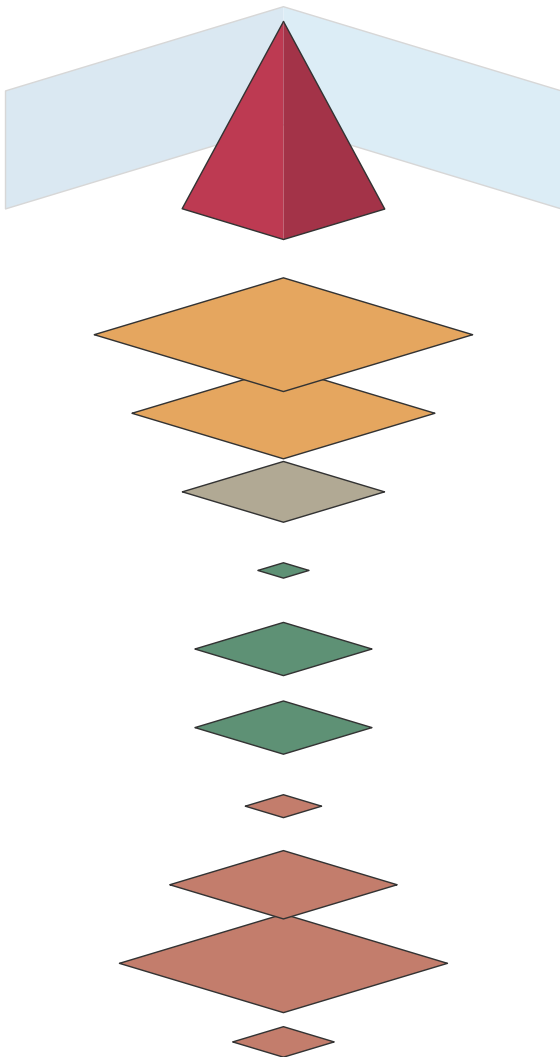




# MAURITANIA



## 4.38 CRIMINALITY SCORE

125<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
40<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  
5<sup>th</sup> of 6 North African countries



### CRIMINAL MARKETS 4.00

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	7.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	6.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	4.00
FLORA CRIMES	1.00
FAUNA CRIMES	3.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	3.50
HEROIN TRADE	1.50
COCAINE TRADE	4.50
CANNABIS TRADE	6.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	2.00



### CRIMINAL ACTORS 4.75

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	2.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	4.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	7.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.00



## 3.08 RESILIENCE SCORE

169<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
40<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  
5<sup>th</sup> of 6 North African countries



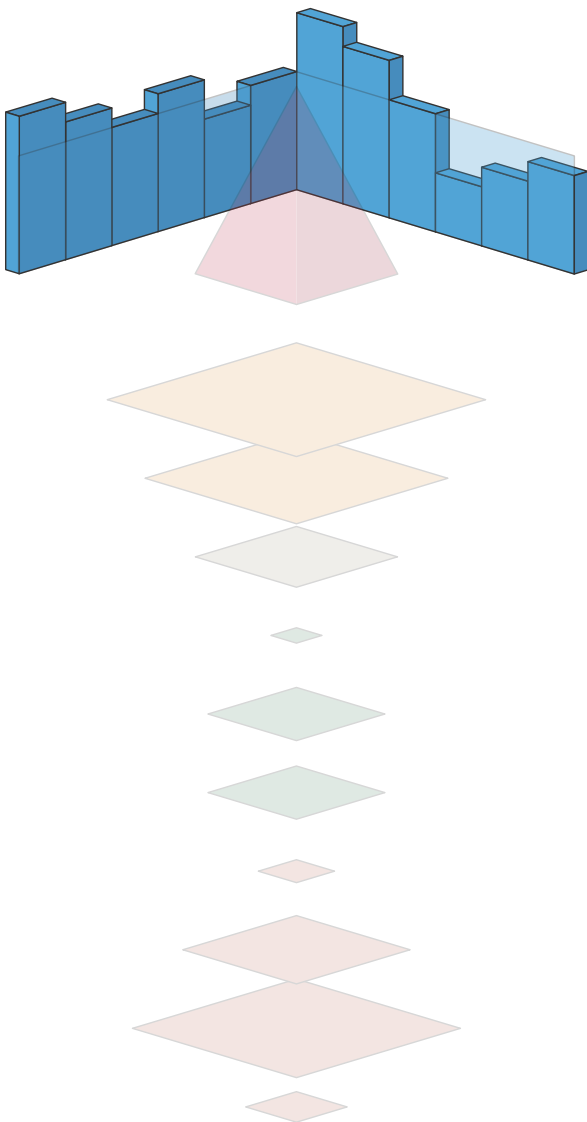
Funding provided by the United States Government.



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.



# MAURITANIA



## 3.08 RESILIENCE SCORE

169<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
40<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  
5<sup>th</sup> of 6 North African countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	4.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	3.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	3.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	3.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	2.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	3.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	4.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	4.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	3.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	1.50
PREVENTION	2.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	2.50

## 4.38 CRIMINALITY SCORE

125<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
40<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  
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CRIMINAL MARKETS	4.00
CRIMINAL ACTORS	4.75



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# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Modern slavery is a pervasive phenomenon in Mauritania, which has an embedded culture of slavery dating back centuries. It is a key point of social discontent and diplomatic estrangement as there has been evidence of state complicity in slavery and attempts to silence activists who seek to draw attention to the issue. Men, women and children from poor communities are all susceptible to forced labour, begging and servitude. Mauritanian women are also victims of trafficking in the Gulf countries, where they are subjected to sexual slavery and forced domestic service. While modern slavery is widespread across the country, members of the Haratine ethnic minority group are particularly affected.

Mauritania is a transit country for migrants – mainly from Mali, Senegal and Guinea – who are smuggled into Europe, though less so than other Sahel-Saharan states. The government has an effective border-control system to prevent human smuggling. Despite this, the number of departures from Mauritania's northern coastal area towards the Spanish Canary Islands is on the rise, with many ship wrecks being reported in 2019. The Mauritanian government monitors internal movement as a means of controlling its borders, which makes mobility for irregular migrants more difficult than in other countries in the region. Nevertheless, occasional departures from Mauritania along previously closed routes have been reported in recent years. The country has also become a key entry point for Syrian refugees arriving in Africa.

### TRADE

Conflict zones and radical groups operating in the Maghreb and Sahel have resulted in all states in the region, including Mauritania, being vulnerable to the trafficking of arms. However, the market is not as prevalent as in other states in the region. In Mauritania, most small arms and light weapons are stolen or bought illegally from civilians and security forces. Arms trafficking is most prevalent along the Western Sahara border, where it flows in both directions. It also takes place along the Mauritania-Mali border, especially in the province of Hodh Ech Chargui. A small black market for arms exists in the capital, Nouakchott, which is experiencing a rise in petty crime.

### ENVIRONMENT

Due to the ecology and geography of the region, the trafficking of illegal flora is largely absent in Mauritania. There is also no real evidence of poaching, due in part to a lack of commonly poached and profitable wildlife. There is poaching of small game, but only for the purposes of food and minor economic gain. However, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing may soon become a problem. Senegalese boats often cross into Mauritania's territorial waters to fish because stocks in Senegalese waters have been depleted. Most unregulated fishing in Mauritania is perpetrated by Chinese, Turkish and European boats. There are reports of government corruption facilitating IUU fishing practices. Violence often occurs between the Mauritanian coast guard and Senegalese fishermen just off the south coast of Mauritania in the Senegalese region of St Louis.

Mauritania is a producer of gold, oil and iron ore. While the smuggling of these minerals is not widely reported, a criminal market for these non-renewable resources may exist. Smuggled petrol is usually intercepted on the Algerian side of the Mauritania-Algeria border.

### DRUGS

Mauritania is a transit point for the smuggling of cannabis, which reportedly enters the country from Morocco and is destined for the Arabian Gulf. Cannabis remains a significant problem for Mauritania, despite strict sanctions regarding its use, possession and cultivation. Seizures of large quantities have occurred recently, with large drug convoys entering from southern Morocco, as well as via El Guerguerat.

Mauritania also operates as a transit point for cocaine from South America that is destined for Europe. It was a key transit point from 2007–2008, but seizures have declined substantially since then, which could suggest reduced cocaine flows passing through the country. Most of the cocaine coming into Mauritania originates from Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. It is trafficked south by land along different desert routes towards Mali. There is little information on the domestic use of cocaine.

Mauritania is a potential transit point for heroin coming from the Middle East to Europe. However, seizures of the drug are unreported, and Mauritania is probably too inconvenient as a trafficking route, given the presence of other transit hubs such as Nigeria. Research suggests there is very little domestic trade in or consumption of heroin. Similarly, there is very little evidence to suggest that there is any significant trade in synthetic drugs in

Mauritania – although given the prevalence of the market in the region, it is unlikely that it is completely absent.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Smuggling networks are active in Mauritania, especially in the case of cannabis, pharmaceuticals and cigarettes. Smuggling takes place cross-country and along the Algerian and Moroccan borders, mostly by Mauritanian nationals. Traffickers often utilize family networks and tribal ties to facilitate smuggling. State complicity in the contraband trade is reportedly prevalent in Mauritania, with customs

officials playing a key role by providing smugglers with special permits to present at checkpoints.

There are a number of foreign criminal groups in Mauritania. Moroccan kif and hashish smugglers use a route that bisects the extreme east and north of the country; Sahrawi smugglers are active in the north; and there is a mix of West African networks in the south. Malian drug traffickers are active at the Mali-Mauritania border and have relationships with a coalition of terrorist groups in northern Mali. These criminal actors are regularly pursued by Mauritanian authorities, resulting in clashes with the country's security forces.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

A history of coups has undermined the stability of Mauritania's government, which can best be described as authoritarian and repressive. While it has worked with other countries to try and prevent organized crime – as well as taken a firm stance against the trafficking of illicit goods, especially when linked to terrorist organizations – state collusion with criminal actors appears to be common practice, and there is unwillingness on the part of high-ranking officials to uphold the rule of law when it threatens their interests or those of their associates. The government has targeted and imprisoned prominent anti-corruption activists, further underscoring its lack of transparency and accountability.

Mauritania has ratified a number of international treaties on organized crime. Its bilateral cooperation with the US is extensive, but there are no extradition agreements in place between the two countries. The G5 Sahel headquarters is located in Mauritania – however, its June 2020 summit did little to reinvigorate levels of international cooperation on the fight against organized crime. Regional cooperation, in particular with the Economic Community of West African States, is not well established, information sharing is poor, and there is a considerable degree of distrust between military officials of the respective states. On a domestic level, Mauritania has a number of laws related to organized crime, but none of them focus solely on the issue.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Mauritania's judicial system lacks a division that deals specifically with organized crime; and it is compromised due to the influence the government exerts over it. Prison conditions in the country are generally poor – sanitation and medical facilities are lacking, and reports indicate that prisoners are frequently tortured by correctional officers.

Mauritania's law-enforcement agencies have almost zero operational funding. The police service lacks personnel, and suffers from corruption and high politicization. Law-enforcement officials are believed to be facilitators of organized-crime activities, although some notable arrests and seizures have been made with the help of foreign agencies.

International cooperation has contributed to an increase in Mauritania's territorial integrity. However, most measures are implemented through the lens of counter terrorism, rather than against organized crime. In spite of involving the military in its border-control measures and enhancing its security at key transit points, Mauritania's long borders are porous due to its geography, with most of the country consisting of sparsely inhabited desert areas. Nevertheless, Mauritania has an extensive intelligence network that allows it to monitor its territory, including in areas beyond the physical presence of security forces.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Mauritania's large informal sector and underdeveloped financial infrastructure make it difficult to detect money laundering. Anti-money laundering legislation exists, but enforcement is difficult. There is also a financial intelligence unit, but its resources and abilities are limited. Employment scarcity is a prime reason that individuals and communities turn to illicit activities for income.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Victim support in Mauritania is minimal and government-funded programmes are scarce. Anti-slavery activists are often subjected to intimidation by the state, while the victims of trafficking are ignored. The criminalization of

sexual relations outside of marriage reduces the potential for providing the victims of trafficking and sexual assault with support. While there has been some minor progress in assisting Talibé children who are the victims of trafficking, there are no concrete measures to identify other victims or provide them with support services. The state's anti-organized crime activities generally focus on prosecution, with very little being done in terms of prevention and protection.

While a civil society exists in Mauritania, it is severely limited by the authoritarian nature of the country's regime. Journalists are often targeted by the state, with fear of reprisal making many of them exercise self-censorship, especially when covering subjects such as corruption, money laundering, military affairs, security, Islam and slavery.

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