

# Combating Human Trafficking in the Middle East

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## BACKGROUND

Human trafficking represents a major challenge throughout the Middle East; countries in the region are involved as origin, transit and/or destination countries. Moreover, demographic, cultural and socio-economic characteristics common to particular groups in the region, including displaced populations, irregular migrants and children, render them highly vulnerable to trafficking. Accordingly, the number of trafficking cases in the Middle East may significantly increase in the foreseeable future and a significant and timely effort is necessary to mitigate this risk.

IOM takes a comprehensive approach to trafficking in persons within the wider context of migration management. Over the course of 2008 and in 2009, IOM's Regional Office for the Middle East has continued to design and implement significant activities in the field of counter trafficking across its geographic mandate, which includes Egypt, the Mashreq region (Lebanon, Syria and Jordan), the Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates), Iraq and Yemen, and support initiatives undertaken by IOM Field Offices, now established in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Yemen and the UAE. IOM has continued to liaise closely with key ministries, establishing many positive working relationships. IOM has made a number of recent and significant breakthroughs as governments in the region demonstrate increased commitment to recognize and combat the crime. IOM activities in the field of counter trafficking are also implemented in partnership with civil society and UN agencies.

IOM counter trafficking initiatives throughout the region have been varied and complementary. Amongst other initiatives, the Organization has: conducted training to enhance the relevant capacities of criminal justice officials and civil society to successfully apprehend and prosecute traffickers and identify and refer/assist victims of trafficking; carried out targeted awareness raising campaigns; provided comprehensive assistance to victims of trafficking; enhanced dialogue and cooperation between relevant stakeholders; assisted in the development of counter trafficking legislation; and conducted research to provide up-to-date data on trafficking in the region.

## CAPACITY BUILDING FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE OFFICIALS

IOM's counter trafficking activities build the capacity of both government and civil society institutions to better address the



Group activity on child trafficking during training for Law Enforcement in Egypt, June 2008.

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challenges posed by human trafficking. IOM has implemented a number of significant initiatives to enhance the capacity of law enforcement officials, including police, prosecutors and judges, to combat trafficking in persons and provide timely and appropriate assistance to victims.

In Egypt for example, as part of the 'Counter-Trafficking Technical Assistance and Training: A Global Rapid Response' project, IOM, in partnership with the Egyptian Ministry of Interior, conducted a three week training program for 20 law enforcement officials in June 2008. Through targeted modules, participants developed and demonstrated skills relevant to identification of and referral systems for victims of trafficking, investigation and interview techniques, the arrest and prosecution of criminals, national plans of action and task teams, international intelligence exchange and cooperation and direct victim assistance in the international context.

Under the ongoing regional project "Empowering Government and Civil Society to Effectively Manage Iraqi Migration Flows and Protect Migrants in Egypt, Turkey and Lebanon", IOM is currently preparing to conduct a second training program for law enforcement officials in Cairo. In 2010, under a 12-month project "Supporting the Government of Egypt's Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking by Enhancing Key Investigation and Prosecution Capacities" is expected that IOM will organize further training for law enforcement officials, as well as public prosecutors and judges.

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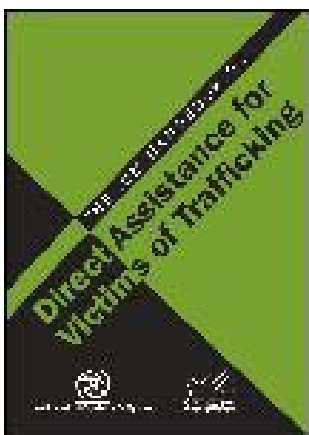
In Bahrain, under an ongoing project for **'Capacity Building and Awareness Raising on Counter Trafficking in the Kingdom of Bahrain'**, IOM conducted training on interviewing and investigative techniques for 38 law enforcement officials. Under this project, IOM has also carried out training for Arabic media, training on Shelter Management, including the provision of psychosocial assistance to trafficking victims, and a Bahrain Anti-Human Trafficking Law workshop, organized in cooperation with the Royal Police Academy.

In addition, through the provision of targeted training, IOM's current initiative for **'Empowering Yemen to Address Mixed Migration and Protect Vulnerable Migrants Travelling the Gulf of Aden Route'** will reinforce the capacity of frontline Yemeni law enforcement entities (police, immigration, border and coastal guards) and relevant agencies (Government, international organizations and civil society) to provide adequate and timely assistance to migrants and asylum seekers, including victims of trafficking.

## DIRECT ASSISTANCE

IOM has implemented a number of recent initiatives to enhance provision of rapid and comprehensive direct assistance to victims of trafficking in the Middle East region. The Organization collaborates with government, non-governmental and UN partners to provide direct assistance and conducts targeted capacity building activities for relevant governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders to enhance overall capacity to identify and assist victims of trafficking. IOM has also supported shelter establishment and management in the region.

Under the **'Multi-Action Program for Assistance to Iraqi Victims of Trafficking in Iraq and the Region'** – which recently entered a Second Phase and is expected to enter a Third Phase in 2010 – targeting Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, IOM has collaborated with government stakeholders to assist a number of trafficking victims. Under this project, IOM has also conducted capacity building activities, including training on the provision of direct assistance to victims of trafficking for government and civil society partners in Lebanon and Jordan. In addition, IOM continues to directly assist vulnerable Iraqis and trafficking victims in the project's target countries.



IOM also continues to support the Government of Syria in the establishment and management of a shelter to provide assistance to victims of trafficking, as part of an ongoing initiative for **'Capacity Building on Shelter Management for Victims of Trafficking in Syria'**. The shelter, which recently opened, offers temporary accommodation as well as valuable financial, psychosocial and legal support to victims of trafficking.

During the **'Regional Expert Meeting on Rights-based Assistance to Victims of Trafficking'** in December 2008, representatives from 22 Arab countries, several non-governmental organizations, civil society and research institutes as well as representatives from UN agencies operating in the region and beyond converged in Cairo to discuss the best international and regional practices in the field of direct assistance to victims of trafficking. IOM also launched an Arabic version of the IOM Handbook on the Provision of Direct Assistance for Victims of Trafficking during the meeting, a valuable resource that will assist policy makers, legislators, law enforcement agencies and community and health workers in the region.

In Egypt, IOM is also preparing to cooperate with the Ministry of Health to enhance identification and provision of assistance to victims of trafficking, under a 12-month initiative titled **"Enhancing the Capacity of the Ministry of Health to Assist Trafficking Victims"**.

## RESEARCH AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

IOM conducts qualitative and quantitative research on trafficking to ensure that initiatives to counter trafficking in the region are well targeted, including policy development. IOM also works to foster greater cooperation and dialogue between countries in the region, to facilitate the development of a cohesive counter trafficking response and with a view to the harmonization of national and regional policies.

Under the recent **'Multi-Action Program for Assistance to Iraqi Victims of Trafficking in Iraq and the Region'** IOM commissioned an assessment on trafficking of foreign nationals into Iraq, Iraqi nationals within Iraq and Iraqi nationals into neighbouring countries, providing valuable new insight into trafficking in the region. IOM has also engaged in the provision of support to Egypt's National Centre for Social and Criminology Research, recently tasked with a **'Research Project to Study Trafficking Patterns in Egyptian Society'**.

Through an action to **'Support to the Syrian Government in developing counter-trafficking legislation'** IOM assisted in the development of counter trafficking legislation in Syria. The draft legislation has the potential to provide comprehensive legal grounds to successfully prosecute traffickers and is expected to be endorsed soon by Parliament.

*For more information about IOM's programs in the field of counter-trafficking in Egypt, please contact Ms. Fiona Ellassiuty - felassiu@iom.int (updated: September 2009)*

## RELEVANT LINKS

**IOM Cairo:** [www.egypt.iom.int](http://www.egypt.iom.int)

**IOM Worldwide:** [www.iom.int/jahia/jsp/index.jsp](http://www.iom.int/jahia/jsp/index.jsp)