator followed a similar approach by not explicitly defining transnational organized crime but rather incorporating provisions criminalizing it within the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Law. This was based on the necessity to align national laws with international agreements ratified by Algeria, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) in 2000, ratified through Presidential Decree No. 02-55 dated February 5, 2002. This was further affirmed through amendments to the Penal Code by Law No. 04-15 dated November 10, 2004, amending Articles 176, 177, and 177 bis to classify offenses such as money laundering and drug trafficking. Additionally, amendments were made to the Criminal Procedure Law by Law No. 04-14 dated November 10, 2004, and further amendments in 2006. (Hamoudi, 2018: 79)

### **2. Characteristics of organized crime:**

The characteristics of organized crime include:

## **2.1. Planning:**

Work within criminal organizations is characterized by a collective nature, relying on role division from preparation to execution. Its modus operandi primarily relies on planning, enabling them to assess available resources and develop precise plans for efficiently carrying out their criminal activities. They often seek the expertise of professionals in administrative, legal, economic, and political fields, who are usually from elite social classes and free from suspicion. **(Dhanaib, 2009 :23)**

## **2.2. Organization:**

Organization is the primary characteristic of organized crime, referring to the arrangement, coordination, and assembly of members within a comprehensive and integrated structure capable of carrying out criminal activities. This organization ensures that members adhere to an authoritarian, presidential system, where they are under the leadership of a leader, commander, or supreme committee responsible for decision-making and directing members to achieve the group's criminal objectives. The organization also allows members of the criminal group to have a hierarchical relationship based on the efficiency of their organization. Therefore, the organized group distinguishes itself by distributing work among its members. This distribution is one of the manifestations of organized crime and does not necessarily require the organizational structure to take a specific form or for each member to be aware of the specialization or roles of others. Hence, these structures are usually secretive. **(Hamoudi, 2018 :81)**



### **2.3. Number of Members:**

Many legislations require a specific number of individuals involved in criminal activities, not less than three, to be described as organized crime. This is the approach taken by Italian law and the European Union. However, there are other legislations that do not specify the number of offenders required to classify a crime as organized crime, such as French and German law. On the other hand, the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime stipulated that the gang must consist of three persons, regardless of the nature of the criminal act. **(Bin Amara, 2016: 04)**

### **2.4. Professionalism:**

Perpetrators of organized crime aim to achieve enormous profits in record time. Therefore, it is necessary for them to have dedicated elements for criminal activity, meaning professional criminals with sufficient expertise to follow the methods that achieve their goals and are willing to sacrifice in order to succeed in their mission. **(Qara, 2013: 285)**

### **2.5. Means of achieving criminal goals:**

In order to facilitate the execution of its criminal operations, the organized crime group resorts to the use of specific means, which include violence, threats, or intimidation. Violence may be directed internally against members of the organization in case of violation of the organization's rules, or externally when confronting foreign individuals who obstruct the organization's activities and threaten its existence. Additionally, the criminal

organization may employ other means such as bribery and corrupting government officials to achieve its objectives. ( 2013, p. 284)

### **3. Pillars of organized crime: (Shirmat, 2021: 536)**

The establishment of organized crime requires the presence of two fundamental pillars, which are:

#### **3.1. Material Element:**

The material element is represented by the criminal act according to the criminal text, and it varies depending on the punishable criminal behavior. Legal jurisprudence stipulates three elements for the material element, which are:

**The Act:** The act constitutes the criminal activity or behavior, involving the commission of an act or the omission of a criminal act as defined by the law.

**Criminal Result:** The criminal result must be achieved, although modern trends in criminalization no longer necessarily require the occurrence of a criminal result for the commission of certain types of crimes, now referred to as hazardous crimes.

**Causal Relationship:** If the law requires the occurrence of a criminal result for the commission of the crime, there must be a causal relationship between the act and the result to fulfill the material element and its components.

#### **3.2. Moral Element:**

The moral element consists of two forms:

**Intentional Commitment:** This form is represented by the perpetrator's intention towards the elements of the crime, including the act and the result, known as criminal intent. The member of the criminal organization must be aware in



advance that their criminal behavior contributes, along with other members, to achieving the goals of the criminal organization. Additionally, they are presumed to be aware of the types of crimes committed by this organization.

**Criminal Intent towards the Behavior without Result:** This form refers to the criminal intent towards the behavior without a resultant criminal outcome, known as mistake.

#### **4. Dimensions of organized crime:**

The risks of organized crime have three dimensions: (Marouk, 2000: 137)

##### **4.1. Social Dimension:**

This dimension represents the negative consequences resulting from the use of illicit drugs and its impact on individual behavior, health, the proliferation of violence, weapon use, and fear of crime, as well as the undermining of official social organizations such as labor unions.

##### **4.2. Political Dimension:**

This dimension signifies the influence on political parties and senior officials in both the public and private sectors, leading to a loss of trust between officials and the populace.

##### **4.3. Economic Dimension:**

This dimension represents the economic losses at both the individual and societal levels, threatening the national economy with collapse.

## **5. Causes of the spread of organized crime: (Abida, 2009: 35-37)**

Some of the most important reasons for the spread of these criminal patterns include:

The tremendous advancement in technology, where geographical boundaries blur with societies becoming interconnected through computer networks, satellites, the internet, and global communication networks.

The prevailing globalization system in international relations, which gives more scope for the expansion of organized crime beyond internal and international control and surveillance.

The development and use of advanced weapons in violent crimes, as well as the dissemination of consciousness-altering substances, smuggling of sophisticated weapons, nuclear materials, and their sale by gangs, with the proceeds often invested in drug cultivation.

Insufficient traditional provisions in criminal law to combat organized crime, as perceived by legal scholars among the factors aiding in the spread of organized crime.

Internal conflicts leading to increased organized crime activities, as these conflicts disrupt social control systems, leading to the absence of a viable national law enforcement system, thereby increasing opportunities for existing organized crime groups to operate and creating new opportunities for the emergence of other groups.

## **6. Images of organized crime:**

### **6.1. Crimes of illicit drug trafficking:**

Drug crimes rank at the forefront of illicit activities perpetrated by criminal organizations due to the substantial and rapid profits they yield. Drug crimes vary in their



**Soumission : 02/01/2025    Acceptation : 05/06/2025    Publication : 15/07/2025**

nomenclature and patterns depending on the manner in which they are conducted, such as drug use or trafficking. They encompass activities including buying, selling, storing, possessing, dealing, treating, delivering, dividing, retailing, and concealing drugs. Socially, these crimes are commonly referred to as drug possession offenses. **(Zayan & Al-Mufti, 2020: 330)**

## **6.2. Trafficking in women and children and their exploitation:**

While it is inherently unthinkable for humans to be subjected to trade, contrary to the most basic human values prevailing in all societies, humanity has witnessed a form of illicit trafficking that targets humans. The significant danger of this criminal activity is evident in the fact that organized crime groups consider it among the lucrative crimes. Human trafficking ranks third globally, following drug and arms trafficking, due to its substantial profits and relatively lower risks, thus prioritizing it. Trafficking in humans, especially women and children, is not a new phenomenon but rather an ancient and ongoing practice. Throughout history, there have been public auctions for the sale of slaves, particularly women, who were purchased for labor on farms, domestic service, or prostitution. **(2020, p. 331)**

## **6.3. Terrorism crimes:**

World leaders have not agreed to unite and combat a certain type of crime as they have agreed to fight terrorism, despite not yet agreeing on a unified concept for these crimes. Conferences, meetings, and forums have been held for this purpose, but they have not yielded results in this

field. The reason for this lies in the overlap of several terms and behaviors, and the different adaptation of each party. This crime often closely resembles the concept of resistance, while on the other hand, it is closer to armed rebellion. Therefore, the common denominator in the concept of these crimes is seen as taking up arms against states and governments. **(Rahmani, p. 355)**

#### **6.4. Money laundering crimes :**

Money laundering refers to the act of concealing the true source of funds obtained through illegal means by exporting them, depositing them in banks in other countries, transferring or moving them, using them, or investing them in legitimate activities to evade detection and seizure, presenting them as if they were derived from legitimate sources. Whether the deposit, concealment, transfer, conversion, utilization, or investment is carried out in developed or developing countries, the danger of money laundering operations conducted by organized criminal gangs is evident in that they not only conceal their laundered wealth and proceeds but also resort to legitimate and publicly acknowledged presence within society by engaging in economic activities that do not rely on violence and bring them numerous benefits. **(Mujahideen, 2018: 188)**

#### **6.5. Corruption crimes:**

Corruption crimes are considered among the most dangerous crimes to the stability and security of societies, undermining state institutions, ethical values, and justice, and posing a threat to sustainable development and the rule of law. The danger of corruption lies in its connection to other organized crimes and economic crimes, including



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money laundering. Today, corruption has become a crime that transcends national borders, placing the international community under the necessity of cooperating to combat it. According to the 2008 annual report published by Transparency International on corruption levels, this phenomenon is prevalent in both rich and poor countries. Bangladesh topped the list of countries suffering from corruption, while Algeria ranked 97th globally. The cleanest countries in terms of corruption include Iceland, Denmark, Finland, and New Zealand. **(Sengouni & Aifaoui: 11)**

#### **6.6. Manufacturing weapons and illegal arms trafficking :**

The irregular trade of weapons has led to the emergence of criminal groups specialized in manufacturing and trafficking arms illegally. By manufacturing or assembling firearms from parts obtained illegally, without a license or permission from the competent authority in the country according to its domestic laws. Illegally trafficking arms involves their trade in the market through export, import, acquisition, sale, or generally the movement of weapons from one region or across regions to another country, with the condition that both countries are parties to the agreement. **(Sengouni & Aifaoui, p.15)**

#### **7. Effects of organized crime:**

##### **7.1. The Social Effects: (Belwadh, 2013, p. 66)**

Erosion of Trust: Organized crime undermines trust within communities, leading to suspicion and fear among residents. People may become reluctant to cooperate with authorities or engage in community activities due to concerns about retribution from criminal organizations.

**Disruption of Social Order:** Organized crime destabilizes social structures and norms, leading to an erosion of social cohesion. Communities affected by organized crime often experience higher levels of conflict, violence, and insecurity, which disrupt daily life and hinder community development.

**Victimization and Fear:** Individuals and families living in areas with high levels of organized crime may experience victimization, including extortion, intimidation, and violence. This creates a climate of fear and insecurity, leading to psychological distress and trauma among residents.

**Youth Recruitment and Exploitation:** Organized crime groups often target vulnerable youth for recruitment into their ranks. Young people may be lured by promises of wealth, power, or belonging, only to become trapped in a cycle of violence and exploitation.

**Corruption and Impunity:** Organized crime can corrupt public institutions and undermine the rule of law. Corruption within law enforcement agencies, judicial systems, and government institutions allows criminal organizations to operate with impunity, further eroding trust in the authorities.

**Stigmatization and Marginalization:** Communities affected by organized crime may face stigmatization and marginalization, both from within and outside their communities. This can lead to social exclusion, discrimination, and limited access to opportunities for economic and social advancement.



## **6.2. Economic Effects: (Shirmat, 2021: 543)**

The use of banks in money laundering leads to significant damages to them, such as sudden withdrawals of funds, which result in liquidity gaps for the bank. Additionally, corruption within the banking system, involving some of its leaders taking bribes to facilitate money laundering operations, tarnishes the reputation of banks and undermines trust in them. The principle of trust in banks is fundamentally based on the cleanliness of the funds they manage. This can also undermine confidence in banking personnel due to their tarnished reputation. Furthermore, as money laundering operations rely on foreign currency for ease of movement from one country to another, the demand for foreign currencies increases, leading to the depreciation of the national currency, a deficit in the balance of payments, and a crisis in foreign currency liquidity. This threatens the country's reserves of foreign currencies held by the central bank.

## **6.3. Political Effects: (2021, p. 543)**

Organized crime infiltrates political parties and governmental institutions, including local administrations, leading to the distortion of their policies and the corruption of their law enforcement duties. Deteriorating political situations in countries exacerbate the activities of criminal gangs, resulting in decreased public trust in their leaders and reduced political participation. This leads to a breakdown in consensus between social and political entities, ultimately weakening the structures of the public state.

It is also known that a portion of laundered money is used to finance and support terrorist activities. These funds can also influence the political structure itself, as they finance election campaigns for unknown candidates, pushing them into parliament where they influence legislation and monitor government actions to serve their personal interests and achieve their benefits. Money laundering professionals exploit the media to promote their agendas through advertisements and purchasing advertising space, causing distortion of facts and serving their personal goals at the expense of societal interests, posing a serious threat to the state.

## **7. Ways to confront organized crime:**

### **7.1. At the internal level: (Belwadh, 2013: 70-71)**

Ensuring the provision of tools to the community to understand the scope and motivations of criminal operations, as well as those involved and beneficiaries, by focusing on community education across all sectors and levels and enhancing the sense of security.

Combatting organized crime is not solely the responsibility of governments; it should also involve national associations and civil society organizations collaborating with governmental bodies, particularly in social policies addressing the root causes of organized crime. These organizations play a vital role in implementing programs and campaigns to raise awareness, educate, and train individuals in preventing organized crime.

Utilizing media channels to increase awareness of the dangers of illegal migration, a significant contributor to the proliferation of organized crime across borders.



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Developing media programs aimed at increasing youth awareness of the dangers of harmful ideologies and false promises propagated by organized crime syndicates through online platforms and modern media outlets.

Emphasizing the existence of clearly defined penalties for organized crime in accordance with legal principles, underscoring the importance of legal provisions in defining crimes and punishments.

Urging a review of punitive measures taken against organized crime, moving away from traditional methods by enhancing procedural aspects related to judicial prosecution and leveraging modern techniques for detecting organized crime.

Enhancing border surveillance and migration procedures to track the movements of criminals and promptly inform relevant authorities.

Establishing specialized security units within law enforcement agencies equipped with advanced scientific and technological capabilities to effectively confront the evolving nature of organized crime.

## **7.2. At the external level: ( 2013, P. 71-72)**

Working towards activating the principle of supporting less developed countries with technological means and technical expertise to combat organized crime.

Promoting regional and international cooperation among law enforcement agencies by providing communication channels, methods of exchanging information and expertise according to clear legal guidelines and mechanisms.

The effectiveness of combating organized crime undoubtedly requires deepening the foundations of solidarity among states. This necessitates a diversified and nuanced approach to international relations. Judicial interaction becomes imperative, as it confronts transboundary organized crime, necessitating the adaptation of judicial prosecution measures to combat the activities of criminal groups that transcend national borders.

The United Nations General Assembly has issued a resolution endorsing international cooperation in criminal matters, expressing its conviction that UN model treaties on international cooperation in criminal matters provide essential tools for enhancing international cooperation and contribute to increasing capabilities in crime prevention.

One of the most significant pillars of international judicial cooperation is extradition, which is considered the most effective means of combating organized crime. For extradition processes between countries to occur smoothly, certain conditions must be met, including the existence of bilateral or multilateral agreements regulating the extradition process, reciprocity, and consideration of the state's interest.

Encouraging border-sharing countries to establish unified databases and information systems dedicated to collecting and analyzing information related to organized crime, especially illegal migration and cross-border smuggling.

Encouraging countries to conclude regional and bilateral agreements to combat transboundary organized



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crime and striving for their implementation and follow-up.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, tackling the phenomenon of organized crime is a comprehensive challenge that requires international cooperation and comprehensive coordination among governments, security institutions, and civil society. It is a phenomenon that threatens global stability and security, negatively impacts economic and social development, and disrupts the lives of affected communities.

Effectively combating organized crime requires multiple strategies, including enhancing international cooperation, improving legislation and strengthening law enforcement measures, providing necessary support for crime victims, and raising public awareness about the dangers of this phenomenon. Certainly, eliminating organized crime will not be an easy task, but through cooperation and collective efforts, the international community can make tangible progress in combating it and protecting communities from its harmful effects.

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