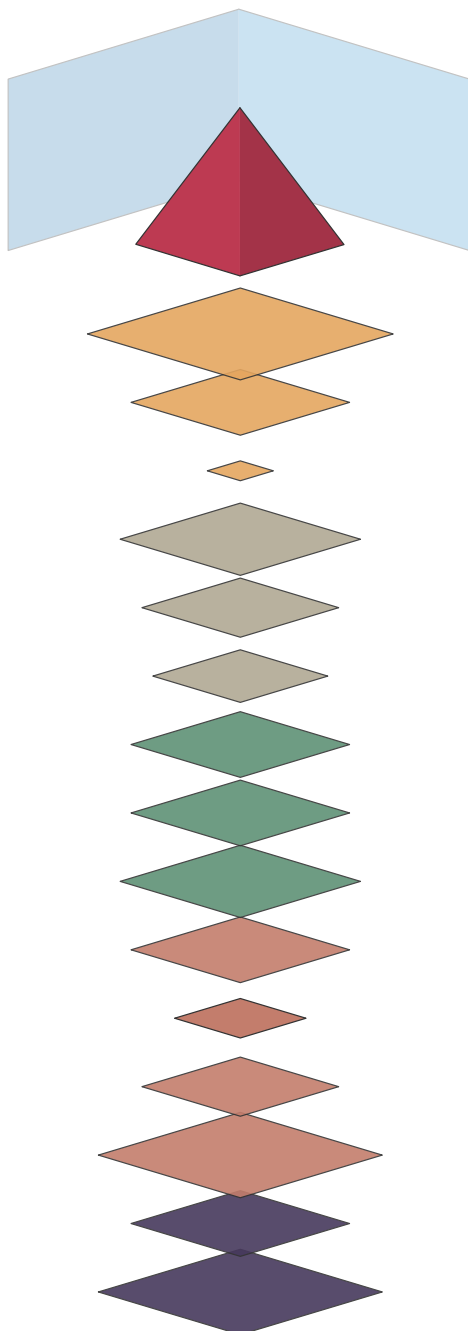




# OMAN



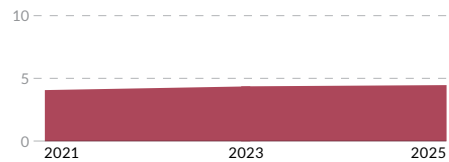
4.45  $\nearrow 0.05$

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

131<sup>st</sup> of 193 countries  $\nearrow 1$

34<sup>th</sup> of 46 Asian countries  $\nearrow 2$

14<sup>th</sup> of 14 Western Asian countries -



## CRIMINAL MARKETS

4.90 0.00

|                                     |      |                 |
|-------------------------------------|------|-----------------|
| HUMAN TRAFFICKING                   | 7.00 | 0.00            |
| HUMAN SMUGGLING                     | 5.00 | 0.00            |
| EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING | 1.50 | $\searrow 1.00$ |
| ARMS TRAFFICKING                    | 5.50 | $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS          | 4.50 | 0.00            |
| ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS     | 4.00 | $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| FLORA CRIMES                        | 5.00 | 0.00            |
| FAUNA CRIMES                        | 5.00 | $\searrow 0.50$ |
| NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES       | 5.50 | $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| HEROIN TRADE                        | 5.00 | $\searrow 0.50$ |
| COCAINE TRADE                       | 3.00 | 0.00            |
| CANNABIS TRADE                      | 4.50 | 0.00            |
| SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE                | 6.50 | 0.00            |
| CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES              | 5.00 | $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| FINANCIAL CRIMES                    | 6.50 | 0.00            |



## CRIMINAL ACTORS

4.00  $\nearrow 0.10$

|                       |      |                 |
|-----------------------|------|-----------------|
| MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS    | 1.00 | 0.00            |
| CRIMINAL NETWORKS     | 5.00 | 0.00            |
| STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS | 4.50 | $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| FOREIGN ACTORS        | 4.00 | 0.00            |
| PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS | 5.50 | 0.00            |



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

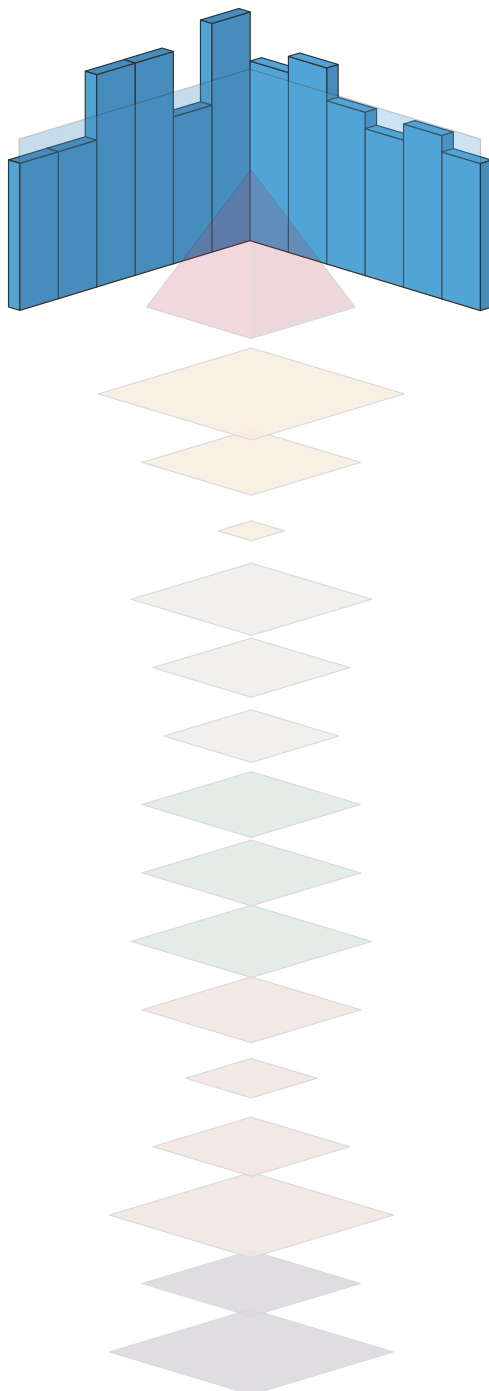


Funded by  
the European Union

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.



# OMAN



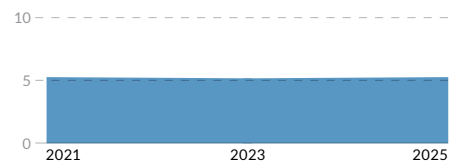
5.33  $\nearrow 0.13$

## RESILIENCE SCORE

66<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  $\nearrow 11$

12<sup>th</sup> of 46 Asian countries  $\nearrow 2$

5<sup>th</sup> of 14 Western Asian countries  $\nearrow 1$



|                                            |      |                 |
|--------------------------------------------|------|-----------------|
| POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE        | 4.50 | 0.00            |
| GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY | 4.50 | 0.00            |
| INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION                  | 6.50 | 0.00            |
| NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS                 | 6.50 | 0.00            |
| JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION              | 4.50 | $\searrow 0.50$ |
| LAW ENFORCEMENT                            | 7.00 | 0.00            |
| TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY                      | 5.50 | 0.00            |
| ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING                      | 6.00 | $\nearrow 1.00$ |
| ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY               | 5.00 | $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT                 | 4.50 | 0.00            |
| PREVENTION                                 | 5.00 | $\nearrow 0.50$ |
| NON-STATE ACTORS                           | 4.50 | 0.00            |



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



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.

# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Foreign workers in Oman, mainly from South East Asia, South Asia and increasingly Africa, often face forced labour or sex trafficking after migrating under false employment promises. Women are especially vulnerable as domestic workers or in commercial sex, sometimes trafficked via the UAE. Recruitment agencies and informal sub-agents exploit social media to offer cheap, unregulated labour, heightening trafficking risks. Oman's human trafficking market is supported by systemic vulnerabilities, with thousands of people still kept in conditions similar to modern slavery.

Oman encounters persistent challenges with human smuggling due to its geography and economic conditions, although the market remains less consolidated than human trafficking. People, including children, are smuggled by air and sea, with fishers charging high fees to transport migrants from South Asia and East Africa. The border with Yemen serves as the primary hotspot for smuggling activity, particularly as instability in Yemen has intensified refugee flows into Oman. Despite these pressures, the country reports fewer incidents than neighbouring Yemen and ranks below other Gulf Cooperation Council states in terms of migrant arrivals relative to its population size. In contrast, extortion and protection racketeering are relatively rare in Oman and typically manifest in the form of blackmail. Moreover, many of these incidents take place through digital platforms, further blurring the lines between extortion and other forms of cybercrime. Although the government has introduced legal reforms, enhanced investigative tools and launched public awareness campaigns, the full scope of this criminal activity remains difficult to assess.

### TRADE

While Oman's domestic arms market remains small, its coastal waters serve as a major transit route for weapons smuggling to Yemen. Recent interceptions by French, British, US and Omani forces revealed shipments of rifles, anti-tank missiles, drones and ballistic components, mainly from Iran and, in some cases, the UAE. Smugglers often use traditional dhows crewed by stateless people. Arms trafficking networks overlap with drug trafficking and human smuggling, sharing routes and methods. Oman's cooperation with international partners has been proactive, though smuggling persists. Despite these challenges, local arms demand remains low, and the societal impact within Oman is assessed as moderate to low.

Oman's counterfeit goods market is relatively consolidated but remains limited in scale, with no clear evidence of involvement by organized criminal groups. Trade is primarily driven by local traders, smugglers and unauthorized distributors, who sell counterfeit items such as engine filters, electronics, pharmaceuticals, cigarettes and food products through both formal and informal channels. Smuggling routes – particularly those passing through Musandam – pose enforcement challenges. Oman functions mainly as a destination market, where demand is largely price-driven and exacerbated by low consumer awareness. Although the government has taken proactive measures, including multi-sectoral seizures, the issue remains geographically concentrated and moderate in its overall impact.

Oman's criminal market for illicit alcohol and tobacco is also organized and involves both nationals and foreign networks. Strict regulations, high taxes and recent bans on products like e-cigarettes have fuelled demand and a parallel black market. Recent seizures, including large volumes of alcohol and tobacco derivatives in 2024, highlight notable smuggling attempts via maritime and land routes. Smugglers use concealed compartments and target Oman's extensive coastline and porous borders. Despite proactive enforcement measures, Oman continues to serve as both a transit and destination point for regional smuggling, with local demand driven by high legal costs and restrictive regulations.

### ENVIRONMENT

Flora-related crimes in Oman appear to be moderately consolidated, with organized actors taking advantage of legal ambiguities surrounding tree cutting. Although official permission is required for tree removal, inconsistent enforcement and the presence of a parallel legal trade facilitate illicit activities. Historically, Oman has served as a transit point for illegal charcoal smuggling from Africa to the UAE, but the absence of recent data makes it challenging to accurately assess the current scope and scale of this market within the country. Wildlife trafficking in Oman persists, with the country acting as a source, destination and transit point for species like cheetahs, great apes and falcons. Sporadic incidents of illegal hunting in 2024 targeted Nubian ibex, Arabian gazelle and wild birds, particularly in Dhofar, involving both local poachers and international networks. Although legal enforcement has resulted in convictions and penalties, demand for wildlife products remains high. Wildlife crimes in Oman are driven by both local consumption and international trade. The environmental impact is predominantly negative, threatening biodiversity and undermining conservation efforts, particularly through the decline of protected species such as the Arabian oryx and gazelle. Oman's criminal market for non-renewable

resources, notably gold and oil, is relatively consolidated, supported by organized smuggling networks. Oman serves as a transit hub for gold smuggling to India, with incidents involving passengers carrying gold in concealed forms. Oman has also increasingly become a transit point for Iranian oil smuggling, with notable arrests for oil diversion along the Gulf of Oman. Overall, the country's strategic location and the presence of sophisticated smuggling networks in the region contribute to Oman's role as a hub for the trafficking of non-renewable resources.

## DRUGS

Oman functions primarily as a transit point for heroin trafficking from Iran and Afghanistan, with limited domestic demand. Most heroin-related arrests involve foreign networks, particularly Iranian groups, and maritime seizures often occur aboard fishing vessels and dhows. Recent operations revealed more advanced methods, such as the use of drones for heroin smuggling. Packages seized in Europe linked to Oman suggest shared trafficking networks. Although heroin trafficking is not strongly tied to other crimes in Oman, heroin is often seized alongside other drugs like hashish and methamphetamines. Cocaine is consumed in Oman; however, the criminal market remains limited in scale, with no indication of significant activity. Although information on the market is scarce, recent reports suggest that the street value of cocaine in Oman remains high compared to other markets.

Oman's cannabis market is relatively well-organized but is regularly disrupted by law enforcement, particularly along maritime routes. Smuggling networks – often involving foreign nationals in collaboration with local actors – connect Oman to broader regional and international drug trafficking operations. Recent enforcement actions have led to substantial seizures of hashish and marijuana, often concealed within other shipments and smuggled alongside other illicit drugs. The scale and frequency of these interceptions indicate an active and potentially profitable domestic market for hashish, involving both Omani nationals and expatriates. Oman's synthetic drug market shows consolidation, with large-scale seizures highlighting organized trafficking networks. The country serves as both a transit point and a local consumer market, particularly for Captagon and crystal meth. Drugs are trafficked alongside other substances through maritime and land routes, often using concealed methods such as hiding pills in fruits or windowpanes. Significant recent operations led to seizures of millions of Captagon pills and substantial quantities of crystal meth. While enforcement efforts, often in cooperation with international partners, have disrupted major shipments, the persistence of domestic arrests suggests sustained local demand for synthetic drugs.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crimes in Oman pose a notable threat, with actors ranging from individual hackers to organized groups, mostly operating from abroad. Although Oman is less impacted compared to other Gulf countries, incidents have risen. Challenges persist in assessing the true scale of cyber-dependent crimes, given overlaps with broader cyber-enabled offences.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crime is an increasing concern in Oman, frequently involving cyber-enabled offences such as fraud, identity theft and phishing targeting individuals, businesses and financial institutions. Notable cases include impersonation fraud, banking scams and public sector corruption involving embezzlement. Bounced cheque fraud remains the most commonly reported financial offence. Furthermore, persistent reports of embezzlement, misuse of public funds and tax evasion highlight ongoing systemic vulnerabilities.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

There is no evidence of the existence of domestic mafia-style groups in Oman. However, criminal networks comprising primarily Omani nationals are active across the country, often operating loosely as gangs. Exploiting the country's strategic Gulf location, these networks primarily engage in the smuggling and trafficking of humans, drugs, counterfeit goods and weapons through maritime routes and land borders. Additionally, collaboration between Omani and foreign criminal actors is evident, notably in gold smuggling and the drug trade, highlighting transnational criminal dynamics. State-embedded actors exert a notable influence on Oman's criminal landscape, with reports pointing to corruption within the police, various ministries and state-owned enterprises. Concerns over official complicity in trafficking-related crimes have persisted in recent years. In some cases, officials have reportedly facilitated so-called 'release fees,' contributing to debt bondage and enabling the re-trafficking of abused migrant workers by returning them to their employers. Additionally, state-embedded actors have been implicated in financial crimes, with recent scandals revealing public officials' involvement in manipulating public procurement processes for personal gain.

Foreign actors also play a role in Oman's criminal markets, engaging in activities such as cannabis trafficking, synthetic drug trade, human trafficking and migrant smuggling. Omani recruitment agencies reportedly collaborate with foreign agents to lure workers from countries including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Egypt under false employment promises. Collaboration between foreign and local criminal actors is evident, particularly in drug trans-shipment operations, with organizations of foreign origin using Oman's territory while partnering with

Omani nationals and, at times, involving low-level state-embedded people. The private sector in Oman plays a role in organized crime, particularly through recruitment agencies collaborating with foreign agents to deceive foreign nationals, leading to involvement in human trafficking and narcotics trade. The Kafala system exacerbates workers'

vulnerability by restricting their ability to change employers, exposing them to exploitative and abusive conditions. Some sponsors reportedly permit employees to work elsewhere in exchange for fees. Additionally, private sector actors are implicated in financial crimes, notably tax evasion, contributing to the broader criminal economy.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Oman remains a hereditary monarchy, with power concentrated in the hands of the sultan. The regime continues to restrict most political rights and civil liberties, imposing criminal penalties for criticism and dissent. Organized crime does not feature prominently in political discourse, and the democratic process remains largely subordinate to the Sultan's executive authority. Nevertheless, the government has taken steps to combat organized crime, particularly by targeting international illicit trafficking, given Oman's strategic location. Despite ongoing regulatory and law enforcement efforts, these activities persist. The country maintains a reputation as a low-crime nation, characterized by a quiet, diverse population and rare occurrences of internal conflict, terrorist activity, or civil unrest. However, the 2024 terrorist attack by ISIS marked one of the few such incidents in Oman. Although the country maintains a policy of neutrality, regional instability – especially in neighbouring Yemen – has facilitated the operation of cross-border smuggling networks. In response, Oman has reinforced its border controls to reduce spillover effects. Overall, internal security incidents remain infrequent and largely isolated. Oman has mechanisms to hold officials accountable for corruption and human rights abuses, with laws mandating penalties for embezzlement and bribery by public officials. High-profile prosecutions indicate a formal zero-tolerance stance, although concerns remain about conflicts of interest because of the overlap between private business and public roles. Oman has ratified international anti-corruption conventions and enforces asset declaration rules for officials. However, transparency is limited, with audit findings not publicly disclosed and key institutions such as the military exempt from scrutiny. Corruption risks persist in public procurement, with irregular payments reported and members of the ruling elite holding stakes in contracting companies.

Oman actively participates in international anti-crime efforts through its INTERPOL National Central Bureau and maintains strong cooperation in policing and law enforcement. It has acceded to major international conventions against organized crime, corruption, drug trafficking and terrorism financing, while selectively reserving jurisdictional clauses. Oman's approach to treaty accession reflects a strategy

of cautious engagement aligned with its neutral foreign policy. Regionally, Oman is party to Arab conventions addressing transnational organized crime, corruption and extradition. International and US assistance have supported Oman's capacity to combat smuggling and trafficking, enhancing the capabilities of the Royal Oman Police, Coast Guard and related security agencies. Oman has adopted a comprehensive legislative framework to address various forms of organized crime, including firearms trafficking, drug smuggling, cybercrime and wildlife offences. Recent legal developments, such as updated cybercrime and data protection laws, have strengthened the country's capacity to combat cyber-enabled and financial crimes. Additionally, the government has introduced a new wildlife trade law to enhance protections for endangered species. Oman's ratification of international conventions further demonstrates its commitment to aligning with global standards. Reforms to labour and migration legislation have also aimed to improve protections for migrant workers and reduce vulnerabilities to human trafficking, although enforcement of these laws remains inconsistent.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Oman's judiciary is generally viewed as free from organized crime influence, though it remains subordinate to the sultan, who appoints senior judges. Court proceedings, particularly in sensitive cases, lack transparency. Official reports praise the humane treatment of inmates, with programmes supporting rehabilitation and family integration. However, independent human rights organizations document instances of arbitrary detention, torture and suppression of dissent, especially targeting political activists. Legal safeguards against arbitrary detention are inconsistently applied, and politically sensitive cases often face harsher treatment. Access for independent monitors is limited, and conditions in detention can involve mistreatment and forced disappearances.

Oman has developed specialized law enforcement units and engages in international partnerships to combat organized crime, with the Royal Oman Police leading efforts across eight policing regions. Centralized under the sultan's authority, the security apparatus addresses crimes

such as drug trafficking, cybercrime and environmental offences. While Oman's low crime rate suggests public trust in law enforcement, challenges persist in effectively investigating and prosecuting human trafficking cases. Instances of arbitrary arrests have been reported. The Royal Oman Police Coast Guard maintains active regional and international collaborations to counter smuggling and piracy, reinforcing Oman's commitment to international crime prevention efforts.

The country's strategic location at the crossroads of major regions makes it vulnerable to smuggling and illicit transit activities, particularly due to instability in neighbouring Yemen. Furthermore, Oman is further challenged by maritime and land borders, with reports implicating the country in weapons smuggling. In response, Oman has strengthened its border security through infrastructure projects and increased military spending. Recent interdictions, such as the seizure of drones at Al-Dara Port, reflect these efforts. Additionally, Oman has developed strong cybersecurity defences, ranking among the world's most prepared countries for preventing and responding to cyberattacks.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Oman has established a robust framework to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, broadly aligned with international standards. Key institutions such as the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Royal Oman Police and the Public Prosecution Office are responsible for investigating money laundering cases and are generally well-resourced and empowered to carry out their mandates. While the system demonstrates a high level of compliance, concerns remain regarding delays in the analysis of suspicious transaction reports, despite a rising number of convictions. According to the country's 2024 Financial Action Task Force (FATF) mutual evaluation report, Oman has significantly improved its legal, operational and supervisory framework on anti-money laundering and countering terrorist financing in recent years through robust technical compliance with the FATF recommendations.

Oman has strengthened its economic regulatory framework to foster a business environment resilient to criminal influence, aligning reforms with its Vision 2040 objectives. Measures include restructuring administrative systems, revising financial laws, and modernizing public finance management through initiatives like the Treasury Single Account and the Maliyah system. While no sectors of the economy are known to be controlled by organized crime, vulnerabilities persist, particularly through the human trafficking market linked to the Kafala system. Additionally, high taxes on products like tobacco and alcohol creates incentives for illicit trade, reflecting minor areas where economic crime can generate profit opportunities.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Victim support and witness protection services in Oman exist, particularly for victims of trafficking, despite some progress in recent years. The government has increased funding for shelter operations, which now offer services such as counselling, medical care and legal assistance. However, formal referral mechanisms remain underdeveloped and largely unimplemented. While self-referral options are available, they are hindered by a lack of procedural clarity. Repatriation support and legal alternatives for victims have been offered in certain cases. For people with drug dependencies, treatment services are primarily limited to Al Massara Hospital, which mainly caters to male patients. In response to these gaps, civil society organizations have begun expanding their role in victim support and advocacy efforts. Oman has increased its crime prevention efforts through awareness campaigns, digital tools and strengthened reporting mechanisms. Efforts against human trafficking include multilingual hotlines, outreach to private sector workers and the 2024–2026 National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking. Initiatives targeting counterfeit goods focus on consumer apps and enforcement by the Consumer Protection Authority. Anti-drug efforts have involved community competitions and mobile awareness campaigns. Oman's cybersecurity readiness is highly ranked internationally, reflecting strong legal, technical and organizational frameworks. While prevention initiatives have broadened, ongoing improvements and greater regional cooperation are needed to enhance their overall effectiveness. Civic space in Oman is highly restricted, with independent civil society organizations largely absent because of stringent registration controls and penal code provisions criminalizing opposition to state principles. Activists face risks of arrest for advocacy on labour rights, environmental issues and government accountability. Media freedom is similarly constrained; although protected by the Constitution, in practice, expression critical of the government or royal family can result in fines or imprisonment. Journalists operate under strict authorization rules, leading to self-censorship and reliance on official sources. Despite marginal improvements, Oman's media freedom remains low, reflecting limited space for independent civic or journalistic activity.

---

*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.*