The Role of Algerian Courts in Combating Drug Crimes

Soreya GHERBI *
University of AinTemouchent, Algeria
The Mediterranean Laboratory for Legal and
Economic Studies
Soreya.gherbi@univ-temouchent.edu.dz

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Abstract: Algerian courts play a pivotal role in combating drug-related crimes by strictly enforcing laws and imposing deterrent penalties on those involved in trafficking and consumption. They contribute to protecting society by ensuring justice, safeguarding defendants' rights, and strengthening both general and specific deterrence. Furthermore, courts coordinate with security authorities and apply relevant drug laws, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of criminal policy in addressing this growing phenomenon.

Keywords: Algerian courts, drug crimes, criminal policy, deterrence, justice, drug control.

***Corresponding author: Soreya GHERBI.**

Introduction:

Drug-related crimes constitute a major and increasingly complex challenge facing many countries around the world, and Algeria is among the states that confront this phenomenon with seriousness, vigilance, and determination. The growing expansion of drug trafficking networks and the rise in consumption rates have made this issue not only a legal concern but also a social, economic, and security threat that affects the stability of societies. In this context, Algerian courts play a vital and decisive role in seeking to curb these crimes and ensure the delivery of justice to those involved, whether as perpetrators, accomplices, or facilitators.

Courts are a fundamental pillar of the Algerian justice system, as they are responsible for the application and interpretation of laws in a manner that guarantees fairness, equality before the law, and the protection of public order. Through their judicial authority, they contribute to strengthening the rule of law by ensuring that criminal acts related to drugs are prosecuted and sanctioned in accordance with legal standards. This judicial function is essential in maintaining public confidence in the justice system and reinforcing the principle that no one is above the law.

The analysis of the role of Algerian courts in combating drug crimes falls within a broader framework of national efforts aimed at addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by this phenomenon. Drug crimes have a deeply negative impact on public security, social cohesion, and public health, often leading to increased violence, family disintegration, and economic instability. Therefore, understanding the judicial response in this context is essential for assessing the effectiveness of current measures and identifying possible gaps that require reform or reinforcement.

This study is based on a detailed examination of the role of Algerian courts in combating drug-related crimes, focusing on several key dimensions. These include the application and enforcement of relevant criminal laws, the safeguarding of the rights of both defendants and victims, the proportionality and effectiveness of imposed penalties, as well as the extent of international cooperation in combating transnational drug trafficking networks. Each of these dimensions reflects the multifaceted nature of judicial intervention in this field.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of the judiciary is closely linked to its ability to adapt to the evolving nature of drug crimes, particularly with the emergence of new trafficking methods and the increasing use of technology in criminal activities. This requires continuous legal development, enhanced judicial training, and stronger coordination between different law enforcement institutions to ensure a coherent and efficient response.

Based on this analysis, a deeper understanding can be gained of how Algerian courts influence the fight against drug crimes, the challenges they face in achieving their objectives, and the mechanisms through which their effectiveness can be improved. Such an understanding is essential for strengthening justice, enhancing legal security, and ensuring greater protection for society.

Accordingly, the following research question is raised: How has the Algerian judiciary addressed the phenomenon of drug crimes, and what mechanisms has it adopted to reduce this serious scourge?

Based on this, the research will be divided into:

I. The Role of Algerian Courts in Combating Drug Crimes.

II. Legal Procedures for Combating Drug Crimes.

Section One : The Role of Algerian Courts in Combating Drug Crimes

Achieving justice in drug-related cases is essential to ensuring social stability and protecting individuals from the harmful effects of this phenomenon. Fair and equal treatment of defendants and individuals involved in drug crimes is fundamental to maintaining the integrity of judicial work and safeguarding individual rights.

The process of achieving justice in drug-related cases relies on several factors, including:

Fair trial and the rights of the accused: Trials must be conducted in accordance with applicable laws while respecting the rights of defendants, including their right to defense, legal counsel, awareness of the charges against them, and the opportunity to present evidence.

Comprehensive investigation: Judicial authorities are required to conduct thorough and accurate investigations to collect evidence and present it before the court. This includes verifying the sources of drugs, tracking distribution networks, and identifying those involved.

Imposition of fair penalties: Penalties imposed on individuals convicted of drug crimes must be proportionate to the seriousness of the offense and the circumstances of the accused. This includes ensuring deterrent sanctions to prevent the recurrence of similar crimes[1].

Protection of victims' rights: The judicial process must ensure the protection of the rights of those affected by drug crimes, whether directly or indirectly impacted by their consequences.

Since achieving justice is fundamental in drug-related cases, efforts to enforce the law and deliver justice must be grounded in principles of integrity, transparency, and respect for human rights. By ensuring the application of these principles, a strong and reliable judicial system can be established, capable of delivering justice and protecting society from the consequences of drug crimes.

Furthermore, Algerian courts play a key role in ensuring the effective application of national legislation related to drug offenses. This involves the consistent interpretation and enforcement of legal provisions in a way that strengthens deterrence and ensures that offenders are held accountable in accordance with the law.

In addition, judicial cooperation between different criminal justice institutions, such as police services, public prosecutors, and investigative judges, is essential in enhancing the efficiency of drug crime prosecutions. This coordinated approach contributes to faster proceedings, improved evidence handling, and more accurate judicial outcomes.

Moreover, continuous judicial training and specialization in drug-related cases are necessary to improve the performance of judges and legal practitioners. By developing expertise in organized and drug-related crime patterns, the judiciary can respond more effectively to the increasing complexity of such offenses and ensure higher standards of justice delivery.

Firstly: Application of Relevant Algerian Laws

The application of Algerian laws related to combating drug crimes is essential to ensuring the effectiveness of judicial action in this field. Algerian legislation on drug-related offenses encompasses a set of rules and legal provisions covering various aspects of this phenomenon, including classification, definitions, and appropriate sanctions.

[1] -Bouziane, Khadija. "The Role of the Judiciary in Combating Organized Crime in Algeria." Journal of Law and Political Sciences, Issue 3, 2018, p. 222.

The main aspects of applying these laws include:

Classification of offenses and definitions: Algerian law defines the different types of drug crimes and clarifies their classifications, thereby facilitating investigation and prosecution procedures.

Penalties and alternative sanctions: Algerian law establishes strict penalties for those involved in drug crimes, including imprisonment and financial fines. It also provides for alternative measures such as community service or treatment programs for certain offenders.

Investigation and evidence: Algerian laws regulate procedures for investigation and evidence collection in drug-related cases, including searches of premises and individuals, as well as the questioning of suspects.

International cooperation: Algerian legislation encourages international cooperation in combating drug crimes, including the exchange of information, joint investigations, and extradition procedures.[2]

The effective application of these laws requires strong coordination between the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, and other legal institutions, while maintaining respect for the rights of the accused and ensuring judicial fairness. Through strict and effective enforcement, drug crimes can be addressed, justice achieved, and society protected.

The efforts to limit drug trafficking and consumption constitute a central objective of the Algerian judicial and legal system. These efforts aim to reduce the spread of drugs within society by strengthening legal control mechanisms and ensuring strict enforcement of relevant legislation.

One of the primary strategies in this regard is the reinforcement of criminal penalties for individuals involved in drug trafficking and distribution. By imposing severe and deterrent sanctions, the legal system seeks to discourage participation in such illicit activities and disrupt trafficking networks.

In addition, preventive measures play an essential role in reducing drug consumption. These measures include public awareness campaigns, educational programs, and community initiatives designed to inform individuals, especially youth, about the dangers of drug use and its negative consequences on health and society.

The judiciary also contributes indirectly to limiting drug consumption by ensuring swift and effective prosecution of offenders. The efficiency of court procedures helps reinforce the message that drug-related offenses are treated with seriousness and zero tolerance under the law.

Moreover, coordination between judicial institutions and security services is crucial in combating drug trafficking. Joint efforts facilitate better intelligence sharing, improved surveillance, and more effective dismantling of criminal networks involved in the drug trade.

Finally, international cooperation strengthens national efforts by enabling Algeria to work with other countries in tracking cross-border trafficking operations. This cooperation enhances the capacity to address drug crimes that extend beyond national borders and ensures a more comprehensive approach to combating this global issue.

[2] - Salmi, Ali. *"Legal Challenges in Combating Drug Crimes in Algeria."* Journal of Legal and Political Sciences, Issue 6, 2019, pp. 21–22.

Secondly: Limiting Drug Trafficking and Consumption in the Country

Reducing drug trafficking and consumption represents one of the major challenges facing Algeria and requires coordinated and comprehensive efforts by public authorities and society as a whole. In this context, Algerian authorities adopt several measures to combat this phenomenon, including:

Strengthening control and inspection: The government intensifies monitoring and inspection at ports, borders, and land and air entry points to prevent drug smuggling and combat trafficking.

Enhancing international cooperation: Algeria continues to strengthen cooperation with other countries in combating drug crimes through the exchange of information and expertise, as well as coordinated efforts to dismantle international trafficking networks.

Promoting public awareness: Authorities implement awareness and educational campaigns to inform the public about the dangers of drugs and their harmful effects on individuals and society, with the aim of reducing demand.

Strengthening preventive and treatment programs: Relevant institutions work to enhance preventive and therapeutic programs for drug users and addicts, including psychological, social, and medical support.

Imposing stricter penalties: Strict sanctions are applied to individuals involved in drug crimes, whether traffickers or users, in order to achieve deterrence and reduce recidivism.

In addition, combating drug trafficking and consumption requires coordinated efforts across multiple sectors, including law enforcement, the judiciary, and health, educational, and social institutions, to ensure the effectiveness of measures taken and to achieve the desired outcomes in protecting society.[3]

Section Two: Legal Procedures for Combating Drug Crimes

Legal procedures for combating drug-related crimes constitute a fundamental pillar in the criminal justice system, as they ensure that law enforcement actions are carried out within a legal framework that guarantees both the effectiveness of prosecution and the protection of individual rights. These procedures are designed to regulate all stages of criminal processing, from the initial arrest of suspects to the final judicial investigation, ensuring that evidence is lawfully obtained and that due process is respected.

First: Arrest of Suspects and Conducting Necessary Investigations

Within the framework of combating drug crimes, Algerian legal authorities undertake several measures to arrest suspects and conduct the necessary investigations. These procedures aim to collect evidence, apprehend those involved in drug-related offenses, and bring them to justice.

Intelligence gathering and information collection: The process begins with gathering information from various sources, including intelligence services and field data, to identify suspects and distribution networks.

Arrest of suspects: Based on collected information, legal authorities issue arrest warrants against suspects involved in drug crimes, which are executed by police or competent security agencies.

[3] - Bouabdallah, Abdelrazak. "Organized Crime and the Role of the Algerian Court in Combating It." Journal of Legal and Political Studies, Issue 10, 2020, p. 325.

Preliminary investigations: Once suspects are arrested, preliminary investigations are conducted to determine their level of involvement, including collecting evidence and interrogating them.

Search of premises and property: Authorities conduct searches of locations and property associated with suspects, such as homes, vehicles, and warehouses, to uncover drugs or related evidence.

Referral for judicial investigation: Based on the results of preliminary investigations, suspects are referred to the public prosecutor to initiate formal judicial proceedings.

Through these procedures, Algerian authorities aim to effectively combat drug trafficking, hold offenders accountable, and ensure justice is served.[4]

The arrest of suspects in drug-related crimes represents the initial and most critical stage in criminal proceedings. It must be carried out in strict compliance with legal provisions to ensure the protection of individual rights while allowing law enforcement authorities to effectively address criminal activity. Any arrest must be based on reasonable grounds or legal authorization to avoid arbitrary detention.

Following arrest, judicial and investigative authorities are responsible for conducting thorough investigations to establish the facts of the case. This includes gathering physical and digital evidence, hearing witness testimonies, and identifying the structure of drug trafficking networks. The accuracy and reliability of this stage are essential for building a strong legal case before the court.

Furthermore, respect for procedural safeguards during investigations is crucial to ensure fairness and legality. This includes informing the suspect of their rights, guaranteeing access to legal counsel, and ensuring that interrogation methods comply with legal and ethical standards. Such safeguards help maintain the integrity of the judicial process and prevent violations that could undermine the legitimacy of the proceedings.

Second: Bringing the Accused Before the Court for Trial

Following preliminary investigations and the arrest of suspects in drug-related cases, the accused are brought before the court for trial, where charges are presented based on the collected evidence. This stage is crucial in the justice process, as it ensures that defendants are held accountable through fair legal proceedings in accordance with applicable laws[5].

Preparation of the case file: The public prosecutor prepares the case based on investigation results and available evidence, formulating the appropriate legal charges.

Scheduling of hearings: Court sessions are scheduled to present the accused before the judiciary, ensuring they are informed of their rights and the charges against them.

Trial hearings: Hearings are conducted in the presence of the judge, prosecutor, defense lawyers, and the accused, during which evidence and testimonies are examined and arguments are presented by both parties.

Pronouncement of judgment: After reviewing the evidence and arguments, the judge issues a final decision based on legal provisions and the facts established, determining the appropriate penalty if guilt is proven.

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[4] - Taher, Nabil. *"Legal Mechanisms for Combating Organized Crime in Algeria: Prospects for Development."* International Review of Criminology and Technical Police 70, no. 4 (2017): 409–422.

[5] - Hamza, Youssef. "Analysis of the Role of Algerian Courts in Combating Drug Crimes." Journal of Legal and Social Sciences, Issue 8, 2017. P.45.

Right of appeal: Convicted individuals have the right to challenge the judgment before a higher court if they are dissatisfied with the decision.

Presenting the accused before the court is a fundamental stage in ensuring justice, safeguarding the rights of defendants, and upholding the rule of law through fair and transparent procedures.[6]

Bringing the accused before the court for trial constitutes a fundamental stage in the criminal justice process, as it ensures that individuals suspected of drug-related crimes are formally prosecuted in accordance with the law. This step reflects the principle of legality and guarantees that no person is judged outside the framework of judicial authority.

At this stage, the public prosecution plays a central role in presenting the case before the competent court, based on the evidence collected during the investigation phase. The prosecutor is responsible for formulating charges, submitting supporting materials, and ensuring that the proceedings reflect the seriousness of drug-related offenses.

The trial process must also respect the rights of the accused, including the right to a fair hearing, the presumption of innocence, and the opportunity to present a defense. These guarantees are essential to maintaining the integrity of judicial proceedings and ensuring that justice is both fair and transparent.

In addition, the presence of defense counsel is a key element in safeguarding the rights of the accused. The lawyer's role is to challenge evidence, present arguments, and ensure that the accused receives adequate legal protection throughout the trial process.

Finally, judicial hearings in drug-related cases must be conducted in an orderly and transparent manner, allowing the court to carefully evaluate all evidence and testimonies. This ensures that the final judgment is based on objective legal assessment rather than assumptions or external influence.

Thirdly: Issuance and Effective Enforcement of Judicial Decisions

Once judicial decisions are issued in drug-related cases, their effective enforcement is essential to ensuring justice and preventing recidivism. The enforcement process involves several key steps:

Execution of imposed penalties: This includes enforcing sentences handed down by the court, whether imprisonment, fines, or alternative sanctions such as community service, through the competent institutions.[7]

Monitoring procedural legality: It is important to ensure that all procedures, including preliminary investigations and evidence collection, comply with legal standards[8].

Ensuring fairness and impartiality: Justice must be applied with integrity and without discrimination, regardless of the status or influence of the accused.

[6]- Boukellal, Mourad. *"International Cooperation in Combating Drug Trafficking in Algeria."* International Review of Criminal Law 87, no. 1 (2016): 157–170.

[7] - Guemida, Rachid. *"Combating Transnational Organized Crime in Algeria: Challenges and Perspectives."* Review of Criminal Law and Criminology 97, no. 4 (2017): 353–371.

[8] - Bouamrani, Suleiman. "Legal and Procedural Challenges in Combating Drug Crimes under Algerian Law." Journal of Legal and Political Sciences, Issue 4, 2016. P.136.

Ensuring compliance with judicial decisions: Authorities must guarantee that court rulings are implemented promptly and effectively in accordance with the law.[9]

Institutional cooperation: The enforcement of judicial decisions requires effective coordination between judicial authorities, law enforcement agencies, and other institutions such as prisons and rehabilitation centers.

By ensuring the effective enforcement of judicial decisions, justice can be achieved, repeat offenses can be reduced, and public confidence in the legal and judicial system can be strengthened.[10]

The issuance of judicial decisions in drug-related cases represents the final stage of the criminal justice process, where courts deliver rulings based on the evaluation of evidence and applicable legal provisions. At this stage, judges are required to ensure that their decisions are grounded in law, supported by facts, and consistent with the principles of justice and fairness.

Judicial rulings in drug crime cases must also reflect the seriousness of the offense and its impact on society. Accordingly, courts are expected to impose proportionate sanctions that serve both punitive and preventive purposes, aiming to deter offenders and discourage the spread of drug-related activities within the community.

However, the effectiveness of judicial decisions does not depend solely on their issuance but also on their proper enforcement. The execution of sentences, whether custodial or financial, is essential to ensure the credibility of the judicial system and to confirm that legal rulings are not merely theoretical but have real practical effect.

Moreover, effective enforcement requires coordination between judicial authorities and correctional institutions to guarantee that sentences are implemented in accordance with legal standards. This includes monitoring compliance, ensuring humane treatment of convicted persons, and maintaining transparency throughout the execution process, thereby reinforcing public trust in the justice system.

Conclusion:

Strengthening International Cooperation: Algeria should enhance international cooperation in combating drug-related crimes through the exchange of information and expertise with other countries, as well as participation in regional and international programs and initiatives related to this issue.

Developing Technical Capacities: It is necessary to strengthen the technical capabilities and technological modernization of Algerian courts to facilitate investigation procedures, improve evidence documentation, and ensure more efficient information exchange.

Enhancing Awareness and Education: The Algerian government should intensify awareness and educational campaigns on the dangers of drugs and their negative impact on individuals and society, targeting especially youth and the general public.

Improving the Enforcement of Judicial Decisions: Mechanisms for implementing court rulings should be improved to ensure effective and timely enforcement, while also guaranteeing the rights of defendants and convicted persons.

[9] - Guemida, Rachid. *"Combating Transnational Organized Crime in Algeria: Challenges and Perspectives."* Review of Criminal Law and Criminology 97, no. 4 (2017): 353–371.

[10] - Bouchama, Nassima. *"Transnational Organized Crime and Drugs: The Contribution of the Algerian Judiciary."* International Review of Criminology and Technical Police 67, no. 4 (2014): 487–500.

Expected Results:

Reduction in Crime Rates: Through stricter control and effective law enforcement, Algerian courts are expected to contribute to reducing drug-related crime rates and strengthening national security and stability.

Increased Confidence in the Judicial System: By ensuring fairness and integrity in trial procedures and the enforcement of judgments, the role of Algerian courts is expected to increase citizens' trust in the judicial system.

Strengthening International Cooperation: Enhanced cooperation with other countries in combating drug crimes can lead to more effective and comprehensive outcomes in this field.

Improvement of Public Security: By reducing drug-related crimes, public safety and social stability can be strengthened, contributing to an overall improvement in quality of life.