JIED Journal of Illicit Economies and Development

The Show Must Go On: A Brief History of Lebanon's Drug Control Politics

POLICY COMMENTARY

MICHELLE WAZAN

ABSTRACT

This commentary explores the contradictory forces behind Lebanon's implementation of drug control policies: opportunistic responses to international pressures on one hand, and an attempt to extract benefits from the industry on the other. This article argues that this logic results in 'theatrical gestures' by state institutions and mediatized performances of crop eradications and arrests to appease international pressures while continuing to profit from illicit economies.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:
Michelle Wazan
Skoun, Lebanese Addictions Center, LB
michelle.wazan@gmail.com

KEYWORDS:
Lebanon; Drug Control; Illicit Drug Markets; Alternative Crops; Cannabis

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:
Wazan, M. 2023. The Show Must Go On: A Brief History of Lebanon's Drug Control Politics. *Journal of Illicit Economies and Development*, 5(2): pp. 34–41. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31389/jied.207

For most of its recorded history, from the Roman Empire into the Ottoman, under the French Mandate and up to the present day, Lebanon has been engaged in the cultivation, production, and trade of drugs. The Baalbeck-Hermel area, along with some of its surrounding regions, for instance, has been historically famous for the cultivation of cannabis. During the early years of the civil war (1975–1990), Lebanon has seen the establishment of the culture of opium poppies (Makhlouf 1994; Cwerman 1990). And, since the beginning of the war in Syria in 2011, it has become one of the main transit countries for the substance known as *Captagon*, an amphetamine mainly produced in Syria and exported to the rest of the Arab countries, specifically the Gulf (GIATOC 2017; GIATOC 2021). Despite the scarcity of resources and studies on the topic, Lebanon has been recognized as a main player in the international drug trade.

Due to its geographical location and peculiar political structure, Lebanon's became more vulnerable to the production and trafficking of illicit substances. A small country sitting on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea, Lebanon has been marked by a long history of regional political turmoil. Due to its position in the heart of the Middle East, it has been for centuries the theater of military campaigns, the battleground of Empires and the battlefield for competing foreign and regional interests, as well as a hub for drug trafficking. Its political structure, characterized by a fragmented state and divided system, has allowed for the production and trade of controlled substances to flourish. As a result, Lebanon has been ranked for several years among the top cannabis producers in the world (UNODC 2019). And, while it no longer occupies the top ranks in terms of worldwide cannabis production, Lebanon is still one of the main cultivators in the Middle East, estimating between 20,000 to 40,000 hectares of land used for cannabis cultivation (EMCDDA 2022).

Prior to the 1920s, cannabis cultivation remained unbothered, and it was only with the establishment of the French Mandate over Lebanon that drug control policies were 'imported' into its legal system to respond to international pressures and agendas (Shad 2012). The implementation of these drug policies are moved by contradictory forces: opportunistic responses to international pressures on one hand, and an attempt to extract benefits from the industry on the other. This article argues that this logic rules to this day and results in 'theatrical gestures' by state institutions and mediatized performances of crop eradications and arrests to appease international pressures while continuing to profit from illicit economies. However, the policy being 'theatrical' does not mean that it does not have disastrous consequences on the weakest links in the supply and demand chain. If we take arrests as an example, around 15% of annual arrests have targeted low or mid-level links of the supply chains, while the majority of arrests (around 77%) have targeted those who consume the products of the illicit market (Mansour 2018).

CORRUPTION, POLITICAL INTERESTS, AND THE FAILURE TO CONTROL THE SUPPLY OF DRUGS

The failure to enact sound drug policies and to effectively control the supply of drugs is the result of a network of political interests benefiting from the illicit drug trade. Going back as early as the beginning of the 20th century, internationally imposed supply reduction measures have faced political obstacles from a ruling elite and its administration, which had vested interests in the sustainability of the drug trade.

In 1879, Egypt, one of the largest consumers of hashish, banned cannabis cultivation. This decision was reportedly in response to growing fears about the harms of cannabis and European pressure (El Hadka 1965). This resolution shifted supplies to Greece and other neighboring countries, such as Lebanon and Syria. Faced with increased smuggling across its borders, Egypt brought the issue to the attention of the League of Nations in 1925 (El Hadka 1965). As a result, the first ban on hashish production was enacted in 1926 by the French Mandate authorities in Lebanon and Syria. However, the policy remained nominal despite the ban on production, as the French authorities had to rely on local authorities for its implementation due their minimal territorial presence (Shad 2012). Cannabis production soared in the following years with an estimated 60 tons of cannabis being produced in 1928 Lebanon, 90% of which is said to have been supplying the Egyptian market (El Hadka 1965). The fate of this first ban of a controlled substance set the tone for the coming attempts to deal with drug cultivation and production in Lebanon.

According to Felbab-Brown (2021), illicit economies require political sponsorship and corruption to survive. This rule can be applied to the case of Lebanon's drug supply chain. For instance, large landowners on whose properties cannabis was cultivated often sought political positions that would guarantee their immunity and provide them with the political power to protect their interests (Shad 2012). In addition to the landowners, other officials were involved in different aspects of the supply chain, either overlooking or facilitating transportation and smuggling of drugs (Shad 2012). Illicit economies create their own network of political support, often reaching the highest ranks in the political decision-making hierarchy.[1]

The involvement of Lebanese statesmen in hashish production was highlighted throughout the years by a number of missions and reports. Back in 1939, the French Sûreté Générale listed hashish producers in Lebanon who included 'a number of members of Parliament, a minister of finance, a former minister of agriculture, and local notables and priests' (Shad 2012: 34). In 1950, Charles Siragusa (a Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) operative in Lebanon) identified Sabri Hamade (the Speaker of Parliament) as 'the biggest marijuana farmer and biggest landowner in the Beqaa' (Marshall 2012: 15). Siragusa also identified Hamade's ally Ahmad el Asad, the Minister of Public Works and MP, as also involved in the drug trade. Siragusa connected both men with the President of Lebanon, Bechara el Khoury, and the Prime Minister, Riad el Solh. In September 1970, after Greek authorities seized a plane transporting more than 1,000 kg of hashish, two MPs were accused publicly by the Minister of Interior: Nayef al Masri and Sabri Hamade, who was still occupying the position of Speaker of Parliament (New York Times 1970). Neither men were prosecuted.

The imbrication of the political system and the drug trade deepened with the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War and the unravelling of the central state. As the country devolved into chaos, warring militias took control of different areas of the country, fighting over strategic military positions and over strategic trafficking positions and routes (Traboulsi 2007). Militias conducted drugs-for-arms trade to sustain their war efforts, which allowed them to arm themselves and pay their combatants (Marshal 2012). Most militia leaders and their descendants remain in power to this day, along with the connection to the illicit economies that brought them to power. The Organized Crime Index of 2021 confirms that political figures and parties are still involved in the drug trade: 'State-embedded actors and security personnel provide operational support and political cover for cannabis, prostitution, currency forgery and smuggling from Syria' (GIATOC 2021:4). Today, a number of reports have linked Hezbollah–a Lebanese paramilitary party with representation in the executive and legislative branches of government–to the growing Captagon trade in the region (GIATOC 2022).

The hashish interests are so widespread at all levels of government that it's impossible to target higher echelons of the trade. Even when law enforcement managed to arrest individuals in *flagrante delicto*, the Lebanese judiciary failed to prosecute them. As Marshall (2012) demonstrates several times in his book, the arrest of high-level traffickers usually does not lead to prosecution. And when it does, the well-oiled corruption machine present in the Lebanese state ultimately hinders the judicial process through the dismissal of cases or the recusal of judges as a result of political influence or bribery (Picard 2005).

The reach of the illicit drug industry is not limited to the upper echelons of the state. The importance and survival of the drug trade in Lebanon was not only made possible by the involvement of rich landowners, but also through the bribery and buy-in of most levels of power. Even back in 1949, 'experts in the drug traffic assert[ed] that hashish can be grown in Lebanon only through open corruption of responsible officials' (New York Times 1949). For smugglers' enterprises to succeed, collusion with officials within key institutions such as the Customs or anti-narcotics agents was necessary. This remains true today. In 2020, the Customs Chief was issued an arrest warrant for illegally lifting a travel ban imposed on a Captagon smuggling Saudi prince before the latter had paid the multi-million fine imposed on him as part of his sentence (Azhari 2020). In 2022, the former Head of the Lebanese Drug Crimes Bureau was arrested after it emerged that a significant quantity of seized cocaine had vanished from evidence during his tenure (Libnanews 2022).

1 Due to the limited sources studying the history of the drug trade in Lebanon, the historical aspect of this paper will mostly focus on cannabis.

Another important political motive behind Lebanon's significant role in the international traffic of drugs was the unwillingness of authorities to clash with local populations, whose livelihood depends on the drug trade, are heavily armed, and enjoy political backing (Marshall 2012; Shad 2012). Due to the high revenues generated by the cultivation, production, and sale of drugs, most of those involved in the drug trade are ready to defend themselves against the state, which might want to curb and control their source of income (Blanford 2012). Clashes between law enforcement, the army tasked with crop eradication, or the arrest of traffickers and dealers in the Beqaa often end in bloodshed (Dagher 2023; Topalian 2022; Arab News 2018).

In view of the general political reluctance to address this issue, mediatized cases of arrests are often the result of international pressures and pragmatic response to them (what this article described as a 'theatrical' implementation). For instance, the recent mediatized arrests of high-ranking individuals involved in the Captagon trade–such as a Saudi Prince arrested in 2015 while attempting to smuggle two tons of Captagon pills out of Lebanon (France 24 2015) and the arrest of Hassan Duqqo, dubbed the 'King of Captagon', in 2021 (Fredericks 2022)–ended with the judiciary handing down light sentences of respectively five and seven years in prison (Azhari 2020; Kareem 2023). The prison sentence for drug trafficking in Lebanon is of a lifetime in prison as provided for by Lebanese Law 673/1998 on Drugs. It is noteworthy that these two high-profile cases ended with the imposition of the minimum sentences for crimes, denoting the performative nature of their arrest and prosecution.

ECONOMIC INTERESTS BEHIND ILLICIT ECONOMIES

Political factors are not the only motives for the reluctance of the state to curb the drug trade. National economic interests have historically been a factor in the weakening of supply reduction measures as well. A Lebanese official estimated that from 1920 to the mid-1940s, 50% of the Lebanese economy depended on the production of hashish (TGIATOC 2017). In fact, 'Lebanese farmers began growing cannabis in the 1920s, to avoid economic ruin after the local silk industry collapsed in the face of competition from Japanese silk and synthetic rayon' (Evans 1991).

Hashish cultivation and trade profited the whole supply chain–from rich landowners, to smugglers, to the poorest farmers–at varying levels of revenue. In 1963, the United Press International reported that 'some 2,500 families are estimated to depend in one way or another on illegal cultivation, processing, or smuggling of hashish.' For his part, Lebanese agronomist Hassane Makhlouf (1994) estimated that 'more than a million Lebanese profit directly or indirectly from drug cultivation or trafficking.'

The incomes of the illicit economy were and continue to be significant at the national level. A 1960 study conducted by French consultants hired by the Lebanese government (and subsequently suppressed) concluded that Lebanon's economy relied on 'hashish smuggling and prostitution [as] two major sources of national income' (Marshall 2012: 22). In 1970, the New York Times commented that hashish was also important in terms of foreign exchange as it allowed US dollars to enter the market and 'help the small trading nation balance its books' (New York Times 1970).

Although imprecise, different estimates of the drug trade in Lebanon between the 1970s and until 1990 put annual proceeds anywhere between 500 million USD and 6 billion USD, underscoring the primordial importance of the drug trade to the inhabitants of the impoverished and marginalized Bekaa region of Lebanon. According to the different imprecise estimates of the civil war period, the drug trade contributed to anywhere between 20 and 50 percent of the country's Gross National Product (Marshall 2012: 180,181). Regardless of the accuracy of these numbers, these estimates bear testament to the weight of drug trafficking in Lebanon's economy. In 2018, the consulting firm *McKinsey* was hired by the Lebanese Government to come up with an economic plan for the country. One of the recommendations was the legalization of the cultivation and export of cannabis for medical and industrial purposes, as it would contribute to bringing in over one billion USD a year (McKinsey 2018).

In light of the income generated by hashish cultivation, for Lebanon to effectively curb the drug trade, it would have to provide viable alternatives to the illicit crops and to compensate farmers for their loss of income by providing them with an alternative that is as lucrative as cannabis or

poppies. In the 1960s, the government introduced its first alternative crop program aimed at substituting cannabis with sunflowers (Darwich 2004), but the short-lived plan did not succeed in curbing the hashish trade. In 1971, the program was reportedly failing 'because sunflowers cost more to raise than hemp plants and sold for much less' (Marshall 2012: 24). The beginning of the civil war in 1975 effectively ended the program.

When the civil war ended, and in an attempt to regain its authority and foster the economic recovery of the country, the Lebanese state requested US funds to revive the alternative crops program (Kaslow 1990). However, the funds never materialized. The authorities proceeded to destroy crops without an alternative program leaving scores of farmers without income (Muir 1992). The eradication campaigns, however, did not reach all plantations, and the cultivation of hashish remained (Blanford 2012; Muir 1992). In 2001, the Lebanese minister of Agriculture blamed the lack of foreign aid for the return of the cultivation of cannabis (AlBawaba, 2001).

Likewise, subsequent eradication campaigns failed due to the financial appeal of Hashish for farmers. The Mayor of Yammouneh (one of the main cannabis growing areas) commented that '[here] we grow either apples or hashish. That's all that will grow here because there's not enough water to irrigate other crops', noting that 'a kilogram of apples is worth 30 cents, while a kilogram of processed cannabis resin is worth $1,700' (Blanford 2012: 2–3). The inability of the state to properly invest in the substitution of illegal crops thus becomes self-evident.

If eradication program and crop substitution schemes failed in the past, the present financial crisis makes any similar policy highly unlikely. Since 2019, Lebanon has faced financial turmoil, including the collapse of state institutions and finances. The difficult economic context has led to the expansion of the illicit drug market (EMCDDA 2022). Following the crisis, a Voice of America report showed that in 2021, amidst the protracted economic crisis in Lebanon, more farmers are turning to cannabis cultivation to make a living (Russel 2021). In 2022, a local newspaper reported that more and more cannabis farmers are turning to the manufacture and trade of Captagon given its higher profitability (Sewell 2022). To illustrate the size of the emerging Captagon market, according to an ISF source, the number of pills seized between 2013 and 2016 (making up 10% of the production) could 'represent a market potentially worth 14 billion USD' (GIATOC 2017).

PUTTING ON A SHOW

The motivations behind the state's unwillingness and inability to curb the drug trade translated into theatrical campaigns against illicit drugs with publicized crop eradication and arrests, more often than not targeting the weakest links in the supply and demand chains. This show was primarily aimed to respond to the pressures of the international community. Local elites were also aware that such pressures would never materialize into real sanctions, as the international community was also committed to the stability of the country due to geopolitical considerations.

In 1951, succumbing to Egyptian and US pressure, Lebanon proceeded to conduct one of its first eradication campaigns by sending 'armored cars […] to protect work gangs destroying marijuana crops under police surveillance' (Ross 1951). Ironically, it emerged that this campaign was motivated by the need to eliminate drug competitors. Speaker of Parliament Sabri Hamade–one of the largest landowners of cannabis plantations–also sat on the Parliamentary Committee for Hashish Destruction that 'began promoting a crop eradication campaign [in 1950], allegedly to reduce the oversupply of hashish and eliminate some 'bothersome' competitors' (Marshall 2012: 19).

In 1961, the Single Convention on Drugs was signed by Lebanon and ratified in 1965. At the same time, in the 1960s and 1970s, the US consumption of hashish greatly increased (Shad 2012). Around that time, Lebanon began its cannabis crop substitution program. A 1973 article describes the subterfuge and the collaboration between farmers and law enforcement:

> *'[Emile][2] obligingly surrounds his fields with a thin screen of the yellow flowers. But the cash crop is hash. His father grows it. His brothers grow it. His neighbors grow it in a hundred other villages of the Hermel-Baalbek area in northern Lebanon. 'Sometimes*

2 A local farmer, whose name was changed by the journalist.

the police have to make an arrest. Then the village gets together and selects someone to take the blame. The volunteer, usually a seasonal worker without land of his own, is paid up to $1,500 to spend a few months in jail.' (Herald Journal 1973).

The same article quotes the Mayor of Haush Barada, noting that the law criminalizing hashish cultivation was 'applied only to the weak, the small farmers [...] they never destroy the crops of the big landowners. They collect some fines and go away. The Hashish still grows' (Herald Journal 1973). However, the show served its purpose and dazzled its audience. The UN Economic and Social Council congratulated Lebanon on its efforts in 1968 (UN ECOSOC 1968). In a 1970 notice, the US consulate stated that the 'Lebanese police agencies are working assiduously to suppress the traffic in hashish' (Reston 1970).

When seizures or crop eradication were conducted more seriously, the government was getting something in return from the international community. For instance, as a response to international pressure, and under Syrian occupation, the Lebanese government conducted massive eradication campaigns from 1992 to 1999. In 1997, Lebanon and Syria were rewarded by being removed from the 'list of major drug-trafficking countries' (Reuters 1997). The classification of a country as a 'major illicit drug producing country, major drug-transit country, or a major money laundering country' by the United States President precludes it from receiving US financial assistance as per the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (US government 1961).

However, according to the same act, the US President may require that foreign assistance be provided to identified countries engaged in the drug trade for national interest imperatives (US Government 1961). In his 1997 Majors Determination, President Clinton justified providing aid to Lebanon by mentioning eradication efforts undertaken since 1992, which have allegedly led to the near disappearance of cannabis cultivation for hashish production (US Federal Register 1997). The Determination document concludes that

'Lebanese trafficking continues to pose a threat to U.S. citizens and interests. On the other hand, the United States considers the provision of assistance which encourages the continued development of Lebanon's economy and infrastructure as critical to peace and stability in the Middle East, which is also of vital importance to U.S. interests and stability. These factors, combined with Lebanon's sustained positive performance in eradication and other anti-narcotics efforts, outweigh the threat posed by drug trafficking through Lebanon to the United States' (US Federal Register 1997).

The 1997 decision highlighted the importance of the show to sustain the flow of foreign assistance to Lebanon, which a Congressional Research Service Report (Sharp 2007) put at 'an estimated $35 million to $40 million per year [...] since the late 1990s' (Sharp, 2007:1). The fact that Lebanon was also allowed foreign aid due to its classification as a national interest asset rather than a country fully cooperating with US anti-narcotic efforts also explains why the state could continue effecting performative actions rather than actually combating drug traffic and production. From 1987 to 1997, Lebanon was annually issued 'Waivers on Vital National Interest Grounds' (CRS 2021: 22–24).

In 2005, the US International Narcotics Control Strategy Report stated that Lebanon continued eradicating cannabis and poppies, based on the judicial police statistics showing that '273,555 square meters of opium and 641,890 square meters of hashish were eradicated during 2005' (USDoS 2005). Yet, that same report cites that 'a respected agricultural research center reported that in fact there were no eradications of illicit crops because farmers did not plant illicit crops' (USDoS 2005). In other words, the theatrical implementation of drug policy continues to this day. According to the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 'Lebanese officials insist they are dedicated to combating narcotics, but upon closer inspection it seems perhaps the fight is not taken seriously at the highest levels of power.' At the same time, the Lebanese state has no incentive to do so. The confluence of political and economic factors exhibited above, along with the lack of investment by the international community that 'recognizes Lebanon's role in the global narcotics economy but seems in no rush to act' (GIATOC 2017), seems to play in favor of the expansion of the illicit market.

In view of the contradictory interests behind the implementation of drug control measures, state institutions have no interest or ability to truly respond to the challenges posed by the illicit drug markets. What remains within their reach to respond to international pressure are

the weakest links in the chain, whether at the supply or demand level. The results have been particularly disastrous for people who use drugs in Lebanon–with up to 10,000 individuals arrested or charged every year (Mansour 2018). Simultaneously, major kingpins appear on television programs, with their faces uncovered, seemingly unencumbered by the possibility that they may be identified by the state.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

Michelle Wazan orcid.org/0009-0003-0658-2873
Skoun, Lebanese Addictions Center, LB

REFERENCES

Arab News. 2018. *8 killed as Lebanon army swoops on suspected drug baron*, 23 July 2018. Available at https://www.arabnews.com/node/1344126/middle-east [Last Accessed 5 October 2023].

Azhari, T. 2020. *Lebanese custom chief formally arrested in "Captagon Prince" case. Al Jazeera*, 5 November. Available at https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/5/lebanon-customs-chief-formally-arrested-in-captagon-prince-case [Last Accessed 5 October 2023].

Bawaba, A. 2001. *Lebanese minister blames donor nations for return of bekaa pot crop*, 16 June 2001. Available at https://www.albawaba.net/news/lebanese-minister-blames-donor-nations-return-bekaa-pot-crop [Last Accessed 5 October 2023].

Blanford, N. 2012. *Farmers, government battle over hashish in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. Christian Science Monitor,* 7 August 2012. Available at https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/0807/Farmers-government-battle-over-hashish-in-Lebanon-s-Bekaa-Valley [Last Accessed 5 October 2023].

Congressional Research Service. 2021. *The US "Majors List" of illicit drug-producing and drug-transit countries*. Washington, USA: Congressional Research Services. Available at https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2021-02-25_R46695_3f0e06048b2d8b5716e0a220f41b881241ecb74a.pdf [Last accessed 27 January 2023].

Cwerman, R. 1990. *Lebanon: Valley of drugs. The Washington Post*, 18 November 1990. Available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1990/11/18/lebanons-valley-of-drugs/9cca8a22-5a60-4529-9d5c-cfedf083af4f/ [Last Accessed 5 October 2023].

Dagher, L. 2023. *Three soldiers killed during raid on drug traffickers. L'Orient le Jour*, 16 February. Available at https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1328513/three-soldiers-and-three-suspects-killed-in-bekaa.html [Last Accessed 5 October, 2023].

Darwich, S. 2004. Enjeux de Reconversion Rurale dans la Béqaa (Liban). Politiques Publiques et Cultures Illicites. In Michel Picouet, et al. (eds.), *Environnement et Sociétés Rurales en Mutation: Approches Alternatives* (pp.323–340). IRD Éditions. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/books.irdeditions.1144

El Hadka, A. 1965. Forty years of the campaign against narcotic drugs in the United Arab Republic. *Bulletin on Narcotics.* Vienna, Austria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. 2022. *Overview of drug markets in the European Neighbourhood Policy-South countries*: Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Evans, B. 1991. Evolution of a Drug Economy: The case of Lebanon. Thesis (MA), University of Texas, Austin.

Felbab-Brown, V. 2021. *The nexus between the illicit narcotics trade and corruption. Written statement before the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control on November 17, 2021*. Available at https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-nexus-between-the-illicit-narcotics-trade-and-corruption/ [Last accessed 27 January 2023].

France 24. 2015. Saudi Prince Caught 'With Two Tons of Drugs' at Lebanese Airport, 26 October 2015. Available at https://www.france24.com/en/20151026-saudi-prince-caught-with-two-tons-drugs-beirut-airport [Last accessed 5 October 2023].

Fredericks, L. 2022. Dethroning Lebanon's King of Captagon. *The Washington Institute for Near East. Policy Analysis/Policy Watch 3610*. Available at https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/dethroning-lebanons-king-captagon.

Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. 2017. *Captured by Captagon? Lebanon's evolving illicit drug economy*. Geneva, Switzerland: TGIATOC.

Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. 2021. *Global Organized Crime Index: Lebanon Profile*. Geneva, Switzerland: TGIATOC.

Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. 2022. *Lebanon's Role in Syria's Captagon Trade*. Geneva, Switzerland: TGIATOC.

Herald Journal. 1973. Hashish Growers Prosper in Lebanon. *Herald Journal*, 11 March, p.6.

Kareem, C. 2023. Hassan Daqqou: From Selling Watches to Becoming Lebanon's "King of Captagon. *Daraj*, 9 August. Available at https://daraj.media/en/110707/ [Last accessed 5 October 2023].

Kaslow, A. 1990. New Lebanese plan would fight hashish in the Bekaa valley. *Christian Science Monitor,* 7 March.

Libnan News. 2022. L'ancien responsable de la lutte contre la drogue accusé de trafic de substances illicites mais inscrit sur la liste des promotions par le général Othman. *Libnan News*, 8 February. Available at https://libnanews.com/en/lancien-responsable-de-la-lutte-contre-la-drogue-accuse-de-trafic-de-substances-illicites-mais-inscrit-sur-la-liste-des-promotions-par-le-general-othman/ [Last accessed 27 January 2023].

Makhlouf, H. 1994. *Culture et Trafic de Drogue au Liban*. Paris: Edition L'Harmattan.

Mansour, H. 2018. Statistics and Indicators of the Central Drug Crimes Bureau (Unpublished). Beirut, Lebanon.

Marshall, J. 2012. *The Lebanese Connection: Corruption, Civil war, and the International Drug Traffic*. California: Stanford University Press.

McKinsey. 2018. *Lebanon Economic Vision and How to Achieve it. Lebanon*. Available at https://www.economy.gov.lb/media/11893/20181022-1228full-report-en.pdf [Last Accessed 5 October, 2023].

Muir, J. 1992. Syrians, Lebanese 'forbid' drugs in the Bekaa Valley. *Christian Science Monitor,* 7 August.

Picard, E. 2005. Trafficking, Rents, and Diaspora in the Lebanese War. In: Arnson, CJ and Zartman, W (eds.), *Rethinking the economics of war: the intersection of need, creed, and greed* (pp. 27–65). Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Reston, J. 1970. Beirut: The dope traffic in the Middle East. *The New York Times,* 18 February.

Reuters. 1997. World news briefs; Syria and Lebanon off U.S. drug list. *The New York Times*, 11 November. Available at https://www.nytimes.com/1997/11/11/world/world-news-briefs-syria-and-lebanon-off-us-drug-list.html [Last Accessed 5 October 2023].

Ross, A. 1951. Lebanon battles narcotic traffic; Steps taken to destroy crops of marijuana after appeal by Egypt for action. *New York Times*, 2 July, p. 5.

Russel, J. 2021. Lebanon's farmers turn to growing cannabis as economy sinks. *Voice of America,*16 June. Available at https://www.voanews.com/a/episode_lebanons-farmers-turn-growing-cannabis-economy-sinks-4720356/6117216.html [Last accessed 27 January 2023].

Sewell, A. 2022. No longer riding the hashish high, Lebanon's cannabis producers move to Captagon. *L'Orient le Jour,* 15 September.

Shad, A. 2012. Drug trafficking networks in Lebanon: Their history and formation, 1920–1975. Unpublished Thesis (MA), American University of Beirut.

Sharp, J. 2007. US Foreign Aid to Lebanon: Issues for Congress. Washington: Congressional Research Service. Available at https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL33933.html [Last accessed 27 January 2023].

The New York Times. 1949. Arab League told to act on hashish; Egyptians pay $40,000,000 Each Year for Illegal Drug, Cairo Official Says. *New York Times,* 29 May.

The New York Times. 1970. Lebanon orders inquiry into production of hashish after political scandal. *New York Times,* 19 September, p.18.

Topalian, N. 2022. Lebanese army pursues Baalbek drug barons in ongoing raids. *Al Mashreq,* 13 June.

Traboulsi, F. 2007. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. London: Pluto Press.

UN ECOSOC. 1968. Replacement of cannabis cultivation in Lebanon E/RES/1968/1292(XLIV) 1520th Plenary Meeting 23 May 1968.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes. 2019. World Drug Report Booklet 5, p.16.

United States Department of State. 2005. *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*. Available at https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2005/index.htm.

United States Federal Register. 1997. Presidential Determination No. 97–18 of February 28, 1997 Certification for Major Narcotics Producing and Transit Countries. Vol. 62, No. 48, 12 March.

United States Government. 1961. *Foreign Assistance Act of 1961*, FAA.

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:
Wazan, M. 2023. The Show Must Go On: A Brief History of Lebanon's Drug Control Politics. *Journal of Illicit Economies and Development*, 5(2): pp. 34–41. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31389/jied.207

Submitted: 30 June 2023
Accepted: 12 October 2023
Published: 07 December 2023

COPYRIGHT:
© 2023 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

Journal of Illicit Economies and Development is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by LSE Press.