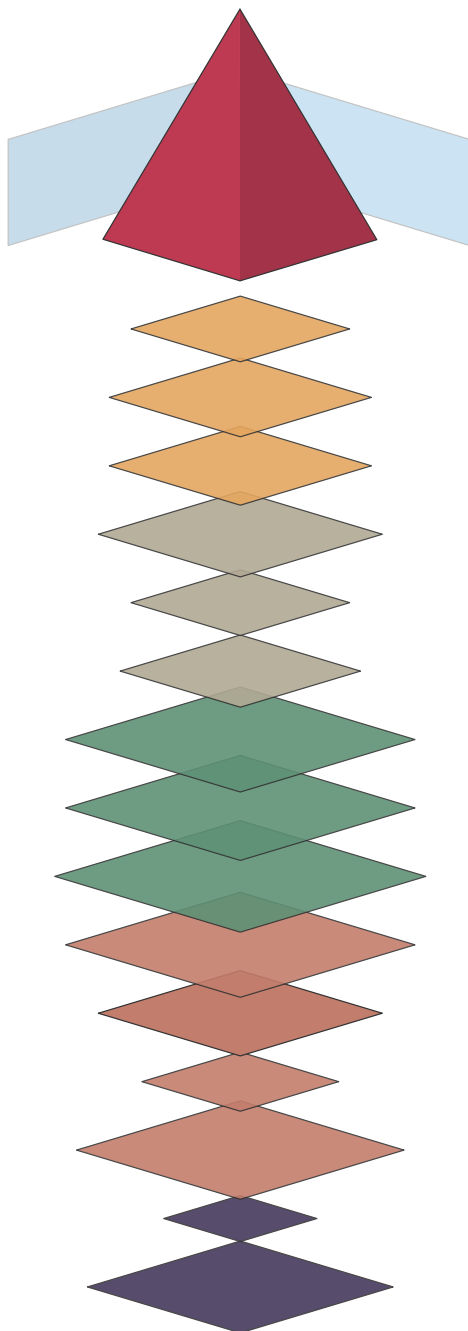




# MOZAMBIQUE



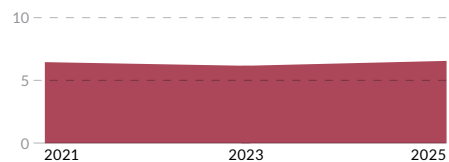
6.63  $\nearrow 0.43$

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

27<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  $\nearrow 15$

8<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  $\nearrow 3$

2<sup>nd</sup> of 13 Southern African countries -



## CRIMINAL MARKETS

6.37  $\nearrow 0.47$

|                                     |                      |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| HUMAN TRAFFICKING                   | 5.00 $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| HUMAN SMUGGLING                     | 6.00 $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING | 6.00 $\nearrow 1.00$ |
| ARMS TRAFFICKING                    | 6.50 0.00            |
| TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS          | 5.00 $\nearrow 1.00$ |
| ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS     | 5.50 $\nearrow 1.00$ |
| FLORA CRIMES                        | 8.00 0.00            |
| FAUNA CRIMES                        | 8.00 0.00            |
| NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES       | 8.50 $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| HEROIN TRADE                        | 8.00 0.00            |
| COCAINE TRADE                       | 6.50 $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| CANNABIS TRADE                      | 4.50 $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE                | 7.50 $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES              | 3.50 $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| FINANCIAL CRIMES                    | 7.00 $\nearrow 0.50$ |



## CRIMINAL ACTORS

6.90  $\nearrow 0.40$

|                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS    | 6.00 $\nearrow 1.00$ |
| CRIMINAL NETWORKS     | 8.00 0.00            |
| STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS | 9.00 0.00            |
| FOREIGN ACTORS        | 7.50 0.00            |
| PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS | 4.00 $\nearrow 1.00$ |



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

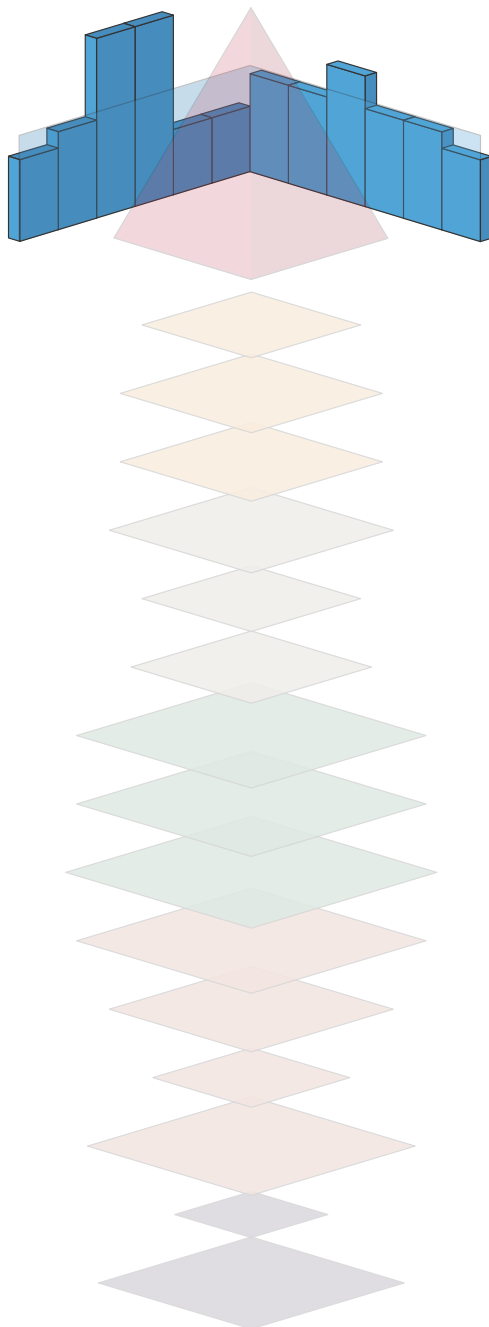


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# MOZAMBIQUE



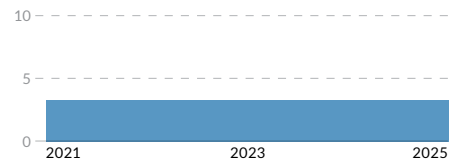
3.25  $\nearrow 0.04$

## RESILIENCE SCORE

155<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries -

32<sup>nd</sup> of 54 African countries  $\nearrow 1$

9<sup>th</sup> of 13 Southern African countries  $\nearrow 1$



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP  
AND GOVERNANCE **2.50**  $\nearrow 0.50$

GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY  
AND ACCOUNTABILITY **3.00**  $\nearrow 0.50$

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION **5.50** 0.00

NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS **5.50** 0.00

JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION **2.00** 0.00

LAW ENFORCEMENT **2.00** 0.00

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY **3.00** 0.00

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING **3.00** 0.00

ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY **4.00** 0.00

VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT **3.00** 0.00

PREVENTION **3.00**  $\nearrow 1.00$

NON-STATE ACTORS **2.50**  $\nearrow 0.50$



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# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Mozambique is a key transit and source country for human trafficking, victims primarily being trafficked to South Africa for forced labour on farms and mines. Zimbabwe has also emerged as a significant destination for trafficked Mozambican victims, especially children, in areas such as Mount Selinda, where they are exploited for labour. There are also reports of armed groups, including those linked to Islamic State, forcibly recruiting children to support their operations, serving as carriers, logistical aides, and, in some cases, participating in raids. The trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation is prevalent along the southern transport corridor connecting Mozambique to South Africa and Eswatini. Many victims are recruited online through fraudulent job postings. Individuals with albinism are trafficked for ritual purposes due to superstitions about their body parts. Mozambique's large population of people internally displaced by climate-related disasters are also highly vulnerable to trafficking. Human smuggling is largely associated with the southern route, which facilitates migration from the Horn of Africa to South Africa through Mozambique, Tanzania and Malawi. This route is predominantly used by Ethiopian and Somali migrants. The maritime route from Kenya and Somalia to Mozambique, followed by overland travel southwards, is particularly dangerous due to frequent shipwrecks. Many migrants navigate the route independently but organized smuggling networks operate in Mozambique. Corruption among law enforcement allows smugglers to facilitate illegal crossings with ease. Women generally avoid the southern route due to the high risk of sexual violence, preferring to fly to Mozambique before continuing their journey overland.

Extortion and protection racketeering are prevalent in Mozambique, particularly in Cabo Delgado, where insurgents and militias exploit local populations. Insurgents impose extortion fees on villagers and businesses to fund their activities, while state-backed militias have been reported demanding bribes at checkpoints. Kidnappings for ransom are also widespread, criminal groups in Maputo and Beira targeting businessmen and their families. Ransom demands have reportedly reached millions of dollars, and recent attacks targeting police officials suggest the increasing power of kidnapping networks.

### TRADE

Mozambique's arms trafficking market is fuelled by historical conflict and weak disarmament efforts. Illicit firearms are in circulation and ports such as Nacala and Beira are key entry points for smuggled weapons. Corrupt security officials have been implicated in renting out firearms to criminal groups. The arms trade is closely linked to poaching networks, and AK-47 and SKS rifles are used extensively for illegal hunting. Insurgent groups in Cabo Delgado have historically relied on arms trafficking but they are increasingly sourcing weapons through direct raids on security forces.

The trade in counterfeit goods is pervasive and most products sold in Maputo are reportedly counterfeit. Seizures by the National Inspectorate of Economic Activities have uncovered counterfeit items such as electronics, pharmaceuticals (including cough syrup) and falsely branded products. The inspectorate reports that most popular alcoholic drink brands in the country are counterfeit and sold at significantly lower prices than genuine products. Weak enforcement and corruption allow the trade to flourish and criminal networks play a significant role in distribution. Ports facilitate the transit of counterfeit goods, particularly medicines, clothing and footwear, to central and southern Africa.

Illicit trade in excise goods, including tobacco and alcohol, is widespread. Mozambique is a destination, transit and source country and its smuggling routes connect to South Africa and Zimbabwe. Criminal syndicates use the loosely regulated borders to traffic contraband, often bypassing customs controls through corruption. The Beira corridor is a significant route for smuggled cigarettes and alcohol, leading to substantial tax revenue losses. Another smuggling route is the Maputo corridor linking Mozambique to Eswatini and South Africa. While the overall size of the illicit trade market is difficult to measure, it is clearly extensive and deeply embedded.

### ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes, particularly illegal logging and charcoal production, are significant, causing substantial environmental and economic damage. The illicit timber trade generates millions annually and China is the primary destination for illegal exports. Several criminal actor types exploit flora crimes. Insurgents are reported to finance their activities through timber trafficking in Cabo Delgado, but overall private sector actors play a central role in illegal logging for timber and charcoal production, operating outside legal frameworks. Foreign actors, particularly Chinese logging companies, have been implicated in overstepping licence boundaries

and exporting timber volumes far exceeding official limits. The laundering of this illegal and conflict timber is facilitated by systemic corruption in the timber sector. Flora crimes are transnational in nature and much of Mozambique's illegally felled timber is exported to China. The production of charcoal is also driven by high local demand from urban households that use it as a primary energy source.

Mozambique is a major transit hub for wildlife crimes, including ivory and rhino horn trafficking. Organized networks operate poaching rings in conservation areas and elephant and pangolin populations are particularly affected. Recent seizures have intercepted large shipments of ivory bound for Dubai. Corruption undermines enforcement efforts and state officials are implicated in facilitating trafficking. Illegal fishing, primarily driven by Chinese fleets, depletes local stocks and contributes to significant economic losses.

Non-renewable resource crimes, particularly illegal mining, are widespread in Mozambique. Gold, rubies and tantalite are illegally extracted in provinces such as Cabo Delgado and Nampula. Corrupt officials and foreign actors exploit weak enforcement mechanisms to traffic minerals across borders. Reports suggest that displaced populations from conflict zones increasingly turn to illegal mining as a livelihood, contributing to environmental degradation and social instability. The transnational nature of the market is evident. Minerals are smuggled into neighbouring Tanzania, and Mozambique is a transit route for illicit lithium ore from Zimbabwe. It is also a source and a transit point for illegally mined minerals, particularly gold, and it has become a key regional hub in the illicit trade of raw copper. Corruption in the extractive sector is a critical issue and weak regulatory oversight allows illicit activities to persist.

## DRUGS

Although minor interruptions have been reported, Mozambique plays a critical role in the heroin trade as a major offloading point along the southern route that connects Afghanistan to global markets. Heroin shipments primarily arrive in Nampula before being transported southwards. High-level state corruption has historically enabled the trade, although international pressure has led to increased seizures. Mozambique is a key transit country for heroin destined for South Africa and beyond. There is also local demand, particularly in urban centres such as Maputo.

The cocaine trade is expanding and Mozambique is emerging as an important transit point for shipments from Brazil. The São Paulo-Maputo-South Africa route is increasingly used by traffickers. Large seizures at Maputo's port highlight the country's growing role in the global cocaine trade. Foreign actors dominate this market, with most drug traffickers arrested in Mozambique originating from airports in Addis Ababa, Dar es Salaam, and São Paulo. However, there is limited evidence of widespread domestic cocaine consumption.

The cannabis trade in Mozambique is growing, driven by the rising popularity of cannabis products in the region. Production is centred in rural areas such as Tete province. Local cultivation supplies domestic and international markets, notably Europe. Law enforcement occasionally conducts eradication operations but demand continues to fuel production and trafficking.

Synthetic drug trafficking is a rising concern and Mozambique is a key transit point for methamphetamine and amphetamine originating from Afghanistan. These drugs and their chemical precursors move through established trafficking routes towards southern Africa and beyond. The country is primarily a transit hub but there is also local consumption. Reports suggest the existence of clandestine labs producing meth, methcathinone and MDMA, which are distributed locally and across regional markets. Criminal networks with transnational ties play a significant role in facilitating this trade, exploiting weak regulatory controls and corruption.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crime in Mozambique is increasing, and hacking and the use of malware are prevalent. The country records significant numbers of cyber-attacks monthly, affecting financial institutions and businesses. The lack of specific information makes it challenging to assess the scale and impact of this criminal market.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

The financial crimes market in Mozambique is well established, encompassing illicit activities such as job scams, online banking fraud, embezzlement and tax evasion. Tax evasion and under-invoicing are particularly prevalent in the mineral sector, leading to significant revenue losses for the government, while embezzlement in public institutions further depletes resources meant for essential public services. A wide range of actors are involved, from opportunistic individuals to private sector entities and organized criminal networks, indicating a fragmented landscape rather than a single consolidated structure. Corruption is deeply entrenched and state-embedded actors are frequently implicated in large-scale financial scandals, exacerbating governance and accountability challenges.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

The most significant mafia-style group in Mozambique is Islamic State, which is associated with the insurgency in Cabo Delgado. Despite recent leadership losses, the group remains a persistent threat, capitalizing on the withdrawal of foreign military forces to expand its operations. The insurgency has demonstrated the group's ability to control territory intermittently, particularly in central Cabo Delgado, while also launching attacks in Niassa and Nampula provinces. Its criminal activities include extortion, displacement of

villagers and the recruitment of child soldiers, all of which have led to the forced displacement of more than a million people. The insurgency sustains itself through looting, extortion and kidnapping for ransom, benefiting from international allies' ideological support.

Mozambique hosts a variety of criminal networks involved in many illicit markets. These networks are particularly active in the illegal logging and timber trade, non-renewable resource exploitation and drug trafficking. As instability in northern Mozambique has increased, the main trafficking hubs have shifted south, with operations now more concentrated in Inhambane and Sofala provinces. While most criminal markets in Mozambique operate with relatively low levels of violence, kidnapping for ransom is a notable exception. Urban areas such as Nacala and Nampula are hotspots for organized crime, and influential figures – often referred to as oligarchs – leverage political connections to evade justice. There are reports of law enforcement collusion with criminal networks, particularly in the growing kidnapping industry targeting foreign business executives.

Corruption among state-embedded actors is a defining feature of Mozambique's organized crime landscape. Officials in government institutions are frequently implicated in criminal enterprises, particularly the illicit timber trade and non-renewable resource exploitation. High-ranking political figures provide protection to criminal networks, facilitating the smuggling of illicit goods. State actors are not always directly involved in organized crime but they create an environment of impunity through corruption and selective enforcement of laws. High-profile corruption and embezzlement cases illustrate the entrenched nature of financial misconduct in the political system. Law enforcement agencies have also been implicated in criminal activities, including extortion and abuse of power. Reports indicate that police officers prey on vulnerable populations, including displaced persons in Cabo Delgado, and demand exorbitant bribes to secure the release of detainees. These patterns

of corruption undermine trust in state institutions and weaken efforts to combat organized crime.

Foreign actors play a significant role in Mozambique's criminal economy, particularly in the environmental crimes sector. Chinese networks are heavily involved in the illicit timber trade, often in collaboration with Mozambican state-embedded actors. Chinese and Vietnamese actors are engaged in wildlife trafficking, while Tanzanian criminal groups are active in ivory smuggling and Somali networks participate in human smuggling operations. Brazilian criminal organizations have extended their influence, particularly in drug trafficking, and recent high-profile arrests highlight these transnational connections. Financial crimes involving multinational corporations further demonstrate the involvement of foreign entities, as evidenced by tax evasion allegations against an Italian energy company. Foreign actors exert considerable economic influence but they generally lack direct control over Mozambique's criminal markets, instead operating through partnerships with local actors.

Private sector actors in Mozambique are deeply involved in illegal activities, particularly non-renewable resource crimes and flora crimes. Numerous companies engage in illegal logging and timber smuggling, often misdeclaring shipments or omitting key details to evade detection. Discrepancies in shipping and customs data suggest widespread tax evasion and regulatory manipulation in the timber sector. In the mining sector, private companies have been implicated in tax evasion schemes, exacerbating financial losses to the state. Many of these businesses maintain close ties to ruling party figures, facilitating an environment in which corporate crime flourishes. As Mozambique's democratic processes have weakened, private sector actors have gained increasing influence, playing a critical role in perpetuating corruption and organized crime. Their role in illegal activities, including smuggling excise goods and wildlife products, underscores their broader impact on the criminal economy.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Mozambique faces significant governance challenges, including corruption, political instability and weak institutional oversight. Efforts to combat organized crime have been hindered by inadequate implementation of national strategies. Allegations of electoral fraud, including vote-rigging, fake voter registrations and ballot stuffing in October 2024 elections, have eroded public trust in political institutions, leading to protests that escalated into violent clashes. In response, the government has employed heavy-handed measures,

including internet blackouts and social media restrictions to suppress dissent. The ruling party, FRELIMO, has been accused of receiving financial support from criminal actors in exchange for policy favours, exacerbating governance issues. These developments have underscored the tension between state security measures and democratic freedoms, raising broader concerns about Mozambique's political stability and the well-being of its citizens. In addition to these challenges, Mozambique is grappling with an insurgency linked to Islamic State extremists in Cabo Delgado.

Government transparency and accountability are limited. The absence of independent oversight bodies, coupled with widespread corruption, weakens enforcement efforts. The 2016 hidden debt scandal, involving secret loans of about \$2 billion meant for state fishery projects, continues to shape Mozambique's financial and political landscape, and there have been recent legal attempts to recover lost funds. The impact of new transparency frameworks is undermined by systemic corruption and political interference. International assessments highlight the country's struggles with accountability and institutional integrity.

Mozambique participates in international cooperation efforts to combat organized crime, including membership of INTERPOL and the ratification of key international conventions. The country maintains extradition agreements and regional partnerships which have facilitated prosecutions. Maritime security initiatives and efforts to curb illegal fishing demonstrate engagement in broader security frameworks. However, enforcement is inconsistent due to corruption and capacity constraints.

The legal framework provides a foundation for addressing organized crime through laws and codes that criminalize activities linked to criminal networks. Existing legislation covers offences such as migrant smuggling, drug trafficking and arms trafficking, but enforcement is inconsistent. There is no comprehensive legal framework specifically targeting organized crime, limiting the effectiveness of legal measures. However, the country, with the help of international partners, is advancing a national strategy, targeting crimes such as human trafficking, wildlife crime and drug trafficking, in line with Southern African Development Community regional strategies. Recent initiatives, including anti-counterfeiting regulations and cybersecurity policies, indicate progress, but enforcement efforts are hampered by resource constraints, corruption and a lack of institutional coordination.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Mozambique's judicial system faces challenges including corruption, political interference and inadequate capacity. Courts have prosecuted individuals involved in illicit activities but systemic inefficiencies such as case backlogs and limited staffing hinder judicial effectiveness. Corruption among judicial officials further undermines public trust, and there have been reports of selective prosecutions and impunity for politically connected individuals. The number of magistrates has increased but regional disparities persist, affecting overall judicial efficiency. Overcrowding and poor sanitation are critical issues in the correctional system. Prisons operate well beyond their intended capacity and reports indicate severe infrastructure deficiencies. The government has announced the implementation of a national strategy to improve prison conditions but its effectiveness is uncertain as systemic challenges persist.

Law enforcement agencies struggle with resource constraints, limiting their effectiveness in tackling organized crime. The National Criminal Investigation Service has made arrests in high-profile cases but corruption in law enforcement is a major issue. Reports of police involvement in extortion, drug trafficking and kidnapping highlight systemic problems. Training programmes and international collaborations have been introduced but public trust in law enforcement is low due to ongoing misconduct and inefficiency.

Mozambique's territorial integrity is undermined by porous borders that facilitate human trafficking, drug smuggling and wildlife crimes. The southern route for heroin trafficking passes through Mozambique, exacerbating security challenges. International cooperation has improved border monitoring but corruption at checkpoints is an obstacle. The insurgency in Cabo Delgado has strained government resources, complicating efforts to secure borders and combat transnational crime.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Mozambique has implemented reforms to strengthen its anti-money laundering framework, focusing on financial intelligence and compliance with international standards. Even so, the country remains on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list due to deficiencies in monitoring illicit financial flows. Weak enforcement mechanisms and limited investigative capacity allow financial crimes to persist. Improving compliance with FATF regulations has been a government priority, leading to tightened banking regulations, enhanced training for law enforcement on investigating money laundering and asset recovery, and improved international cooperation. However, gaps in case management and resource allocation hinder effective enforcement.

The economic regulatory environment in Mozambique is characterized by weak oversight, corruption and limited investor confidence. The country has significant natural resources but governance challenges prevent economic growth from benefiting the broader population. Regulatory shortcomings in the mining and logging industries have facilitated illicit activities and criminal actors have exploited legal loopholes. Security concerns, including frequent kidnappings of business executives, further deter foreign investment. Deep-rooted governance issues hinder financial resilience, despite economic reforms.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Victim and witness support services in Mozambique are inadequate and there is heavy reliance on NGOs and international organizations. There are laws to protect victims but their implementation is weak due to insufficient resources. Government-run shelters provide short-term support for human trafficking victims but long-term

rehabilitation services are lacking. The absence of a centralized victim support system complicates efforts to address the needs of vulnerable populations.

Prevention initiatives against organized crime are underdeveloped and there are minimal state-led programmes. Some community organizations engage in crime prevention activities but resource limitations constrain their effectiveness. Government-led counterterrorism initiatives in Cabo Delgado include community engagement components, but broader crime prevention strategies are inconsistent and underfunded. While awareness campaigns and educational initiatives aimed at reducing vulnerability to organized crime have been introduced, their impact is difficult to assess. Legal protections for whistle-blowers are limited, discouraging the reporting of corruption and organized crime. Mozambique's national strategy against organized crime has been designed to include preventive measures but its full scope is still being defined.

Non-state actors play a mixed role in Mozambique's resilience against organized crime. Civil society organizations operate under restrictive conditions, and journalists and activists face government repression. Press freedom has deteriorated, particularly in conflict-affected areas, where reporting on organized crime is often censored. Despite these challenges, some civil society groups continue to call for transparency and accountability, particularly regarding corruption and human rights. International organizations provide crucial support for local initiatives but government restrictions and security concerns limit their operational capacity.

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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.*