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Murder of Mehdi Kessaci – urgent need for ambitious European action against drug trafficking

European Parliament resolution of 20 January 2026 on the murder of Mehdi Kessaci: urgent need for ambitious European action against drug trafficking (2025/3020(RSP))

(C/2026/3686)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), in particular their provisions on the area of freedom, security and justice,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular its articles on human dignity, the right to life, freedom of expression, victims' rights and the protection of personal data,
- having regard to EU drugs strategies, and to the latest version published together with the EU action plan against drug trafficking 2026-2030,
- having regard to the work of the Council's Horizontal Working Party on Drugs (HDG), which was established in 1997 and is responsible for coordinating EU action on drugs,
- having regard to the reports and analyses of the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA), in particular the European Drug Report 2025,
- having regard to the launch of the European Coalition against Drugs, which brings together more than 40 countries and aims to strengthen international cooperation against drug trafficking;
- having regard to the work of the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe on drug policies and prevention,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 and the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC),
- having regard to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, signed in Palermo in 2000, and the protocols thereto, and to the United Nations Convention against Corruption,
- having regard to the various provisions adopted by European and international bodies on preventing and combating money laundering and the financing of organised crime,
- having regard to Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989,
- having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 11 June 2013 on organised crime, corruption and money laundering ⁽²⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 315, 14.11.2012, p. 57, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2012/29/oj>.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 65, 19.2.2016, p. 16.

- having regard to the commitment by European authorities to combating drug trafficking, in particular the EUDA, Europol and Eurojust,
 - having regard to the 2024 EU legislative package on tackling money laundering and the financing of terrorism, including in particular Regulation (EU) 2024/1624 ⁽³⁾, Directive (EU) 2024/1640 ⁽⁴⁾ and the establishment of the Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA),
 - having regard to Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims ⁽⁵⁾,
 - having regard to the work of the Civil Society Forum on Drugs and its youth wing,
 - having regard to the particularly critical situation in the outermost regions,
 - having regard to the book published by anti-drug activist Amine Kessaci, *'Marseille, essuie tes larmes'*, and to his speeches calling for the public to rise up and take a stand against drug trafficking,
 - having regard to Rule 136(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas 20-year-old Mehdi Kessaci, a French national unknown to the police other than for having applied to become a police officer, was murdered in broad daylight on a Marseille street on 13 November 2025 in the context of drug-related violence, which illustrates the increasing brutality of criminal networks and the direct consequences this violence is having for families and local communities;
- B. whereas Mehdi Kessaci was the brother of Amine Kessaci, an anti-drug activist, author and recognised figure in civic mobilisation against organised crime; whereas he was undoubtedly murdered because of this family link; whereas this murder constitutes a direct attack on freedom of expression, and is suspected of being an intimidation tactic reminiscent of the practices of organised mafia networks; whereas this crime has caused a national outcry, bringing together 10 000 people across the country in support of Amine Kessaci and his family, as well as in defence of democracy, freedom of expression and the rule of law against drug trafficking;
- C. whereas this murder is part of a pattern of drug-related violence in Marseille, which saw 24 people murdered in 2024 and 49 victims in 2023, affecting an increasing number of minors and innocent people; whereas this scourge affects numerous European cities and threatens social cohesion, the health and safety of citizens and the rule of law; whereas the situation is particularly critical in the outermost regions, with almost 90 killings related to drug trafficking in Guadeloupe and Martinique in 2025 alone;
- D. whereas drug trafficking is one of the most serious threats to the internal security of the European Union, fuelling organised crime, violence and corruption, and whereas, according to Europol, almost 50 % of Europe's most dangerous criminal networks are involved in drug trafficking, more than a third of them exclusively;
- E. whereas violence linked to drug trafficking in Europe has intensified in recent years, with organised crime groups increasingly using firearms, and whereas on average 28 % of firearms seizures in Europe are linked to drug trafficking, which illustrates the direct link between drug trafficking and serious threats to public safety;
- F. whereas the production, trafficking and use of drugs are rising rapidly and reaching unprecedented levels in the EU; whereas, according to the EUDA, 752 tonnes of cannabis and 419 tonnes of cocaine were seized in the EU in 2023, and whereas 2,7 million young adults aged 15-34 reported having used them in the past year; whereas almost 500 synthetic drug laboratories are dismantled every year in the EU, and whereas there were almost 7 500 drug-related deaths in 2023; whereas these developments reflect a widespread phenomenon affecting all territories, generations and social categories;

⁽³⁾ OJ L, 2024/1624, 19.6.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1624/oj>.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L, 2024/1640, 19.6.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1640/oj>.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L, 2024/1712, 24.6.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1712/oj>.

- G. whereas European ports are major strategic entry points for illicit drugs, with around 70 % of customs seizures of drugs taking place in port infrastructure, and whereas criminal networks exploit the logistical and human vulnerabilities of these platforms;
- H. whereas professionals working in the fisheries and ports sectors, such as fishers and dockers, are targeted by drug trafficking networks, which exploit the nature of their activities to bring drugs into the European Union;
- I. whereas the massive increase in drug use has a direct impact on drug trafficking, generating huge profits for traffickers, who are acquiring a financial strength that could put our democracy in danger; whereas the French Commission for Campaign Accounts and Political Funding has warned about the influence of drug trafficking networks on the upcoming local elections;
- J. whereas drug trafficking is one of organised crime's most lucrative activities, accounting for about one fifth of the proceeds of crime worldwide, and whereas the European Union is facing an unprecedented increase in the availability of illicit drugs, particularly cocaine from South America;
- K. whereas drug trafficking networks may seek to exert pressure or undue influence on locally elected representatives and voters, in particular at municipal level, thereby undermining the integrity of democratic processes;
- L. whereas the financial strength acquired by drug traffickers is a threat to democracy, through money laundering, corruption, infiltration of the legal economy and the capacity it gives criminal networks to obtain and extend their territorial reach, including within the European Union;
- M. whereas the fight against money laundering, tax havens and infiltration of the legal economy by criminal organisations is therefore a key lever for permanently weakening drug trafficking networks;
- N. whereas the European Democracy Shield emphasises that organised crime and corruption pose a direct threat to the rule of law and our democratic institutions;
- O. whereas digital tools and social media are increasingly being used for recruiting, coordinating and committing acts of violence, and aimed in particular at minors, which calls for a coordinated European response that respects fundamental rights;
- P. whereas criminal organisations and their practices are evolving, including through the digitalisation of their strategies, and whereas therefore the investigative, judicial and social structures in the European Union's response to this scourge also need to evolve;
- Q. whereas the prevalence of new psychoactive substances (NPS) is increasing in Europe, including strong synthetic cannabinoids, cathinones and synthetic opioids, which are often produced or distributed within the EU and remain partly outside international and national controls; whereas their strength and the low volumes needed, combined with the possibility to slightly modify their chemical structures in order to circumvent the legislation, are creating a rapidly expanding and highly lucrative market for traffickers, while posing considerable risks to public health and safety; whereas robust early warning systems, enhanced detection capabilities and coordinated responses at EU level are needed to address the evolving threat posed by NPS;
- R. whereas the development and permanent establishment of drug trafficking networks often takes place in contexts marked by persistent social and territorial inequalities, insufficient access to employment, public services and educational opportunities, and a sense of institutional abandonment, particularly in certain deprived urban neighbourhoods, and whereas these vulnerabilities provide a breeding ground for the criminal economy and structural factors exploited by drug trafficking networks to recruit a vulnerable, often young, workforce;
- S. whereas EU cohesion policy, through its financial instruments, has historically contributed to reducing territorial disparities, strengthening social cohesion and supporting structural investment in urban areas in difficulty, and whereas the orientations envisaged by the Commission for the 2028-2034 multiannual financial framework, as well as the implementation of the new EU agenda for cities, will have a decisive impact on the EU's ability to sustainably prevent illegal trafficking taking root in these areas;

- T. whereas the sums acquired by criminal networks are facilitated by corruption and are likely to reinforce it, and whereas their financial strength enables them both to provide services to residents and to instil fear in an increasing number of areas, resulting in a kind of anaesthesia within local communities that are becoming less and less resilient to the scourge of drug trafficking; whereas the murder of Mehdi Kessaci is part of these intimidation strategies; whereas warnings about the influence of drug trafficking on elections serve as a stark reminder of the threat it poses to fundamental rights, democracy and the rule of law;
- U. whereas the families of victims, in particular the mothers and relatives of people killed or recruited by criminal networks, often play a key role in prevention, raising awareness and supporting young people exposed to drug trafficking; whereas, however, the families of drug trafficking victims are not involved in the development of European and national drug policies or in the Civil Society Forum on Drugs;
- V. whereas previous strategies have highlighted the need to find a better balance between law enforcement responses and policies on prevention, risk reduction and social justice;
- W. whereas the EU drugs strategy is based on key pillars combining public health, prevention, judicial and police cooperation, and cooperation with third countries, and whereas it would benefit from the addition of a component dedicated to the social resilience of territories and communities mobilised against drug trafficking;
- X. whereas the spread of drug trafficking is a European phenomenon and requires a united and firm response; whereas European institutions must demonstrate their ability to mobilise so as to ensure that no more lives are lost;
1. Condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the murder of Mehdi Kessaci; expresses its deep sympathy and sincere condolences to his parents and to his family and loved ones, and, through them, to all the direct and indirect victims of drug trafficking in Europe and throughout the world;
 2. Pays tribute to the commitment of Amine Kessaci, the 'Conscience' association and all activists who, often at risk to their own safety, are working to tackle drug trafficking; honours the courage of Amine Kessaci, who continues to stand up to drug traffickers despite the threats against him; recognises that the murder of Mehdi Kessaci is a direct attack on freedom of expression and creation and on the rule of law;
 3. Stresses that actions by grassroots associations contribute to youth protection, social cohesion and democratic vitality and that they are often poorly recognised, supported or protected;
 4. Stresses that the fight against drug trafficking and organised crime is a major challenge for the European Union as a whole, in terms of both security and public health, social justice and respect for the rule of law;
 5. Welcomes the adoption of the new EU drugs strategy and its action plan and reiterates its support for a balanced approach based on demand reduction, judicial and police cooperation, cooperation with third countries and prevention, including online; recalls that previous plans have not been sufficient to curb the scourge of drug trafficking, but that it is the responsibility of all to meet this challenge;
 6. Recalls that the new anti-drug strategy calls on the Member States to adopt zero-tolerance policies on driving under the influence of drugs, in accordance with Directive 2006/126/EC ⁽⁹⁾ on driving licences, and to make full use of the cross-border tools available to enforce these rules;
 7. Gives its full support to the public health and prevention pillar of the EU drugs strategy, including early prevention, risk reduction, access to care, treatment for addictions and social reintegration; recalls that drugs are increasingly affecting the whole of society, putting it in a position of dependence, and require a broad mobilisation to safeguard the mental health of Europeans;

⁽⁹⁾ Directive 2006/126/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on driving licences (OJ L 403, 30.12.2006, p. 18, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2006/126/oj>).

8. Supports the Commission's proposal to strengthen security in the fight against drug trafficking, including the planned evaluation by 2026 of the existing framework decision on drug trafficking and the modernisation of rules on organised crime; supports key measures such as strengthening public-private cooperation to improve the detection of drugs smuggled through postal and parcel delivery services, as well as the development of a new European strategy for ports to increase the security and resilience of ports and supply chains against drug trafficking;
9. Welcomes the commitment of law enforcement, armed forces, customs services and magistrates mobilised throughout the European Union in the fight against drug trafficking; recognises their essential contribution to the protection of public safety and calls for a proportionate and adequate reinforcement of the resources available to police forces and judicial authorities in order to cope with the evolving transnational threat;
10. Calls for a strengthening of the human, material and technological resources allocated to external border controls in the fight against trafficking in arms, human beings and drugs and of joint cross-border law enforcement operations, particularly in hotspots such as Marseille, Le Havre, Antwerp, Rotterdam and Hamburg, in close coordination with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Europol, Eurojust and the EUDA, in order to dismantle the criminal networks behind the shootings, killings and intimidation taking place across Europe;
11. Stresses the need to strengthen cooperation and information exchange between customs, law enforcement, judicial and administrative authorities, and calls on the Commission to ensure the necessary framework to support these efforts, while safeguarding fundamental rights and privacy;
12. Recalls that the fight against organised crime must address the economic and financial structures of drug trafficking, including by strengthening schemes to confiscate criminal assets and by tackling tax havens; calls on the EU and the Member States to make full and effective use of the new Directive (EU) 2024/1260 on asset recovery and confiscation ⁽⁷⁾, and to put in place the necessary measures to allow confiscated property to be allocated for social purposes, including to grassroots organisations fighting against the territorial grip of drug trafficking, as is the case in Italy, as well as to the authorities most exposed to drug-related violence or to judicial and customs investigation services; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that measures relating to the use of confiscated property in the public interest or for social purposes are included in their national asset recovery strategies;
13. Highlights the importance of including judicial cooperation and transparency requirements in the EU's external relations and agreements with third countries affected by drug trafficking routes; stresses that cooperation with some of these states is fruitful, while others refuse to cooperate fully with European authorities;
14. Welcomes the successful conclusion of Eurojust and Europol agreements with Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lebanon;
15. Stresses the importance of carrying out an in-depth examination of the methods adopted by criminal organisations and their rapid evolution in order to develop the most appropriate judicial procedures; calls, in particular, for a common approach to tackling organised crime, for consideration to be given to establishing an 'assisting offender' status, for the protection of minors involved in criminal networks, and for the fight against drug trafficking to be linked to provisions on money laundering and corruption, extortion, human trafficking, environmental crime and arms trafficking; calls for a bigger role for the European Public Prosecutor's Office in the fight against organised crime to be explored;
16. Commits to monitoring drug trafficking and the fight against organised cross-border, drug-related crime more closely and thoroughly;
17. Calls for an enhancement of the human resources assigned to local police forces, specialised police forces and courts dedicated to combating drug trafficking, including anti-money laundering courts;

⁽⁷⁾ OJ L, 2024/1260, 2.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1260/oj>.

18. Encourages cooperation between EU bodies, national authorities and Member States in police, judicial and administrative matters;
19. Calls for the fight against drug trafficking to be made a pillar of the European port strategy and of the Ports Alliance, including both seaports and river ports, and for training, prevention and protection measures to put in place for port workers; calls for support and assistance to be provided to dockers and fishers faced with pressures, threats and blackmail attempts by drug trafficking networks; stresses the importance of intelligence sharing on seizures of drugs, precursors and essential chemicals, as well as the use of surveillance technologies targeted at strategic infrastructure;
20. Calls for the fight against drug trafficking to be made a priority of the European Union Customs Authority and for customs agencies to be given the same tools as port staff;
21. Stresses that forthcoming European initiatives, such as the European Ports Alliance, as well as the reforms to Europol, Eurojust and the European Public Prosecutor's Office, should help strengthen the integrity, transparency and resilience of European ports, including by improving the protection of frontline officers and workers against the risks of intimidation and corruption;
22. Stresses the key role of prevention, including on social media and digital platforms, and calls for effective implementation of existing EU rules, in particular the Digital Services Act, to prevent online recruitment, incitement to violence and the organisation of criminal activities and to examine the needs for developing them further; calls on the Member States to include in their prevention policies clear communication enabling drug users to understand that they are contributing to the violent action of destructive criminal networks;
23. Stresses the need to fully integrate the protection of minors against recruitment by criminal networks into drug policies, in accordance with the Digital Services Act and with the European Parliament resolution on the protection of minors online (2025/2060 (INI)), including through cooperation with digital platforms, targeted prevention and early detection;
24. Stresses the vital importance, alongside a security and law enforcement approach, of structural action targeting the social, economic and territorial factors that encourage the establishment of these criminal activities on a lasting basis, particularly in deprived urban neighbourhoods; stresses, in this regard, the crucial role of EU budget instruments, including the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), in supporting long-term investments in access to employment, urban renewal, community-based public services, education, prevention and social cohesion, thereby helping to strengthen the resilience of these areas against illicit economies and communities' resistance against criminal organisations;
25. Expresses, however, serious concerns about the orientations envisaged by the Commission for the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034, in particular the risks of increased renationalisation of cohesion policy, the merging of cohesion funds with other instruments and the concentration of funding exclusively on less developed regions; warns that these developments could lead to harmful competition between priorities and territories, to the detriment of the investments needed in urban areas in difficulty located in intermediate or more developed regions, even though these areas often have acute social vulnerabilities and are highly exposed to drug trafficking;
26. Stresses that the recent adoption by the Commission of the new EU agenda for cities will produce tangible results only if it is fully integrated into future national and regional partnership programmes; calls, in this regard, for these plans to include specific, identifiable and adequately resourced measures for public investment in working-class neighbourhoods, in order to prevent them becoming permanently marginalised and captured by criminal networks; stresses the need to ensure a place-based, integrated and inclusive approach to cohesion, which is indispensable for leaving no territory behind and for strengthening security, social justice and cohesion in the EU in a sustainable manner;
27. Recalls that the success of the Italian anti-mafia strategy was based largely on the mobilisation of civil society; calls, therefore, for the full integration of civil society, and in particular grassroots associations, in the fight against organised crime and drug trafficking;

28. Stresses the need to place the experience and voice of victims' families at the centre of the development, implementation and evaluation of European drug policies, recognising their essential role in prevention and in supporting those at risk; calls, therefore, for them to be fully integrated into future action by the European Union and the Member States in the fight against drug trafficking;
 29. Calls for drug-strategy governance bodies, associated stakeholder committees and Member States to include representatives of victims and affected families in a structured manner;
 30. Expresses its support for all actors on the ground, including law enforcement officers, associations, educators, social workers and local authorities; stresses the importance of adequate EU financial support for these initiatives, noting that, in this context, both the funds allocated to social action and those under the proposal for a regulation establishing the Union support for internal security for the period from 2028 to 2034 (COM(2025)0542) could be mobilised;
 31. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop a European coordination of best practices on the protection of victims and witnesses, taking into account the often precarious social and economic situation of the families concerned;
 32. Calls on the Member States to ensure the relocation of families affected by drug trafficking and their access to employment in order to guarantee their safety, and calls on the Commission to include this dimension in its housing plan;
 33. Calls on the Member States to support those who raise their voices against organised crime, such as Amine Kessaci and Roberto Saviano, and to make that support a pillar in the defence of the rule of law and freedom of expression;
 34. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the international institutions and organisations concerned.
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