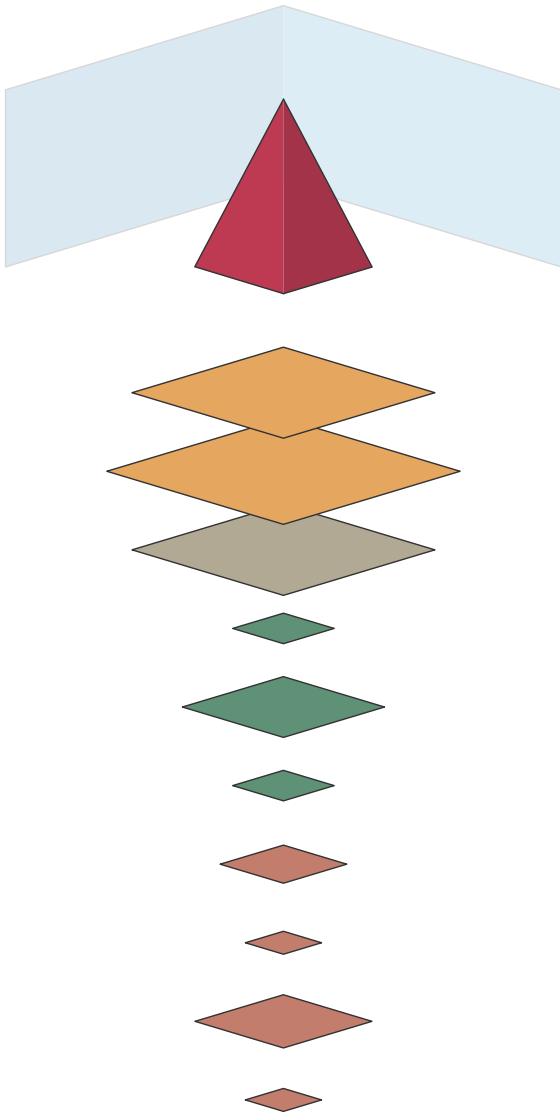




# DJIBOUTI



## 3.99 CRIMINALITY SCORE

146<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
45<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  
9<sup>th</sup> of 9 East African countries

### CRIMINAL MARKETS 3.60

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	7.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	6.00
FLORA CRIMES	2.00
FAUNA CRIMES	4.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	2.00
HEROIN TRADE	2.50
COCAINE TRADE	1.50
CANNABIS TRADE	3.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	1.50

### CRIMINAL ACTORS 4.38

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	5.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.00

## 4.50 RESILIENCE SCORE

111<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
18<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  
3<sup>rd</sup> of 9 East African countries



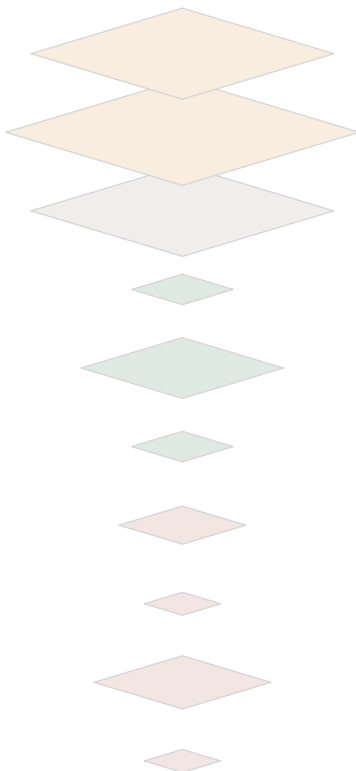
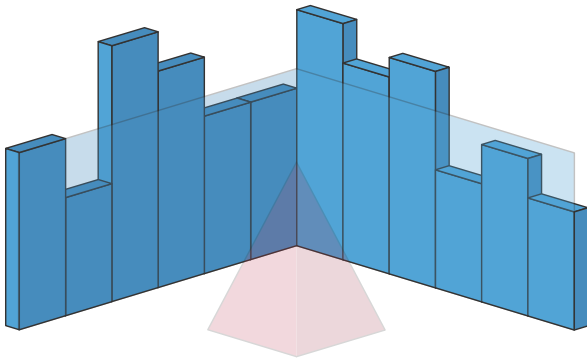
Funding provided by the United States Government.



ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.



# DJIBOUTI



## 4.50 RESILIENCE SCORE

111<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
18<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  
3<sup>rd</sup> of 9 East African countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	4.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	3.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.50
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	5.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	4.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	4.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	6.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	3.00
PREVENTION	4.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	3.00

## 3.99 CRIMINALITY SCORE

146<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
45<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  
9<sup>th</sup> of 9 East African countries

CRIMINAL MARKETS	3.60
CRIMINAL ACTORS	4.38



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# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Despite Djibouti's small size, its central location in the Horn of Africa renders it a crucial transit country for migration and human-trafficking flows in the region. Djibouti is a country of origin, a waypoint and a destination market for children, men and women trafficked for sexual and labour exploitation. Victims are mainly Ethiopian and Somali economic migrants destined for the Arabian Gulf. While a sizeable proportion of migrants are subjected to labour and sexual exploitation at their ultimate places of destination, many are also held for ransom in Djibouti. Although limited data complicates the accurate assessment of the extent of the issue, modern slavery does occur on a relatively large scale in the country.

Human smuggling is one of the most prevalent forms of organized crime in Djibouti. It is a significant transit country for most Ethiopian and Somali migrants smuggled from the Horn of Africa to the Arabian Peninsula by sea. The country's proximity to Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen renders it a key transit point for human smugglers who move refugees, mercenaries and irregular migrants both into and out of these conflict-affected areas. At present, migrants smuggled through Djibouti are predominantly Ethiopian, as Somalis reportedly now travel to Yemen primarily via Puntland in Somalia. Djiboutian smuggling networks often operate out of Tadjoura and leverage contacts in source communities in Ethiopia. Human smuggling networks first organize border crossings into Djibouti, and later facilitate movement to the port city of Obock, where boat departures to Yemen are arranged. Given the high number of migrants attempting to transit the country, Djibouti offers an increasingly lucrative opportunity for human smugglers and, as a result, the human smuggling industry has increased in both sophistication and capacity in recent years. Human smuggling operations can be ad hoc and informal, or organized, or operations in which the perpetrators hold migrants hostage at different points of their journey to extort additional taxes from their families.

### TRADE

Situated in one of the most fragile and conflict-affected regions in the world, Djibouti has emerged as an increasingly central arms trafficking hub. The flow of arms across Djiboutian ports and borders with conflict-affected neighbours is increasing at alarming levels. Much ammunition and many arms and landmines appear to originate from Houthi-controlled territories in Yemen, and are trafficked through Djibouti by a variety of criminal networks, including Iranian, Turkish and Yemeni groups that support actors

involved in the conflicts in Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia. A significant portion of arms traffickers reportedly uses small islands off Djibouti's coast as staging grounds for their operations. Moreover, military and government officials, the African Union Mission in Somalia and executives of state-owned enterprises, all seem to be tied to companies engaged in sponsoring and aiding the trafficking of arms in the Horn of Africa. The illicit flow of arms into Djibouti has also been linked to the country's conflict with neighbouring Eritrea.

### ENVIRONMENT

Djibouti is both an origin and a transit country for illicit goods such as ivory, rhino horn, wild animal skins and live animals. Strong evidence suggests that wild animals, including cheetahs, leopards and lions, are trafficked through Djibouti to Yemen on their way to exotic pet markets in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates or other destination markets in Asia, Europe or the Middle East. Illicit wildlife products are known to depart via the Dewele border crossing between Ethiopia and Djibouti. Additionally, gazelles, as well as nesting seabirds and marine turtles – for their eggs and meat – are also poached in the Eritrean Coastal Desert, an eco-region that is part of Djibouti's Red Sea coast. Moreover, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is known to occur in Djibouti's territorial waters. Evidence of illicit activity in Djibouti's diamond, gold, oil, coloured gemstones and coal trades is limited. However, Djibouti is becoming a transit country for gold smuggled between Ethiopia and the Persian Gulf. Similarly, there is little criminal activity related to the illicit trade or trafficking of flora species in or through Djibouti.

### DRUGS

While there is no evidence of a significant consumer base and its role in the global drug trade is not substantial, Djibouti is a waypoint for heroin trafficked from Southern, Western and South-eastern Asia as well as cannabis trafficked from Southern Asia to East Africa. Weak border controls and high border porosity enable transport of heroin and cannabis into and out of Djibouti with relative ease. The criminal markets for cocaine and various synthetic drugs are very small and trafficking cases are isolated.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Criminal networks in Djibouti engage in both human trafficking and human smuggling from Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen to Persian Gulf countries. These criminal networks are believed to consist overwhelmingly of Djiboutian nationals, although many such networks also have links

to counterparts in Ethiopia and Yemen. Criminal networks in Djibouti are also believed to engage in arms trafficking between Yemen and Turkey to various other East African countries. Multiple foreign criminal systems operate in Djibouti, including Somali hawala networks and Yemeni, Iranian and Turkish arms trafficking networks. Evidence

suggests that high-level Djiboutian government officials profit from corrupt activities and that state-embedded actors (such as the Djiboutian secret police) accept, and potentially profit from, criminal markets such as human smuggling. Conversely, there is no indication of mafia-style groups operating in the country.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Although a peace agreement was reached in 1994, ending the Djiboutian Civil War, clashes continue in the country and Djibouti remains somewhat fragile. Authorities in Djibouti do not have the capacity and resources to respond to and tackle the country's human trafficking and human smuggling issues. The government has claimed that it has limited available policy options as criminal markets are driven by external events in Ethiopia and Yemen. Nevertheless, while these constraints remain, the Djiboutian government has increased its efforts to address human trafficking and smuggling in particular. Djibouti continues to suffer from endemic corruption, but the country has strengthened its anti-corruption framework in the last couple of years, particularly by erecting the National Commission for Anti-Corruption and setting up a new asset declaration system. Transparency and accountability in the country are undermined by the government, evident in the harsh crackdown on the anti-government demonstrations in 2020.

Djibouti is party to most international agreements pertaining to organized crime, including the UNTOC and the UNCAC. However, despite being viewed as an arms-trafficking hub, the country has not yet ratified the Arms Trade Treaty. Djibouti cooperates in a number of regional and international initiatives and organizations, including the East Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation, INTERPOL, MENAFATF and the Horn of Africa Wildlife Enforcement Network. Djibouti also exhibits strong relationships with Arab-speaking countries, as well as with France and French-speaking countries, and has also expanded international cooperation with Turkey, Brazil, Senegal, the Netherlands, Morocco and other countries through bilateral and multilateral relationships that focus on capacity-building for law enforcement agencies. Djibouti maintains political exchange agreements on human trafficking and human smuggling with other Intergovernmental Authority on Development member states. However, except for Ethiopia, no regular technical exchanges occur. An Ethio-Djibouti commission functions to counter issues related to smuggling, contraband trade and the trafficking of arms along the border between Djibouti and Ethiopia, but concerns regarding the forceful repatriation of migrants and human rights violations in the work of the commission have

been raised. The country is also part of the Lomé Charter, which seeks to establish mechanisms to tackle transnational crime at sea. However, no evidence points to the efficacy of these measures. Djibouti has a legal framework in place to address organized crime, which includes an anti-human trafficking legislation, but the implementation of these laws remains a challenge.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Djibouti's judiciary lacks independence and capacity, and suffers high levels of corruption. Allegations of politically motivated prosecutions are common and the right to due process is frequently violated. Prison conditions remain severe due to overcrowding, failure to separate violent and non-violent offenders (including detained migrants) and numerous reported cases of mistreatment in prisons. However, recent years have seen significant improvements in Djibouti's prison system. No specialized units aimed at countering organized crime exist within Djibouti's judiciary or law enforcement. Nevertheless, law enforcement agencies such as the national police, gendarmerie, intelligence service, coast guard, immigration and border management, and the Ministry of Justice engage in preventing and suppressing instances of organized crime. Although fairly efficient, law enforcement faces challenges in terms of training standards, equipment and communication and has limited capacities in, for instance, forensic services. Corruption also remains a persistent constraint on the efficacy of law enforcement in fighting organized crime. Djibouti's central location on the Horn of Africa and porous maritime, mountain and desert borders render it a significant transit point for illicit flows, particularly human trafficking and human smuggling.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Djibouti's private sector continues to face growth restraints and the economy suffers high electricity costs, high unemployment, skills shortages, compliance risks and high levels of public debt. However, with a number of business reforms, steps have been taken towards making the country a more attractive and globally integrated business destination. Conversely, control over illicit financial transactions and

the hawala system remain significant issues. An anti-money laundering framework is in place in Djibouti, and a financial intelligence unit (FIU) was established in 2016. Nevertheless, the implementation of anti-money laundering regulations is lacking and authorities, including the FIU and the central bank, lack the capacity and expertise needed to adequately combat financial crimes.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

While the Djiboutian government has pledged to combat human trafficking, drug trafficking and arms trafficking, statements regarding provisions for prisoners or rehabilitation and treatment programmes for drug users remain scarce and witness protection inadequate. However, while it continues to fail in many areas of victim support, authorities have pushed to build up their capacity to protect victims of human trafficking, and now allows civil society organizations to support human trafficking victims. Similarly, more efforts have been dedicated to a more adequate response to human smuggling, which includes the funding of migrant response centres and mobile health clinics and repatriating irregular migrants in a seemingly orderly fashion. NGOs also operate a number of protective services, particularly for victims of human trafficking. Djibouti lacks national organized-crime prevention strategies, but there have been sporadic attempts made by national security services to take preventive approaches to organized crime. Djibouti's ruling party places serious constraints on the capabilities of the opposition in the country to function, and both civil society organizations and journalists critical of the incumbent regime are regularly harassed, arrested or censored. Djibouti thus has a very poor record of respecting civil liberties. The involvement of either media or civil society organizations in investigative journalism and advocacy against the proliferation of criminal markets is thus minimal.

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