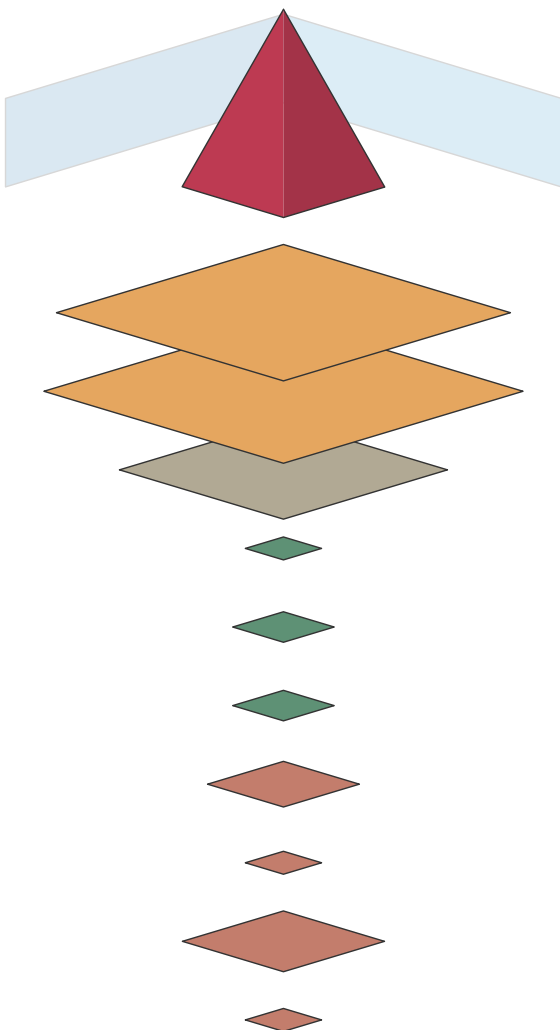


 **ERITREA**



 **4.34**
CRIMINALITY SCORE

127th of 193 countries
41st of 54 African countries
8th of 9 East African countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **4.05**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	9.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	9.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	6.50
FLORA CRIMES	1.50
FAUNA CRIMES	2.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	2.00
HEROIN TRADE	3.00
COCAINE TRADE	1.50
CANNABIS TRADE	4.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	1.50

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **4.63**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	9.50
FOREIGN ACTORS	2.50

 **2.33**
RESILIENCE SCORE

180th of 193 countries
47th of 54 African countries
7th of 9 East African countries



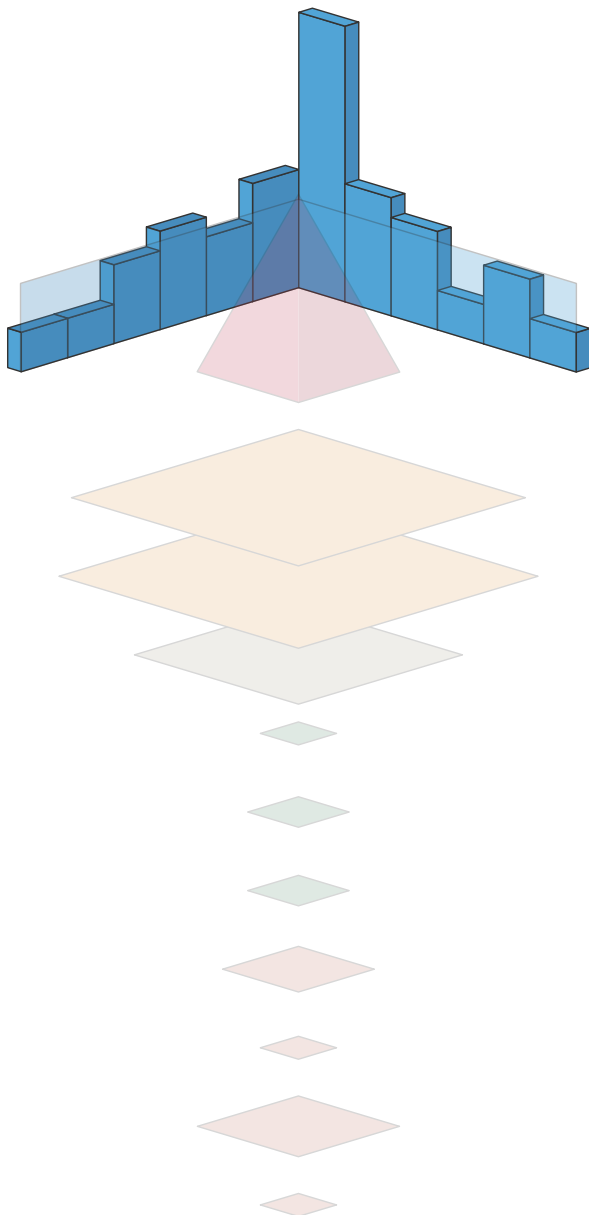
Funding provided by the United States Government.



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.



ERITREA



2.33 RESILIENCE SCORE

180th of 193 countries
47th of 54 African countries
7th of 9 East African countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	1.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	1.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	2.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	2.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	2.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	3.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	7.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	3.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	2.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	1.00
PREVENTION	2.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	1.00

4.34 CRIMINALITY SCORE

127th of 193 countries
41st of 54 African countries
8th of 9 East African countries

CRIMINAL MARKETS	4.05
CRIMINAL ACTORS	4.63



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Eritrea has the highest estimated prevalence of human trafficking in Africa. Indefinite state-sponsored conscription, functioning essentially as bonded labour, breeds resentment and significant emigration. This compulsory national service continues despite increasing international pressure to reintroduce 18-month limits. Eritrean emigrants continue to be extremely vulnerable to trafficking, usually upon leaving the country.

Eritrea is therefore one of the most significant refugee-producing countries in Africa. Human smuggling is exacerbated by strict exit control procedures, limited passport issuance and the militarization of borders following the war with Ethiopia. Smugglers are often contacted by the families of individuals abroad who pay significant rates. Members of the Eritrean diaspora likely remain entrenched within sophisticated human-smuggling networks with links to the political class and top-level civil servants and diplomats in embassies throughout Africa and the Middle East. Improvements in the country's relations with Ethiopia and the reopening of some border points resulted in an influx of Eritreans crossing the border, but following their reclosure, dependence on smuggling networks resumed. Senior military officers reportedly remain entrenched in the smuggling of Eritreans for private gain, resulting in the frequent abuse of smuggled individuals.

TRADE

Eritrea has been isolated for over two decades, but is strategically located on the Red Sea with two functioning ports, namely Massawa and Assab. The country subsequently serves as a trans-shipment point for arms trafficking to neighbouring embargoed states including Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia. Eritrea has a long history of armed conflict with Ethiopia and Djibouti. During the conflicts, the illicit flow of arms moved in all directions from various sources. While Eritrea was subjected to an arms embargo between 2011 and 2018, it remained a transit route for arms trafficking, primarily to Sudan. It is likely, following the lifting of the arms embargo in late 2018, that the flow of weapons through Eritrea to Sudan has increased. To date, the country remains among the countries in the Horn of Africa with the highest prevalence of firearms. Given the state and ruling party's dominant role in the economy, including its monopoly on all imports, actors with ties to the state or state-embedded actors are likely involved in arms trafficking.

ENVIRONMENT

Since 2016, the Horn of Africa has emerged as a major source and transit region of wildlife products, mainly ivory, rhino horn, skins of wild animals and live animals. Historically, however, ivory poaching has not been of major concern. Eritrea plays only a minor role in this illegal trade, although Massawa port is used to ship ivory trafficked towards Asia. Despite its location in a region with considerable illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, the issue does not appear to be significant in Eritrea. With regards to flora-related crimes, there are few reports on illegal deforestation, logging, or other forms of flora trafficking conducted by criminal groups. While deforestation has been cited as a concern, there is scant reporting of it being linked to organized crime. However, military involvement has been cited in illegal logging. Additionally, low-level smuggling of cactus species to the Middle East may occur, as well as the illicit trade of gum arabic and frankincense.

Gold from Sudan appears to be smuggled through Eritrea to the United Arab Emirates, although there is little evidence of this occurring systematically. Gold smuggled out of the country due to current sanctions is the second-largest export from Eritrea. A small number of actors are involved, primarily the elite, and only a small part of the country is affected. Compared to other countries in Africa, the level of smuggling is fairly low. However, all mining companies run the risk of complicity in Eritrea's forced labour system.

DRUGS

Drug use in Eritrea is reportedly one of the lowest in the world, and there is very little evidence of a criminal market around synthetic drugs or domestic cocaine or heroin use. However, Eritrea's ports have become increasingly important along the heroin smuggling routes from Southern Asia to Europe and the Americas, and instances of cocaine trafficking cannot be ruled out. The ports of Eritrea have also become key points along the cannabis smuggling routes from Southern Asia to Europe and the Americas. Cultivation within Eritrea is relatively widespread, although there is little evidence of cannabis being cultivated for large-scale commercial supply or trafficking.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Given their dominance in the economy and the authority they maintain in society, organized criminal activity is likely largely limited to state and military actors, and individuals closely associated with them. Members of the government have taken part in transnational organized crime, and the state actors are perceived by most Eritreans as a mafia. Diplomats posted abroad, especially those in Sudan, are

prone to bribery in order to provide legal services or issue documents for travel to Eritrean citizens. Thus, diplomats allegedly facilitate human trafficking. Other state officials, however, have also been found involved in criminal activity. A case in point is police and military personnel, engaged in trafficking along the Sudanese border. In addition to state-embedded actors, transnational networks of Eritrean smugglers operate on routes towards Europe. Those operating within Eritrea are often from the same communities as the smuggled individuals. Rashaida traffickers, who have

been aided by Eritreans, are known to operate along the Eritrea–Sudan border and allegedly kidnap and hold individuals for ransom in the Sinai peninsula or in Libya.

While there are no notable mafia groups in Eritrea, the state itself is highly criminalized, allowing few foreign criminal actors to operate in the country. Nevertheless, there have been speculations over the possible involvement of criminal actors from Sudan or Egypt in Eritrean criminal markets.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Eritrea is deemed an authoritarian state controlled by President Isaias Afwerki. The latter heads the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), which is Eritrea's sole political party and has been in power since 1991. President Afwerki has been historically extremely dismissive of any suggestions of political reform. Thus, no elections have been held in the country since 1993, when Eritrea gained its independence from Ethiopia. Since then, the government has held little regard for rights and freedoms and has violated the human rights of its citizens with impunity, while the security services have operated free of any civilian oversight. Authorities follow formal and informal systems and exert almost total control over the economy. The lifting of the United Nations' sanctions and strengthening of relations with Ethiopia following a prolonged state of 'no war, no peace' has, to date, had little effect on governance. The government does not publish reliable data regarding the economy and crime dynamics, and has been criticized for its lack of transparency. Furthermore, recent attempts by external actors to support domestic data gathering and the publication of statistics have been shunned.

Eritrea is party to a number of international treaties relevant to anti-organized crime. Since 2018, the country has taken steps towards normalizing and strengthening relations with some neighbouring countries and Somalia. Its relations with the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union, several UN agencies, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), remain strained. However, the government has made steps to build partnerships and strengthen its capacities to counter human trafficking. Additionally, Eritrean authorities have co-hosted training seminars with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime for key government stakeholders on human trafficking, and contributed to a regional plan of action on combating trafficking. Engagement with external entities on such matters represents a significant departure from previous practice. Eritrea has a number of laws pertaining to organized crime, but in spite of having an approved

constitution, it has not yet been enforced. Nonetheless, the penal code criminalizes some forms of organized crime, including human trafficking. In addition, Eritrea joined the Elephant Protection Initiative to support its small population of elephants in the Gash-Setit wildlife reserve.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Eritrea has no independent judiciary, national assembly, or other democratic institutions. The resulting power vacuum has given rise to an environment where human rights violations and impunity persist. There are no judiciary-related specialized units with the specific aim of countering organized crime, and prison conditions remain harsh, even life-threatening, with severe overcrowding being a huge issue. Eritrea has weak law-enforcement capacities, although penalties exist in the legal framework of the country. There is neither an independent police oversight body nor a specialized law-enforcement unit in the country, and corruption and bribery are common. Eritrea shares land borders with Ethiopia, Sudan and Djibouti, and encompasses 441 islands. The government holds firm control over the country's borders, including through enforcing a 'shoot to kill' policy for all those who attempt to gain an unauthorized entry into the country or try to flee it. Nevertheless, there is mounting evidence that it controls and profits from the smuggling of people as well as goods, including narcotics.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Eritrea is reportedly at a high risk of money laundering primarily because of its cash-based, largely informal economy. Other vulnerabilities include the widespread use of informal money transfer systems, such as the hawala, the insufficient regulatory capacity and the growing corruption in the country. The state currency – the nakfa, is not fully convertible, which opens up certain vulnerabilities to the use of illicit financial services. Banks in the country are all under the control of the state and are not transparent.

Specific references to money laundering are not apparent in Eritrean laws or proclamations available to the general public. State cooperation with the IMF and the World Bank is insufficient. Eritrea is considered extremely difficult with regards to ease of doing business, and the UN, the European Union and the United States have placed a 12-year arms embargo on Eritrea. For years, Eritrea's economy has been a prerogative of the PFDJ party and the military. The economy remains very weak and citizens experience shortages of fuel and drinking water as well as constant electricity blackouts.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

There is no evidence of government efforts to identify, protect or support victims of trafficking. There are no proactive victim identification mechanisms in place to recognize victims from at-risk groups, especially Eritrean citizens that have been deported from abroad or those who are fleeing the country. In addition, the government has yet to report the establishment of a standardized instrument for referring trafficking victims to proper care. Moreover, foreign victims have no alternatives to being deported to their home countries in the instances where they face punishment. Although Eritrea launched a series of awareness-raising events and poster campaigns to bring the attention of citizens to the dangers of human trafficking, national authorities have limited comprehension of the phenomenon. With regards to press freedom, Eritrea has a clear dictatorship where the media have no rights, and in 2019, 16 journalists were reported imprisoned in the country. Non-governmental organizations are not permitted to operate in Eritrea and independent media outlets were closed down in 2001. Additionally, authorities in the country have no regard for the freedom of assembly, and demonstrations in the recent past have been met with lethal force and arbitrary detentions. No foreign human rights organizations are permitted to function within the country.

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