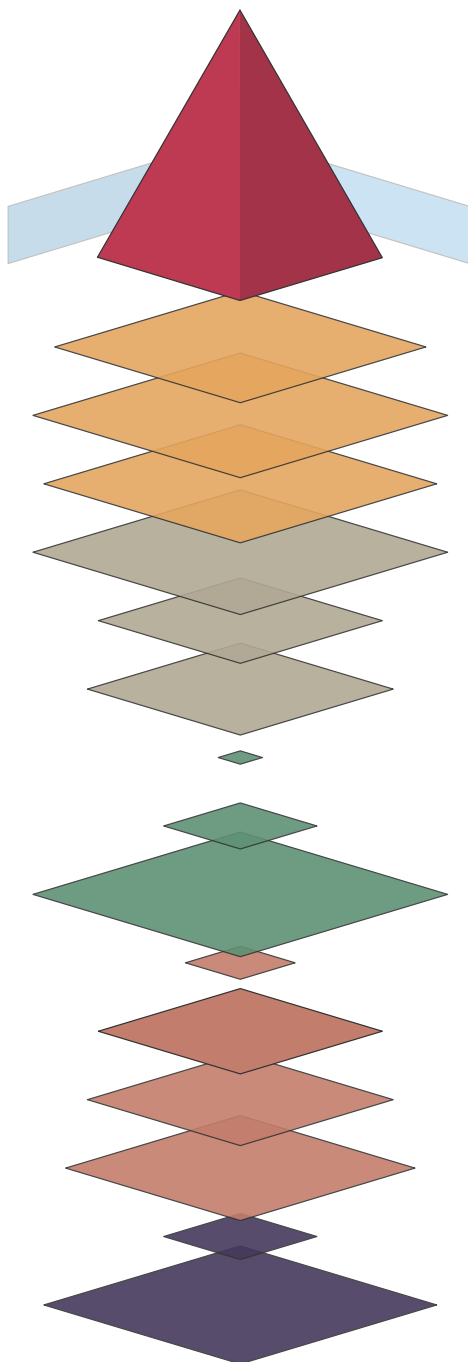


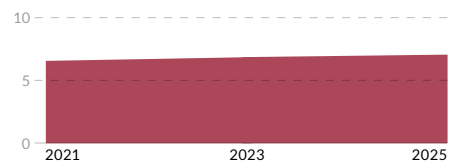


# LIBYA



7.05  $\nearrow 0.12$   
**CRIMINALITY SCORE**

15<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  $\nearrow 3$   
5<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries -  
1<sup>st</sup> of 6 North African countries -



**CRIMINAL MARKETS** **6.70**  $\nearrow 0.13$

|                                     |      |                 |
|-------------------------------------|------|-----------------|
| HUMAN TRAFFICKING                   | 8.50 | 0.00            |
| HUMAN SMUGGLING                     | 9.50 | 0.00            |
| EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING | 9.00 | 0.00            |
| ARMS TRAFFICKING                    | 9.50 | $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS          | 6.50 | $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS     | 7.00 | 0.00            |
| FLORA CRIMES                        | 1.00 | 0.00            |
| FAUNA CRIMES                        | 3.50 | 0.00            |
| NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES       | 9.50 | 0.00            |
| HEROIN TRADE                        | 2.50 | 0.00            |
| COCAINE TRADE                       | 6.50 | $\nearrow 1.00$ |
| CANNABIS TRADE                      | 7.00 | 0.00            |
| SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE                | 8.00 | $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES              | 3.50 | 0.00            |
| FINANCIAL CRIMES                    | 9.00 | $\searrow 0.50$ |



**CRIMINAL ACTORS** **7.40**  $\nearrow 0.10$

|                       |      |                 |
|-----------------------|------|-----------------|
| MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS    | 9.00 | 0.00            |
| CRIMINAL NETWORKS     | 8.00 | $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS | 9.50 | 0.00            |
| FOREIGN ACTORS        | 5.50 | 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.

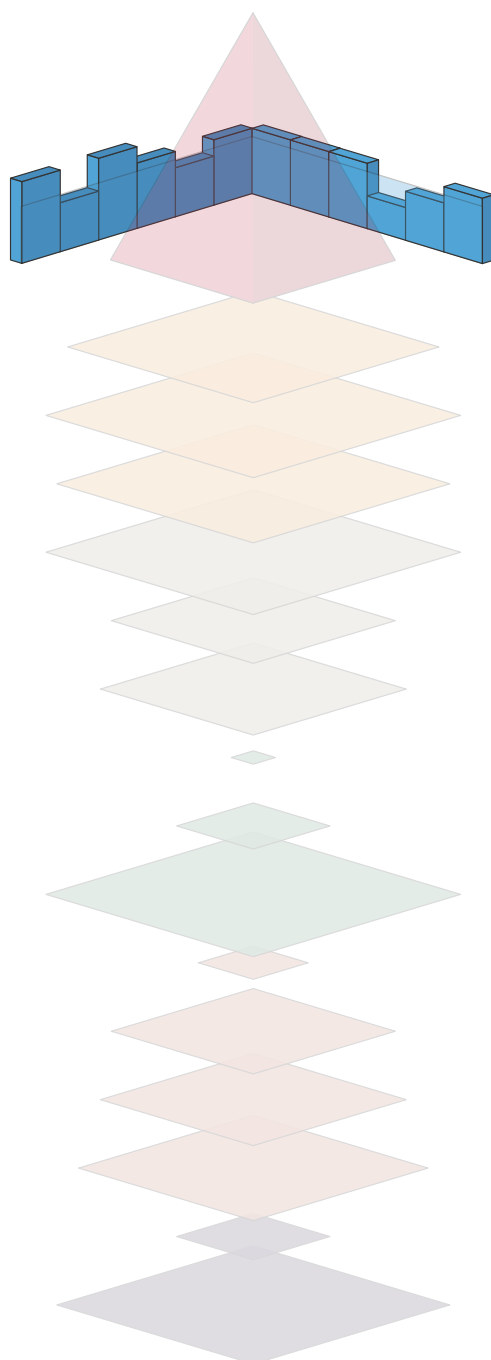


Funded by  
the European Union

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.



# LIBYA



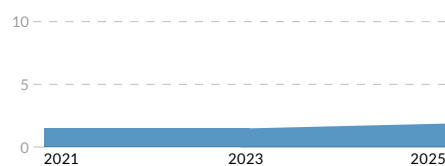
1.88  $\nearrow 0.33$

## RESILIENCE SCORE

188<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  $\nearrow 4$

53<sup>rd</sup> of 54 African countries  $\nearrow 1$

6<sup>th</sup> of 6 North African countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE **2.50**  $\nearrow 1.00$

GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY **1.50** 0.00

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION **2.50** 0.00

NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS **2.00** 0.00

JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION **1.50** 0.00

LAW ENFORCEMENT **2.00**  $\nearrow 0.50$

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY **2.00**  $\nearrow 0.50$

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING **2.00**  $\nearrow 1.00$

ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY **2.00** 0.00

VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT **1.00** 0.00

PREVENTION **1.50**  $\nearrow 0.50$

NON-STATE ACTORS **2.00**  $\nearrow 0.50$



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# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Libya's strategic location as a transit country for migrants and refugees heading to Europe, coupled with ongoing political instability and weak governance, has made it a nexus for human trafficking. Severe abuses – including forced labour, sex trafficking and torture – continue to affect migrant populations, with Sub-Saharan Africans particularly vulnerable. Detention centres, both state-run and militia-controlled, are the scenes of repeated abuse, including exploitation in exchange for basic necessities. The human-trafficking criminal market in Libya involves a range of actors, including armed groups, criminal gangs and networks, tribal factions and smugglers. To entrap victims in forced labour or sexual exploitation, perpetrators use violence (verbal, physical and sexual), fraudulent recruitment, document confiscation, wage withholding and debt bondage. Commercial sex trafficking is prevalent in Libya's south, with Nigerian women and girls at heightened risk. Official complicity is widespread, though some operations in 2024 disrupted trafficking networks, marking some incremental progress.

Libya remains a key source, transit and destination country for human smuggling due to its coastal location and weak governance. Hybrid smuggling – in which migrants, predominantly of South Asian and Western Asian origin, are moved with both formal and informal modes of transport – has become more prevalent and profitable than the overland routes that previously dominated. Despite slightly lower levels of abuse in these operations, rates of violence, extortion and exploitation remain high. Smugglers continue to exploit migrants' vulnerability, often collaborating with complicit officials. While recent suppression of smuggling activities signals some progress (for example, in Tobruk), sustained anti-smuggling efforts are still being undermined by corruption, political instability and militia involvement.

Extortion and protection racketeering are also pervasive in the country. Armed groups, militias and criminal organizations operate across various territories, often engaging in kidnapping for ransom and torture, targeting migrants and refugees in particular. The practice is widespread across Libya, from Kufra in the far southeast to the northwest coast. Bani Walid has become a central hub for ransoming abducted migrants, where armed gangs – often young men – torture victims and send footage to families to extort payments. Militias have long been involved in detaining and abusing refugees, but these gangs are becoming key players in the market. In early 2024, authorities dismantled a kidnapping ring in Sabha that targeted African migrants with false job offers, later demanding ransoms from their

families. Overall, armed groups across Libya continue to operate predatory systems, often collaborating with or being paid by criminal networks trafficking illicit goods, including drugs.

### TRADE

Libya continues to play a central role in regional arms trafficking due to political instability, porous borders and widespread militia control. Although arms flows decreased from their post-2011 peaks, Libya remains a major source of newly manufactured small arms, including AK-pattern rifles, which are trafficked to conflict zones in Mali, Niger, Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic. Domestic markets in illicit arms also persist. While international monitoring efforts have intensified, with maritime and aerial surveillance increasing in early 2024 to enforce the arms embargo, recent reports indicate an increase in the spread of arms trafficked through the country. The growing value and circulation of weapons have turned arms trafficking into a significant part of Libya's economy. Although arms flows from Libya into Sudan during the Sudanese conflict have been less significant than those from Chad, the country still serves as a conduit for weapons, including illicit Russian shipments that violate the UN embargo. Meanwhile, Nigerian rebel groups have sought to acquire Libyan arms, further driving local demand. Although this proliferation has not yet triggered the kind of anti-state violence seen in Sudan, it continues to erode Libya's state capacity.

Libya remains both an origin and destination for counterfeit goods. Exports – mainly clothing, footwear and leather goods – are smuggled to European markets, while imports include counterfeit cigarettes, apparel and cosmetics. Criminal networks exploit the instability and weak enforcement in the country, with both counterfeit and legally produced cigarettes entering Libya illicitly. Despite prohibitions, alcohol production and distribution persist. In early 2024, authorities uncovered a facility in Tobruk producing counterfeit medications, including treatments for diabetes, epilepsy and flu, reflecting broader vulnerabilities in Libya's regulation of pharmaceutical imports and manufacturing.

Libya also remains a notable transit and destination hub for illicitly smuggled excise goods, due to its political instability and its geographic location at the crossroads of Southern Europe, the Gulf states and the Sahel. Years of conflict and weak governance have allowed militias and warlords to seize control of key smuggling routes, entrenching organized crime and undermining law enforcement efforts. Cigarettes are trafficked by sea from Balkan ports under false documentation, and overland through Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt, while a significant portion of domestically consumed cigarettes originate illegally from the Sahel.

Alcohol, officially banned under Islamic law, is widely smuggled from Tunisia and Algeria or produced illicitly in Libya, as reflected in recent seizures of imported liquor and arrests for homemade alcohol sales. Meanwhile, generous state subsidies of food, vehicles and consumer goods have spurred a significant black market in these sectors. Although detrimental to state revenues and domestic supply, the black market sustains the livelihoods of many border communities.

## ENVIRONMENT

Political instability and urban expansion continue to drive illicit timber extraction, although no reported instances of organized crime involvement in the flora market have surfaced to date.

Illegal hunting in Libya remains a pressing concern, particularly of bird species such as quail, falcons, herons and flamingos, as well as rare mammals such as Barbary sheep and deer in the Akakus mountains. Illegal hunting rifles proliferate, with recent seizures recorded at Khoms Port. Overfishing and destructive practices such as dynamite fishing have also been reported, causing severe damage to marine ecosystems, including sponge and seaweed populations. International vessels reportedly operate in Libyan waters without licences, revealing weak maritime enforcement and threats to biodiversity and marine sustainability.

Fuel smuggling is one of Libya's major criminal markets, driven by high subsidies, weak oversight and external demand. As much as 40% of imported fuel – mainly from Russia – is smuggled or re-exported, often generating substantial profits for armed groups and criminal networks. Investigations revealed coordinated efforts involving the use of local ports and small tankers to illegally export refined fuel, often mislabelling Russian oil as Libyan. Increases in overland and maritime smuggling, particularly from Benghazi, have been documented since 2022, with links to Russia's oil sanctions evasion. The market also supports foreign conflicts and is a key income source for some armed groups. Gold smuggling is another major illicit market in Libya, with flows estimated at 50–55 tons in recent years. Networks involved in illegal gold mining and trafficking operate across southern Libya – sourcing gold mainly from Chad – often with transnational elements and the involvement of foreign labour. High-level complicity has also been reported, including the alleged role of customs officials in facilitating large gold transfers through national airports.

## DRUGS

Although recent detailed information on the heroin trade in Libya is limited, the country's weak enforcement mechanisms and chronic instability offer traffickers a low-risk corridor. A March 2024 seizure by authorities in Benghazi, which included a small quantity of suspected heroin alongside other narcotics, suggests the absence

of a distinct or well-structured heroin trafficking market. The limited volume points to heroin's marginal role within the broader illicit drug economy in Libya. But cocaine trafficking through Libya has intensified, with the country acting as a key transit route for shipments from South America and the Sahel to Europe. Land routes through Algeria and Niger remain active, while maritime routes have also gained prominence. Major seizures in 2024 highlight the scale and consistency of the trade. Notably, cocaine arriving from Ecuador was found at Libyan ports and hidden in food and construction supply shipments. The high value of cocaine trafficking has attracted both organized criminal networks and state-linked actors, suggesting deeper systemic involvement and a potentially large undetected flow. Libya has a well-established and growing cannabis resin trade, particularly involving hashish trafficked overland from Morocco via Algeria and the Sahel. Increased domestic consumption since the 2011 revolution, combined with Libya's porous borders, has reinforced its role as a key transit country. Notable seizures and multi-ton shipments intercepted abroad suggest the scale of the trade. Synthetic drug trafficking in Libya remains widespread, with captagon, tramadol, pregabalin and clonazepam readily available. Tramadol, though still trafficked, has declined in significance since 2020. On the other hand, pregabalin smuggling, primarily via maritime routes from Türkiye and Montenegro, has increased sharply since 2018, with armed groups reportedly taxing shipments. Libya has also emerged as both a destination and transit point for captagon, with origins largely traced to Syria and Lebanon. Seizures in 2024 include a significant number of tablets at ports in Misrata and Benghazi, with drugs concealed in food shipments or containers from India and Syria. These trends confirm Libya's deepening role in regional synthetic drug networks.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

While not widespread, cyber-dependent attacks are increasing in sophistication and severity, including hacks and ransomware schemes demanding large sums. Critical infrastructure, such as the telecommunications sector, and government-linked entities have faced service disruptions due to cyberattacks. For instance, in April 2024, an oil and gas company was hacked by the group RansomHub, resulting in the theft of 1 terabyte of confidential data. The expansion of cyber-dependent crimes reflects growing digital insecurity across Libya, exacerbated by weak digital safeguards.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Libya continues to experience widespread financial crime, particularly embezzlement, contract fraud and corruption, both within state institutions and the banking sector. These issues have persisted since before the revolution and remain deeply entrenched today. In 2024 alone, several high-level cases were reported, involving officials from key institutions

such as customs, banks and state-owned enterprises. These cases illustrate the misuse of public funds and institutional resources on a significant scale. A notable scheme involved fraudulent use of letters of credit, enabling companies to illegally access large sums in foreign currency and profit from exchange rate manipulation. Authorities linked several officials and financial institutions to these activities, exposing the scale of collusion between public and private actors. Moreover, Russia has been accused of sending counterfeit currency to Libya, fuelling instability and supporting local armed groups. The fake money has contributed to inflation and weakened Libya's official financial system. Tax evasion is also a persistent issue, though recent reporting on this front remains limited. The overall pattern indicates that financial crimes are widespread, systemic and closely tied to corruption at many levels of government.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Libya's organized crime landscape is predominantly shaped by militia networks that exert mafia-style control over territory, resources and smuggling routes. These groups are deeply entrenched in illicit economies across Libya, profiting from fuel smuggling, drug trafficking, protection racketeering and criminal taxation. Eastern Libya and the Fezzan, areas which are under the control of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), have relatively structured and stable criminal landscapes, reflecting the more settled political situation. By contrast, western Libya sees more fragmented but active criminal participation, notably on the western coast, where fuel, human and drug smuggling are central. Zawiya remains highly unstable due to frequent violent clashes between rival militias. Competition over illicit markets remains a significant driver of this conflict. In 2024, state recognition of militias' roles enabled their entrenchment in security structures, reinforcing their control over both political power and criminal economies.

Criminal networks in Libya remain active across arms trafficking, human smuggling, the drug trade and fuel smuggling. The resurgence of human smuggling and trafficking has been linked to increased mobility following stabilization in western Libya and the end of pandemic-era

restrictions, alongside declining elite interest in law enforcement reform. These networks operate through entrenched ties with political elites and armed groups, often receiving protection in exchange for payment. In areas such as southern Cyrenaica and the Fezzan, militia-controlled illicit economies have taken on semi-legitimate characteristics, with criminal actors paying levies to both armed groups and local authorities and receiving documentation to facilitate their movement.

Libya's persistent institutional fragmentation, marked by two rival governments and overlapping institutions, has enabled widespread state capture and limited law enforcement capacity. Criminal actors with armed group ties have transitioned from informal influence to holding senior roles within both the GNU and GNS, granting them decision-making power and access to intelligence. These state-embedded figures exploit official tools to manage criminal markets and influence public finances. Notably, senior government officials and high-level politicians linked to militias have been implicated in illicit activities, including fuel smuggling, unauthorized spending and corruption, illustrating the extent of criminal infiltration within state structures.

Foreign actors exert limited but notable influence in Libya's criminal markets, particularly in fuel smuggling and human trafficking. Russian entities have been linked to illicit fuel flows to Europe, while foreign recruiters and financiers play key roles in human smuggling networks, though their operations remain dependent on Libyan facilitators. Nigerian criminal groups have been implicated in trafficking women into sexual exploitation in Europe via Libya. In September 2024, Libyan authorities dismantled a Nigerian network involved in human trafficking, drug smuggling and forced labour in Zuwara. The growing influence of armed groups across both formal and informal economies has increasingly drawn private actors into the criminal landscape. This includes the takeover of state-owned enterprises and financial institutions. The fuel sector is particularly affected, with militias deeply entrenched in its operations and licensed petrol station owners playing an active role in smuggling networks.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Libya continues to face severe political fragmentation, insecurity and weak governance, with no unified strategy to combat organized crime. Governing entities often adopt an approach of co-optation, tolerating illicit activities that do not threaten regime stability. Legislation targeting

organized crime remains limited and inconsistently enforced. The enduring conflict since the fall of Gaddafi has fuelled militia rivalries, human rights abuses and exploitation by criminal networks. International actors have supported dialogue among Libyan leaders to address the political deadlock, but progress toward unified governance and

rule of law remains limited. While the municipal elections marked a step forward for democratic progress in Libya, they also revealed enduring problems, including political interference and the need for stronger institutional support. Nevertheless, their successful execution demonstrates Libya's potential for democratic development. During the reporting period, Libya's Administrative Control Authority joined the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network, marking a step toward enhancing international cooperation on integrity and accountability. Despite this development, corruption remains widespread among public officials, driven by fragmented institutions and the absence of enforceable transparency laws. Budgeting and procurement processes lack openness across rival governing bodies. Analysts note a sharp rise in elite-led graft and criminal activity, warning that systemic looting threatens the viability of core institutions, particularly the national oil sector, amid limited international focus on anti-corruption in favour of conflict mediation.

Libya engages with multiple international partners to address organized crime, human trafficking and terrorism. Cooperation with UN agencies focuses on criminal justice reform and cross-border crime prevention. Libya has also signed bilateral agreements with Italy covering extradition, judicial cooperation and migrant transfers, including support for the Libyan Coast Guard. Other partnerships include asset recovery efforts with France and security dialogue with the Netherlands. EU operations aimed at enforcing the arms embargo and disrupting trafficking networks have been extended, with the addition of capacity-building components. Libya remains a signatory but not a state party to the Arms Trade Treaty and pursued enhanced security cooperation with Türkiye through a formal agreement. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of international cooperation efforts in addressing criminal markets has been curbed by weak enforcement mechanisms and ongoing instability within the country. Libya's legislative framework addressing organized crime remains inadequate. While certain provisions criminalize some forms of sex trafficking involving women, they exclude labour trafficking and adult male victims, and apply only to cross-border movement, thus diverging from international standards. Penalties under relevant articles range up to 15 years' imprisonment for slavery-related offences. A cybercrime law enacted in 2022 authorizes content censorship and punitive measures for broad violations of 'public order and morality.' In 2024, the attorney-general criticized several legal instruments, including the cybercrime and anti-terrorism laws, as reactionary measures lacking research, emphasising that they prioritize public order at the expense of fundamental rights and freedoms.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Libya's criminal justice system continues to exhibit serious structural weaknesses. Judicial processes are undermined by political interference, insecurity and threats against legal professionals. Military courts try civilians, and many individuals remain in detention without trial. Courts function inconsistently, often lacking impartiality, particularly in areas under militia control. There are no specialized units for prosecuting human trafficking and accountability for such crimes is rare. Arbitrary arrests and systemic ill-treatment persist in detention facilities, where overcrowding, torture and the denial of medical care are widespread. Reports of deaths in custody and abuses by armed groups, including state-linked actors, have triggered public outcry and demands for independent investigations.

In 2024, Libya took part in a European-supported initiative aimed at improving law-enforcement efforts and land border management through training, infrastructure support and the provision of surveillance equipment. Capacity-building efforts addressed areas such as smuggling detection, search techniques and international humanitarian law. Despite these efforts, Libyan law enforcement's ability to combat human trafficking remains constrained by shortages of trained border personnel and broader institutional weaknesses. Corruption, fragmented governance and the entrenched influence of local non-state actors continue to undermine centralized law enforcement. In many areas, policing is carried out by local groups whose actions are shaped more by political or social dynamics than by adherence to national legal authority.

Libya's extensive and porous borders, primarily in its desert regions, remain a critical vulnerability due to fragmented political control and limited state presence. Armed groups and militias operate across various sectors, contributing to inconsistent enforcement and enabling illicit cross-border activity. Efforts to address these challenges include the installation of electronic surveillance systems along the Tunisian border and increased efforts by LAAF to secure the frontiers in the Fezzan. Additionally, Libya signed agreements with the EU to improve integrated border management. Nonetheless, concerns persist regarding limited oversight, human rights abuses during maritime interceptions and Libya's significant exposure to cyber threats due to inadequate digital safeguards.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

In early 2024, a national committee convened to address developments in anti-money laundering (AML) and counterterrorism financing (CTF), including plans for a national risk assessment and enhanced inter-agency coordination. These efforts aim to strengthen Libya's financial system, uphold national security and align with international standards. Additional discussions took place with international financial institutions on improving AML and CTF practices, and a dedicated agency for combating



financial crime and terrorist financing was established in 2024. Despite these initiatives, problems remain. A 2024 investigative report revealed that tens of millions of euros from Libya were laundered abroad, tracing the origin to compromised state funds in Benghazi. This case exposes the persistent vulnerabilities in Libya's financial oversight and the risk of illicit financial flows being used to fund conflict. While reform efforts are underway, structural challenges and past abuses continue to weigh heavily on the credibility and effectiveness of Libya's AML and CTF regime.

Libya's economic environment remains constrained by persistent political fragmentation, weak governance and widespread corruption. Despite recovering oil revenues, long-term planning is hindered by institutional paralysis and poor public financial management. The private sector is marginalized, while systemic legal uncertainty and conflict have disrupted property rights and commercial activity. Armed groups continue to dominate informal markets and benefit from fuel subsidies, which contribute to resource depletion. Though international financial institutions had projected a partial recovery, natural disasters and ongoing instability have further strained the economy. Structural challenges – such as a dysfunctional labour market, stalled diversification and entrenched patronage networks – continue to impede sustainable growth.

journalists and lawyers face arbitrary detention, harassment and defamation. Media freedom remains severely restricted, with most outlets aligned with factions or foreign interests. Cybercrime laws and direct repression by security actors have further constrained freedoms, deepening a climate of fear and impunity.

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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.*

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Libya continues to lack institutional capacity and legal frameworks to support victims of organized crime, trafficking and conflict-related violence. Government efforts to identify or protect trafficking victims – especially migrants, women in commercial sex and child soldiers – remain virtually absent, with no formal mechanisms for victim assistance or alternatives to deportation. Rehabilitation centres are defined by prison-like conditions and reports of abuse persist, especially in facilities without female staff. Libya lacks a cohesive national strategy to prevent organized crime, relying instead on limited participation in international initiatives led by organizations such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the African Union and the Arab League. These efforts primarily address drug trafficking, smuggling and terrorism. Judicial dysfunction, the absence of centralized authority and the dominance of armed groups and foreign actors all serve to create pervasive insecurity. Corruption, militia control and widespread impunity undermine broader prevention efforts.

Civil society in Libya continues to address displacement, and to promote reconciliation and social development, often stepping in where state services are absent. Traditional tribal and religious institutions also play a key role in conflict mediation. However, the operating environment for civil society organizations has deteriorated due to legal restrictions, intimidation and violence. Regulatory frameworks allow state interference, and authorities have invalidated many post-2011 organizations. Activists,