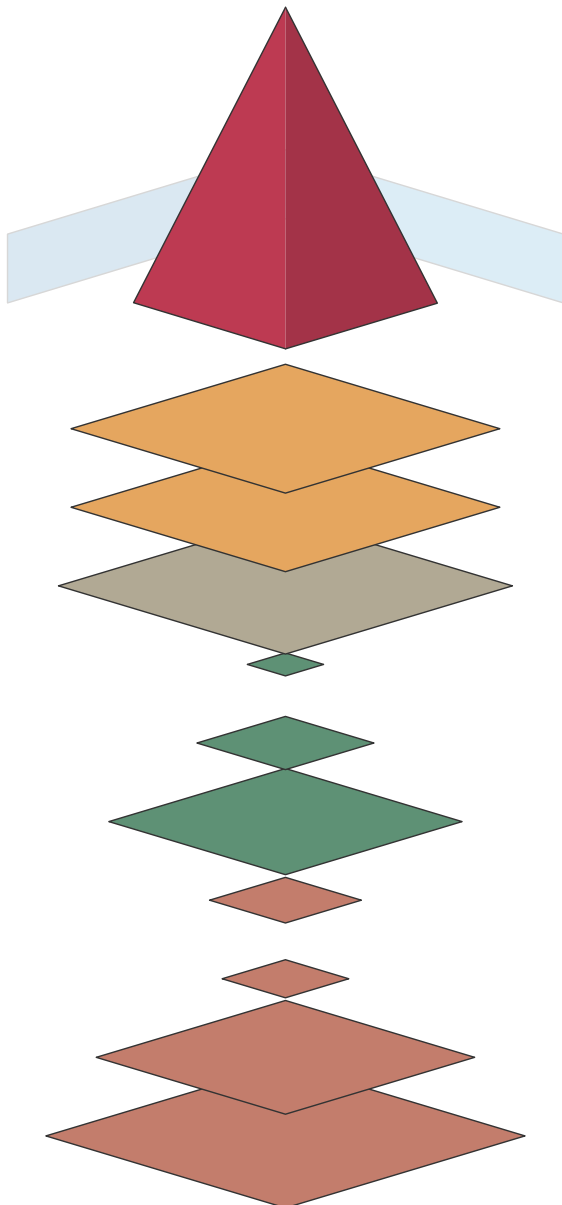




SYRIA



6.84

CRIMINALITY SCORE

13th of 193 countries

6th of 46 Asian countries

4th of 14 Western Asian countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS

6.05

HUMAN TRAFFICKING **8.50**

HUMAN SMUGGLING **8.50**

ARMS TRAFFICKING **9.00**

FLORA CRIMES **1.50**

FAUNA CRIMES **3.50**

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES **7.00**

HEROIN TRADE **3.00**

COCAINE TRADE **2.50**

CANNABIS TRADE **7.50**

SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE **9.50**



CRIMINAL ACTORS

7.63

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS **4.50**

CRIMINAL NETWORKS **9.00**

STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS **10.00**

FOREIGN ACTORS **7.00**



1.88

RESILIENCE SCORE

190th of 193 countries

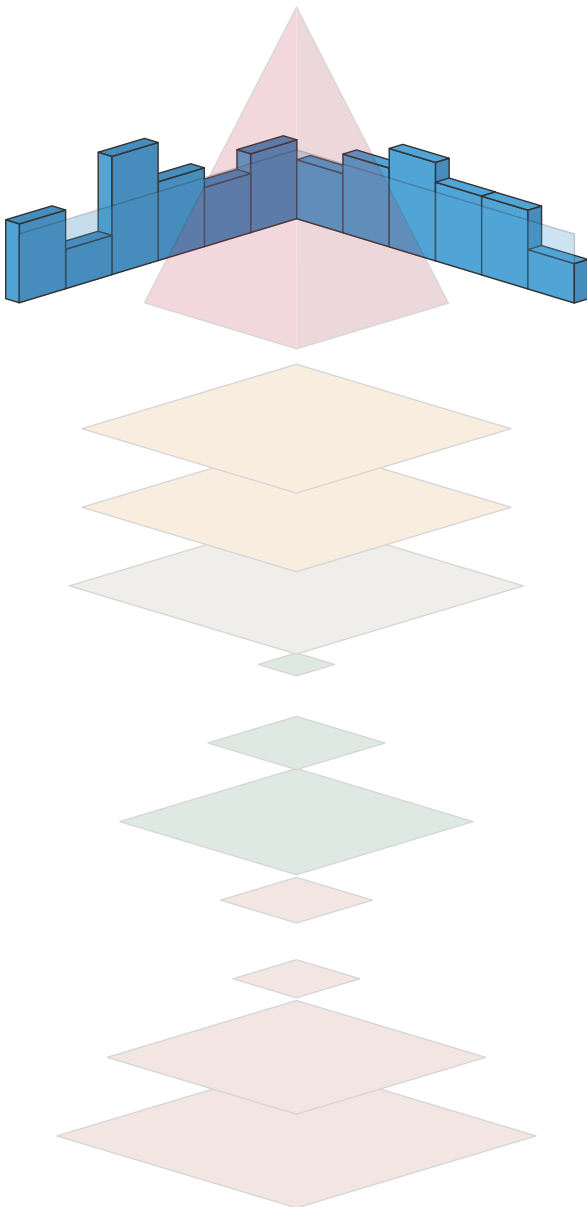
46th of 46 Asian countries

14th of 14 Western Asian countries





SYRIA



1.88

RESILIENCE SCORE

190th of 193 countries

46th of 46 Asian countries

14th of 14 Western Asian countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	2.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	1.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	3.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	2.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	1.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	2.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	1.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	2.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	2.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	2.00
PREVENTION	2.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	1.00



6.84

CRIMINALITY SCORE

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CRIMINAL MARKETS

6.05



CRIMINAL ACTORS

7.63



CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Syria's human-trafficking and human-smuggling markets are flourishing. Forced labour and sexual exploitation are pervasive in the country with women, men and children being victimized; many women in particular are forced into prostitution. Organ trafficking is also known to occur. State and non-state actors alike have also exploited Syrian children in combat, forcing them to participate as combatants, human shields, suicide bombers or executioners. Syrian and foreign victims have been trafficked out of Syria and exploited in neighbouring countries. The market is extremely lucrative, and is reportedly expanding. State inaction and facilitation of human trafficking exacerbates the Syrian population's vulnerability to exploitation. Although human trafficking occurs across the country, Deir ez-Zor and Al Qaim have been identified as major trafficking hubs.

Millions of Syrians seeking to escape the civil war have been smuggled to neighbouring countries in recent years. Syrian smugglers cooperate with foreign counterparts in neighbouring countries to transport both asylum seekers and refugees. It is difficult to distinguish between the human-smuggling and human-trafficking markets, as smuggled individuals have faced considerable dangers on smuggling routes, especially when ISIS maintained a stronger presence in the region, and have also been exploited once abroad. As a result, many Syrians have paid smugglers to transport them back into Syria. Due to the elimination of ISIS in north-eastern Syria and the Syrian regime's re-consolidation of most territory, the market has contracted in recent years. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the vulnerability of asylum seekers and refugees to exploitation.

TRADE

Arms trafficking has been surging in Syria since the outbreak of the civil war. Many foreign weapons intended for delivery to either pro-regime or opposition groups have been diverted to the black market. Many weapons intended for delivery to opposition groups have also been diverted to terrorist groups such as ISIS. Weapons are illicitly sold both online and in open-air markets, especially in north-eastern Syria. Regime weapons stockpiles have also been continuously raided and looted throughout the war, and Syrian Army officials are known to make illicit sales of both weapons and ammunition to opposition groups such as the Free Syrian Army. Syria's arms-trafficking market is primarily controlled by pro-regime groups, both foreign and domestic, and is particularly prevalent in southern Syria and in Kurdish regions, generating billions of dollars annually.

ENVIRONMENT

Oil trafficking is a significant issue in Syria. Throughout much of the civil war, Syrian oil was controlled by ISIS, and constituted an important source of revenue for the terrorist group. ISIS sold oil to both pro-regime and opposition groups, at its peak generating millions of dollars daily. Regime-subsidized fuel has also been diverted to black markets, and both criminals and warlords have engaged in fuel smuggling. High-ranking Syrian officials have been implicated in the illicit oil trade, and illicit fuel profits have played a crucial role in sustaining the Syrian economy throughout the war. High-level Turkish officials have also been accused of illicitly purchasing and transporting Syrian oil from ISIS, although this remains disputed. Since the elimination of ISIS in north-eastern Syria, Syrian oil has fallen into the hands of US-backed Kurdish forces, raising questions as to the extent of US involvement in the Syrian oil industry. Due to US sanctions on Iran, Iranian oil is also smuggled into Syria.

Although wildlife crimes are less pervasive, wildlife and pets have been smuggled into Syria from neighbouring countries and Eastern Europe, and subsequently exported with fraudulent permits. There are also wildlife breeding centres in Aleppo and Damascus, from which exotic animals are smuggled out of Syria to elsewhere in the Middle East. The illicit bird trade is a significant issue, and notably threatens falcon species, such as shaheen falcons. Poachers also target the Eurasian blackcap as a black-market food delicacy. Moreover, sheep have been trafficked to neighbouring countries with drugs hidden in their wool, especially out of southern Syria and the eastern Euphrates region. Although gold smuggling also occurs, most other environmental crimes, including the flora trade, are limited or non-existent.

DRUGS

Syria's cannabis and synthetic-drug trades are flourishing. Cannabis consumption is widespread among youth, and many Syrians have turned to cannabis cultivation as a means of survival amidst rising rates of poverty and unemployment, especially in north-eastern Syria. Cannabis is also smuggled into Syria from neighbouring countries, often with the aid of foreign groups such as Hezbollah, which also aids in local cannabis cultivation in Syria and promotes cannabis use among Syrian youth. Corrupt regime and military officials also facilitate cannabis distribution, and the market is controlled by a mafia-like network of domestic and foreign actors. Synthetic drug consumption is also on the rise in Syria, and prescription drugs such as Tramadol have been increasingly used by Syrian youth. Captagon consumption has also been exacerbated by the civil war, as it has been used by all warring parties to enhance fighting capabilities.

Synthetic drugs are also smuggled out of Syria to neighbouring countries and elsewhere in the Middle East, as well as to Europe. Easy access to ingredients enables synthetic-drug production to flourish, and Captagon production in particular has been increasing in recent years. Corrupt regime officials also facilitate the synthetic-drug trade, and the triple border between Syria, Jordan and Iraq is known to be a synthetic-drug-smuggling hub.

Syria's heroin and cocaine trades are far less pervasive. However, heroin from neighbouring countries and Central Asia transits through Syria and onwards to other countries in the Middle East or Europe, primarily via Damascus, Aleppo and Syria's north-western coast. Cocaine also transits through Syria to elsewhere in the Middle East. Hezbollah is involved in both heroin and cocaine smuggling in Syria, and sells drugs to corrupt regime-affiliated actors involved in distribution. The port cities of Tartous and Latakia are major drug-trafficking hubs.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Corruption, bribery and nepotism also run rampant in Syria. State-embedded actors engage in various criminal markets, especially drug-trafficking markets, and regime-affiliated groups such as the National Defence Forces (NDF), Tiger Forces, Country Armor Forces and Ghaith Forces exert significant control over transnational criminal markets. State-embedded actors also provide criminal groups with weapons and security, preventing their entry into prisons and facilitating their transit through checkpoints. Some

state-embedded criminal networks such as the Shabiha Forces and the NDF are known to employ mafia-style tactics, and are involved in a wide range of criminal markets, especially in regime-held territory. In recent years, the Castle Company has emerged as one of the Syria's main mafia-style groups, operating primarily in regime-held territory formerly controlled by opposition groups. The Castle Company has significant ties to foreign criminal groups.

Many other criminal networks also operate in Syria, including paramilitary groups, tribal militias and family businesses that engage in crime and violence. Whereas large criminal groups tend to be more violent and engage in various criminal markets, small criminal groups tend to operate at a local level and engage primarily in kidnapping and extortion. Syria's largest and most violent criminal networks tend to operate along the country's borders, cooperating with foreign counterparts in neighbouring countries and across the Middle East. Foreign criminal groups also exert significant influence over Syria's criminal markets. Hezbollah is the most active foreign group engaged in organized criminal activity in Syria, and plays a significant role in drug-trafficking markets. Foreign criminal groups also cooperate extensively with local criminals, especially south of Damascus. Various foreign proxy groups involved in the civil war also control border crossings, real-estate markets and human-trafficking operations, and are also suspected of involvement in oil trafficking. Nevertheless, most criminal markets in Syria remain under the control of state-embedded actors.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Syria is one of the most fragile, vulnerable and corrupt states in the world. The Syrian regime is highly centralized and restricts all forms of dissent. Social, economic and military interests revolve around personal loyalty to the Syrian president, and positions in the state apparatus are often awarded to relatives of the ruling family or to pro-regime Iranian actors. State intelligence agencies observe the daily lives of citizens in efforts to root out dissent through targeted detentions, torture and executions. The Syrian regime has not made sufficient effort to combat organized crime, even after the end of ISIS in north-eastern Syria. Instead, since the outbreak of the civil war the regime has remained focused on re-consolidating territory and returning basic services to its citizens. State-embedded actors and pro-regime criminal groups also engage in various forms of organized crime. Corruption is a systemic issue

and affects the entire state apparatus, rendering Syria's rule of law one of the weakest worldwide.

Syria has ratified most treaties relevant to organized crime, and is party to the UNCAC. The country's legislative framework addresses various types of organized crime, including human smuggling and trafficking of human beings. Nevertheless, anti-organized-crime and anti-corruption efforts are severely lacking, and law-enforcement efforts and capacity remain limited. Rampant impunity for state-embedded actors also hinders rule of law. The Syrian regime has also failed to engage in international collaboration to combat organized crime, and has taken advantage of attempts at collaboration to instead blackmail international partners and advance its political goals. Syria also fails to extradite war criminals, even though extradition treaties are in place.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The Syrian judiciary is extremely corrupt and lacks political independence. Judicial officials also lack proper legal training, and are required to be members of the ruling Ba'ath Party. Law-enforcement entities are equally corrupt, lack political independence and are infiltrated by elements of organized crime. Corruption among police is exacerbated by low public salaries. The Syrian military also carries out arbitrary arrests of citizens. There is very little public trust in either the Syrian police or other state security groups. The state security apparatus has also suffered due to the civil war and lacks the necessary capacity to effectively combat organized crime.

Syria's territorial integrity is extremely weak, and the regime lacks the capacity and infrastructure to control its borders. However, the Syrian regime is now in control of nearly three-quarters of the country's territory, primarily in central, southern and coastal areas. Since the elimination of ISIS, north-western Syria has been controlled by US-backed Kurdish forces seeking autonomy from Syria. North-western Idlib continues to be controlled by various opposition and jihadi groups. Syria's northern borders are secured only from the Turkish side, but not internally, and the Turkish government has taken control of a swathe of territory along the Syrian-Turkish frontier. Syria's eastern borders are controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces, with the exception of the al-Waleed Crossing, which is controlled by Iranian actors and Hezbollah, along with the Syrian-Lebanese and Syrian-Jordanian borders. Low territorial integrity enables cross-border criminal activity to flourish. Syria's southern borders in particular are known smuggling hotspots.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Syria has an extremely high risk of money laundering and terrorist financing, and legitimate economic activity has dwindled since the outbreak of the civil war. Although the country has strict legislation against money laundering, implementation remains limited. Pro-regime and pro-Iranian actors in particular enjoy impunity from financial-related offences. The Syrian Central Bank has also been complicit in money-laundering schemes. Syria's economy has been severely damaged due to the war, and most businessmen, economists and companies have moved to neighbouring countries. Foreign investment is also limited. As Iranian and pro-Iranian actors exert considerable control over the country's businesses, imports and exports, the economy has further suffered from sanctions on Iran. Some state-embedded actors control minor businesses, although these are also monitored by Iranian intelligence. As such, doing business in Syria is extremely difficult.

The crumbling state of Syria's economy resulted in the emergence of a black market for money exchange and transfers offering better rates than the Syrian Central Bank. The regime has arrested hundreds of individuals involved

in the black-market trade. Since January 2020, the value of the Syrian pound has plummeted, and it reached record lows following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, inflation and the cost of basic goods in Syria are soaring, and the country relies heavily on emergency shipments of basic commodities from foreign allies. Over three-quarters of the national population live in poverty, and this has only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Victim protection is extremely weak in Syria. Courts discriminate against women in particular, and perpetrators of sexual abuse can avoid punishment by marrying their victims. Women are also afraid to report sexual abuse to the police for fear of further sexual abuse. While a limited number of civil-society organizations seek to protect women, especially victims of sexual abuse, their role remains limited, and they are severely underfinanced. However, the Syrian regime has introduced stricter laws against sexual abuse in recent years. Two state-run drug-rehabilitation centres also exist, as do a few private centres. However, Syria lacks a witness-protection programme, and judges may oblige witnesses to appear in court without protection. Crime prevention in Syria revolves around community awareness-raising programmes, often targeted at youth. The Syrian regime also has plans to establish crime-reporting centres. Community-based initiatives led by non-governmental organizations to promote civil-society awareness have also been launched, although they have been largely ineffective. Moreover, various crime-prevention programmes supported by international aid organizations have been mostly unsuccessful at reducing crime.

The Syrian media is owned and controlled by state actors, and investigative journalism is nearly non-existent. Journalists engage in self-censorship, especially on matters regarding the ruling family or the Alawite sect. Journalists are also under constant threat of abduction and death, and have often been subjected to intimidation. Syria is thus one of the worst countries for media freedom globally.

This summary was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State. The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.