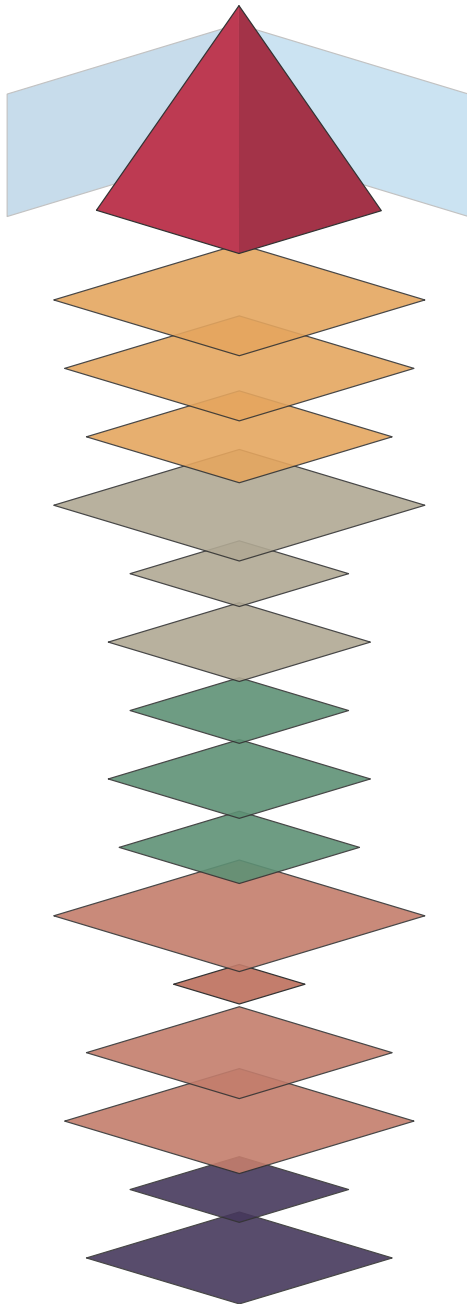
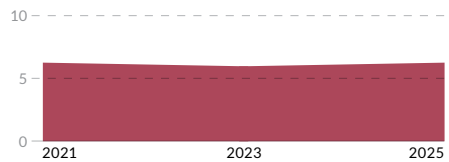


 **PAKISTAN**



**6.32**  $\nearrow 0.29$   
**CRIMINALITY SCORE**

45<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  $\nearrow 2$   
19<sup>th</sup> of 46 Asian countries  $\nearrow 1$   
3<sup>rd</sup> of 8 Southern Asian countries -



**CRIMINAL MARKETS** **6.53**  $\nearrow 0.26$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	<b>8.50</b> $\nearrow 0.50$
HUMAN SMUGGLING	<b>8.00</b> $\nearrow 0.50$
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	<b>7.00</b> $\nearrow 0.50$
ARMS TRAFFICKING	<b>8.50</b> 0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	<b>5.00</b> $\nearrow 0.50$
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	<b>6.00</b> 0.00
FLORA CRIMES	<b>5.00</b> $\nearrow 0.50$
FAUNA CRIMES	<b>6.00</b> $\nearrow 0.50$
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	<b>5.50</b> 0.00
HEROIN TRADE	<b>8.50</b> 0.00
COCAINE TRADE	<b>3.00</b> 0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	<b>7.00</b> 0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	<b>8.00</b> $\nearrow 1.00$
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	<b>5.00</b> 0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	<b>7.00</b> 0.00



**CRIMINAL ACTORS** **6.10**  $\nearrow 0.30$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	<b>6.50</b> $\nearrow 0.50$
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	<b>7.00</b> 0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	<b>7.50</b> 0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	<b>4.50</b> $\nearrow 0.50$
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	<b>5.00</b> $\nearrow 0.50$



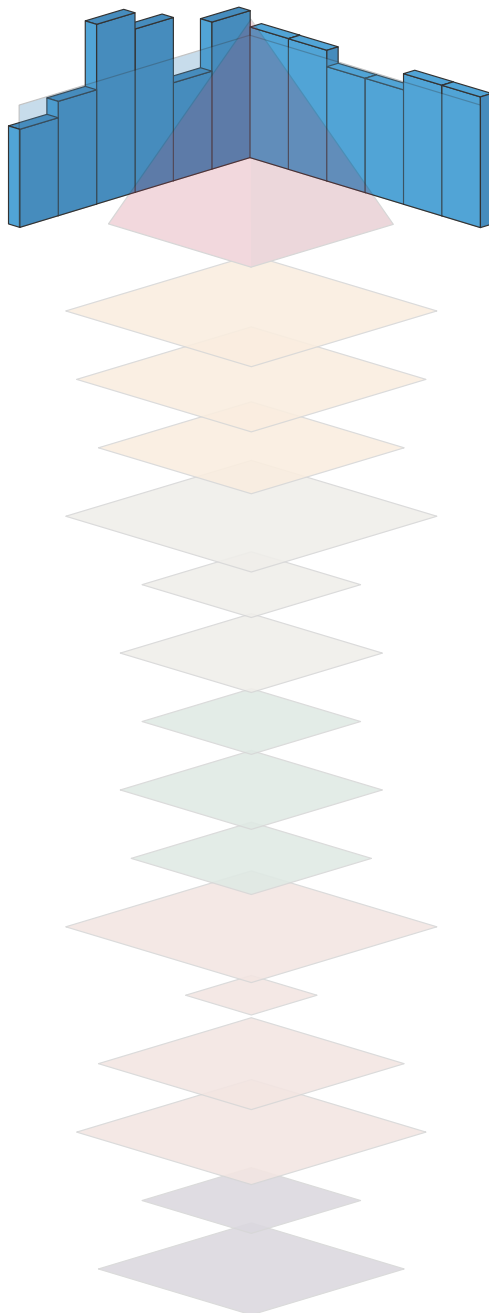
This project was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State.



Funded by the European Union

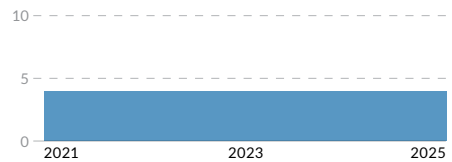
ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

 **PAKISTAN**



 **3.96**<sub>0.00</sub>  
**RESILIENCE SCORE**

**131<sup>st</sup>** of 193 countries ↗3  
**25<sup>th</sup>** of 46 Asian countries ↗3  
**4<sup>th</sup>** of 8 Southern Asian countries ↗2



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	<b>3.00</b>	↘0.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	<b>3.50</b>	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	<b>5.50</b>	↗0.50
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	<b>5.00</b>	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	<b>3.00</b>	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	<b>4.50</b>	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	<b>4.00</b>	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	<b>4.00</b>	0.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	<b>3.50</b>	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	<b>3.50</b>	0.00
PREVENTION	<b>4.00</b>	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	<b>4.00</b>	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.

# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Human trafficking is deeply entrenched in Pakistan, which serves as a source, transit point, and destination for trafficked people. Bonded labour remains the most prevalent form of trafficking, particularly in the agriculture, brick kiln and textile sectors. Entire families are trapped in this exploitative system due to inherited debt. Forced labour and sex trafficking are widespread, affecting both Pakistani nationals and foreign workers. Children are also exploited by drug trafficking networks, especially in urban centres such as Karachi. Victims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and China are subjected to forced labour in Pakistan. The country's role as a transit hub has intensified following the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, increasing the vulnerability of refugees and stateless people, particularly Afghans, Bangladeshis and Rohingyas.

Pakistan remains a significant source and transit point for human smuggling, with thousands of people attempting irregular migration each year, primarily to Western countries. Smugglers operate land routes through Balochistan and use air travel to facilitate unauthorized migration. Social media platforms are increasingly used to promote and organize these services. Balochistan is the primary departure point for individuals smuggled, with operations deeply embedded in the local economy. Corrupt border officials enable the movement of people across the Iranian border, from where they continue towards Türkiye and Europe. Pakistani smuggling networks are active internationally, with US and European law enforcement targeting those facilitating migration through South and Central America and the Balkans. Despite periodic crackdowns, the persistence of these sophisticated networks highlights the difficulties of sustained enforcement. Maritime smuggling routes across the Arabian Sea have also gained prominence, with people undertaking perilous journeys to Gulf states.

Extortion is a major issue in Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Karachi. Militant groups such as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) target wealthy people, demanding ransom payments to fund their operations. The presence of safe havens in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan has emboldened these groups, contributing to a rise in extortion in urban centres including Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Lahore. In Karachi, extortion extends beyond traditional practices, notably within the illicit water supply market. Criminal networks – often colluding with state-linked actors such as the paramilitary rangers – control and manipulate the municipal water supply, reselling it at inflated prices. The city has also seen a rise in extortion-related street crime, with organized gangs operating from within Pakistan

and abroad. Land mafias, in collaboration with corrupt officials, engage in extortion through illegal property takeovers and forced evictions.

### TRADE

Pakistan continues to play a central role in the regional arms trade, acting as both a source and transit point for illicit firearms. Since the US exit from Afghanistan, abandoned American weaponry has surfaced in the country, driving down local prices for high-powered firearms. Smugglers exploit commercial transport routes and, on occasion, drones to move arms across borders. The porous Afghanistan-Pakistan border remains a key corridor for weapons smuggling, fuelling insurgencies on both sides. The trade also supports militant groups such as the TTP and Baloch insurgents, who obtain sophisticated arms from Afghanistan. Despite intermittent crackdowns, authorities struggle to stem the flow. Domestically manufactured weapons from hubs such as Darra Adam Khel also feed criminal markets, contributing to violence in urban gang conflicts.

Counterfeit goods are prevalent across Pakistan, with robust markets for pharmaceuticals, electronics and automotive parts. Fake medicine poses serious public health risks, while widespread tax evasion adds to economic losses. Regulatory oversight remains weak, with only a fraction of smuggled goods intercepted each year. Digital marketplaces now serve as a key platform for counterfeit sales, complicating efforts to control distribution. The illicit market for excise goods, especially tobacco and automobile parts, remains sizeable. Although Afghan tobacco smuggling has slowed, domestic production has surged, much of it controlled by organized crime groups. The illicit cigarette trade accounts for nearly 40% of sales, depriving the state of substantial revenue. Non-custom-paid vehicles continue to cross into Pakistan from Afghanistan, with the involvement of corrupt officials.

### ENVIRONMENT

Illegal logging, driven by the so-called timber mafia, is particularly widespread in the forests of KP and Gilgit-Baltistan. These networks pose a major threat to Pakistan's rapidly declining forest cover, contributing to the endangered status of species like the Himalayan yew (*Taxus wallichiana*). Corrupt officials facilitate the trade, with timber often smuggled into Afghanistan or the Gulf via Karachi. The environmental fallout includes deforestation, habitat loss and soil erosion, intensifying vulnerability to climate change. Inconsistent policies and limited enforcement capacity continue to hamper forest protection efforts. However, recent government action, particularly in KP, has led to some improvement, with the provincial administration

taking a more active stance against timber-related crime. Although forest protection services have intensified patrols in reserves, authorities acknowledge that the scale of the problem remains overwhelming.

Pakistan also plays a prominent role in the illegal wildlife trade, with falcon trafficked to Gulf buyers and pangolin destined for Chinese markets. Tortoises, freshwater turtles, and exotic birds are smuggled using sophisticated concealment techniques. Many animals are pre-booked and transported using coded systems and luxury vehicles to avoid detection. Online platforms now facilitate much of the trade, further complicating enforcement efforts. Corruption and limited oversight continue to enable wildlife trafficking, which is largely orchestrated by organized crime groups with support from local authorities and influential figures. Animals are primarily captured in regions such as Chakwal, Jhelum, Sargodha, Mianwali, Murree, Kotli Sattian and Khushab.

Pakistan's substantial natural resource wealth – including coal, gems and precious metals – has long been undermined by illegal extraction and corruption. In KP and Balochistan, unregulated mining drives insurgencies and contributes to economic instability. Commodities such as coal, gems and uranium are exported illegally, often with the help of corrupt officials and foreign investors. In Sindh, sand mining accelerates environmental degradation, while poor regulation enables ongoing exploitation. Crackdowns on illicit fuel smuggling from Iran highlight the broader pattern of non-renewable resource trafficking through the country.

## DRUGS

Pakistan remains a critical transit hub for heroin trafficking from Afghanistan, with stockpiles sustaining the trade despite Taliban-imposed cultivation bans. Domestic addiction rates are among the highest in the world, fuelling a severe public health crisis. Corrupt law enforcement officials frequently enable heroin shipments through border regions. While Pakistan is not a major cocaine market, it does function as a minor transit route. Cocaine use is limited to elite urban circles, and smuggled primarily by air. The country also plays a key role in the regional cannabis trade, with KP serving as a major cultivation zone. Pakistan acts as a conduit for Afghan cannabis destined for Iran and further afield. Recent moves to legalize hemp production may alter domestic market dynamics. Overall, cultivation remains prevalent despite the absence of official government records. Pakistan is also an important hub for synthetic drug trafficking, both as a destination and, to a lesser extent, a source country. The use of synthetic drugs – particularly methamphetamine – is on the rise, especially among youth, fuelled by affordability and accessibility. While much of the methamphetamine is trafficked from Afghanistan, there are also signs of domestic production in cities such as Peshawar and Karachi. Criminal groups distribute tablet Ks, a drug laced with both methamphetamine and opioids, contributing to addiction rates. The country's strategic

location and established trafficking routes have made it a key transit point for synthetic drugs destined for other regions. Powerful criminal networks dominate the trade, and despite efforts by authorities, enforcement remains a challenge due to the evolving nature of production, smuggling methods and cross-border dynamics.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crime is a growing threat in Pakistan, with a large number of cybersecurity attacks recorded in 2024. Hacking and malware schemes mostly target government bodies, businesses and individuals. While measures have been introduced to address cyber threats, enforcement is limited, and political misuse of cybercrime laws is concerning. Cyberattacks generally target critical infrastructure, posing risks to national security.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crime ranges from tax evasion to cyber-enabled fraud. Many citizens have fallen victim to online scams and social media-driven fraud, reflecting the growing scale of digital exploitation. Tax evasion is pervasive, severely affecting national revenue collection. Key sectors such as tea, tobacco, pharmaceuticals and real estate contribute significantly to annual losses, with high-profile individuals in industries like textiles and sugar also implicated through the use of fictitious entities and falsified sales. Embezzlement and offshore financial scandals involving political elites and military figures have further eroded public trust. The informal hawala system remains a conduit for illicit transactions, despite crackdowns. Even the regulated banking industry has faced periodic exposure to financial fraud and forgery.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Pakistan hosts multiple mafia-style groups that operate across various criminal markets, often blurring the lines between organized crime, political factions and extremist movements. These networks are involved in drug trafficking, money laundering and extortion. Some, like the Lyari gangs, control specific territories and carry out violent operations. While certain groups operate purely for profit, others, such as the TTP, function as ideological militant organizations while engaging in smuggling, extortion and kidnapping for ransom. Their presence is especially strong in KP and Balochistan, where they exert considerable territorial control. Extortion remains a major revenue source, with businesses, transport operators, and informal sectors frequently targeted for protection money, while the widespread availability of firearms fuels high levels of violence, particularly in urban centres. The emergence of militant splinter groups such as Jaish Fursan-e Muhammad and Tehrik-e Jihad Pakistan further illustrates the fluidity between extremism and organized crime. Overall,

limited transparency and the absence of comprehensive data obscure the full extent of their operations, though their influence remains entrenched across a wide range of illicit activities.

Pakistan's criminal networks operate with fluid structures, engaging in transnational and domestic illicit activities. Human smuggling is a major enterprise, with networks facilitating irregular migration to Western Asia, Europe and North America. Punjab-based syndicates frequently collaborate with groups in Balochistan, exploiting porous borders with Iran and Afghanistan to move people and contraband. Beyond human smuggling, these networks are also active in wildlife trafficking, illicit logging and the arms trade. The so-called timber mafia in KP and Gilgit-Baltistan is deeply entrenched, benefiting from collusion with corrupt officials. Criminal groups trafficking pangolin, falcon and other endangered species have established strong links with Chinese markets, taking advantage of weak enforcement mechanisms.

State-embedded actors in Pakistan exploit their official positions to facilitate organized crime. Corrupt law enforcement officials are involved in human trafficking, drug smuggling and illicit trade often providing protection to criminal networks in exchange for bribes. Border security personnel enable the cross-border movement of arms and drugs, while bureaucrats manipulate procurement processes and land distribution to benefit criminal organizations. Political elites – including members of the military and ruling parties – have been implicated in financial crimes and offshore wealth transfers. Election rigging and entrenched corruption further illustrate the intersection between organized crime and governance. The 2024 parliamentary elections were widely criticized as manipulated, with the military exerting significant influence over the electoral process.

Foreign criminal actors maintain a presence in Pakistan, particularly in drug trafficking, human smuggling and the arms trade. Afghan and Iranian networks collaborate with local groups to traffic heroin, synthetic drugs and contraband across regional borders. The Taliban's control of Afghanistan has strengthened militant-linked operations, intensifying cross-border narcotics flows. Pakistani ports and logistics infrastructure are also exploited by international drug cartels, with Karachi serving as a key transit point for shipments bound for South Asia and Africa. Growing collaboration between Pakistani and foreign actors in transnational crimes highlights the country's role as a major global hub for illicit trade.

Private-sector actors in Pakistan facilitate organized crime through tax evasion, illicit labour practices and financial misconduct. Bonded labour is prevalent in agriculture, brick kilns, and textile industries, with business owners complicit in exploiting workers through debt bondage schemes. Money laundering is a persistent issue, with the textile and sugar industries frequently implicated. Licensed foreign exchange dealers also participate in illicit financial transfers via hawala/hundi networks, though pressure from the Financial Action Task Force has led to increased scrutiny. Private-sector actors are heavily involved in illicit cigarette production in Mardan and Swabi, evading taxes and contributing to the underground economy. In addition, real estate, gold markets and charitable organizations remain vulnerable to criminal infiltration, with fraudulent land deals and resource extraction schemes benefiting both criminal enterprises and corrupt officials. The low conviction rate for white-collar crime reflects systemic failures in regulatory oversight, further enabling criminal activity within the private sector.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Pakistan's political leadership continues to face challenges, particularly following the 2024 elections, which deepened public distrust in state institutions. The military retains substantial control over political processes and frequently curtails civilian freedoms. Governance is further undermined by sectarian divisions, political instability and ongoing human rights violations, especially in KP and Balochistan, where enforced disappearances and extrajudicial actions are widespread. Militant attacks have escalated since late 2023, highlighting persistent security vulnerabilities. In Karachi, authorities have targeted politically connected criminal groups, significantly reducing the influence of the

People's Aman Committee and similar networks. However, law enforcement remains subject to political interference, hindering long-term reform efforts. While some sectarian groups offer limited social services, their expanding role in public life undermines state authority and fuels instability.

Pakistan has several integrity institutions, including the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), tasked with investigating and prosecuting corruption. However, NAB has been widely criticized for political bias, often pursuing opposition leaders while protecting those aligned with the ruling establishment. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and provincial anti-corruption bodies also operate,

but their mandates do not cover corruption in the security sector, which remains largely unchecked. Although freedom of information laws are in place, enforcement is inconsistent. Transparency in public procurement and official budget disclosures has improved, but gaps in judicial and administrative transparency persist. Pakistan has not yet adopted key international transparency agreements, and officials are not required to publicly declare assets or disclose conflicts of interest. Civil society reports continue to expose high-level corruption across government, the military and the judiciary, further undermining institutional credibility.

Pakistan maintains international law enforcement cooperation through agreements with INTERPOL, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and regional organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. It has ratified key UN conventions on narcotics, corruption and transnational organized crime, although it has not signed the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty. Bilateral law enforcement collaborations are in place with countries including the US, China, and Türkiye, particularly in areas such as counterterrorism and anti-money laundering. Furthermore, Pakistan has started showing signs of greater improvement in international collaboration under the new FATF regime. Pakistan's partnership with China has deepened under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, resulting in expanded security cooperation. However, persistent security threats from Baloch separatist groups targeting Chinese nationals and infrastructure have strained the relationship.

Pakistan's legal framework addresses several forms of organized crime, including human trafficking, money laundering and the narcotics trade. Pakistan has relied on the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 as its principal legal instrument for addressing cybercrime. Both sex and labour trafficking are criminalized, and cybercrime laws cover offences such as hacking, identity theft, and digital piracy. However, despite legislative progress, implementation remains limited, particularly in cases involving bonded labour and cyber fraud. The production and sale of counterfeit goods, along with intellectual property violations, continue despite legal reforms. Pakistan remains on the Special 301 watch list due to persistent shortcomings in intellectual property enforcement.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Pakistan's judiciary remains weak and subject to political influence, with the military often shaping judicial outcomes. Corruption in the legal system contributes to selective enforcement and undermines the right to a fair trial. Criminal investigations are hampered by a lack of professionalism and frequent political interference. Overcrowded and poorly maintained detention facilities are a concern. Prisons are criticized for harsh treatment of inmates, and organized crime groups are active within the system. Reports suggest that prisons also serve as recruitment grounds for militant organizations, further heightening security risks. The FIA

leads efforts to combat human trafficking, cybercrime and economic offences. However, limited resources and alleged official complicity constrain its effectiveness. The Anti-Narcotics Force and Financial Monitoring Unit are also central to tackling drug trafficking and financial crime, but institutional overlap and weak coordination reduce their overall impact. Pakistan's paramilitary forces, including the Rangers, are regularly deployed in counterterrorism operations; however, widespread human rights violations – including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances – continue to be reported. The creation of a new agency to investigate cybercrimes reflects Pakistan's intent to confront growing digital threats; however, concerns persist regarding censorship, the agency's effectiveness, and allegations that it is used to target political dissidents rather than genuine cybercriminals. Border security remains a challenge, particularly along the borders with Afghanistan and Iran, where smuggling, drug trafficking and militant infiltration are ongoing amid rugged terrain. Tensions with India over Kashmir continue to exacerbate regional instability, while the unresolved dispute with Afghanistan over the Durand Line fuels periodic cross-border skirmishes.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Pakistan's anti-money laundering (AML) framework has improved under pressure from the FATF, yet challenges persist, particularly in trade-based money laundering, terrorist financing, and hawala/hundi operations. Unclear jurisdiction and limited prosecutorial authority, combined with widespread smuggling, continue to hinder enforcement. The Financial Monitoring Unit plays a key role in identifying suspicious transactions, but follow-up by law enforcement remains inconsistent. The State Bank of Pakistan is responsible for issuing AML regulations and supervising financial institutions. Pakistan's broader economic environment remains volatile, marked by high debt levels, inflation, and an ongoing balance-of-payment crisis. Policy missteps, such as fuel subsidies and artificially currency controls, have worsened the crisis and undermined efforts to improve the business climate. At the same time, entrenched corruption, poor governance, and regulatory inefficiencies continue to hinder legitimate economic development. These structural weaknesses foster conditions conducive to smuggling and informal economic activity.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Victim support services in Pakistan are inadequate, particularly for people who use drugs and survivors of human trafficking. Shelters for trafficking victims are underfunded, and witness protection programmes remain largely ineffective due to security concerns. Victims often refuse to testify against traffickers for fear of retaliation. The limited availability of protection services leaves many at risk of re-victimization, and, in some cases, drives them back into their exploitative situations.

Pakistan has made limited progress in crime prevention, with law enforcement agencies continuing to prioritize reactive measures over proactive strategies. Initiatives, such as the establishment of a national referral mechanism and the FIA's integrated digital data collection system have been introduced. The FIA is also working on a collaboration with teacher training institutes to develop courses on cybercrime and online risks, with the goal of integrating cybercrime awareness into the school curriculum. However, critical gaps persist – particularly in addressing bonded labour, domestic servitude, forced migration and narcotics abuse – due to insufficient investigations and weak victim identification processes. Labour inspectors who could help identify cases of forced labour reportedly lack the training and resources needed to carry out effective inspections. No standard procedures exist to refer potential cases to the police.

Civil society organizations play a vital role in policymaking, peacebuilding and human rights advocacy, but government restrictions on NGOs and press freedom remain significant barriers. Notably, a coalition of civil society groups and experts has formed to actively participate in the Review Process of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, highlighting ongoing efforts to engage constructively despite these constraints. The private sector has also taken initiative in addressing certain criminal markets – for example, major cigarette manufacturers have launched efforts to combat the illicit trade in tobacco products. Meanwhile, the media environment remains highly challenging. Journalists continue to face threats, censorship and arbitrary arrest, which limits investigative reporting on organized crime and corruption. Pakistan's media environment has further deteriorated, with increasing state surveillance, legal intimidation and press censorship. The government's control over information flow has raises concerns about freedom of expression and access to independent reporting.

---

*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.*