



## **PRISONER SURVEY NOTES INTERNATIONAL NAVAL PRESENCE AS THE PRIMARY DETERRENT TO PIRATES**

### **The Survey findings:**

- Poor economic conditions were reported as the major reason for engaging in piracy, and long-term solutions to piracy should address this.
- Prisoners report being very impacted by prison, and express a strong desire to avoid future prison time.
- International navies, more than any other counter-piracy activity, were listed as the primary deterrent. Armed guards aboard ships were also frequently listed.
- A substantial number of prisoners rejected the term pirate or piracy, maintaining that they were fishermen who were not guilty of piracy.
- For those pirates who knew someone who left piracy, the dominant reason was family or community pressure.
- The illegal fishing narrative remains a rationalization for piracy.

**New York, 7 July 2015:** UNODC and OBP jointly conducted an informal survey of 66 Somali inmates accused of piracy in Hargesia prison in Somaliland, Bosasso Prison in Puntland and Montagne Posee Prison in the Seychelles. The survey was on prisoner attitudes about piracy and effective deterrents. Surveys were conducted in the prisons by UNODC personnel; OBP designed and analyzed the survey data. This survey and its findings should be viewed through the lens of what prisoners wanted to report to the UNODC, and not a wholly neutral survey. With that caveat, the survey finds issues of relevance to UNODC and counter-piracy activities.

The survey asked the prisoners to identify their motivations for going to sea were, if they knew anyone that had left piracy, and what their plans were post-prison. The survey also asked their opinion on the most effective deterrent to piracy, and what might stop piracy long-term.

The survey found there is a clear economic basis for piracy, and long-term solutions to piracy may require addressing this. One prisoner reported going to sea because “My family is poor, so that’s why I joined the pirates.” One reason for leaving piracy was that they had enough money to retire. Many prisoners also pointed to illegal fishing as a reason for piracy and suggested that if it persisted then piracy may continue.

Prisoners who knew pirates who quit piracy indicated that family and community pressures were very important consideration for people leaving piracy, and counter-piracy messaging encouraging this may be valuable. Additionally, a prisoner reported “Prison is the worst place to be in the world”: with many prisoners specifically citing fear of future prison time as a deterrent.

International naval presence was frequently reported as a concern or a significant contribution to deterring pirates. The same was true for armed guards aboard vessels, although to a lesser degree than international navies. This suggests that a significant draw-down in naval forces may reduce a deterrent factor potentially contributing to the reduction in piracy.

Conor Seyle the Director of Research at the One Earth Future Foundation, says; “This survey shows that international navies, family and social disapproval, and the deterrent effects of prison are all elements of suppressing piracy, while economic pressures and illegal fishing all push people towards piracy. This survey shows the need for a coordinated response rather than a one size fits all solution.”

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