

Economic and Social Council

The challenges to society and good governance by illegal organizations (e.g. Mafia, pirates, terrorists)



Description

Illegal organizations pose a major problem to governments, society and economy. With the fear caused by terrorists, lost revenues caused by pirates and corruption and blackmail caused by mafia, modern societies face big challenges. It is our duty during MUNOL to discuss the problem, analyze the essence and come up with good solutions.

Illegal (thus criminal) organizations are highly centralized enterprises run by criminals, mostly intended to generate money. Usually we refer to these groups with the word mafia. When the criminal acts take place at sea, we call it piracy and when the primary motive of the organization is political rather than a monetary, we speak of terrorism.

Definitions

1) Mafia

The first criminal society that was referred to as mafia was the Sicilian group that has emerged in the late 19th century, also known as “Cosa Nostra”. Nowadays ‘mafia’ it is more commonly used to refer to criminal groups that in some way share the same organizational structure of code of conduct. Each “family”, “clan” or “*cosca*”, claims sovereignty over a territory in which it operates its rackets – usually a town or village or a part of a larger city.

Offshoots of the Mafia emerged in the United States, Canada, and in Australia during the late 19th century following waves of Italian emigration. The groups in other countries like Russia (Russian Mafia) and Japan (Yakuza) are also compared to the original Sicilian group, as they share the same practices.

2) Piracy

To stick to the official definition used by the UN, I hereby quote an article of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, written in 1982:

“Article 101) Definition of piracy

Piracy consists of any of the following acts:

(a) any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft, and directed:

(i) on the high seas, against another ship or aircraft, or against persons or property on board such ship or aircraft;

(ii) against a ship, aircraft, persons or property in a place outside the jurisdiction of any State;

(b) any act of voluntary participation in the operation of a ship or of an aircraft with knowledge of facts making it a pirate ship or aircraft;

(c) any act of inciting or of intentionally facilitating an act described in subparagraph (a) or (b).”¹

3) Terrorism

Although defining the term terrorism is important since it is the first step towards a solution for the threat that terrorist currently cause, it is easier said than done. This dilemma occurs because of the different perspectives on the issue; the statement “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” clearly explains why. Despite of the resolutions and measures United Nations has previously taken, the organization has unfortunately never been able to define the term “terrorism.” There has never been a consensus on the definition of the term; however, the Security Council has most recently adopted the Resolution 1566 on 8 October 2004, which refers to “terrorism” as “criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitute offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism.” Professor Bruce Hoffman, a scholar studying terrorism and insurgency in Georgetown University, has simply described the term “terrorism” with “an act of violence becomes an act of terrorism when it has some political motive.” There are numerous definitions of terrorism; however, each member state of the Economic and Social Council has their own recognition and definition of terrorism within their own governments.

General Information

1) Mafia

The main (illegal) activities of the mafia are the following:

-*Gambling.* Especially in countries where gambling is prohibited by the law, mafia and other underground organizations are maintaining the places for people to gamble, thus earning money in illegal ways.



¹ http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part7.htm

-Drug trafficking. The drug industry is the major business with which the underground organizations develop their budget. The illegal drug market has generated USD 321 billion in 2003, Sicilian Mafia having USD 8 billion of it, according to UN estimations.

-Arms trafficking. Through arms trafficking, Sicilian mafia has made approximately USD 1.5 billion in 2003.

-Loan Sharking. Loan sharking refers to the business of offering unsecured loans with high interest rates, often resulting in blackmail or threatens or violence. This act is mostly done by mafia or similar organizations and is also common in Japan referred to as yamikinyu.

-Street taxes (protection rackets). Street taxes imposed by the underground organizations are another solid industry for these groups. It is an inelastic payment; in order to protect their families and their businesses, society is willing to sacrifice that payment to the mafia. Specifically, Sicilian Mafia has made over €10 billion a year through street taxes. 80% of the businesses run in Sicily pay these taxes to the mafia in the region, ranging from €200 to €5000 a year.

-Monopoly in certain industries. With threats and other measures, mafia and similar organizations manage to monopolize a certain industry they run. Controlling other companies within the industry by blackmailing, threatening and acting violently, they can also control the prices of the products in the market and therefore monopolize the industry, which influences the economy of the country extremely negatively.

2) Piracy

Seaborne piracy against transport vessels remains a significant issue (with estimated worldwide losses of US \$13 to \$16 billion per year). As you can see on the right, attacks particularly occur in the waters between the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, off the Somali coast, and also in the Strait of Malacca and Singapore, which are used by over 50,000 commercial ships a year.



3) Terrorism

The groups originated in the Middle East, Palestinian groups, Shi'ite factions and some Lebanon based groups make up 20% of the international terrorism. This 20% accounts for more than 35 % of the fatalities and terrorist actions in the world by causing the international crises that stem from terrorism. 15% volume of international terrorism reflects guerrilla wars in the third world countries, having acts in countries including Sri Lanka and Peru. Another 15% of international terrorism consists of the ideologically and ethnically motivated organizations in Europe. These organizations within Europe include 'Red Army Faction' in Germany as a communist and anti-imperialist left-wing group, French 'Action Directe' being a libertarian communist revolutionary group banned by the French government, 'Red Brigades' in Italy – a Marxist-Leninist militant group having political goals. The existence of these organizations has drastically declined, however, has not been totally eradicated.

Major Parties Involved

United States of America

Over the last several years, the USA have been working with partner nations on regional strategies to break up terrorist networks, eliminate terrorist safe havens and disrupt the activities supporting terrorists. The USA were the victim of the suicide plane hijackings in September 11, 2001, when the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center were destroyed and the Pentagon badly damaged. Following this, the Bush administration responded to these terrorist acts by announcing the 'War on Terrorism,' with objectives including bringing Osama bin Laden, Al-Qaeda and other terrorist networks to justice in order to protect the citizens of the US and allies. Later, the US troops invaded Iraq because of the suspicion of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism. The governance of the terrorist groups by the US after September 11 war was considered vastly aggressive.

Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda is a terrorist organization founded in late 1980s and early 1990s which still operates today. The leader of the organization Osama bin Laden has imposed the ideology of fundamentalist Islamic movement calling for a global 'jihad'. This terrorist group is responsible for the simultaneous attacks of different targets in the USA in September 11, 2001. The War on Terrorism was initiated by the US and its allies after the severe attacks of Al-Qaeda.

PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party)

Founded in late 1970s, PKK is recognized as a terrorist group internationally by most of UN Member States and organizations, including the USA, NATO and the EU. It is a separatist militant group founded on the ideology of socialism and Kurdish nationalism. The group operates in southeastern Turkey, northeastern Iraq, northeastern Syria and northwestern Iran. The leader Abdullah Ocalan claimed that their goal is to have political and cultural rights for the ethnic Kurdish community in Turkey. Using terrorism and threat of force against civilian and military targets for their political aims, the group is in armed conflict still with Turkey.

Hamas

Since 2007, Hamas is the organization that governs the Gazan part of the Palestinian Territories. It has launched a plethora of suicide bombings in Israel beginning with April 1993. Even though it has ceased the attacks in 2005 but bouncing back in 2006 with less severe attacks, Hamas is recognized as a terrorist organization by the governments of USA, Israel, Japan, Canada, EU and some other UN Member States.

States Sponsoring Terrorism according to US Reports

Cuba

The USA have listed Cuba as a state sponsoring terrorism due to their supposed situation for being a sanctuary for terrorists and US fugitives until 2006. The USA have also claimed that Havana hosts Latin American insurgents in their country, including Colombia's two largest terrorist groups. Cuba further supported the groups ETA, FARC, the ELN during 2008 by providing safe haven, as the USA suggested.

Iran

Iran is also listed as a sponsor of numerous terrorist organizations for having Palestinian-based and Zionist groups along with other Islamic terrorist organizations. Qods Force, a branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), is Iran's primary mechanism in supporting terrorism globally. Iran has provided safe haven, weapons, funding and training to the terrorist groups including Lebanese Hezbollah, Iraqi-based militants, Palestinian rejectionist groups – most notably Hamas – and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. Doing this, the state has violated the unanimously adopted UN Security Council Resolution 1701. Furthermore, the former Supreme Leader Khamenei has referred Israel as a “cancerous tumor” in the region that must be removed. It also provides lower level of support to the terrorist organizations operating in Gulf, Africa, Turkey and Central Asia.

Syria

Syria has provided political and weaponry support to internationally recognized terrorist groups. Hamas, PIJ, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP), PLFP-General Command and many other groups have based their leading offices in Syria. Supporting them publicly, the Syrian government claims that these groups only maintain political and informational activities; on the contrary, some of these groups granted responsibility over the deadly anti-Israeli terrorist attacks. (Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism in USA, 2008)

Somalia

Piracy has been a major concern in Somali waters. Since the beginning of the Somali Civil War in early 1990s, Somali pirates have been active damaging the international shipment in region. International Maritime Organization (IMO) and World Food Programme (WFP) have stated their concerns over the increase in pirate acts. Despite all of the measures taken, the activities of pirates in Somali waters are not reduced.

UN involvement and Sources:

UN Security Council Resolution 1373

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2001/sc7158.doc.htm>

UN Security Council Resolution 1566

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/542/82/PDF/N0454282.pdf?OpenElement>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organized_crime

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mafia#Criminal_enterprises

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piracy>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_organized_crime

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/index.html>

http://www.icc-ccs.org/index.php?option=com_fabrik&view=visualization&controller=visualization.googlemap&Itemid=89