

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Pakistan: Country Profile

Pakistan -- Country Map and Statistics

The UNODC Regional Office based in Islamabad, Pakistan is responsible for Afghanistan and Pakistan. UNODC has been providing assistance to the countries in the region for over 20 years. During this period, war, violence, social and political unrest and economic troubles have exacerbated the drug abuse and production problems in the region.

Overview of the drug control situation

The Golden Crescent that encompasses the poppy producing areas of South-west Asia is one of the world's main sources of illicit opiates. Afghanistan and Pakistan are both opium-producing countries. Following the 1979 revolution, Iran's opium poppy crop was largely eradicated though some minor residual amounts may be grown on a non-commercial scale.



The continuing civil strife in Afghanistan have created conditions in the past decade that have boosted Afghanistan into a position as the world's largest producer of illicit opiates. In terms of sheer production volume, it is rivalled only by Myanmar in SE Asia. It harvests 50 times more opium than Pakistan.

Pakistan has been a producer of opium for export since the time of Muslim rule and the later British empire. Beginning in 1979, large-scale heroin production has also taken place in the country. Following the enforcement of Hadd Ordinance in 1979, poppy cultivation and resultant opium production declined steeply in Pakistan until the mid 1980s when the possibility of tremendous profits pushed up the cultivation.

Cannabis is also produced in large quantities in the sub-region, but complete information is not available. Most of the cannabis trafficked in the region originates in Afghanistan. It tends to be processed in the inaccessible areas of Pakistan's Orakzai and Kurram agencies and the Tirah area of Khyber agency. It then travels by caravan through the tribal areas bordering NWFP in the direction of Baluchistan for transportation out of the country via Iran or the Mekran coast. If processed in Afghanistan the most likely outbound route is via the Central Asian Republics in trucks or containers.

Trafficking Problems

Processing and trafficking problems affect the region and the wider world beyond. Most processing takes place in small, mobile laboratories in the Afghan-Pakistan border areas although increasing instances of processing on the Afghan border with the Central Asian Republics have been reported. The subregion itself has become a major consumer market for opiates produced. Opiate processing on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghan border has created a trafficking and, importantly in the case of Pakistan, a drug abuse problem especially since the early 1980s.

Europe, and to a lesser degree the United States of America, are destinations for the higher grade of heroin opiates exported from this region. In the recent past, there has been some success in suppressing heroin laboratories in the tribal areas of Pakistan (especially Khyber and Mohmand agencies). The new drug production and processing areas which are emerging in the Central Asian Republics when combined with the displacement of trafficking northward from Afghanistan, to Russia and to the European market represent a serious development.

Drug Abuse

While estimates on the extent of drug addiction in Afghanistan are not available, reports indicate a serious problem (a) among the Afghan refugee population in Pakistan, (b) in the Afghan province of Badakshan (c) among returning refugees in Kabul and (d) among the Turkmen tribes of North Afghanistan. Hashish, opium and heroin seem to be the preferred drugs among the male population.

Pakistan is one of the countries hardest hit by narcotics abuse in the world. According to national drug abuse surveys, the number of chronic abusers of heroin increased from about 20,000 in 1980 to more than 1.5 million in the late 1990's.

Drugs in the region are mostly ingested orally; heroin is usually smoked or the smoke is inhaled. In Pakistan, a small

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