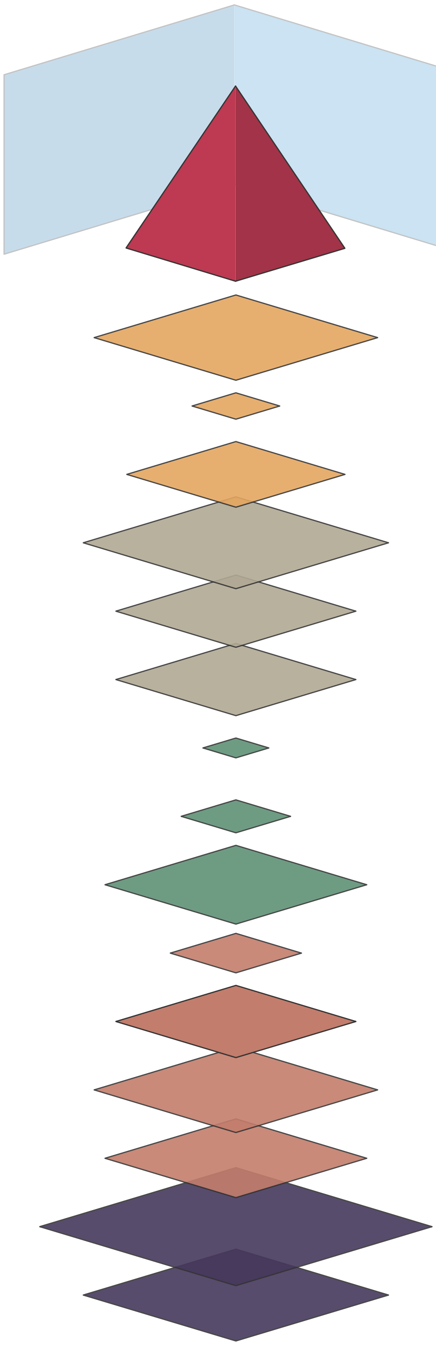
GLOBAL ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX

GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

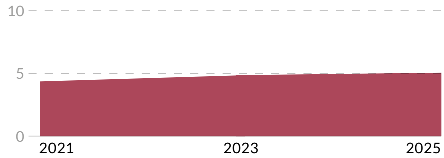
ISRAEL



5.07 ↗0.22

CRIMINALITY SCORE

97th of 193 countries ↗12
28th of 46 Asian countries ↗3
12th of 14 Western Asian countries ↗1



CRIMINAL MARKETS	5.23	↗0.23
HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.50	↗0.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	2.00	↘0.50
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	5.00	0.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	7.00	↗0.50
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	5.50	↗0.50
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	5.50	↗0.50
FLORA CRIMES	1.50	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	2.50	↗0.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	6.00	↗0.50
HEROIN TRADE	3.00	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	5.50	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	6.50	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	6.00	↗0.50
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	9.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	7.00	↗0.50

CRIMINAL ACTORS	4.90	↗0.20
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	6.00	↗0.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	4.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	5.50	↗0.50
FOREIGN ACTORS	4.00	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	5.00	0.00

This project was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State.

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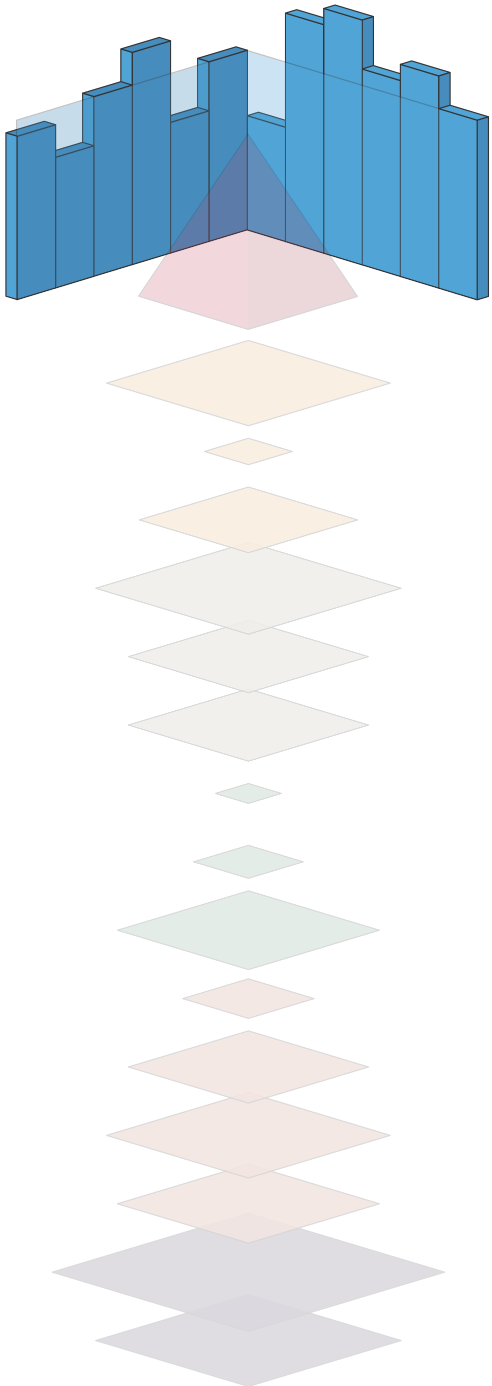
Funded by the European Union

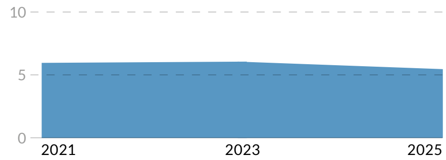
ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

ISRAEL



5.54 ↘0.54
RESILIENCE SCORE

52nd of 193 countries ↘17
7th of 46 Asian countries ↘3
2nd of 14 Western Asian countries ↘1



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	**5.00**	↘1.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	**4.00**	↘1.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	**5.50**	↘1.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	**6.50**	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	**4.00**	↘1.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	**5.50**	↘1.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	**3.50**	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	**7.00**	0.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	**7.50**	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	**6.00**	↘0.50
PREVENTION	**6.50**	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	**5.50**	↘1.00

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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking remains a persistent and evolving criminal market in Israel, encompassing a range of exploitative practices such as forced labour, sexual exploitation and organ trafficking. The country functions primarily as a destination for trafficked people from South and South East Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and the occupied Palestinian territories. Victims are predominantly exploited in domestic work, caregiving, construction and agricultural sectors. The employer-based work permit system for Palestinian labourers further entrenches conditions for forced labour by tethering workers to specific employers. Refugees and asylum-seekers, notably from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan, face elevated risks of sex and labour trafficking due to precarious legal status and employment in low-wage sectors. Sex trafficking is entrenched and often linked to organized crime networks. Victims include foreign women and vulnerable domestic groups such as Israeli children, Palestinian women and Bedouin women. Traffickers increasingly utilise social media and dating platforms to recruit victims. Male caregivers and agricultural workers also face coercive conditions including exorbitant recruitment fees, substandard housing, passport confiscation and physical abuse. Despite recent law enforcement operations that dismantled trafficking networks in cities such as Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, the human trafficking market persists due to inadequate victim identification mechanisms and weak oversight of foreign labour recruitment systems. Moreover, ongoing conflict has diverted attention and resources away from anti-trafficking initiatives, exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities in high-risk sectors.

Human smuggling into Israel, on the other hand, has declined significantly over the past decade due to the construction of a border fence with Egypt and reinforced border controls. Historically, most people smuggled came from African countries such as Eritrea and Sudan, entering via the Sinai Peninsula and settling in working-class districts in Tel Aviv. In recent years, increased militarization and heightened security – particularly since the escalation of the Israel–Palestine conflict – have further reduced the scale of the market. Nevertheless, some smuggling persists along the Israeli–Egyptian border, with minor, sporadic incidents also reported at border points with Lebanon and Gaza. Despite periodic closures, the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt remains a vital exit point for those seeking to reach Europe, typically via Türkiye, facilitated by transnational smuggling networks. These networks offer logistical support in exchange for significant fees. Despite concerns that the conflict would spur a surge in outward migration, international agencies have reported a decline in refugee departures from Gaza and the West Bank. Overall, human smuggling into Israel is characterized by small, loosely coordinated cross-border networks that occasionally collaborate with other illicit trades.

Extortion and protection racketeering constitute a regionally concentrated market in Israel, with a pronounced impact on Arab communities, particularly in the northern regions. Criminal networks, especially those embedded within Bedouin communities, exert territorial control and extract regular payments from local residents and businesses. Victims, often Palestinians or members of ethnic minority groups, are threatened with arson, robbery, or violence for failing to comply with payment demands, which can reach substantial monthly sums. Armed primarily with stolen weapons from security services, these actors enforce compliance through violent means. Notable cases, including extortion efforts against pharmacists and other professionals, reveal sophisticated operations using threats and acts of aggression to coerce victims. These criminal economies are further facilitated by restrictive banking policies and systemic economic marginalization, leading to increased reliance on black market credit and subsequent exposure to violent enforcement.

TRADE

Israel faces a substantial arms trafficking market, closely tied to regional instability and internal conflicts. Weapons are sourced through theft from military stockpiles, diversions from legal trade and smuggling across borders from neighbouring states such as Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Syria. Bedouin tribes play a significant role in facilitating these operations, often acting as intermediaries for organized crime networks and Palestinian armed groups. Arms trafficking serves multiple end users, including Israeli criminal gangs, Palestinian factions such as Hamas and Hezbollah, and settler groups in the West Bank. This is despite increased border patrols and drone surveillance, weapons smuggling via air and subterranean routes continues. Israeli-manufactured arms are also trafficked, including those salvaged and repurposed from failed munitions, contributing to regional conflict dynamics. The escalation in arms demand since October 2023 has intensified concerns over proliferation and the risks posed by unauthorized firearms in civilian hands.

Israel functions as both a destination and a transit country for counterfeit goods, including medications, apparel, alcohol and food products. Although information on this market is limited and outdated, historical seizures and ongoing consumer access to counterfeit items in urban centres like Jerusalem and Tel Aviv indicate a continued market presence. For example, past interceptions in the

US linked counterfeit goods to Israeli-origin shipments, demonstrating Israel's role in global trafficking routes. Instances of counterfeit cigarettes and alcohol, primarily originating from the West Bank, underscore localized supply chains. Moreover, fake pharmaceutical products such as erectile dysfunction and weight-loss pills remain prevalent.

The illicit trade in excise goods, particularly tobacco, remains a notable criminal economy in Israel. The country's tobacco smuggling rate is relatively high and driven by its proximity to jurisdictions with lower taxation and unregulated cultivation. Smuggling is facilitated by porous borders, particularly through underground tunnels into Gaza and via air routes, with Ben Gurion International Airport serving as a notable transit location for intercepted goods. In 2024, international aid deliveries to Gaza were reportedly diverted to fuel illicit cigarette trade, highlighting the market's adaptability and resilience amidst conflict. The existence of an efficient customs infrastructure contributes to regular interdictions, although the scale of evasion continues to result in substantial tax losses.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes in Israel are minimal, with few confirmed reports of ongoing illicit activity. The illegal harvesting of the culturally significant Akoub plant – protected under environmental law – has been observed sporadically, but evidence of widespread organized trade remains minimal. Fauna crimes, while previously rare, have become more prominent in recent years, with an increase in reported seizures. These include raids uncovering illegal trade in species such as snakes, turtles and parrots. Seizures occurred both at border points and within residential areas, indicating the involvement of small-scale networks, some with transnational connections. Cases of smuggling through Ben Gurion Airport, as well as domestic breeding and possession, point to a growing, though still fragmented, market.

Non-renewable resource crimes primarily involve contested natural resource exploitation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Golan Heights. The awarding of gas exploration licences in waters adjacent to Gaza raised concerns regarding the legality and ethics of such extraction. While Israel lacks significant mineral resources domestically, its role in the diamond industry is well established. Though recent reports on illicit diamond flows are limited, historic patterns link Israel's diamond trade to rough stones sourced from conflict-affected regions, particularly in Africa.

DRUGS

Israel functions as both a transit and destination country for various drugs. Heroin use is less widespread compared to other substances, but rising demand, particularly in urban centres such as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, reflects increasing consumption among socioeconomically disadvantaged populations. The drug is typically smuggled into the country from Jordan, with criminal networks including Israeli groups involved in its distribution. While large-scale seizures are uncommon, notable interceptions have revealed heroin smuggled alongside other drugs, such as hashish and cocaine. In recent years, Israel has faced a rise in drug addiction, particularly opioids, exacerbated by the ongoing conflict.

Cocaine use is more prevalent among middle- and upper-class users in cities like Tel Aviv. The drug is trafficked through multiple channels, including via Jordan and in shipments originating from South America. Israeli criminal networks with transnational connections are implicated in this trade, and authorities have carried out significant seizures within the country. Past operations have uncovered hundreds of kilograms of cocaine smuggled through maritime and land-based methods. Though the market is not as consolidated as in some of the other countries in the region, the scale and regularity of seizures suggest a persistent and growing problem.

Cannabis is the most widely used illicit substance in Israel. The country is a destination, transit and source market for cannabis, with both legal medical cultivation and illicit trafficking occurring. Recreational cannabis use has been decriminalized, contributing to widespread consumption, particularly among youth. Despite legal reforms, large-scale smuggling and unregulated domestic cultivation persist. Bedouin communities in the Negev region are frequently involved in production and trafficking, with seizures indicating continued cross-border activity, especially along the Egyptian and Jordanian borders. Enforcement efforts have included raids on thousands of cannabis greenhouses and the interception of shipments involving hashish and marijuana.

The synthetic drug trade in Israel is well-established, with substances such as ecstasy, LSD, Captagon and synthetic cannabinoids widely consumed. Usage increased in recent years, especially among younger demographics, facilitated by online distribution and delivery services. Methamphetamine and other amphetamines are also trafficked into the country, often via Jordan or through air travel. Reports have also highlighted the circulation of adulterated synthetic cannabinoids, sometimes laced with toxic substances, posing significant health risks. Captagon has become increasingly prevalent in both Israel and the Palestinian territories, with some indications of its use among combatants in recent hostilities.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Israel is both a significant target and an actor in the global landscape of cyber-dependent crimes. The frequency and sophistication of cyberattacks have increased considerably since 2023, with a surge in distributed denial of service attacks targeting government, media and financial sectors. Multiple hacker groups, including those with geopolitical motives, have targeted Israeli infrastructure, and the state has faced cyber intrusions from actors linked to Iran and other hostile entities. Notably, pro-Palestinian hacktivist groups and Russian-aligned collectives as well as Iranian proxies are reported to be responsible for high-profile attacks. Conversely, Israel itself has been accused of engaging in cyber operations against adversarial states. The line between politically motivated cyber activity and organized cybercrime remains blurred, but the overall impact on public and private institutions has been severe.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes are a major concern in Israel, encompassing both domestic and international activities. A significant portion of the population has been affected by financial fraud, with phishing, online investment scams and other forms of cyber-enabled crime being particularly prevalent. Organized criminal networks, including transnational groups, have been implicated in large-scale fraud schemes targeting individuals and businesses both within and beyond Israel's borders. Recent incidents underscore the growing sophistication and reach of financial crime in the country.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Mafia-style groups in Israel are diverse, entrenched and operate across multiple criminal markets. These groups, many of which are named after prominent families including the Kedoshim, Hariri, Jarushi, Abu Latif and Abu Zaid families (among others), are often structured around kinship ties and recognized leadership. Their operations span drug trafficking, arms smuggling, extortion, protection racketeering, loan sharking and prostitution. Extortion and protection racketeering are particularly prominent, with such activities exerting significant influence over local communities. While law enforcement has targeted some of these groups, they remain active across various regions and continue to pose a serious threat through intimidation and violence. Violence is a hallmark of mafia-style operations, particularly in Arab communities where intra- and inter-group conflict is common. Recent reports indicate Israeli mafia gangs have been stealing weapons from army warehouses, leading to an increased arsenal of dangerous arms. Despite these challenges, there is limited evidence of widespread, high-level corruption linked to these groups, though isolated instances – such as a suspected debt settlement involving a political figure – have raised concerns.

Criminal networks in Israel tend to be loosely organized and highly opportunistic, with no centralized leadership structure. These networks are active across a broad array of criminal economies, including drug trafficking, arms smuggling, sexual exploitation and cyber-enabled fraud. The fluid nature of these networks allows for adaptability, and many operate across both Israeli territory and the Palestinian territories. In recent years, Israeli criminal networks have become increasingly involved in online fraud, including phishing attacks, forex schemes and various forms of investment scams, generating substantial profits and driving parallel money laundering activities.

Several high-profile corruption cases involving public officials point to state vulnerability to criminal activity. Allegations have implicated senior government officials in financial crime activities, including fraud as well as misuse of public resources. There are also claims of investments scams from businesses with ties to the Knesset, and the state-level exploitation of Palestinian natural resources. Corruption allegations against prominent political figures suggest a recurring pattern of state-linked malfeasance, although these remain isolated rather than systemic.

Israel's criminal markets are also influenced by foreign actors, many of whom are closely linked to transnational networks. Nearly all domestic criminal networks reportedly maintain cross-border ties, particularly with counterparts in neighbouring countries such as Egypt and Jordan. These connections facilitate trafficking of illicit goods, such as drugs and arms. While some non-citizens have reportedly engaged in low-level illicit activities, such as prostitution and drug sales, they do not appear to exert significant control over major markets. Cybercrime is another area where foreign actors are active, with Iranian and Russian groups targeting Israeli infrastructure. These cyberattacks reflect a broader pattern of geopolitical conflict intersecting with organized criminal activity.

Private sector actors in Israel play a notable role in facilitating organized crime, especially through financial and security industries. Sectors such as car rentals, real estate and foreign exchange services are frequently exploited for money laundering and illicit financial flows. Cases have emerged where technology and security companies engaged directly in criminal conduct. These activities point to gaps in regulatory oversight and due diligence within Israel's private sector.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Israel's leadership and governance present a complex picture of strengths and vulnerabilities in addressing organized crime. Domestically, the government's capacity to respond effectively is inconsistent. While Israel has shown commitment to security-focused crime control, especially against perceived external threats, critics highlight a long-standing neglect of and systemic inaction against organized crime in certain communities. These communities report marginalization, a lack of law enforcement presence and systemic underinvestment, contributing to unchecked criminal activity. In contrast, internationally, Israel has actively countered organized crime linked to geopolitical adversaries, such as Hezbollah's illicit operations in Latin America. This dichotomy reflects a broader trend in which state resilience is applied, often aligned with national security interests rather than ensuring uniform public safety across all communities. Following the formation of a right-wing coalition government, national programs such as 'Safe Track' designed to tackle organized crime in key communities were discontinued, with reports in 2024 indicating a surge in violence in Arab-Israeli towns following the program's dissolution. In January 2024, the government reportedly disproportionally reduced budgetary allocations by 15% to all resolutions aimed at cutting crime and advancing the socio-economic development of Arab communities. Recent political developments underscore further governance concerns.

Government transparency and accountability mechanisms are established but face systemic limitations. Israel lacks a dedicated anti-corruption agency, relying instead on the State Comptroller, which has historically functioned as a watchdog, though recent years have seen a more restrained approach in overseeing executive actions. Ongoing high-profile corruption cases involving high ranking officials and their families have eroded public confidence. These include allegations of bribery, media manipulation and abuse of public office, with trial proceedings delayed by both the pandemic and ongoing military operations. Public access to information is hampered by broad exemptions under the Freedom of Information Law, particularly for security-related bodies, and the absence of an independent appeals mechanism. This limited transparency, coupled with judicial constraints and a weakened media environment, further challenges Israel's accountability framework.

On international cooperation, Israel demonstrates partial alignment with global standards. The country has signed and ratified most relevant conventions but has yet to ratify protocols concerning migrant smuggling and arms trafficking. While Israel cooperates with agencies like Europol and other law enforcement counterparts in cybercrime and terrorism cases, its extradition policies remain restrictive, especially for Israeli nationals. Criticism has been levelled at Israel's reluctance to extradite its citizens, often citing the Law of Return. Furthermore, Israel's position on certain humanitarian agencies – such as its decision to ban United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East operations – has prompted international concern as well as debate about its broader approach to multilateral engagement.

Israel's legal framework against organized crime is robust but inconsistently applied. Key laws criminalize a wide range of offences, including drug and human trafficking, racketeering and illegal weapons possession. Reforms have introduced minimum sentencing and measures to address psychoactive substances. Decriminalization efforts for recreational cannabis and updates to arms legislation signal evolving legal priorities. Nonetheless, gaps remain. Human trafficking laws diverge from international norms by omitting elements of force, fraud, or coercion. In December 2024, the Knesset adopted the Protection of the Public from Criminal Organizations Law, 5785-2024 (PPCOL), authorizing courts to issue 'judicial restriction orders' outside the context of criminal proceedings or convictions with the aim to protect against organized crime. The temporary law is set to be in effect for two years. Despite having a relatively robust national framework, geographic gaps in the implementation of anti-organized crime laws, neglecting or targeting certain communities have been a significant issue in Israel.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Israel's judicial system maintains a reputation for independence, evidenced by rulings against state actions and the management of high-profile corruption and human trafficking cases. However, challenges persist. Organized crime cases have reportedly prompted threats against judges, and the use of military courts in the West Bank has drawn international criticism for violating principles of due process. Efforts toward inclusivity, such as appointing diverse candidates to the Supreme Court, signal progress. Public trust in the judiciary has fluctuated, with notable increases recorded during national crises. Nevertheless, delays in case processing and inconsistent victim communication undermine judicial efficacy. Furthermore, due process has often been disregarded in the imprisonment of Palestinians, with many held without formal charges or trials, often based on undisclosed evidence. Israel's penitentiary system has also faced significant scrutiny, particularly in relation to the treatment of Palestinian detainees. Reports have raised concerns around racial profiling, detainment of children, harsh conditions and the use of practices such as prolonged solitary confinement, sleep deprivation as well as physical and verbal abuse. Observations of alleged abuse by prison staff and proposed legislative measures, including discussions around capital punishment, have prompted concern from international observers.

Law enforcement in Israel demonstrates operational strength and is widely recognized for its capacity to address organized crime. Specialized units focus on tackling complex criminal activity, and intelligence services contribute significantly to preventive efforts. However, the protracted conflict and associated challenges, including concerns about police brutality and human rights practices, have complicated the operational landscape. Public trust in law enforcement varies, with higher levels of confidence reported in Jewish-majority areas, where police are generally regarded as effective in maintaining public order and safety.

Territorial integrity is undermined by geopolitical volatility and the ongoing conflict. Israel has not declared official borders since its founding, and conflicts with actors like Hamas and Hezbollah contribute to instability. Military operations against smuggling tunnels, arms trafficking and cross-border threats are frequent. Security infrastructure, including border walls and surveillance systems, aims to curtail terrorist activity and illicit trade, though criminal groups continue to exploit gaps. The Gaza border exemplifies this, with documented use of tunnels for weapons, narcotics and goods smuggling. Strategic concerns over Iran's influence and its proxy groups have prompted substantial defence investments. At the same time, Israel has emerged as a global leader in cybersecurity, bolstering its digital infrastructure. However, cyber threats persist from state-aligned actors, particularly from Iran and Russia, highlighting vulnerabilities in the face of complex hybrid threats.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Israel's anti-money laundering (AML) framework is robust and internationally recognized. As a member of the Financial Action Task Force, Israel is compliant with most recommendations and regularly confiscates illicit assets. In recent years, newly implemented AML regulations for crypto assets align with global standards, though challenges remain in supervision and enforcement. The use of charities for terrorism financing has been flagged as a key risk. While Israel performs strongly in both technical compliance and effectiveness, there remain areas for improvement, particularly in the oversight of nonprofit entities and the implementation of preventative measures to address money laundering risks. The economic regulatory environment is conducive to legitimate business activity but carries embedded risks. Israel's economy performs very well in terms of economic freedom and continues to attract foreign investment, particularly in high-tech sectors. Legal frameworks protect businesses from criminal group interference, and while criminal actors may provide informal financial services, they do not dominate formal markets. However, vulnerabilities exist in sectors like diamond trading, where links to illicit procurement and arms deals persist. While many corporations adopt anti-corruption measures, regulatory enforcement is inconsistent. Free Trade Zones function effectively, although enforcement around intellectual property and reporting remains limited.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Israel provides structured support for victims and witnesses of organized crime. Government-run shelters for trafficking victims offer comprehensive rehabilitation, including legal aid, medical care and job training. Victims who decline shelter services receive documentation protecting them from migration-related prosecution. The Witness Protection Authority offers relocation and long-term protection, coordinating with police and prison services. Measures have also been implemented to support victims of sex crimes during judicial proceedings. However, delays in trafficking victim recognition and a high burden of proof continue to restrict access to services. Additionally, the country does have a programme that offers comprehensive treatment for drug abuse victims, considering factors like gender, age and cultural background to promote accessibility. Recent regressions in migrant worker protections, such as limited legal recourse and exploitative labour conditions, have prompted criticism from civil society organizations. Israel's prevention efforts include national plans on human trafficking and drug abuse, with school-based and workplace education campaigns tailored to the country's multicultural demographics. Whistle-blower protection mechanisms are in place, offering legal and psychological support. Despite these initiatives, enforcement gaps remain. Challenges in recognizing labour trafficking victims and inconsistent oversight of recruitment agencies impede progress. The discontinuation of programmes like Safe Track has further created prevention gaps. Nevertheless, cooperation with NGOs continues, and broad public campaigns address organized crime through multimedia platforms in multiple languages.

Non-state actors are critical yet constrained contributors to Israel's resilience landscape. Domestic NGOs collaborate with government agencies to some degree, but civil society activity in Arab communities faces severe restrictions. Reports in 2024 indicate government crackdowns on anti-war protests including refusal to issue permits and occasional violence against protesters. The designation of Palestinian human rights groups as terrorist organizations and subsequent asset seizures have been widely condemned. NGOs report difficulty accessing government data and engaging in oversight roles. The media operates with relative freedom, though military censorship and legal pressures persist. Israel's media landscape has grown increasingly unstable, marked by heightened government influence over media regulators and efforts to steer editorial positions for political advantage. In May 2024, the Israel passed a law regarding the restriction of foreign broadcasting in the country, allowing the government to ban foreign media organizations it deems harmful to the nation's security.

At the same time, repression of journalists covering the Palestinian territories has intensified significantly, with many journalists in Gaza killed while reporting, and others facing threats of arrest and targeted reputational attacks. Ongoing conflict has exacerbated repression, with the deaths and detentions of journalists drawing international criticism. While Israel has a long-standing tradition of civil society engagement, evolving dynamics and security challenges have introduced pressures that may impact the broader resilience framework.

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.