



Efforts of the League of Arab States in Combating Economic Crime

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Abstract:

Economic crime is directed against the systems and regulations established to protect a country's economic interests. In recent years, the international arena has witnessed a rise in criminal activities in the economic sphere, with impacts that extend beyond the borders of a single state to affect multiple countries. As a result, such crimes have taken on a global dimension, becoming a concern for the international community as a whole.

This study focuses on examining and analyzing the efforts made by the League of Arab States to combat economic crime. It highlights the importance of international cooperation, reviews key regional agreements, and explores the role of major strategies designed to address and limit this phenomenon.

Keywords: Economic crime, League of Arab States, Arab conventions, Security strategy.

Introduction:

Economic crime has become one of the most important issues at the regional level. This explains the increasing attention it has recently received from many regional organizations, including Arab organizations, which have sought to exert every effort to limit the spread of this phenomenon in support of international cooperation. Since the adoption of its Charter in 1945, the League of Arab States emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation among Arab countries and to hold

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international meetings to reinforce relations between them. Thus, it became a regional organization based on respect for the sovereignty of its member states. Arab cooperation in this framework includes security strategies, phased plans to implement these strategies, Arab conventions, and conferences organized by the General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers. All these instruments reflect the efforts of Arab states to combat crime in all its forms.

The importance of studying this topic lies in the growing attention it receives worldwide, driven by the continuous increase in economic criminal activities and the serious threats they pose at various levels. This is particularly evident in the context of rapid scientific and technological advancements, which have made it more difficult for governments to establish unified frameworks and effective measures to combat such crimes. This is done by clarifying the role of the League of Arab States in addressing economic crime, monitoring international policies aimed at confronting this type of crime, and identifying the mechanisms adopted to achieve an adequate and effective fight against various forms of economic crime.

The main research question is: To what extent are the efforts of the League of Arab States sufficient in confronting the phenomenon of economic crime?

To answer this question, the descriptive approach is used to explain the concepts related to the topic, and the analytical approach is used to analyze international legal texts dedicated to combating economic crime.

FIRST SECTION: Arab Conventions for Combating Economic Crime

Economic crime has become a major issue at the regional level, which explains the heightened interest shown by regional organizations, including Arab institutions. These organizations have made considerable efforts to curb the spread



of this phenomenon, leading to the conclusion of several international agreements across the Arab world.

1. The Arab Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1994)

Arab states realized that eliminating illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances is a shared international responsibility. This requires coordinated efforts to strengthen effective legal mechanisms for Arab cooperation in order to eliminate criminal activities resulting from illicit drug trafficking. The convention was signed in Tunisia in 1994 by the Arab Ministers of Interior. It includes provisions related to combating money laundering and follows the approach of the 1988 Vienna Convention in addressing this phenomenon. The convention entered into force on 30 June 1996.¹

2. The Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism (1998)

This convention was approved by the Council of Arab Interior Ministers in its fifteenth session in 1998 and entered into force in 1999. Its aim is to strengthen cooperation among Arab states to combat terrorist crimes that threaten the security and stability of the Arab nation and endanger its vital interests. The convention addresses prevention measures, Arab cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism, judicial cooperation, and law enforcement mechanisms.²

3. The Arab Convention against Corruption (2010)

In order to reinforce Arab and international efforts to combat corruption, the Arab Convention against Corruption was adopted in Cairo in 2010. Its objectives include strengthening measures to prevent, detect, and combat corruption in all its forms, prosecuting offenders, enhancing Arab cooperation in recovering assets,



and encouraging individuals and civil society institutions to participate actively in preventing and combating corruption.³

4. The Arab Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

This convention was signed by the Arab Ministers of Interior and Justice during their joint meeting at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo in 2010 and entered into force in 2013. It addresses several criminal activities such as money laundering, administrative corruption, private sector crimes, fraud against financial and banking institutions, currency counterfeiting, human trafficking especially involving women and children, trafficking in human organs, migrant smuggling, air piracy, and crimes against the environment.⁴

5. The Arab Convention on Combating Information Technology Crimes

Arab efforts to strengthen cooperation in combating cybercrime have been relatively modest compared to other countries, partly because such crimes were not yet widespread in Arab countries. Early initiatives focused mainly on protecting copyright. Resolution No. 229 issued in 1996 by the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice was the first legislative proposal to combat cybercrime.

However, one of the most significant Arab initiatives in this field was the Arab Convention on Combating Information Technology Crimes adopted in Cairo in 2010 through cooperation between the Arab Ministers of Interior and Justice. It was signed by about 23 Arab countries including Algeria. Article 16 addresses crimes related to organized crime committed using information technology, including:

- Money laundering operations or assistance in such operations.
- Promotion or trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.



- Human trafficking.
- Trafficking in human organs.
- Illicit trafficking in weapons.⁵

SECOND SECTION: Arab Security Strategies for Combating Economic Crime

Arab regional security cooperation includes security strategies and phased implementation plans alongside security conventions. These initiatives are implemented by the General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers and Naif Arab University for Security Sciences.⁶

1. The Arab Security Plan (1983)

This plan aims to achieve Arab security integration, since internal security disturbances affect political, economic, and social stability. It seeks to combat crime in all its traditional and modern forms, protect the Arab homeland from terrorism and sabotage, safeguard public institutions, and ensure individual safety and rights. Its foundations include strengthening society through moral and educational values, modernizing security institutions, applying scientific methods in security work, developing penal institutions, and enhancing civil protection services.

Finally, Arab cooperation in the security field should be consolidated by establishing it on an integrated basis characterized by effectiveness and flexibility, supporting efforts to establish security, combat crime, and enhance international



cooperation in combating crime within a framework of combining expertise and exchanging benefits to confront crime.⁷

2. The First Arab Security Plan (1986)

Approved by the Council of Arab Interior Ministers on 25 February 1986, its objective was to strengthen security cooperation among Arab states and coordinate joint action to combat organized crime and money laundering.

3. The Arab Strategy to Combat Illicit Use of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1986)

This strategy aims to strengthen Arab security cooperation in combating illicit drug trafficking. Since money laundering often results from drug crimes, this strategy also aims to eliminate major financial proceeds derived from these crimes.⁸

4. The Comprehensive Arab Plan to Combat Economic Crime

Researchers have emphasized the need to establish a comprehensive Arab plan to combat economic crime as part of a broader strategy for secure economic and social development. Proposed measures include legal and judicial cooperation among Arab states, bilateral agreements between neighboring countries, developing a unified Arab strategy against economic crime, strengthening the role of Naif Arab Security Academy in research and conferences, providing recommendations for prevention, and exchanging information through computer networks related to criminal activities such as drug trafficking and money laundering.⁹



Based on the above, a set of recommendations—more precisely, practical measures—can be proposed to help implement this plan effectively:

- Strengthening legal and judicial cooperation, particularly within the framework of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers and other bodies of the League of Arab States. This can be achieved through the exchange of expertise and perspectives on economic regulations and methods of combating economic crime, as well as by ensuring the effective implementation of judicial cooperation agreements in both letter and spirit.

- Concluding bilateral agreements between neighboring Arab countries to better organize and coordinate mechanisms for combating economic crimes.

- Working toward the development of a comprehensive Arab strategy to address economic crime.

- Granting the Naif Arab Academy for Security Sciences in Riyadh its full role in conducting research, organizing conferences and seminars, and analyzing issues related to economic crime.

- Emphasizing the importance of providing clear recommendations and proposals on how to combat economic crime and prevent its spread.

- Promoting information exchange by establishing interconnected computer networks among Arab countries, particularly concerning criminal activities such as drug trafficking and money laundering.¹⁰

5. The Unified Arab Model Law for Combating Money Laundering (2000)

This law was approved by the General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers, and the Arab states adopted it in an effort to develop the necessary legislation to combat the crime of money laundering resulting from the



illegal trade in narcotics. It was included in the proceedings of the Fourteenth Arab Conference of Heads of Anti-Narcotics Agencies in Arab States, which was held in Tunisia on 19/07/2000.¹¹

Several Arab conferences have been held to combat economic crime; among the most important are :

*** Conference of Arab Interior Ministers in Tunis, 1994**

The conference recommended the necessity of cooperation and coordination between the contracting parties in the field of combating crime and preventing money laundering derived from drug trafficking. The conference also approved several plans prepared by the General Secretariat of the Council, the most important of which are :

- The Unified Arab Security Plan to Combat the Drug Phenomenon.
- The Unified Arab Blacklist of Drug and Psychotropic Substance Traffickers and Smugglers.
- The Unified Arab Guide to Narcotic Substances.

*** Security Cooperation Conference in Tunisia 1996**

This conference addressed several key issues, including :

- The necessity of cooperation among Arab states to combat terrorist crime.
- Combating money laundering through adherence to the principles of international and Arab agreements.
- The need for coordination among Arab states to facilitate the extradition of criminals.
- Preventing the use of proceeds from organized crime to finance and support terrorist operations.¹²

To bolster these Arab efforts to combat economic crime, a number of recommendations were proposed in this context, including :



- Preparing a comprehensive study on economic crimes in Arab countries, addressing the evolution of these crimes, their types, the penalties imposed, the agencies responsible for combating them, and the success of the measures taken to reduce them.

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- Emphasizing the necessity of establishing a specialized department for combating economic crimes in countries that do not currently have such a department. This department would be tasked with investigation, inquiry, and follow-up to uncover economic crimes, and would be equipped with the necessary modern scientific equipment to perform its duties effectively.

- Strengthening cooperation and coordination among security agencies in member states in the field of combating economic crimes, which would help reduce the negative impact of these crimes on economic and social conditions.

-Organizing training courses for personnel working in the field of combating economic crimes to enhance their efficiency in addressing this type of crime.¹³

Conclusion

Economic crime has evolved into a complex and transnational phenomenon that transcends geographical and political boundaries, driven largely by the rapid globalization of markets and the unprecedented expansion of information and communication technologies. These developments have enabled criminal networks to operate with greater sophistication, speed, and anonymity, exploiting regulatory gaps and differences between national legal systems. As a result, no single state



can effectively confront such crimes in isolation. This growing challenge has heightened global awareness of the urgent need for coordinated international action, encompassing both preventive strategies such as strengthening financial oversight, enhancing transparency, and improving regulatory frameworks and deterrent measures, including stricter enforcement, harsher penalties, and cross-border judicial cooperation. Consequently, international and regional organizations have intensified their efforts to establish comprehensive mechanisms, frameworks, and specialized agencies dedicated to combating economic crime. These entities facilitate information sharing, technical assistance, capacity building, and the harmonization of legal standards, thereby reinforcing collective security and promoting the integrity of the global economic system.

Results :

- International cooperation is an effective method for combating economic crime because such crimes occur in different parts of the world and rely on advanced technologies. However, this cooperation still faces several challenges, particularly legislative gaps among states.

- Arab cooperation in combating economic crime is considered a formal cooperation that lacks effectiveness and political will, and is plagued by waves of imitation and conflicts among its members, and the control of external parties has made this cooperation ink on paper.

- Conflicts among Arab states, reliance on imitation, and external influence all contribute to weakening and limiting the success of this cooperation.

Recommendations

- Strengthening international cooperation in combating economic crime, especially in the security field.



- Adopting effective regional and international mechanisms and broader strategies to address the causes of economic crime.
- Training professionals involved in combating economic crime on advanced technical, security, and legal methods.
- Activating the role of civil society and media in confronting serious criminal activities.
- Reforming institutions in Arab countries and creating real mechanisms to fight economic crime.

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