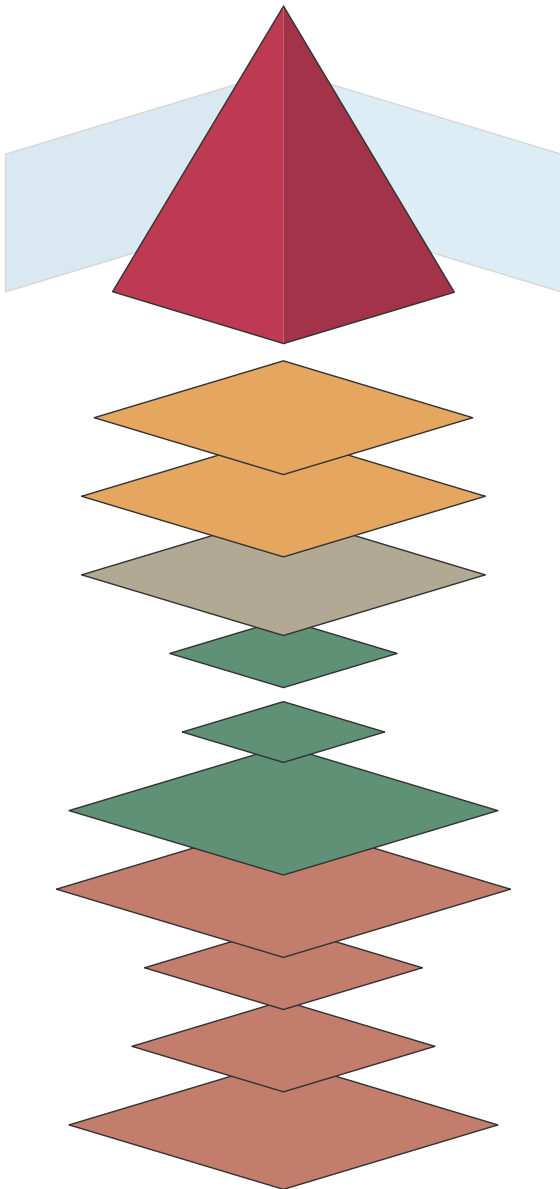




IRAN



7.10 CRIMINALITY SCORE

6th of 193 countries
2nd of 46 Asian countries
1st of 14 Western Asian countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS 6.95

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	7.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	8.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	8.00
FLORA CRIMES	4.50
FAUNA CRIMES	4.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	8.50
HEROIN TRADE	9.00
COCAINE TRADE	5.50
CANNABIS TRADE	6.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	8.50



CRIMINAL ACTORS 7.25

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	7.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	7.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	9.50
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.00



3.50 RESILIENCE SCORE

153rd of 193 countries
38th of 46 Asian countries
12th of 14 Western Asian countries



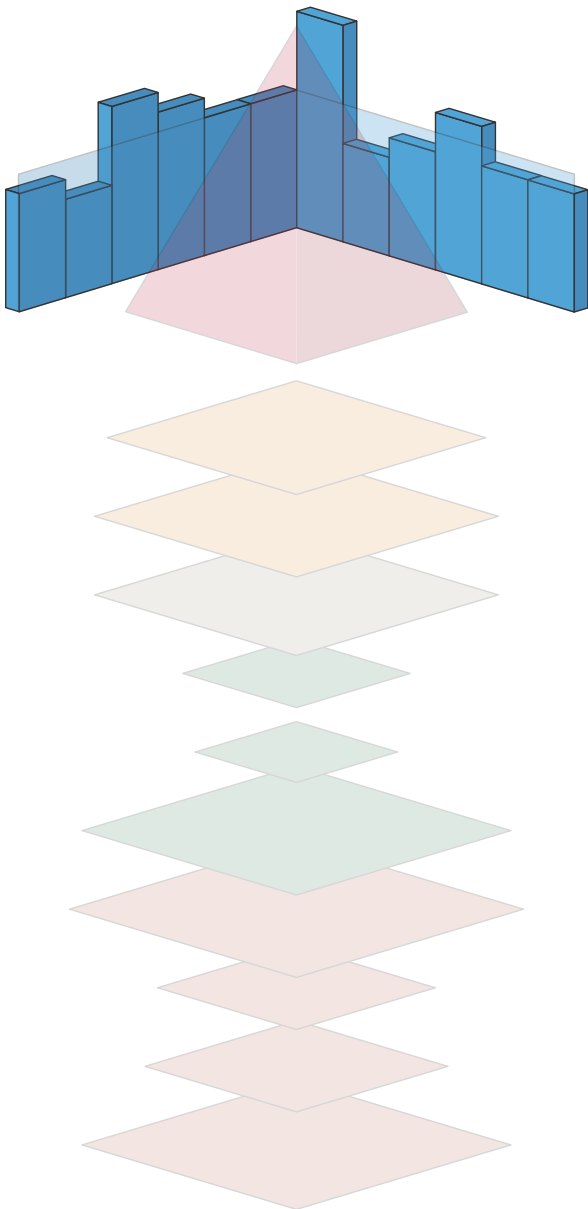
Funding provided by the United States Government.



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.



IRAN



3.50

RESILIENCE SCORE

153rd of 193 countries

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POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	3.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	2.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	4.50
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	4.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	3.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	3.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	2.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	3.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	4.00
PREVENTION	3.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	3.00



7.10

CRIMINALITY SCORE

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CRIMINAL MARKETS 6.95



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking is a widespread issue in Iran and primarily occurs in the form of sex trafficking. Iranians are trafficked abroad to the Gulf, the Caucasus and, to a lesser extent, Iraqi Kurdistan. Internal human trafficking also occurs, primarily between large cities such as Tehran, Shiraz and Tabriz. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has also allegedly forced victims to engage in combat in pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and Syria, although this remains disputed. Iran's human-trafficking market seems to have been at least partially hindered, however, by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Human smuggling is also a significant issue in Iran and serves as a lucrative source of income for various criminal groups. Corrupt government officials also facilitate human smuggling. The human-trafficking and human-smuggling markets are closely intertwined, as many smuggled individuals have been exploited along their journeys. Human smuggling is especially prevalent along the Iranian-Afghan and Iranian-Turkish borders. Tens of thousands of Iraqi refugees and millions of Afghan refugees currently reside in Iran, and hundreds of thousands of Iranian refugees reside abroad. Widespread economic hardship and a lack of employment across the country exacerbate the human-smuggling market, especially for Afghan refugees and Iranians seeking better economic opportunities abroad. Economic hardship has been further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and demand for the services of smugglers is expected to rise, although the pandemic also partially hindered Iran's human-smuggling market due to travel restrictions. The economies of Sistan and Urumiyeh, in particular, are largely dependent upon human smuggling.

TRADE

Iran is one of the least transparent countries globally regarding arms exports. Due to strict gun control legislation and low rates of firearms possession, internal arms-trafficking in Iran is limited. However, regional arms-trafficking is a crucial part of the Iranian government's geopolitical strategy. Sanctions on Iran have rendered arms exports illegal, and state-embedded actors thus traffic arms across the Middle East and Southern Asia. Arms, ammunition, drones and other resources are trafficked to Iranian affiliates, allies and combat units in the Axis of Resistance. Iranian actors are also suspected of trafficking ballistic and cruise missiles across the Middle East and are known to export rifles to Syria and Gaza, as well as aiding the local production of arms in these destinations. Iranian involvement in arms

trafficking has thus significantly led to the proliferation of illicit arms sales across the Middle East.

ENVIRONMENT

Iran has one of the largest oil reserves worldwide, and the country's oil exports have increased in recent years. However, due to the involvement of the IRGC in oil extraction, the US has placed sanctions on Iranian oil and the EU has also placed sanctions on Iranian oil exports to Syria. Illicit oil trading has engendered various socio-economic, geopolitical and environmental challenges both in Iran and across the region. Fuel smuggling also occurs in Iran's border regions, particularly in Baluchistan and Kurdistan. Smugglers also transport Iranian oil and subsidized fuel to neighbouring countries to be resold at higher prices. Oil smuggling often occurs alongside other cross-border crimes such as drug trafficking and human trafficking, and corrupt government officials play a significant role in facilitating the market. Not least of all, despite legislative measures taken, the illegal sale and smuggling of soil from Iran to neighbouring states is reportedly still ongoing.

Since a 2017 ban on logging in the Hyrcanian forests, Iran's illicit logging market has largely diminished. Although independent loggers continue to engage in illicit logging in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, as well as in the Zagros forests, criminal groups are not believed to be involved. However, the illicit orchid-tuber market is a significant issue. Orchid tubers are smuggled out of Iran and into neighbouring countries or to Southern Asia for use in traditional drinks and medicines. Often they are smuggled alongside other products, such as nuts, or mislabelled and exported with false permits. Although less pervasive, poaching also occurs in Iran due to the presence of rare wildlife species. In particular, rare sheep and ram sub-species are poached for meat or to be used as trophies, especially in the Masjed mountain range. Wildlife smuggling is also believed to occur.

DRUGS

Iran is a major transit country for Afghan-produced heroin. Heroin is primarily trafficked through Iran and onwards through the Balkans to Europe. However, heroin also accounts for more than half of drug consumption in Iran, and the country is one of the cheapest in which to buy heroin worldwide. Heroin addiction rates are thus extremely high, and heroin seizures are considerable in number. Heroin trafficking is largely facilitated by foreign organized-crime groups operating in Iran. Corrupt government officials, along with members of the IRGC, have been accused of involvement in heroin trafficking, although this remains disputed. However, US sanctions

have been placed on high-ranking IRGC commanders due to allegations of heroin trafficking in Sistan-e-Baluchistan. Iran's heroin trade incites high levels of violence and has resulted in multiple violent clashes between Iranian border guards and traffickers. Economic devastation due to the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to boost the heroin trade as a means of generating revenue. Cannabis consumption is also a significant issue in Iran, although there is relative tolerance towards cannabis consumption compared to other drugs. Cannabis is primarily cultivated for the production of hashish rather than marijuana. Afghan hashish is also exported from and consumed in Iran. However, Iran has decreased in importance as a transit country for Afghan cannabis in recent years, largely due to the growth of other cannabis markets in the Middle East and North Africa. The home-cultivation and sale of cannabis are also believed to occur in Tehran, albeit on a smaller scale. Cannabis is primarily consumed by the middle class, and its higher price is attributed to the lack of sophisticated and large-scale networks involved in the trade.

Iran is also one of the world's top methamphetamine producers. Most methamphetamine is trafficked out of Iran to other countries in the Middle East, Europe and South-eastern Asia. Methamphetamine is also trafficked into Iran, and Iranian criminals aid in the production of methamphetamine in neighbouring countries. The largest seizure of methamphetamine on record in Iran occurred in 2019, when officials seized 850 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine in Sistan-e-Baluchistan. Iran's methamphetamine market is expanding, as production labs are emerging across the country. The IRGC is suspected of involvement in methamphetamine production, as no known crime groups in the country possess the equipment and knowledge necessary to produce methamphetamine at the high quality that it is produced. However, methamphetamine consumption has slowed in recent years. Iran's cocaine trade remains minimal, although the IRGC has also been accused of involvement in cocaine trafficking and of harbouring links to Latin American drug cartels. There have also been accusations of both IRGC and Hezbollah involvement in cocaine trafficking between North America, West Africa and Europe, although these claims remain unsubstantiated. While Iran's cocaine trade does not induce local violence,

cocaine profits are believed to aid IRGC-funded violence across the Middle East.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Away from major Iranian cities, mafia-style groups wield significant power. These groups are made up mostly of religious leaders who protect the interests of people paying their dues to the local mosque. Gifts and donations secure favours and contribute to the resolution of disputes, obtaining business licences or building permissions, among others. While these groups do not operate overtly as criminal networks, they are considered mafia-like as they have the authority to confiscate land and act as a godfather who rewards loyalty. Most criminal activities are carried out by state-embedded actors and criminal networks. Economic hardship facilitates state-embedded corruption and involvement in criminal activities. Most criminal markets are controlled by state-embedded actors, especially the environmental-crime, drug-trafficking and human-trafficking markets. Corrupt government officials and judges have also been bribed by drug traffickers. While the IRGC has been extensively accused of involvement in organized crime, and is considered by some to be the country's main criminal organisation, this remains disputed. The IRGC has been labelled as a terrorist organisation by the US, although the international community has not followed suit. However, it is indisputable that the IRGC has had a significant impact on Iran's democratic process.

Criminal networks typically specialize in one or two criminal markets, and violence is primarily related to the heroin trade. Loose criminal networks are also active in the human-trafficking and drug-trafficking markets and have links to foreign counterparts. Although criminal networks don't have a significant influence on the democratic process, drug profits are believed to have infiltrated the political arena. Foreign actors are not extremely active in Iran, largely due to the extreme precautions the Iranian government takes against foreign intervention. However, local criminals do cooperate with foreign counterparts, especially in transnational markets such as drug trafficking, human smuggling and fuel smuggling.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Iran is a highly fragile and vulnerable state with a dual governance system, comprising both democratic and religious elements. Democratically elected officials struggle to exercise leadership, as the country's religious supreme leader is not subject to checks and balances. This hinders

the government's capacity to address organized crime, and many efforts to both combat organized crime and establish sustainable global partnerships have been impeded by the IRGC. Corruption is also a systemic issue in Iran, enabling both impunity and criminality to run rampant. Certain steps have been taken recently to clamp-down on corruption, but

these efforts were perceived rather as politicized trials, where either people with links to reformists/moderates or ‘scapegoats’ have been prosecuted. Anti-corruption mechanisms are frequently criticized for inefficacy, as they enable impunity among certain elements of the state apparatus. Access to information in Iran is also poor, as information that could be used against state interests is exempt from transparency laws. Democratically elected leaders can be held to account, but not those government elements under the command of the religious supreme leader, which enables extreme shortfalls of accountability and oversight. Nevertheless, there has been increasing support for moderate and reformist candidates in recent years, alongside increasing uprisings and protests. Traditionally pro-regime communities have also engaged in protest, illuminating the current regime’s high level of vulnerability. Local insurgencies have also resulted in clashes between the IRGC and both Kurdish-affiliated and Baluch nationalist groups.

Iran’s efforts to engage in international cooperation are also negligible. However, the government cooperates with INTERPOL in efforts to increase Iranian law-enforcement capacity, and also with the UNODC to counter human trafficking, money laundering and cybercrime. In 2020, the UNODC opened a new capacity-building centre in Tehran promoting increased regional cooperation on drug crimes. Although Iran has signed and ratified a few select treaties and conventions related to organized crime – excluding the Arms Trade Treaty – enforcement remains limited. However, the country has strict drug laws, as well as laws against human trafficking. While the government has expressed intent to expand cooperation on extradition matters, fears of persecution in the country are likely to hinder such agreements.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Iran also has a dual judiciary system. Although civilian courts have political independence, the Revolutionary Court system lacks political independence and specializes in offences deemed to endanger the Iranian regime. Unlike in civilian courts, individuals charged in the Revolutionary Court system lack access to legal defence, are not assigned juries and are often executed without delay. The Revolutionary Courts have thus been instrumental in the mass executions that have taken place in Iran throughout the previous decades. Iran had the second-highest rate of execution in the world in 2019 and most of the executed are prisoners of conscience. Although executions have decreased in recent years, they remain relatively high. Iran’s judiciary system has also persecuted cases of corruption and targeted criminal networks in recent years, although this has allegedly been partially driven by political motives and efforts to regain public trust. Moreover, the judiciary tends to target only low-level criminals. Iranian prison standards are poor and prisons suffer from overcrowding. Prison officials have

also denied food and medical care to prisoners, and both physical and psychological torture is common.

Iranian law enforcement lacks specialized units targeting specific forms of organized crime. However, the Anti-Narcotics Branch targets drug crimes. In addition to the police, the Basij and various intelligence units under the IRGC engage in law enforcement, although their activities tend to focus on counterinsurgency. There is widespread corruption within law enforcement and security services are often poorly equipped and trained. Importantly, law enforcement agencies, particularly in the borderland regions, operate with little regard for human rights. Iran’s geographic positioning between continents, desert and mountainous terrain, and various maritime ports enable organized crime to flourish. The country’s long borders are difficult to monitor and enforce. As such, border regions are the least secure in the country, and a host of armed opposition groups operate in these regions. Cross-border criminal activity is also facilitated by corrupt border officials and IRGC personnel, especially along Iran’s border with Iraqi Kurdistan. Nevertheless, territorial integrity in Iran remains relatively strong.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Iran is on the FATF blacklist, and also supports organisations widely designated as terrorist groups. Although steps towards the strengthening of the country’s AML/CFT capacity have been taken, including through the introduction of new legislation in recent years, major deficiencies remain. In particular, it is legal to finance foreign groups that fight foreign occupation, in effect rendering possible the financing of terrorist groups. The Iranian economy has also been severely hindered by US sanctions, corruption and criminality. Political actors wield significant control over the economy, limiting the political independence of legitimate business. The Basij and the IRGC control large swathes of the economy and the IRGC, in particular, exerts influence over most legal sectors. The Basij and the IRGC also engage in the extortion of businesses, making business operations in Iran extremely difficult.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Iranian government has shifted towards viewing people who use drugs as victims rather than criminals throughout the last decade, prior to which voluntary treatment programmes did not exist. Currently, various drop-in centres and clinics assist people who use drugs with harm reduction services and also provide treatment. Nevertheless, a highly punitive element of Iran’s approach to drug use is still in place, with ‘drug treatment camps’ rife with corruption and human rights abuses being operational in the country. Iran also has a witness protection programme, although the government does little to aid human-trafficking victims and lacks the necessary framework for victim identification. Crime prevention strategies are also negligent, and largely

ineffective. Most crime prevention strategies take the approach of deterrence through harsh punishment.

Civil-society and media freedom in Iran is also very poor. The government has heavily cracked down on independent NGOs and environmentalists, as well as on protesters. Protestors have been killed on direct orders from the government, and journalists have been both imprisoned and executed. Nevertheless, civil society remains relatively active, especially in the arena of drug-abuse prevention. However, some civil society organisations have been co-opted by the state. The media is also heavily censored and restricted, although government criticism and political debate in Iran remains vibrant compared to other countries with similar media environments. Social media is also banned, and the government has taken efforts to curb the flow of information from outside of the country.

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