

GI-TOC RESPONSE TO THE PRESS RELEASE OF IFTIN EXPRESS

25 September 2020

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) takes note of the 22 September 2020 press release by the UK-based money transfer operator (MTO) Iftin Express concerning a recently released GI-TOC report, "Following the money: The use of the hawala remittance system in the Yemen–Somalia arms trade". In its statement, Iftin Express disputes the authenticity of a remittance slip published by GI-TOC, detailing a March 2020 transaction to an individual under U.S. Treasury sanction for alleged support to Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and Islamic State in Yemen.

GI-TOC stands by the accuracy of the report's findings and the authenticity of the remittance slip disputed by Iftin Express. The research process involved the years-long collection of hundreds of MTO remittance receipts, including several dozen relating to transactions conducted through Iftin Express. The remittance receipts were supplied by multiple independent sources who were well-placed to guarantee their authenticity.

Over two months prior to publication, GI-TOC offered Iftin Express senior representatives several opportunities to discuss the report's findings and to provide comment. Iftin declined to respond to GI-TOC's requests. Nor did the company notify GI-TOC of its concerns prior to releasing its statement.

GI-TOC remains cognizant of the critical role played by MTOs in providing remittance lifelines to vulnerable populations in Somalia and other fragile environments. Towards this end, we continue to engage with MTOs, Somali financial regulators, and Somalia's donor partners in order to help strengthen financial systems in Somalia and prevent their abuse by criminal actors.