

## Illegality of Hashish Usage in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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### Abstract

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is one of the Islamic countries that forbid narcotics as well as any harmful substances. KSA does impose harsh punishment to anyone involved with narcotics, whether they are dealers, smugglers, or users. Although Saudis know that these substances are forbidden by Saudi and Islamic laws, there are individuals that do use them regardless of the laws. In 2006, Statistics of the United Nations noted that the quantity seized from narcotics in the KSA alone exceeded the amount seized around the world. Based on the Statistics of General Directorate of Narcotics Control in the KSA, the narcotics most used in the country are hashish, khat, captagon and heroin. However, hashish usage in the kingdom has become the biggest issue that has faced Saudi Government. Statistics of Ministry of Interior in the KSA proved that 70 percent of hashish users were school students. Although using and cultivating hashish in this country is forbidden by law, dealers from different countries such as Afghanistan, Israel, Iran and Lebanon are smuggling it by sea or other borders. Some politicians stated that, the KSA is one of the targeted countries in this world and the enemies are trying to destroy its citizens. Hence, the Saudi Ministry of Interior established the General Directorate of Narcotics Control department to control the use of harmful substances and punish the narcotic offenders. It imposes harsh punishment for hashish dealers, smugglers and users. It also established specialized hospitals and treatment programs for hashish addicts as well as other drugs. Clearly, this research will provide beneficial information regarding the percentage of hashish addicts in the KSA, the reasons of using hashish among Saudi young and address the efforts of Saudi government against it.

**Keywords:** Hashish; Marijuana; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

### Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is one of the countries that prohibits the cultivation and consumption of hashish and marijuana. This prohibition is based on the Islamic law that forbids all kinds of substances that harm the body or lead to social and health problems. Saudis know that all harmful substances are clearly forbidden in many verses of the Qur'an, yet some of them continue to use them badly. In the last decades, the percentage of addicts among young men exceeded 30 percent. Another study proved that, in the last two years, the percentage of addicts exceeded 300 percent. Although most types of narcotics used among Saudis are hashish, khat, captagon and heroin, hashish became one of the biggest issues in the KSA. Therefore, this research clarifies the percentage of hashish addicts among Saudis young and the reasons of using it. It also illuminates the efforts of the Saudi government against hashish usage and how the officials are fighting hardly to protect the citizens from its danger.

### Classification of the Narcotics

Hashish is the most harmful substances that used illegally between Saudi young. Statistics indicated that most of the addicts are young between 18 to 29 years of age. Hence, the Saudi government created programs that aware people about the danger of using hashish and other drugs. These programs also explain the origin and the classification of narcotics to illustrate their negative effects on the mind and body.

Scientists classified the narcotics based on their origin to three classifications: Natural narcotics, semi-created narcotics and created narcotics. Natural narcotics are originated from plant where the active materials are concentrated on part or parts of the plant. The opium poppy, the khat plant, the coca plant, marijuana and hashish are examples of Natural narcotics. Semi-Created narcotics are compounds which prepared from a simple chemical reaction with compounds that extracted from narcotic plants. Heroin is the best example of semi-created narcotics. Created narcotics are not originated from plant, but prepared from complex chemical reactions between different chemical compounds. It also divided to three categories: Depressive, stimulants and hallucinogens. The experts divided it based on the psychological and mental condition of the user. For example, the researchers have found that the effects of hashish in mental activities vary depending on the amount of hashish taken by the user. It may be depressive if the user used a small amount of it. It also may be a hallucinogen when the user takes a large amount of it. Thus, the scientists placed hashish in a separate category. Depressive, stimulants, hallucinogens and hashish are the new form of narcotics classifications [1].

### Hashish and its Origin

Hashish is the most common narcotic in the world. It comes from a plant called the cannabis or Indian hemp (*Canabis sativa indica*). It cultivated before 3,000 years ago in China as a medicine to treat rheumatism and malaria. Thus, it originated from central Asia. Nowadays, it cultivated in different countries around the world such as Jamaica, Holland, Eastern Europe, Colombia and Lebanon. It is a depressant drug which comes from Indian hemp plants. It contains a high percentage of an active chemical substance called THC ( $\delta$ -9 tetrahydrocannabinol) [2].

This plant has different names in different countries around the world, such as hashish, marijuana and bango. It's called hashish in the KSA, Marijuana in the United States and Bango in Egypt. Some people stated that there are no differences between hashish, marijuana and bango, because all of them are originated from the same plant called "The cannabis or Indian hemp" and they have the same active substance. Nevertheless, there are some differences and the main difference is lying in the production process. Hashish is the dried flower which gathered from the top of female cannabis plant. Marijuana is extracted from any part of the plant. Bango is the dry leaves and seed of the same plant. There is another difference also between hashish and marijuana depending on the concentration of the active substances in the plant. It called marijuana if the concentration of the active substance from 0.5 to 5%; but, it called hashish if the concentration of the active ingredient from 2 to 20% [3]. Based on the percentage of THC in the plant, hashish is more powerful compared to Marijuana, because hashish contains 40% of THC, but Marijuana contains just 10% [2].

Hashish users have different ways of using it. Some individuals are taking it orally and others smoke it. Other people preferred to use it as a main ingredient for cooking food or making cake. Although some people use this plant for medication purposes, it has negative effects on the body and the Central Nervous System. It affects the mental function negatively. It causes psychological and physical dependence. It leads to loss of memory, loss of control, dry mouth, tooth loss and anxiety. It also may lead to madness and death. Some addicts mistreat their family or friends and sometimes they kill them [1]. Moreover, experts called it "The Gateway Drugs", because it opens the door for users to use other kinds of drugs.

## Hashish Usage in the KSA

Although Saudi law is very strict with using, buying or selling hashish, it continues to spread among young people. In the last two years, the percentage of substances abuses in the KSA has exceeded 300 percent and hashish is one of these substances. In fact, hashish is the most harmful substances that have been used illegally among Saudi young. General Directorate of Narcotic Control in the KSA estimated that 70 percent of hashish users are discovered in the schools. Based on Alamal Hospitals records, the percentage of recovery among hashish addicts in Alamal Hospitals has reached 25 percent. The Saudi government is working diligently to decrease the percentage of hashish addicts, but its usage among the young has become a very common habit in the country.

Although using and cultivating hashish in in the KSA is forbidden by law, dealers from different countries such as Afghanistan, Israel, Iran and Lebanon are smuggling it overland. They are smuggling it by sea or using the border between Yemen and the kingdom. To insure selling hashish between Saudi young, dealers tend to use social networks to reach the young easily and quickly. For instance, dealers in the KSA tend to use social networks such as Twitter and Facebook to attract young students to use hashish. They use different accounts on Facebook and Twitter to make jokes and funny stories about hashish addicts. They have chosen a special name for hashish user and called him "Mohashish" which means hashish addicts. There is account on Facebook called *Hekmat Mohashish* that tells funny stories and jokes about hashish users. In fact, the followers on this account exceeded one million and 222 thousand followers. There is another account also on Twitter called *Nokat Mohashishen* and it has a same purpose of twitting jokes and funny stories. The followers on twitter's account

exceeded 144 thousand followers. This way makes many Saudis young want to try it and feel the same feeling of their hero "Mohashish". The General Directorate of Narcotic Control has considered these accounts as an invitation and encouraging the young to use it. Hence, the Saudi government enforced the owners of these accounts to close it or change the name that referred to hashish [4].

There are many other reasons, beside the social networks, that lead to hashish usage in the KSA. Dr. Alshahri stated the main reasons of using it which are depression, social status for some people, mimic some friends or some actors on the TV, bad friends, free time and try doing everything new and strange. Therefore, the Saudi government is exhorting people from these reasons and asked them to stay away of it. Beside the Saudi government efforts against hashish, many doctors in the KSA are warning people from using it. They indicated that most of hashish in the country is mixed with other drugs and dangerous chemical which cause the addiction badly and quickly. Moreover, most of hashish users in the KSA have confirmed that hashish affected their life negatively. They lost their health and money for nothing. It destroyed their nervous system and body and cost so much money. Its cost in the KSA is depending on the quality and types. One of the ex-addicts explained that he was spending almost one hundred dollars for buying hashish for one day. Another addict is spending around three thousand dollars on hashish in order to be sufficient for him for a long time [4]. However, the Saudi government is working hard to protect the country from narcotics by imposing punishments and providing awareness programs to the citizens.

## The Punishments of Hashish Dealers, Smugglers and Users

Statistics of the United Nations clarified that what had been caught, on 2006, from narcotics in Saudi Arabia alone is exceeded what had been caught around the whole world [5]. Hence, Saudi government imposed harsh punishments for those who deal with narcotics or any kind of harmful substances. For hashish usage, the Narcotics Control Law related to the Ministry of Interior in the KSA to distinguish between hashish dealers, smugglers and users. This means that everyone has different punishments depending on his/her positions whether they are dealers, smugglers, or users. The smugglers get the severest punishment which is death, because they are the main reason for bringing the harmful substance to the country. They are importing and bringing hashish to the KSA from the borders and distributed them to the dealers regardless to Saudi and Islamic law [1].

The Narcotic Control Law in the KSA imposes different law for the hashish dealers. Moreover, the law that is applied to one person who deals in hashish for the first time is different from the dealer who is convicted previously. The punishment for a first time offender is prison, financial fine or lashing or all. The punishment is increased for the dealer, who is convicted previously and maybe he/she is condemned to death [1].

For hashish user, if the user is Saudi, he/she is punished according to the justice's decision and imprisoned for two years. Nevertheless, if the user is a foreigner, he/she is deported from Saudi Arabia. Indeed, Saudi Arabia follows the United Nations recommendation in term of treating drugs addicts as patients who need help and special treatment. Hence, if hashish user enrolls in treatment programs or specialized hospital, he/she will not be punished [1].

There is a special treatment for sentenced students. The punishment will be limited to disciplining and monitoring students. The exclusion

of students from punishment should be under special conditions which are: the age should not be more than 20 years, they should be committed for schooling, they should not be smugglers or dealers, they should not be connected to any other crimes or criminal activities, they never have been sentenced before for dealing or using or smuggling narcotics, they should not be convicted before to any ethical criminal activities, their crime should not be connected to any traffic accidents causing injuries or death, they should not be professional drivers who have a public license, they have not combated arrest. Based on Narcotics Control Law, the students should not stay at jail for more than three months, or they can be punished by just fifty lashes [1].

Although Saudi laws impose tough punishments for hashish dealers, smugglers and users, the percentage of Saudi addicts to hashish and other drugs is increased. Thus, besides imposing the punishment for the offenders, the Saudi government established specialized hospitals and treatment programs for hashish addicts and other drugs. Moreover, the General Directorate of Narcotics Control started awareness conferences and programs in Saudi schools to educate young students. These programs also counselled students about the dangers of using harmful substances and its bad consequences.

## Conclusion

Using hashish and other drugs in the KSA is illegal; but, the minority of the population is using it regardless of Islamic and Saudi's

laws. Dr. Al-Otaibi, Faculty of King Fahd Collage of Security, clarified that the number of drug addicts and drug abusers was about 120 thousand until 2005 [6]. However, hashish is considered the most harmful substances that are used between Saudis young who are between 18 years and 29. Saudis know that these substances are considered the most dangerous substances that lead to the destruction of nerve cells, but the percentage of hashish addicts among students exceeded 70 percent. Hence, the Saudi government imposes harsh punishment for hashish dealers, smugglers and users. It established Alamal Hospitals for mental patients, hashish addicts and other drugs addicts. Moreover, it established awareness programs for instructing people about hashish danger and avoiding the reasons of using it.

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