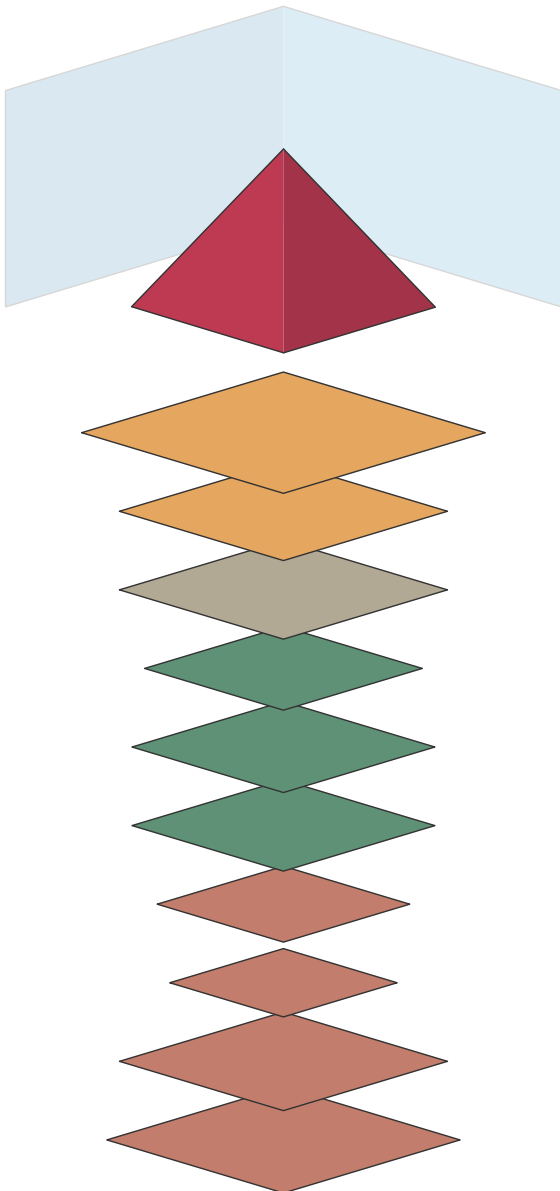




KUWAIT



5.14 CRIMINALITY SCORE

81st of 193 countries
25th of 46 Asian countries
10th of 14 Western Asian countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS **6.15**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	8.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	6.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	6.50
FLORA CRIMES	5.50
FAUNA CRIMES	6.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	6.00
HEROIN TRADE	5.00
COCAINE TRADE	4.50
CANNABIS TRADE	6.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	7.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS **4.13**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	6.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	3.50



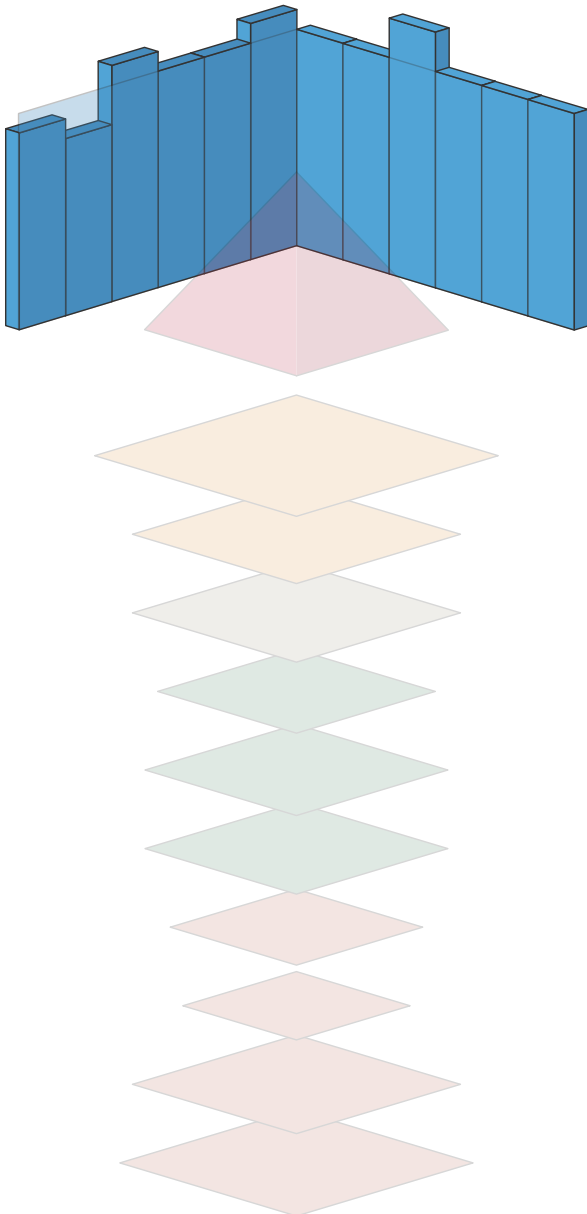
5.54 RESILIENCE SCORE

55th of 193 countries
10th of 46 Asian countries
4th of 14 Western Asian countries





KUWAIT



5.54

RESILIENCE SCORE

55th of 193 countries

10th of 46 Asian countries

4th of 14 Western Asian countries

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



5.14

CRIMINALITY SCORE

81st of 193 countries

25th of 46 Asian countries

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CRIMINAL MARKETS

6.15



CRIMINAL ACTORS

4.13



CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking is a serious issue in Kuwait, with many migrants being subjected to forced labour and prostitution. For the most part, migrants travel willingly to Kuwait from elsewhere in the Middle East, Southern Asia and Africa to seek legitimate employment, but become vulnerable to human trafficking perpetrated by recruitment agencies. Irregular migrants also work informally in Kuwait, where they may face practices that amount to modern slavery. Corruption is rampant as state officials accept bribes and sell work permits to illegal-labour recruitment agencies and migrant workers. Thus, migrant workers are vulnerable to being sold in online 'slave markets' via social media and other online apps. The Kafala (sponsorship) system in Kuwait further endangers migrant workers by binding them to their employers as sponsors, increasing the likelihood of abusive work relationships.

Kuwait relies heavily on imported labour, which promotes a large human smuggling market. The Kafala system creates market opportunities for higher levels of irregular and exploitative migration by reducing entry barriers and increasing incentives for imported labour. Foreign workers are smuggled into Kuwait mainly through the country's al-Abdali border crossing, where instability in neighbouring Iraq has created a vulnerability. Migrant workers predominantly come from Southern Asia, South-eastern Asia, Africa and elsewhere in the Middle East, relying on recruitment agencies to procure legal documents, but often become victims of fraud. If migrant workers are unable to obtain work permits, they opt to be covertly smuggled into the country.

TRADE

The number of small and light arms in Kuwait has grown to pose a large threat to security. Cases of attempted arms trafficking into the country have been recorded, but information on the scope and scale is scarce. Kuwaiti contract rifles have appeared in Iraq, on the local arms market in Iraqi Kurdistan; however, it is unknown whether these were captured weapons from the 1991 Gulf War or diverted surplus. Reports from early 2020 have alleged that Kuwait was one of the host countries for companies laundering proceeds related to the North Korean nuclear programme of North Korea.

ENVIRONMENT

Allegedly, an illicit market for agarwood exists in Kuwait, although its dynamics are unknown. The UAE is an important part of the illicit agarwood trade, importing, consuming and re-exporting agarwood, with Kuwait being among its primary end destinations. Data also shows that Kuwait appears to be a re-exporter as well. The fauna crimes market in Kuwait primarily revolves around the illicit trade of live rare species to be kept as pets, but the dynamics of the market are uncharted. Scarce information points to the presence of dealers offering endangered species such as cheetahs, tigers, birds, reptiles and great apes online. Evidence suggests that falcons and eagles are smuggled into Kuwait from Iraq at al-Abdali, while parrots have been smuggled from Cameroon. Reports also indicate that orangutans, gibbons and clouded leopards have been sold in pet shops in the country. Even though Kuwait has one of the largest oil reserves in the world, the boost in oil-derivative prices in neighbouring countries has increased the smuggling of oil derivatives into Kuwait. Smuggling occurs through seaports and across land borders. The ruling family and Kuwaiti elite, on the other hand, control the domestic oil-derivatives sector. Purportedly, the subsidized oil and diesel budget is subject to organized theft by state-embedded actors. Multiple reports indicate the existence of gold smuggling out of Kuwait to Bangladesh and India, but this appears to be small in scale.

DRUGS

The presence of heroin and cocaine is fairly low in Kuwait, but a domestic market exists nonetheless. Official reports indicate that the al-Abdali border crossing with Iraq is the primary entry point for both drugs into Kuwait, but cocaine has also been smuggled into the country by post. The exact dynamics of the heroin and cocaine markets are unknown, but evidence suggest that taxi drivers are involved in the distribution of drugs in general in the country.

Studies suggest that Spice, a type of synthetic cannabis, is the most prevalent drug in Kuwait; however, other synthetic drugs, such as methamphetamine and Captagon, are also used. Cannabis is the second most popular drug in Kuwait and, like heroin and cocaine, is mostly brought into the country through al-Abdali from Iraq. Cannabis traffickers, reportedly both domestic and foreign actors, have used maritime borders to smuggle the drug, while synthetic drugs are known to be smuggled via air cargo as well.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

State-embedded actors seem to be the most prolific criminal category in Kuwait. High-level state officials are

involved in the organized theft of public funds, related to state control over the lucrative oil and gas sector. Additionally, in terms of bribery, facilitation payments and gifts are widespread and occur with impunity, and state-embedded actors also aid the illicit activities of criminal networks. The latter for the most part engage in human smuggling and trafficking as well as drug trafficking, taking advantage of their ties to state-embedded actors to avoid investigations, escape prosecution or obtain fraudulent documents. Recruitment agencies dominate the market for the smuggling and trafficking of human beings. Criminal networks also organize online 'slave markets' where they

post listings of human beings for sale. Moreover, criminal networks engage in smuggling drugs into Kuwait, which has been exacerbated by Iraqi instability and a lack of control along the Kuwait-Iraq border.

Foreign actors participate in various criminal activities in Kuwait, mostly in the smuggling and trafficking of human beings as well as in drug trafficking. However, foreign actors are probably less influential than domestic criminal networks and state-embedded actors. There is no evidence to suggest that mafia-style groups exist in Kuwait.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Both its geographical positioning and its high dependence on foreign labour make Kuwait attractive for organized crime operations. As drug trafficking and human smuggling and trafficking are the most prominent markets in Kuwait, they tend to feature more strongly in the government's anti-organized crime agenda. The Arab Spring uprisings have increased political pressure on Kuwait, especially with respect to a lack of transparency as well as social and political freedoms. In spite of anti-corruption strategies aimed at fostering transparency, good governance and integrity, anti-corruption laws are not effectively enforced in the country. There is an anti-corruption body – the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) – but its efficiency is questionable, as corruption is rampant in Kuwait. Transparency is also an issue, as the country lacks legislation that guarantees the right to access public information and specific mechanisms to encourage the disclosure of information on governmental operations. Furthermore, there is a law prohibiting disclosure of information as well as statistical data regarding the Kuwait Investment Authority, or the transactions, assets and investments of the natural resources funds authority. This illustrates the entrenched opaqueness of Kuwaiti governmental apparatus.

Kuwait is party to several international treaties pertaining to organized crime, which arguably provide sufficient grounds for the country to implement effective anti-organized crime measures. Kuwait's central role in the Gulf Cooperation Council and its strong relationship with the US are also central components of its international cooperation efforts. In addition, the UNODC and INTERPOL support Kuwaiti anti-organized crime initiatives, while UNDP works with Nazaha in promoting anti-corruption. Kuwait has extradition treaties with several countries, but a number of African states have bans preventing their nationals from being recruited as domestic workers in Kuwait, due to increased vulnerability to exploitation. While Kuwaiti

legislation criminalizes human smuggling and trafficking as well as other offences of interest to this Index, many laws remain unenforced. Weak labour protections deny workers safeguards against exploitative practices, and sponsorship laws tie migrant workers' legal residence and valid immigration status to employers, which limits their movement and punishes workers for fleeing abusive workplaces. Corruption also hinders the implementation of laws, with officials selling work permits to illegal recruitment agencies and taking bribes to enable offenders to avoid investigation or escape prosecution.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Executive pressure renders the criminal justice system unsuccessful in guaranteeing fair trial and due process rights, despite the judiciary being independent on paper. Prosecutions of organized crime cases also remain low, and convictions even lower, while both judges and prosecutors may at times be erratic in their conduct and decision making. Abuse of office, active and passive bribery as well as receiving gifts are all issues underpinning the Kuwaiti judicial system. There are several units responsible for tackling organized crime, but focus tends to be put on human trafficking and smuggling. Nevertheless, international organizations maintain that there are some structural issues with Kuwaiti anti-organized crime units. Coordination between authorities, service providers and NGOs with respect to countering organized crime is also not yet at the required level. Not least, corruption is reported to permeate law enforcement as well. Against this backdrop, Kuwait remains vulnerable to organized criminal activity, due to ongoing regional conflict, particularly in Iraq. ISIS's control over large parts of Iraq meant that Kuwait used to face significant challenges in securing its northern border, but the threat seems to have subsided. Nonetheless, traffickers find new and innovative ways to smuggle illicit

goods into the country, which requires adaptation on the part of national law enforcement agencies.

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ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Kuwait allegedly provides a suitable environment for money laundering, with fraud, corruption and smuggling all generating proceeds needing to be laundered in the country. Recently, authorities stepped up anti-money laundering efforts, which are evident in the better identification of money laundering activities. This increased awareness of the threat of money laundering and the implementation of adequate anti-money laundering legislation is, however, somewhat weakened by the absence of substantive efforts in tackling elite corruption. On the other hand, the business environment in Kuwait has improved since 2018 because of the implementation of measures to strengthen and improve the economic regulatory framework. Additionally, the Kuwaiti government has announced plans to help the economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic through significant stimulus measures.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

There are government-operated shelters in Kuwait for female human trafficking victims, providing medical, psychological and legal services, as along with repatriation assistance. However, even while residing in these shelters, victims are at risk of deportation and detention, based on charges of irregular migration filed by exploitative employers. There are no shelters for men, leaving male workers subject to exploitation with no assistance and protection. Refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people are also made vulnerable to trafficking due to the absence of adequate legal and policy frameworks to protect them. Despite the long-standing risk of victimization, prevention efforts are underdeveloped. Awareness-raising campaigns feature strongly on the government's agenda, but the public and employers of domestic workers alike remain unaware that human trafficking is an issue. A national strategy to combat trafficking was approved in 2018, but efforts were limited to the production and distribution of anti-trafficking brochures to vulnerable people as well as awareness raising through media campaigns. A national strategy to combat drug use has been implemented along with the UNDP and the UNODC, but, as with trafficking, it is limited to awareness raising. The country has suffered from a deteriorating media environment in recent years, with government controlling all publications and distribution of information, along with companies providing internet, mobile, cable and satellite services. Strict censorship laws threaten journalists with arrest, while freedom of assembly and of association are limited, despite being guaranteed by law. Civil society is also monitored by the authorities, and the registration and licensing of NGOs is restricted. NGOs cannot engage in political matters, but unlicensed and unofficial organizations have become more active following the Arab Spring.