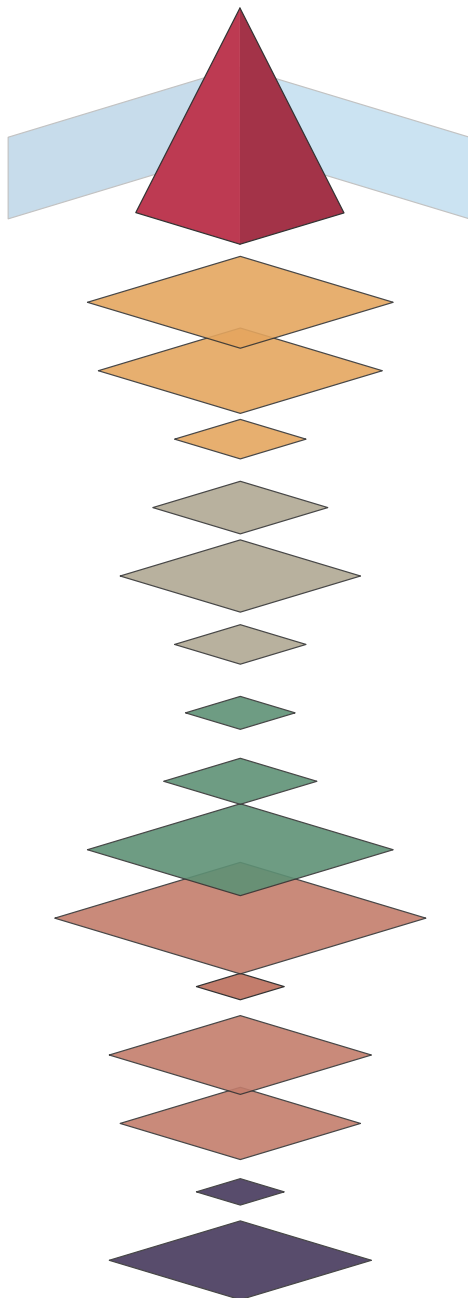


 **TAJIKISTAN**



 **5.45**  
**CRIMINALITY SCORE**

78<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
23<sup>rd</sup> of 46 Asian countries  
1<sup>st</sup> of 8 Central Asian and Caucasian countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **4.80**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	7.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	6.50
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	3.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	4.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	5.50
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	3.00
FLORA CRIMES	2.50
FAUNA CRIMES	3.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	7.00
HEROIN TRADE	8.50
COCAINE TRADE	2.00
CANNABIS TRADE	6.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	5.50
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	2.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6.00

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **6.10**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	6.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	9.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	5.00

 **2.58**  
**RESILIENCE SCORE**



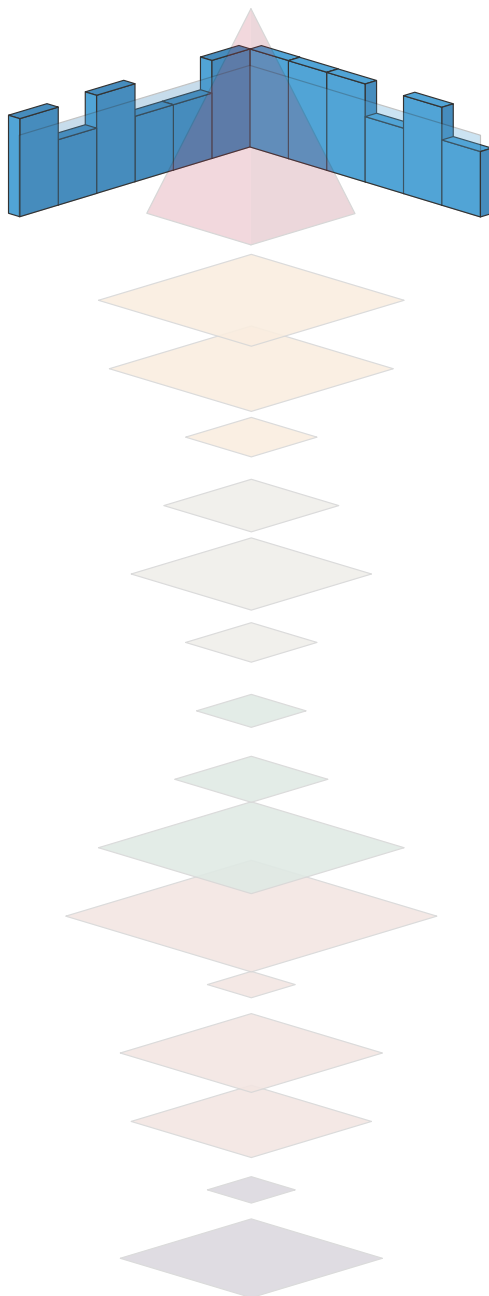
Funding provided by the United States Government.



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.

 **TAJIKISTAN**





 **2.58**  
**RESILIENCE SCORE**

172<sup>nd</sup> of 193 countries  
40<sup>th</sup> of 46 Asian countries  
7<sup>th</sup> of 8 Central Asian and Caucasian countries

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

 **5.45**  
**CRIMINALITY SCORE**

 <b>CRIMINAL MARKETS</b>	<b>4.80</b>
 <b>CRIMINAL ACTORS</b>	<b>6.10</b>



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# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Tajikistan is mainly a source and, to a lesser extent, a destination country for human trafficking. Limited livelihood options, combined with a need for low-skilled labour in Russia and Kazakhstan, create ideal conditions for labour traffickers. Tajik men, women, children and LGBTQ+ individuals – along with foreigners – are vulnerable to forced labour and/or sex trafficking. Tajik men are usually trafficked inside the country for forced labour purposes, while Tajik women and children are usually victims of sex trafficking abroad. Inside Tajikistan, human trafficking is linked to forced labour in agriculture; in some cases, citizens are reported to be forced into public labour by the government. Tajik children are forcibly drafted into military service as part of annual recruitment sweeps by military personnel. After the easing of COVID-19 restrictions and the opening of borders, human trafficking has amplified due to the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic. The war in Ukraine and the financial crisis in Russia have also caused a decrease in remittances sent by Tajikistani migrants working in Russia, leaving Tajik families vulnerable to trafficking.

Tajikistan is predominantly a transit hub for human smuggling. The vast majority of Tajik labour migrants live in Russia but there is little need for Tajiks to employ the services of human smugglers as Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) agreements in the region make it relatively easy to migrate legally from Tajikistan to Russia. Currently, the uncertainty around Russia's policies toward labour migration, and the international sanctions linked to the war in Ukraine, might affect labour migration from Tajikistan to Russia, making people look for alternate destinations. The criminal actors behind human smuggling out of Tajikistan are believed to be a mix of Russian organized criminal groups and complicit Tajik actors, such as employment agencies. Police officers are also likely to be involved with the smugglers, or involved in protecting them. There has been a notable increase in the numbers of Afghan migrants irregularly entering the country following the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban. Recently, there have been reports of Afghan refugees being detained and deported by Tajik authorities. Even though evidence of the existence of extortion and protection racketeering is limited, there have been some allegations of racketeering by organized criminal groups, especially targeting legal businesses.

### TRADE

The arms trafficking market in Tajikistan is small by global and regional standards, but it does contribute to localized violence. Many of the unregistered arms present in Tajikistan are believed to stem from the Tajik civil war that lasted until 1997.

Trade in counterfeit goods is prevalent in Tajikistan and is facilitated by high levels of corruption. Counterfeit consumer goods of well-known brands are commonly found in domestic markets, due to the weak protection of intellectual property rights. Authorities mostly overlook this criminal activity to ensure the population has access to affordable goods. Tajikistan is also a transit country for counterfeit goods smuggled from Asia (mainly China) to Russia.

The market for illicit trade of excise goods is relatively small. Goods such as alcoholic and soft drinks; vinegar; tobacco (and industrial substitutes for tobacco); poultry meat; and noodles are subjected to excise tax. However, since the taxation level is lower compared to the other countries in the region, excise goods such as cigarettes are smuggled out of Tajikistan, making it a source country for the illicit trade of excise goods.

### ENVIRONMENT

The illicit flora market in Tajikistan is limited. There is a certain amount of illegal logging, driven predominantly by domestic demand for firewood, which has contributed to the depletion of forests.

As for fauna crimes, Tajikistan is primarily a transit, and to a lesser extent, a source country for illegal wildlife products. Criminal actors are traditional hunters and poach in remote regions, primarily due to high unemployment rates in the country. Fauna crimes mostly consist of poaching and trafficking of endangered snow leopards, bears and birds. Until recently, hunting and poaching was legal and socially acceptable throughout the country, but hunters have begun to create community-based conservancies to protect endangered wildlife.

Tajikistan is rich in natural resources, with large deposits of silver and aluminium. Natural resources are crucial to the country's economy. Extraction is predominantly carried out by state-controlled companies, but these companies have been reported to be involved in corrupt schemes. The main criminal actors in the natural resource market are state-embedded actors who gain from grand corruption and lack of oversight over the sector. The consequences of corruption in Tajikistan are extensive and multidimensional. In addition to the aforementioned natural resources,

Tajikistan is also a destination country for smuggled fuel. A smuggling route goes from Kyrgyzstan's Batken region to Tajikistan, and high-level officials in Kyrgyzstan seem to be involved in the illegal export of gasoline into Tajikistan. Tajikistan is a transit country for gold smuggling from Afghanistan to the Middle East. Traffickers are usually Tajik citizens; corrupt government officers are often connected to these networks.

## DRUGS

Tajikistan is a transit and destination country for illegal drug trafficking – the heroin trade in particular. Heroin use is not socially accepted and is highly stigmatized, yet it remains one of the most commonly used drugs. Tajikistan – and Central Asia in general – is a traffic hub for at least 25% of Afghan heroin. Criminal actors in this market include state actors, foreign criminal groups from the Central Asian region and West Africa, and local actors in Tajikistan. The criminal market for cocaine trade is not consolidated in Tajikistan, as its consumption is not widespread or socially accepted. Also, the drug is too expensive for the Tajikistani market, especially when compared to opiates.

After the illicit heroin trade, the criminal market for cannabis is the most established drug market in Tajikistan. As with heroin and opium, the source country for cannabis is Afghanistan; Tajikistan is primarily a transit country. In many cases, cannabis, opium and heroin are trafficked together across the Tajik border with Afghanistan. The country is also a producer of cannabis and hashish. Criminal actors involved in the illicit cannabis trade are the same as those involved in drug trafficking more generally: mafia-style groups working together with state-embedded actors.

While the criminal market for synthetic drugs is less consolidated than the markets for heroin and cannabis, Tajikistan is home to a small-to-moderately sized criminal economy in this area. The market for synthetic drugs seems to be growing. Russia is the source country for the majority of MDMA pills that enter Tajikistan. Pills also come from European countries such as Germany, but to a lesser extent. Criminal actors behind the synthetic drug trade mostly consist of Tajik nationals. The profits made from the market are primarily accrued to domestic actors.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Tajikistan is among the least cyber-secure countries in the world and is vulnerable to cyberattacks, especially from crypto-hackers. Despite this, the frequency of cybercrime in the country is low as only around a third of the population has access to internet, and the connection speed is among the lowest in the world. However, due to extremely low electricity prices, the region has become an attractive location for cryptocurrency mining, making it vulnerable to crypto-fraud. Malware spreading due to

the presence of disreputable app stores on sold devices is also a concern in the country.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes committed online by means of identity fraud and mass marketing fraud are relatively widespread in Tajikistan. Tajikistan's fraud situation is endemic in the private sector and stems from the embezzlement of state funds. Such criminal activities are usually perpetrated by white-collar, state-related actors and, at times, foreign entities. The formal banking sector in the country is vague and the use of cash-based transactions has made the risk of financial crimes higher. The presence of organized crime actors in this market is not significant, but their influence should not be ignored.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

There is widespread corruption within the state apparatus, with direct and indirect involvement of state-embedded actors in criminal markets. Control over illicit activities extends all the way down from top government officials. Political elite has been known to facilitate criminal markets such as drug trafficking; alliances between organized criminal groups, political parties and high-ranking government officials are also known to exist. In general, businesses close to the political leadership are given privileged access to key sectors as well as government contracts with the police, judiciary and security services.

Tajikistan has several mafia-style groups, each with regional subdivisions, operating within its borders and outside them. Such groups have roots in former guerrilla opposition organizations and overlap with radical Islamist groups with ties to international terrorism. These groups maintain substantial control along borders, and in criminal enclaves. Most groups are primarily involved in drug trafficking and have been integrated into the state administration where they embody a collusion between the criminal world and the government.

Tajikistan has well-developed criminal networks operating across the country. They are known to compete for shares of the lucrative drug market in the country, particularly on the Afghanistan opiate routes. Some criminal bosses are known to combine drug trafficking with legitimate businesses. The most prominent foreign actors in Tajikistan are the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU; their influence has been declining in recent years) and the Islamic State (ISIL/ISIS). These actors exert control over the narcotics market for opioids trafficked from Afghanistan. Private sector actors are primarily involved in the 'grey economy'. They launder and invest their illegally gained money in fake import companies, facilitated by rampant corruption.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The government's strategic capacity remains impaired by a low level of professionalism, a lack of expertise and a failure to embrace evidence-based policymaking. Corruption is a main contributor to the rise of organized crime in the country, and as a result, public trust in the Tajik government is extremely low. Democratic elections are held in a tightly controlled environment and there is a lack of a genuine opposition. Although politicians have communicated a strong public position against organized crime, such a narrative is used to reinforce the central government's control over peripheral areas where local groups hinder the government's path to power. Government transparency and accountability are harmed by a lack of independent oversight against corruption. Tajikistan has one of the highest corruption perception levels in the world and has been unable to implement adequate anti-corruption measures over the years. The government's anti-corruption unit is perceived by the public to be one of the country's most corrupt state institutions. It is heavily understaffed and has no legal obligation to make its audit reports available to the public. Indeed, most of the institutions established to hold the government accountable and ensure transparency are controlled directly or indirectly by the government itself, making them inadequate. Tajikistan has laws that protect citizens against corrupt practices and also protect their access to information, but these fall short in terms of implementation.

Tajikistan has shown commitment to international cooperation in addressing organized crime by ratifying numerous relevant international treaties, with the exception of the UN Firearms Protocol. Multilateral organizations are also present in the country, with the aim of cooperating in the fight against organized crime. The enforcement of treaties and the level of international cooperation remain limited, however, resulting in no significant change. At a national level, most areas of organized crime (such as corruption and flora and fauna crimes) have been criminalized under domestic legislation, but Tajikistan does not have the capacity to implement most of its criminal laws due to poor governance and a lack of resources.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Tajikistan has an outdated criminal justice system, which is de facto under executive control despite technically being independent under separation of powers. The political elite holds formal and informal power over the courts, strengthened by its authority under the constitution to nominate and dismiss judges and even the prosecutor general. Courts inherited from the Soviet regime operate to support political incumbents. The situation in the judicial

system has been affected by the ongoing economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, a lack of resources, rampant corruption and poor training. Tajikistan's prison system is very concerning for three reasons: political prisoners are held by the government; prison conditions are continuously reported to be abysmal; and international independent oversight is notably limited due to a lack of access to prison systems.

Tajikistan has very few law enforcement units focused specifically on combating organized crime. The most prominent is the Drug Control Agency (DCA). While there is active cooperation between the DCA and international partners, the unit is not exempt from Tajikistan's endemic corruption. Tajikistan recently participated in the creation of a Central Asian, Interpol-coordinated Vulnerable Communities Project to fight against human trafficking, and the country announced its commitment to policing reforms in the future. However, the main priority of local law enforcement seems to be prosecuting dissenters to the regime rather than preventing organized crime. Law enforcement is widely viewed as extremely vulnerable to corruption, ranging from everyday bribery to a fundamentally corrupted detainment system, all the way to top-tier police officers being involved in large-scale patronage networks. Lack of resources, low salaries and inadequate training all contribute to high corruption and a lack of professionalism.

As a landlocked country, Tajikistan is highly dependent on its border security. The country's main worry is spill-over from Afghanistan's organized criminal networks, particularly in the heroin and opium markets, as well as infiltration by radicalized Islamist groups from Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan. The military's border force provides border security, but due to a lack of resources and equipment they tend to rely on the Russian military, which maintains a presence in Tajikistan. Tajikistan's territorial integrity has been weakened by a flare up of the border conflict with Kyrgyzstan – many clashes have occurred in recent years.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Authorities in Tajikistan have a limited understanding of money laundering risks, but they have a good understanding of terrorist financing risks. Inter-agency cooperation in the country is good; mechanisms and legal frameworks are sufficiently in place; and law enforcement agencies make use of the financial intelligence provided by the government's Financial Monitoring Department. However, the country remains vulnerable to money laundering due to the popularity of cash transactions and a sizeable shadow economy. Preventing money laundering does not seem to be a priority for the government, and although some

progress was made in the previous year, enforcement of policies remains poor.

Investment freedom and financial freedom in Tajikistan are significantly weak. The country has had serious difficulties in recovering from the 2008 financial crisis, and its banking sector remains on the verge of collapse. Tajikistan's business climate, and a tedious bureaucracy combined with unreliable administration, make the country's economic regulatory environment unattractive to foreign investment, especially for its infrastructure projects. Entrepreneurship is restricted by state, by price regulations, and by inflexible labour regulations that hinder dynamic employment. Furthermore, state-owned enterprises distort the economy and are affected by high-level corruption. Although there are legal guarantees supporting the freedom to launch businesses or withdraw investments, rampant corruption and extortion by tax and regulation agencies make private investment very scarce.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Despite the legal framework in place to support victims, and recent governmental efforts to assist victims of trafficking, there is a lack of adequate protection and support for victims. There are only a few shelters and a dire lack of specialized professional services and effective legal representation. The subordinated judiciary means that victims are unlikely to be granted adequate justice. Civil society actors providing victim support are also limited. Government action in the case of victims of human trafficking is perceived to be deficient, with inadequate

victim identification procedures and an insufficient shelter network. Even though the country continues to try and prevent organized crime, specifically human trafficking by raising awareness, it does not yet meet all the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the civil society organization (CSO) landscape in Tajikistan has gradually taken root and improved. Tajik legislation for the formation of CSOs has become more liberal over the years: regulatory thresholds for official recognition of NGOs and public associations in general have been lowered. Nevertheless, local government elites prevent NGOs from pursuing activities that do not classify as purely humanitarian or social, such as issues of culture, education, gender and domestic violence, as well as the distribution of humanitarian aid to target populations. Hence, Tajikistan's civil society remains inactive and mostly paralyzed by the pressures of the central authorities. The Tajik media landscape is under serious government pressure and media freedom has been worsening since 2014. Most independent media outlets have been closed, many journalists have escaped or been exiled, and intelligence services harass, intimidate and blackmail journalists across the country. Primary independent news websites and social networks are either permanently blocked or under constant pressure.

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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.*