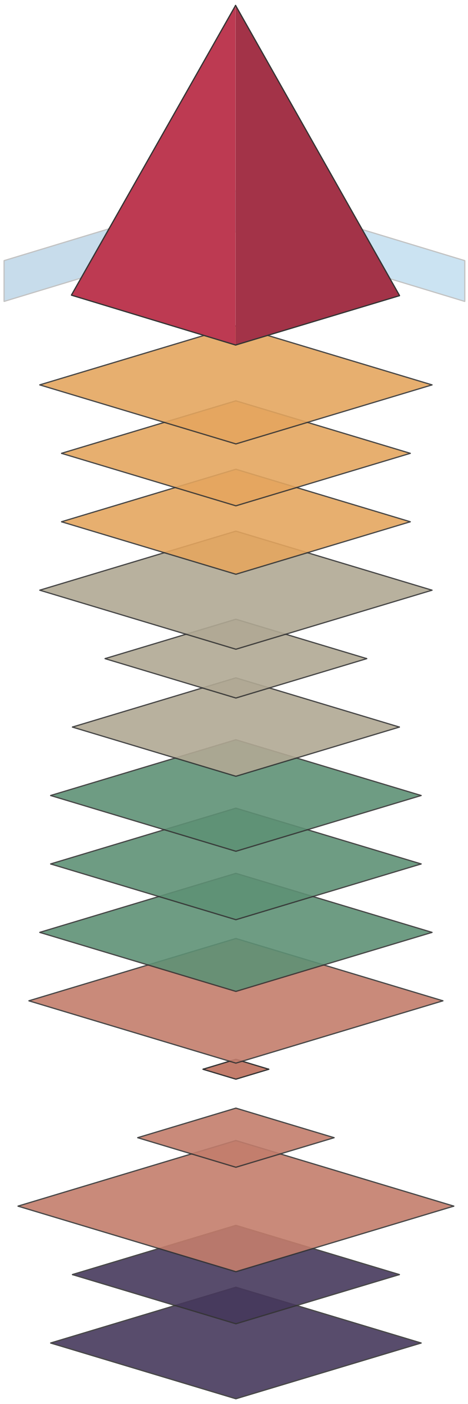
GLOBAL ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX

GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

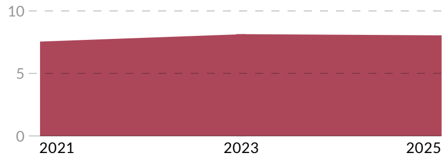
MYANMAR



8.08 ↘0.07

CRIMINALITY SCORE

1st of 193 countries -
1st of 46 Asian countries -
1st of 11 South-Eastern Asian countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS	7.67	↘0.03
HUMAN TRAFFICKING	9.00	↗0.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	8.00	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	8.00	↗0.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	9.00	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	6.00	0.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	7.50	↗0.50
FLORA CRIMES	8.50	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	8.50	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	9.00	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	9.50	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	1.50	↘2.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.50	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	10.00	0.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	7.50	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	8.50	0.00

CRIMINAL ACTORS	8.50	↘0.10
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	9.00	↘0.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	8.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	9.00	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	9.00	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	7.50	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.

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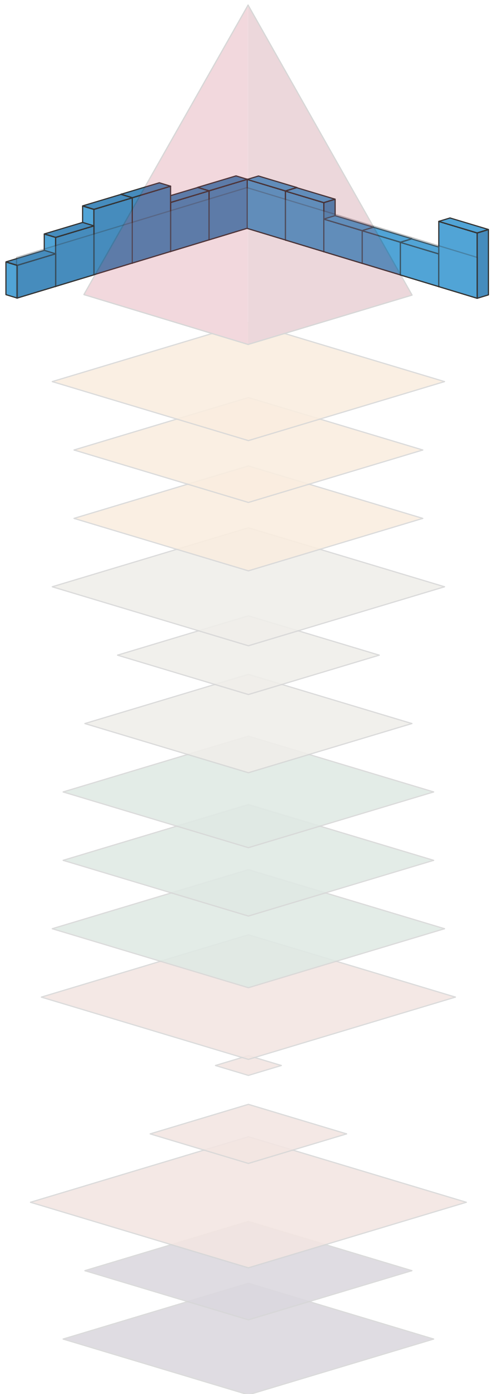
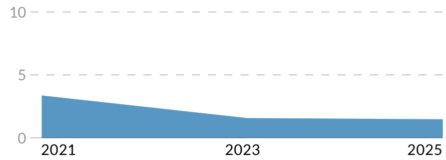


1.46 ↘0.17

RESILIENCE SCORE

193rd of 193 countries ↘2
46th of 46 Asian countries ↘1
11th of 11 South-Eastern Asian countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	**1.00**	↘0.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	**1.50**	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	**2.00**	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	**2.00**	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	**1.50**	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	**1.50**	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	**1.50**	↘0.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	**1.50**	↘0.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	**1.00**	↘0.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	**1.00**	0.00
PREVENTION	**1.00**	↘0.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	**2.00**	↗0.50

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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking in Myanmar remains widespread, driven by conflict, economic instability and the collapse of the rule of law. Criminal groups traffic victims for forced labour not only in traditional industries such as palm oil and rubber extraction, timber harvesting and jade mining, but also criminal industries such as cyber scamming. Criminal networks, foreign actors, state-embedded actors and members from certain ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) are deeply embedded in the human trafficking market. Traffickers lure both local and foreign victims with fake job advertisements, later coercing them into forced criminality in cyber scam centres. Foreign victims predominantly come from China, South East Asia, South Asia and Africa. Despite targeted efforts by China and other neighbouring countries to rescue victims, disrupt scamming operations and dismantle trafficking networks, these criminal operations continue to operate across Myanmar. Human smuggling remains deeply entrenched, driven by violent conflict, economic desperation and the introduction of forced conscription. One of the primary routes connects Myanmar and Bangladesh to Malaysia and, to a lesser extent, Thailand and Indonesia. Smugglers often change their routes and tactics, transporting people across lengthy and inaccessible land borders in various vehicles, on foot and over water across the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. Air smuggling, involving fraudulent passports, is facilitated by regional and international smugglers. Smugglers include locals, ethnic affiliates and transnational actors, with collusion from corrupt officials across various state levels. Although Thai authorities disrupted some smuggling operations in 2024, broader enforcement remains weak.

Extortion and protection racketeering are widespread in Myanmar, carried out by both criminal networks and members of EAOs. Criminal networks operating cyber scam operations extort families of victims forced to work at cyber scam centres. Travellers and truck drivers are regularly extorted at checkpoints and roadblocks by members of the EAOs, who charge 'taxes' to allow them to continue their journey. Failure to pay can result in violence. Some EAOs justify such taxes as legitimate sources of income. There is also evidence that criminal groups have threatened individuals and businesses with violence unless they pay for protection. While authorities occasionally prosecute high-profile offenders, overall enforcement remains inconsistent.

TRADE

There has long been high demand for arms in Myanmar, driven by ongoing ethnic conflicts in the country and the need for protection along trafficking routes that support illicit economies. This demand has grown since late 2023 following a surge in attacks after rebel forces launched a defensive operation. Both state and non-state actors are becoming increasingly reliant on the illicit arms market due to restrictions on official or quasi-official supply chains that provide the necessary spare parts and equipment to sustain combat operations. Although Myanmar has historically been a source of illicit arms, the current situation has reversed the flow. Arms are now being trafficked into Myanmar from India, China and Thailand, with Laos serving as a transit country for arms originating from China. Myanmar's counterfeiting market mostly involves pharmaceuticals and vaccines. Unauthorized clinics have distributed counterfeit medicines, prompting government warnings. Relatedly, Mandalay and Yangon are major centres of counterfeit art, with forged paintings reportedly sold at similar prices as original artworks. Available data suggests that profits from these counterfeit markets are generated through local demand and remain relatively small. The illicit trade in excisable goods – particularly alcohol, tobacco and automobiles – is a well-established and significant criminal market in Myanmar. As both a source and destination country, Myanmar experiences high volumes of smuggling driven by restrictive policies, high excise taxes and foreign exchange controls that distort market pricing and fuel a black market. Organized networks, including EAOs and foreign actors, play key roles in this trade. Tobacco smuggling is especially prevalent, with Myanmar serving as a major supplier to neighbouring countries, particularly India. Alcohol smuggling, including beer and wine, remains widespread, amplified by local boycotts of military-produced goods and disparities in enforcement between urban centres and conflict-affected regions.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora-related crimes in Myanmar are extensive and involve the military, EAOs, transnational crime groups and private-sector actors. Myanmar has one of the world's highest deforestation rates, driven largely by the illegal logging of protected forests and the illicit timber trade with China, India, the US and Europe. Both the military and regulatory bodies are reported to participate in the illicit economy through corrupt subcontracting, mislabelling, under-quoting of volumes and kleptocratic practices. EAOs profit from having stakes in logging concessions and receiving royalties paid by logging companies for forest access. Despite sanctions imposed by Canada, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the US and the European Union, there is evidence that Dutch, Italian and US companies have illegally imported teak, often through indirect or laundered supply chains. India and China, having imposed no sanctions, remain major importers and serve as key transit points for timber entering international markets, including Europe and the US. Wildlife trafficking in Myanmar is widespread and largely enabled by weak law enforcement and instability caused by the ongoing civil war. Myanmar functions as a source, transit and destination country, with major smuggling corridors into India, Laos and China. Smugglers transport live animals and animal parts – particularly pangolins, small cats and birds – across Myanmar's porous borders using buses and informal land routes. Wildlife is also trafficked into Myanmar from the Philippines and Indonesia. Criminal networks and foreign actors are involved, with poor communities and migrants often facilitating the capture and transportation of protected species. Increasingly, traders are using online platforms and social media to advertise and sell trafficked wildlife. Crimes involving non-renewable resources represent a lucrative and deeply entrenched criminal economy in Myanmar. Both the military and multiple EAOs dominate this market, which includes jade, gold, precious and semi-precious stones, and rare-earth minerals. Jade is the most smuggled resource, with the illegal trade estimated to be in the billions of dollars. The military and some EAOs exert control over the sector by extorting mining companies for protection money, collecting illicit rents from jade mining and charging fees at checkpoints to allow smuggled jade to pass through. Most of this jade is transported directly to China via the Kanpiketee border crossing in Kachin State to avoid Myanmar taxes. These markets are a major source of financing for conflict actors and are linked to environmental degradation and human trafficking.

DRUGS

Myanmar remains one of the world's largest production centres for heroin, supplying both domestic and international markets. Most of the production is concentrated in Shan and Kachin states, near the borders with China and Thailand, as well as part of Chin state bordering India. A variety of criminal actors are involved in the heroin trade, including the military and its allies, EAOs, local criminal networks and foreign criminal actors. Illicit drugs produced in northern Shan state typically transit through Laos via ports controlled by powerful non-state armed groups working with transnational organized crime syndicates. Although heroin's influence is declining regionally in favour of synthetic drugs, it remains significant within Myanmar. Opium continues to be a cash crop, and the ongoing collapse of Myanmar's socio-economic and security conditions has pushed farmers back into opium cultivation for subsistence. Myanmar's cocaine market is negligible, with only a few isolated cases reported in recent years. While there is limited evidence of demand, particularly among youth, the scale of distribution remains minimal. The relatively low retail price for cocaine suggests limited demand. In contrast, Myanmar's cannabis market is illicit but socially tolerated in many areas. Local supply comes from cultivation areas in Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway and Ayeyarwady. Cannabis is widely available and increasingly sold online, including through social media platforms, although the market overall appears relatively stable. Certain ethnic groups allow cannabis use and cultivation within the territories they control, but the product quality is low. Cannabis is also used for traditional purposes among ethnic groups. Like heroin, Myanmar is one of the world's largest producers of synthetic drugs, supplying domestic, regional and international markets. Shan state remains the primary production area, where advanced labs are run by organized crime networks, often in collusion with the military and certain EAOs. The synthetic drug trade is not only extremely profitable, but also deeply entrenched in local economies. It influences internal power dynamics and is a major driver of conflict. Methamphetamine dominates the market, with large-scale seizures recorded across Asia, including record busts in India and Thailand. Crystal meth and meth tablets follow different trafficking routes within Myanmar, often transported to neighbouring countries through unofficial crossings.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Myanmar faces various forms of cyber-dependent crimes. These include cryptocurrency scams run by criminal networks using forced labour, as well as advanced persistent threat attacks targeting government agencies, telecommunications companies and banks. The government lacks the technical capability to effectively prevent or respond to such cybercrimes. Cryptocurrency scams are on the rise, driven by the growth of cyber-scam compounds that have relocated from Cambodia and Laos. These compounds are no longer confined to border regions but are spreading into urban centres, including Laukkaing, Myawaddy and Mandalay. Recent crackdowns and territorial losses by the military have forced scam operations to relocate south. These scams are enabled by collaboration between criminal networks, foreign actors, the Myanmar military, certain EAOs and private-sector actors.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes continue to proliferate within Myanmar due to embezzlement, misuse of funds, illegal currency trading and financial fraud. A major driver of this surge is the proliferation of cyber-scam compounds across the Myanmar. Common financial scams include romance scams and impersonation schemes in which criminals pose as bankers or law enforcement officers and phone victims, alleging their involvement in a crime or that their bank accounts are under threat. These scams primarily target foreign nationals, including from Japan, South Korea, Europe and the US. Weak regulations, the collapse of law enforcement and the provision of protection to elites enable the expansion of financial crime.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

While EAOs pursue political objectives such as autonomy or democratic governance, some are also engaged in Myanmar's criminal markets. Due to their reliance on revenue from illicit economies, they can be regarded as mafia-style groups. Their level of participation varies. For example, the United Wa State Army is involved in methamphetamine production, while others like the Kachin Independence Army are active in non-renewable resource crimes. EAOs reportedly impose taxes on citizens and generate income from taxing criminal groups. These groups have significant access to arms through various channels and engage in acts of violence. They have ties to both local criminal networks and foreign actors, and exert considerable influence over Myanmar's criminal landscape. Criminal networks are central to nearly all illicit markets in Myanmar, including drug trafficking, non-renewable resource crimes, timber and wildlife smuggling, cybercrime and human trafficking. These groups exert control through extortion, violence and collusion with military and EAOs, particularly along the borders with China and Thailand. Their operations are marked by adaptability and a high degree of impunity, enabled by weak law enforcement and complex ties to foreign criminal entities – including those smuggling wildlife through Laos and India. Though they are located throughout the country, these groups are concentrated in volatile border regions, where they fuel ongoing violence and instability by supplying arms to both the military and EAOs. Their actions further deepen Myanmar's governance and security crises.

State-embedded actors, particularly Myanmar's military and affiliated personnel, are deeply entrenched in the country's criminal economy. The military facilitates and profits from illicit markets such as drug and timber trafficking, cyber scams and resource extraction through systemic bribery and collusion. Corruption is systemic across all levels of government, with officials enabling large-scale criminal operations, including scam compounds and casinos. Border authorities often accept bribes to allow illicit goods and smuggled individuals into neighbouring countries, and some actors have reportedly obstructed law enforcement actions against transnational criminals. Foreign actors, especially long-standing Chinese networks, play a prominent role in Myanmar's criminal economy. They work in close coordination with local criminal groups and state-embedded actors. Their activities include drug and timber trafficking, financial fraud, crypto-related scams and rare earth mining. Their influence is especially strong in border areas such as Shwe Kokko and Mongla, where transnational scam compounds operate with military protection. Some Chinese entities collaborate with both military-linked actors and resistance groups to facilitate illegal resource extraction and smuggling. Indian and Lao nationals also participate in wildlife and timber trafficking. These international collaborations deepen Myanmar's criminal economy, entrenching cross-border illicit flows and complicating efforts to combat organized crime. Private-sector actors in Myanmar are deeply embedded in organized crime, often leveraging their connections with military elites. Financial institutions, casinos and online gambling platforms are major channels for laundering profits from narcotics, cyber scams and other illicit activities. The military contracts extensively with domestic and foreign firms to extract resources like jade, rare earth elements and gold – enriching corrupt elites through embezzlement and privatization. Military-linked businesses also profit from illegal fuel imports and arms procurement networks, with support from countries such as Thailand and Singapore. While Myanmar's junta suppresses private actors linked to the former civilian government, it cultivates a new class of loyal business elites. These efforts reinforce state capture and enable criminal economies through sanctioned corporate and cross-border arrangements.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Since the 2021 coup, Myanmar has been engulfed in intense conflict between the military government and a coalition of resistance forces. The military has suffered major territorial losses, including control over key trade routes. Despite its participation in regional crime control mechanisms, Myanmar continues to face international scrutiny for human rights violations and the military's participation in organized crime – particularly the trafficking of people from neighbouring countries for forced labour. Institutional governance has deteriorated, with the government failing to outline a political path towards lasting peace. Ongoing instability, including renewed violence in Rakhine state by the Arakan Army, has displaced tens of thousands more Rohingya into Bangladesh, further straining regional humanitarian and security dynamics. The military maintains extensive control over the economy, especially the extractive sectors, awarding contracts to loyal businesses and military-linked entities. Transparency mechanisms has been dismantled since the coup, and civil oversight has been severely curtailed. While some high-level prosecutions have occurred, they appear driven by internal power struggles rather than reform. Anti-corruption efforts, led by a designated commission, remain weak, and regional cooperation has failed to prevent domestic backsliding. Myanmar continues to rank poorly on corruption indices and lacks key transparency infrastructure. In resistance-controlled areas, efforts to establish governance face significant barriers – particularly military air strikes that render towns and cities ungovernable.

Myanmar remains subject to a suite of bilateral sanctions related to repression, corruption and human rights abuses. These include arms and trade embargoes, asset freezes and travel bans. Regional responses vary: while some Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) members have distanced themselves, others – including China, Russia, Thailand and India – maintain diplomatic ties. Although Myanmar has ratified several major international conventions related to crime and corruption, it remains outside the Arms Trade Treaty and avoids binding arbitration mechanisms. Myanmar has signed bilateral agreements with Vietnam and Thailand, and cooperation with China on cross-border cybercrime has increased, despite the absence of an extradition treaty. International actors, including the US, now engage directly with Myanmar's National Unity Government and other non-state groups. However, the post-coup political environment has problematized Myanmar's participation in these platforms, as ASEAN states are concerned about including representatives of the military regime in high-level meetings. Domestically, Myanmar has adopted several laws to address transnational crime, including trafficking, terrorism, cybercrime and wildlife offences. Legal revisions have been made to align with international standards, especially the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. However, implementation remains limited. The 1993 drug law enforced harsh penalties, and despite a 2018 policy shift towards harm reduction, punitive sentencing continues. Anti-trafficking efforts are hampered by ineffective institutions. Structural issues further undermine enforcement efforts, with poor coordination among laws and regulatory directives, and critical legal gaps – such as the lack of penalties for non-compliance with key investment regulations – remain unaddressed.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Myanmar's judiciary lacks independence and capacity, issuing rulings aligned with the interests of the military-led State Administration Council. Martial law and emergency powers have enabled arbitrary detentions and closed military tribunals, which have handed out numerous death sentences and operate with limited transparency. Lawyers face threats and arrest. The military government has passed new laws targeting political opponents, journalists and civil society, with tens of thousands of political prisoners reported in 2024 – most held without trial. The prison system has expanded to 96 facilities, including forced labour camps, housing several tens of thousands of people. Detainees face overcrowding, poor sanitation, torture and inadequate healthcare, with more than 100 reported deaths from abuse or neglect in early 2024. The Myanmar Police Force functions as an extension of the military but remains under-staffed due to conscription demands and widespread defections. It is widely distrusted, particularly in rural areas, and police members have been implicated in human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests and violence against civilians – undermining public cooperation. Capacity-building efforts continue bilaterally with countries like China, Thailand and India. In contrast, pro-democracy groups have established community policing initiatives in areas outside military control. Myanmar also engages in limited intelligence sharing with neighbouring countries and continues to participate in regional forums on transnational crime. The military government's territorial control has eroded significantly due to the ongoing conflict, with nearly all of Myanmar's external land borders now controlled by EAOs. Efforts to curb illegal cross-border trade through stricter inspections and market raids have raised costs for traders and increased incidents of bribery and extortion. Meanwhile, Myanmar's cybersecurity remains under-developed, lacking adequate legislation and institutional capacity to address growing digital threats.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Although Myanmar has introduced several anti-money laundering (AML) laws and established a Financial Intelligence Unit, these measures remain ineffective due to limited political will and weak institutional enforcement. Regulatory gaps persist, including a lack of coherence between directives and laws; for example, the AML law does not address non-compliance with corporate directives. As a result, Myanmar is internationally categorized as a high-risk jurisdiction for money laundering and terrorist financing, and is listed on the Financial Action Task Force's 'blacklist'. It ranks among the highest-risk countries in various AML indices. Numerous sanctions remain in place, targeting military leaders, state-linked businesses and enterprises through financial restrictions and embargoes. Myanmar's economy has sharply deteriorated since the 2021 coup, marked by widespread poverty, high inflation and the collapse of public services. The kyat has lost 75% of its value since 2019 and food prices have more than doubled. Military-imposed economic controls – including forex restrictions, price and capital controls and rigid trade regulations – have stifled business activity and incentivized informal trade. Although some currency controls were eased in late 2023, foreign investment remains minimal. Endemic corruption, regulatory inefficiency and sanctions further constrain the business environment. The growth of illicit markets, including casinos and trafficking hubs, has accelerated due to weak governance and enforcement, deepening the country's governance and economic instability.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Myanmar's military regime provides minimal assistance to trafficking victims and often fails to cooperate with foreign governments on repatriation or victim protection. Disinformation campaigns have been used to deflect blame, and legal aid providers supporting trafficking victims have been targeted. Although Myanmar has enacted anti-trafficking legislation, enforcement remains weak, hindered by social stigma and repressive policies. Access to drug rehabilitation services is inadequate and punitive responses to drug use persist. More broadly, the regime stands accused of widespread human rights abuses, including against ethnic minorities and civilians in both minority- and majority-populated regions – highlighting its role not only as a passive enabler but as a perpetrator of violence. Preventative measures such as whistle-blower protections and public awareness campaigns are virtually non-existent. Myanmar continues to face severe shortcomings in addressing trafficking and exploitation. The regime continues to recruit child soldiers and use forced labour, particularly among ethnic minorities. While some investigations have been conducted, there is no accountability within the military, and prior democratic-era reforms remain unimplemented. Myanmar's civil society, traditionally focused on humanitarian and religious services, has been severely constrained since the 2021 coup. The 2022 Organization Registration Law imposes harsh restrictions on NGOs, with individuals facing arrest or enforced disappearance for dissent. Despite this, civil society remains active in areas outside regime control, where it plays a vital role in service delivery and information gathering. The regime continues to suppress minority religious groups, particularly Muslims. Media freedom is heavily restricted, independent broadcasters have been shut down, internet access is controlled and virtual private networks are banned. Many journalists have been imprisoned in the last few years, reflecting a continued decline in press freedom.

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.