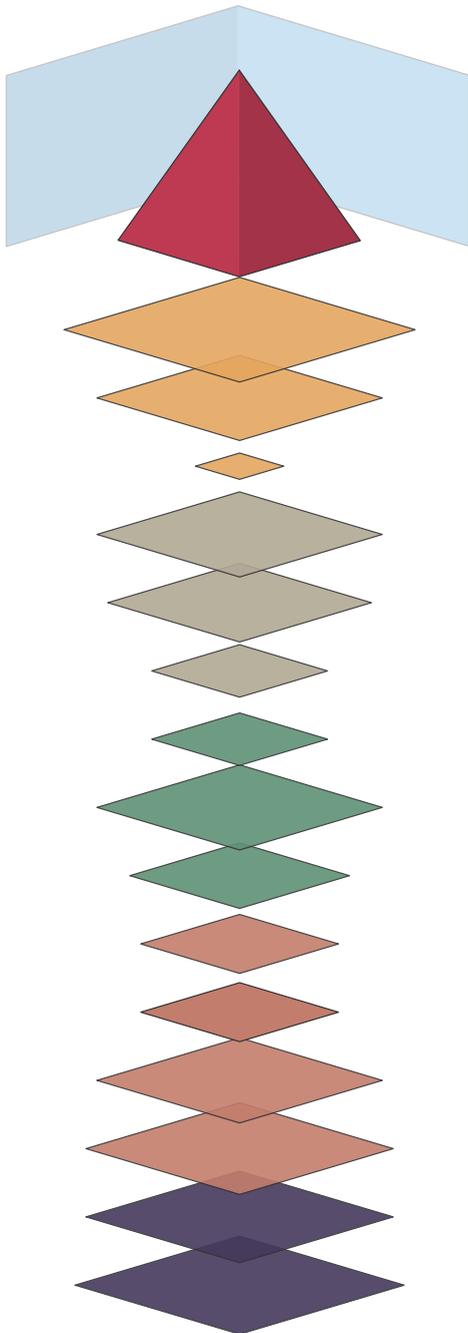


# QATAR



5.45

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

77<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries

22<sup>nd</sup> of 46 Asian countries

9<sup>th</sup> of 14 Western Asian countries



### CRIMINAL MARKETS

5.70

HUMAN TRAFFICKING 8.00

HUMAN SMUGGLING 6.50

EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING 2.00

ARMS TRAFFICKING 6.50

TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS 6.00

ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS 4.00

FLORA CRIMES 4.00

FAUNA CRIMES 6.50

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES 5.00

HEROIN TRADE 4.50

COCAINE TRADE 4.50

CANNABIS TRADE 6.50

SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE 7.00

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES 7.00

FINANCIAL CRIMES 7.50



### CRIMINAL ACTORS

5.20

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS 1.00

CRIMINAL NETWORKS 6.00

STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS 6.50

FOREIGN ACTORS 6.00

PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS 6.50

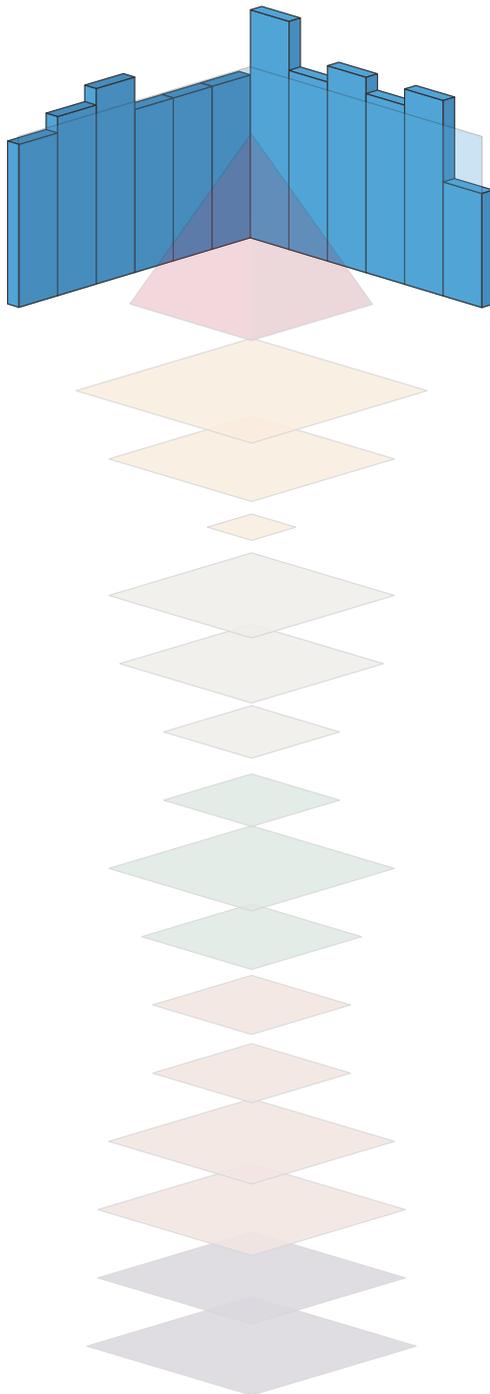


5.42

## RESILIENCE SCORE



 **QATAR**



 **5.42**  
**RESILIENCE SCORE**

62<sup>nd</sup> of 193 countries  
10<sup>th</sup> of 46 Asian countries  
4<sup>th</sup> of 14 Western Asian countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	5.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	5.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	5.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	5.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	7.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	6.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	5.50
PREVENTION	6.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	3.50

 **5.45**  
**CRIMINALITY SCORE**

 <b>CRIMINAL MARKETS</b>	5.70
 <b>CRIMINAL ACTORS</b>	5.20



Funding provided by the United States Government.



Funded by the European Union

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.

# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Qatar's heavy reliance on foreign labour, along with its extensive infrastructure projects, has created an environment conducive to human trafficking. The Kafala system, which links the legal status of migrant workers to individual sponsors, persists in the country, leading to the intersection of Qatar's human trafficking and human smuggling markets, as migrants seeking economic opportunities may become victims of modern slavery practices.

The majority of the country's population consists of foreign nationals, making Qatar a prime destination for human trafficking, particularly for forced labour and sexual exploitation. Migrant workers are predominantly recruited from countries in Southern, Eastern, and Southeastern Asia, as well as Africa, and they typically enter Qatar through formal recruitment agencies. Once in the country, many of these workers face restricted movement, withheld payments, passport confiscation, and threats of deportation or abuse. Additionally, the construction of large-scale infrastructure projects, especially as seen in preparations for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, has worsened exploitative working conditions for foreign labourers, including long hours, abuse, and unsanitary living conditions. Occurrences of violence, particularly against domestic workers, are not uncommon but it remains a taboo subject in Qatari society.

Given the high demand for foreign labour in Qatar, particularly in domestic work and other services, human smuggling remains a significant issue in the country and several networks contribute to the smuggling of workers from Southeast Asia and East Africa. Limited information is available about the extortion and protection racketeering market in Qatar. However it is reported that victims of human rights violations, such as mistreated workers and people subjected to other forms of human trafficking and human smuggling, are also vulnerable to such practices.

### TRADE

Arms trafficking in Qatar should be interpreted within the context of the state's foreign policy goals. Qatar's arms imports increased significantly over the past decade, and the country has played a significant role as both an importer and a potential source for illegal weapons, or for those who are subject to international sanctions. Qatar actively supports various militant factions across Western Asia, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel region. This support includes providing financial assistance and arms, including in conflict-ridden areas such as Syria and Yemen.

Reports have accused Qatari state actors of smuggling weapons to separatist groups in Yemen.

Additionally, Qatar has a notable market for counterfeit goods. It is an attractive place for fake gold, jewellery and luxury watches, with India a prominent source country. Criminals are increasingly using the internet and social media platforms to sell their counterfeit products. Qatar also has a smaller market for the illicit trade of excisable goods, primarily in the form of tobacco smuggling. Although efforts have been made to curb this illicit market, particularly leading up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup, authorities continue to arrest individuals involved in the illegal tobacco trade.

### ENVIRONMENT

The internal market for illegal flora appears to be moderate, with only limited evidence suggesting illicit activities occurring both in the desert and the mangrove areas of the country. However, Qatar has a significant market for the illicit fauna trade, mainly involving items such as ivory and rhino horns. It is unclear whether the country primarily serves as a destination or a transit point for these products. Reports have emerged of wildlife trafficking activity, including Arabian wolves, big cats, leopard skins, and birds. The demand for falcons in Qatar is particularly high, leading to the illicit importation of these birds from countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Mongolia. Wildlife traffickers often exploit Qatar Airways, the world's largest cargo carrier, for transporting these animals. Moreover, due to its coastal location, Qatar is vulnerable to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities.

The country also has a moderately-sized market for non-renewable resource crimes, with instances of illegal smuggling of precious metals, particularly gold. There have been reported cases of individuals attempting to transport gold out of the country illegally or selling metal coins under false pretences. The profits from gold smuggling primarily benefit foreign actors involved in organized groups with suspected networks in South Asian countries such as Nepal and India.

### DRUGS

In terms of heroin, Qatar primarily acts as a transit country, and regular shipments pass through its air and land routes. There have been few instances of seizures of heroin in Qatar in the reporting period, the majority of them implicating Qatari nationals and involving transnational networks in Africa and Europe. Although cocaine consumption remains low in Qatar, there has been a moderate increase in recent years in the interception of cocaine shipments supposed to be transiting through the country by air, particularly from

South America, Kenya, or Nigeria. In most cases, cocaine was found to be concealed in tea bags, lotion bottles, duvets or shoes.

Qatar is experiencing an increasing trend as a destination for cannabis, with criminal organizations from Southern Asia, particularly India, involved in the trade. These groups reportedly send drug mules to Qatar who transport the drugs through Doha Airport. Qatar has also emerged as a significant hub for the synthetic drug trade. Authorities frequently report significant seizures of methamphetamine, Captagon, and other substances such as tramadol and Lyrica. The criminal market for synthetic drugs is primarily operated by foreign nationals, with some involvement of domestic groups. Organized crime networks from Southern Asia, along with domestic groups to a lesser extent, have been implicated in the import and export of synthetic drugs. These groups often exploit homeward-bound migrant workers as drug traffickers out of Qatar. Additionally, the country serves as a hub for methamphetamine and Captagon trafficking flows.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-security threats pose a growing concern in Qatar, with the state and its residents facing various cybercriminal activities. Prevalent malware attacks and hacking incidents target both Qatari society and the private sector. Especially during major events like the 2022 FIFA World Cup and Formula 1 races, sophisticated cyber-attacks exploit the country's vulnerabilities. In recent years, the country's central bank has issued repeated warnings about illegal financial institutions and crypto scams that target individuals, including tourists present in the country. In other cases, cybercriminals have impersonated governmental agencies or officials in order to spread ransomware viruses.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Qatar has a significant market for financial crimes. The proliferation of fraudulent websites has caused significant monetary losses by deceiving people into placing fake orders. Such scam attempts escalated during the 2022 FIFA World Cup, leading to the shutdown of numerous fake domains and fraudulent websites related to ticket purchases and accommodation. Criminals have mimicked the Qatar Post logo and embedded links in deceptive emails to trick victims and steal large amounts of money through unauthorized access to their bank accounts. Additionally, there have been cases of financial crimes involving high-ranking officials, such as the arrest of Qatar's minister of finance in 2021 on charges of corruption, embezzlement, and the misuse of public funds, offences which are also considered widespread in the country.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

There are various reports on the state's involvement in corruption scandals and human rights abuses, indicating state-embedded actors' significant role in illicit activities in the country. Recent corruption scandals pertaining to the 2022 FIFA World Cup and the European Parliament revealed the alleged involvement of the Qatari state in major corruption schemes. In recent years, state actors have been thought to also be involved in the trafficking of arms from Qatar to militia groups abroad. The private sector is also involved in Qatar's organized crime landscape, especially in terms of the human trafficking activities surrounding the preparations for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Despite the Qatari government's encouragement of competition and privatization, many of the country's largest companies, including the heavily subsidized Qatar Airways, remain state-owned.

In Qatar, various criminal activities are carried out by loosely connected networks that often have transnational ties. The country's main criminal hubs are concentrated in Doha, including Hamad International Airport, where criminal groups facilitate illicit gold smuggling, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and crimes related to fauna and arms trafficking. Foreign actors, particularly from India, Nepal, Pakistan, and East African countries, also play significant roles in these criminal networks. Diaspora groups predominantly dominate instances of human trafficking, smuggling, and illicit substances. Transnational networks, including foreign actors such as Nigerian and other African nationals contributing to cocaine trafficking, are known to use Qatar as a transit point. Some drug shipments from Latin America into West Africa through Doha Airport may involve the domestic participation of Brazilian drug cartels. Arms trafficking also often involves transnational networks and foreign nationals from various countries. There is no information suggesting the existence of mafia-style groups in the country.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Political power in Qatar is centralized in the hands of the emir, with no parties or elected legislature to balance executive authority. Addressing organized crime does not appear to be a prominent focus on the country's agenda, although there have been allegations of Qatar supporting separatist and terrorist groups abroad. Decision-making authority primarily rests with the emir and his family, and tribal influence and family ties continue to play a significant role in shaping public opinion and voting choices. Women's representation in governing bodies remains significantly marginalized. Perceptions of corruption in Qatar are generally low, and officials have expressed their commitment to anti-corruption and integrity measures. While there are anti-corruption bodies, the focus seems to be primarily on addressing low-level corruption within the state apparatus. However, corruption does exist, and senior government officials and members of the ruling party are not held accountable through fully independent mechanisms. Qatar has faced accusations of employing corrupt tactics during its successful bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Another recent corruption scandal involving allegations against members of the European Parliament implicated the Qatari state with alleged involvement in a cash-for-favours scheme to influence voting.

Qatar is a member of various international treaties to combat organized crime, including the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, the Palermo Protocols, the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, and the Arab Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. While not a signatory of the Arms Trade Treaty, Qatar has actively worked to implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. The country has established partnerships with international organizations, such as INTERPOL, to combat fauna crimes in accordance with CITES agreements. Moreover, Qatar has extradition agreements with several Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, facilitating the cooperation and extradition of individuals involved in organized crime.

At the domestic level, Qatar has a comprehensive legal framework to address organized crime. Its penal code criminalizes organized crime as an enterprise, different criminal activities and membership in a criminal organization. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing prevalence of cybercrime, the Qatari government has enacted stricter laws to combat cybercrime, with harsher prison sentences and higher fines. Additionally, Qatari Islamic scholars and central bank authorities have banned business in digital and cryptocurrencies, aligning with Sharia

law to address concerns related to money laundering and terrorist funding.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Although Qatar's judicial system is generally considered impartial and relatively free of corruption, judges are appointed by the emir, raising concerns about true independence. However, there is no evidence to suggest that organized crime can influence the judicial process. The supreme judiciary council lacks specialized units dedicated to addressing organized crime issues. There have been claims of long and harsh prison sentences for political dissidents, often accompanied by alleged coerced confessions. While Qatar's prison conditions generally meet international standards, there have been reports of abuse, life-threatening conditions and significant overcrowding.

The Qatari police have faced frequent accusations of ill-treatment of individuals, with some allegations particularly occurring during the lead-up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Qatar has been a member country of INTERPOL since 1974 and hosts a national central bureau in Doha. The country is renowned for its law enforcement systems and training. Qatar is also projected to experience rapid growth in cybersecurity spending, reaching an expected governmental investment of more than US\$1 billion in 2026.

Qatar's territorial integrity is generally secure. The border zones are sparsely populated, with only one land border shared with Saudi Arabia. The land and sea borders are relatively secure, with organized crime activities predominantly utilizing air routes. Qatar's land border was reopened in early 2021 after being closed following a 2017 diplomatic crisis when Saudi Arabia and other countries severed ties and closed it. In recent years, Qatar has implemented comprehensive surveillance sensors across its territory to provide complete coverage of its 600-kilometre borders, addressing various threats such as human trafficking, piracy, smuggling, and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. However, incidents of illegal goods trafficking and human trafficking across borders still occur via air routes. Qatar is internationally recognized for its strong cybersecurity capabilities, ensuring a fairly secure cyberspace.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Qatar generally adheres to international standards and recommendations on combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism. There exist two financial units: one is tasked with minimizing the risks of companies being used in money laundering activities; the other with obtaining, analyzing and distributing information

on potential proceeds of crime, money laundering and terrorism-financing activities. Qatar is not considered a country of concern by the Financial Action Task Force or the European Commission's list on money laundering. However, there have been reports indicating that Qatari citizens are significant contributors of financial aid to terrorist groups abroad, including the Taliban.

Qatar is moderately effective in protecting its economic and financial environment from organized crime. While the private sector's involvement in Qatar's economy has grown in recent years, the largest companies are still state-owned. Despite government attempts to promote fair competition and privatization, concerns persist regarding the lack of official mechanisms to hold the ruling family and senior officials accountable for the allocation of state resources. Regulations around property ownership and starting a business are different for Qatari and non-Qatari nationals, although the latter are now able to fully own enterprises.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Qatar has intensified its efforts to support victims of organized crime in recent years. Instead of criminalizing drug abuse, the government prioritizes treatment and rehabilitation for drug consumption through a national drug centre. Qatar has established centres for trafficking and domestic abuse victims, offering medical, social, and psychological support, along with housing, repatriation assistance, and reintegration programmes. However, challenges remain. Qatar lacks a national referral mechanism for human trafficking victims. Migrant workers, especially domestic workers, face limitations in accessing complaint mechanisms because their mobility is restricted and their

knowledge of the law is limited. Immigration issues and the fear of deportation further complicate matters.

The government employs various prevention tools, with a particular focus on raising awareness about human trafficking and cybercrimes. These efforts include hotlines, awareness campaigns, capacity-building activities, training, and media coverage. While there are mechanisms to protect whistle-blowers, those who report corruption risk trial and imprisonment, and victims of sexual exploitation may face charges under the penal code.

Qatar's media sector, both print and broadcast, is subject to censorship and strict state control, despite claims of a relatively free press. This control extends to the limited coverage of domestic issues compared to international affairs, which often aligns with Qatari foreign policy. As a result, journalists and editors resort to self-censorship to avoid legal consequences, including imprisonment for defamation. In addition to media restrictions, NGOs in Qatar face close monitoring and must obtain permission to operate. Freedom of association and assembly are restricted, with political parties and labour unions prohibited. These limitations contribute to a lack of cooperation between NGOs and the government, extending beyond human trafficking concerns. Furthermore, the absence of independent human rights organizations in Qatar exacerbates the situation.

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*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.*