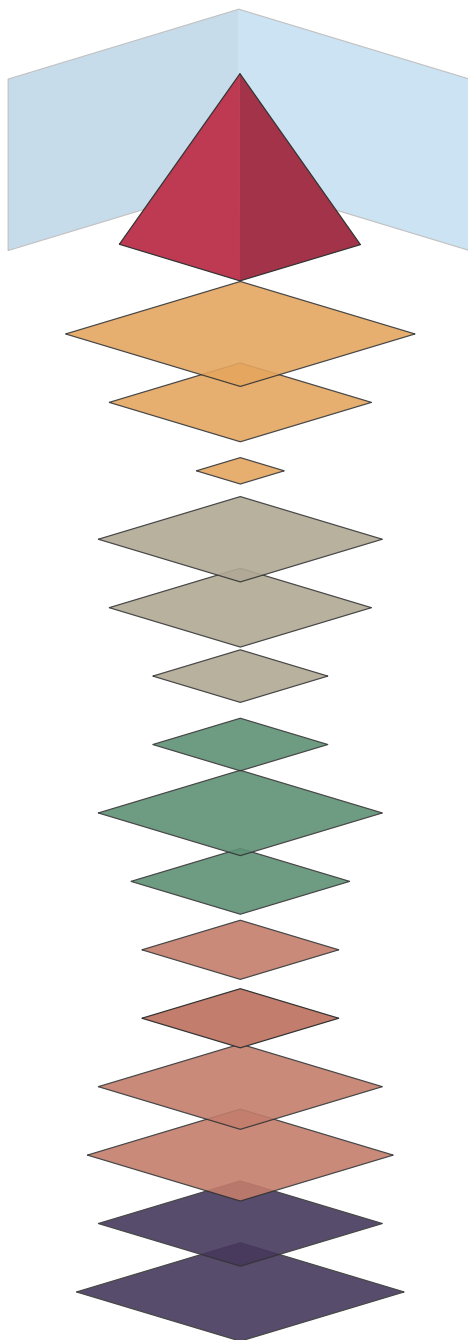
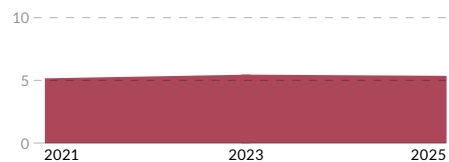


QATAR



5.37 $\nearrow 0.08$ CRIMINALITY SCORE

79th of 193 countries $\nearrow 2$
22nd of 46 Asian countries -
9th of 14 Western Asian countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS 5.63 $\nearrow 0.07$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	8.00	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	6.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	2.00	0.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	6.50	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	6.00	0.00
ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	4.00	0.00
FLORA CRIMES	4.00	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	6.50	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	5.00	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	4.50	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	4.50	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	6.50	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	7.00	0.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	6.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
FINANCIAL CRIMES	7.50	0.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS 5.10 $\nearrow 0.10$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	6.50	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.00	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	6.00	$\nearrow 0.50$



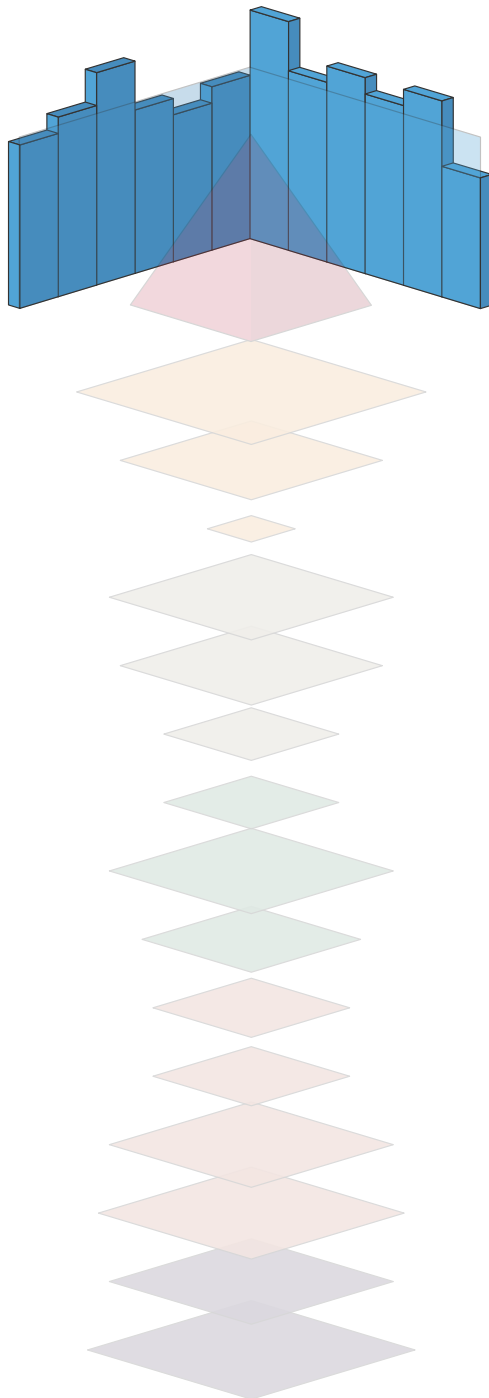
This project was funded in part
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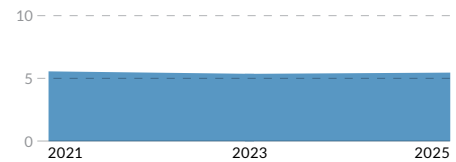
ENACT is funded by the European Union
and implemented by the Institute for
Security Studies and INTERPOL, in
affiliation with the Global Initiative Against
Transnational Organized Crime.

QATAR



5.46 $\nearrow 0.04$ **RESILIENCE SCORE**

56th of 193 countries $\nearrow 6$
9th of 46 Asian countries $\nearrow 1$
3rd of 14 Western Asian countries $\nearrow 1$



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	5.00	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	5.50	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	5.00	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	4.50	$\searrow 0.50$
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.00	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	7.00	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50	0.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	6.00	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	5.50	0.00
PREVENTION	6.00	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	4.00	$\nearrow 0.50$



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Qatar remains a key destination for human trafficking, with victims predominantly from South East Asia and East Africa. Migrants, often lured by false promises, face forced labour in construction, domestic work and service sectors, experiencing excessive hours, withheld wages, passport confiscation and, in some cases, physical or sexual abuse. Despite the formal abolition of the Kafala system, exploitative sponsorship practices persist, compounded by weak enforcement and corruption. The sale of 'free visas' and misuse of 'Hayya' cards have further exposed workers to illegal employment and exploitation.

Qatar remains a key hub for human smuggling, often intersecting with trafficking activities. The country's sponsorship system and prevailing payment structures significantly increase the vulnerability of migrant workers, many of whom are subjected to forced labour or sexual exploitation after paying high recruitment fees. Irregular migration is largely driven by the widespread practice of visa trading, while additional risks arise when people become stranded due to business closures or sudden contract terminations by employers or sponsors. Financial constraints often lead migrants to overstay visas or fail to obtain the mandatory identification card required for legal employment, resulting in violations of immigration laws. Nevertheless, there is limited evidence of a substantial organized crime presence behind these practices. Extortion and protection racketeering appears to be limited, with no recent data indicating active operations in the country. Nonetheless, it is highly plausible that victims of human rights abuses, such as trafficked migrants and exploited workers, may be subjected to forms of extortion or informal protection arrangements, even if such practices remain underreported.

TRADE

Over the past decade, Qatar's arms imports have increased significantly, positioning the nation as a major global buyer. Although most of these imports come from Western suppliers through legal means, some reports suggest that certain weapons may be diverted to conflict zones, with sporadic allegations pointing to Qatari support for non-state actors in areas such as Yemen. While incidents of illicit weapons transfers remain relatively infrequent, with a notable seizure in 2024 at Abu Samra Port – there are ongoing concerns about unregulated 'grey market' arms flows.

Qatar serves as a destination for counterfeit goods, particularly luxury watches, jewellery and imitation gold. Most counterfeit

shipments originate from China and Hong Kong, with Qatar ranking second among Gulf countries for receiving such goods. Fake products are sold in local markets and through social media platforms. Recent seizures highlight the notable risks for smuggled tobacco products in Qatar, while not extensive. Authorities intercepted tonnes of contraband tobacco and cigarette packs in 2024, mainly at ports and airports, often hidden in shipments containing different products, such as perfumes. These cases underscore the noticeable scale of the illicit tobacco trade and the sustained local demand, despite intensified enforcement efforts.

ENVIRONMENT

While some evidence suggests a modest presence of flora-related criminal activity in Qatar's desert and mangrove areas, such crimes remain generally negligible. Regional patterns indicate the ongoing illegal trade of valuable plants like agarwood and frankincense, with India reporting significant seizures of agarwood shipments destined for Gulf countries, including Qatar. Fauna crimes, on the other hand, occur at a moderate level in Qatar, with seizures of species such as Arabian wolves, birds and big cats such as leopards. Demand for illicitly imported falcons remains high, and Qatar serves as a key transit hub for illegal wildlife from Africa destined for Asia. Authorities have conducted multiple seizures in recent years, including rhino horns from Mozambique intended for Vietnam. Reports also indicate the involvement of private sector actors, such as airlines, in wildlife trafficking through the country. Additionally, Qatar faces challenges with illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, with limited response efforts. Qatar continues to face challenges related to the illegal smuggling of precious metals, particularly gold. Organized groups, mainly from Nepal and India, dominate this market, often concealing gold in luggage, clothing, or bodies, and using disguised forms such as using gold substitutes for metal parts. While there are occasional reports of gold smuggled from Qatar to Asian countries, the overall scale remains unclear.

DRUGS

Qatar is viewed as a minor transit point for heroin trafficking, with most shipments arriving via air routes linked to the Golden Crescent and Iran. Although some heroin is diverted for local sale, Qatar generally functions as a secondary destination. In recent years, authorities have recorded multiple seizures, often connected to transnational networks in Africa and Europe, and most frequently at Hamad International Airport. The cocaine trade follows a similar trend, for which Qatar is emerging as a transit hub for air shipments primarily originating from South America, Kenya and Nigeria. Most of these shipments are destined for Asia and, more recently, Europe. Traffickers often

conceal small quantities of cocaine in everyday items such as tea bags, lotion bottles, duvets, shoes and souvenirs. Although recent cases underscore Qatar's involvement in global cocaine routes, interception efforts by Qatari customs have been ongoing.

Qatar is also becoming a more significant destination for cannabis trafficking, with criminal networks from South Asia, particularly India, implicated in smuggling operations. Cannabis products are typically transported through Hamad International Airport by drug mules. Authorities have seized notable quantities of hashish at both Hamad and Southern ports in recent years, although most involve individual seizures rather than large-scale operations. In addition, Qatar serves as both a transit and destination country for synthetic drugs, notably methamphetamine, Captagon, tramadol and Lyrica. Smuggling attempts rose markedly during the 2022 FIFA World Cup and continued into 2023 and 2024, driven largely by foreign networks that include Syrian and Lebanese nationals operating from the EU. While less common, there have also been instances of Qatar as an origin point for synthetic drugs, with reports of Asian nationals trafficking methamphetamine to Hong Kong. Concealment methods have ranged from clothing and cricket bats to air conditioners.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cybersecurity threats are a growing concern in Qatar, impacting individuals, companies and government entities. Attacks, often originating from abroad – particularly India and Israel – tend to increase during major events. More recently, a ransomware attack attributed to an Eastern European cybercriminal group disrupted several financial institutions. While these attacks were generally limited in scale, authorities have introduced guidelines to mitigate cyber-dependent crimes.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Qatar faces a significant financial crime market, with fraud, embezzlement and misuse of public funds being the most common offences. The proliferation of fraudulent websites has led to notable monetary losses, while cases of deepfake and forced verification fraud have risen, contributing to a significant increase in fintech fraud. Criminals have used deceptive emails mimicking official institutions like Qatar Post to access victims' bank accounts. Financial crimes involving high-ranking officials who engage in embezzlement and misuse of public funds also remain an issue.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

There is no information suggesting the existence of mafia-style groups in the country. In Qatar, organized crime is predominantly driven by loosely affiliated networks with transnational connections. These groups engage in gold smuggling, drug and arms trafficking, human trafficking and fauna-related crimes, exploiting the country's role as a global transit and trade centre. The interplay between local and foreign criminal elements facilitates the movement of illicit goods and people across borders, underscoring Qatar's vulnerability to broader regional and international criminal dynamics.

Evidence indicates that certain state-affiliated actors in Qatar may be involved in various illicit activities, including large-scale corruption cases and human rights concerns, underscoring systemic vulnerabilities within national institutions. Furthermore, in recent years, there have been sporadic allegations that state-linked entities facilitated arms trafficking to non-state actors in conflict zones. These developments highlight the intersection between domestic governance challenges and broader regional instability.

Foreign actors, particularly from South Asia and East Africa, play a central role in Qatar's criminal networks, especially in human trafficking, smuggling and the trade of illicit substances. Diaspora groups are heavily involved in these activities, while transnational networks, including African and Latin American actors, have been known to use Qatar as a strategic transit hub for cocaine trafficking. Some operations moving drugs from Latin America into West Africa through Doha reportedly involve connections to Brazilian criminal groups. Gold smuggling to Asian markets is largely controlled by organizations based in India and Nepal, and arms trafficking frequently involves coordinated efforts by foreign nationals from various regions.

The private sector in Qatar has also been implicated in organized crime activities, notably in human trafficking. Historical records also suggest private sector involvement in corruption and fraudulent schemes, highlighting persistent intersections between business operations and illicit activities within the country's broader criminal landscape.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Qatar enjoys a high degree of political stability, though it continues to face ongoing criticism over political rights and civil liberties. Executive authority largely resides within the ruling family, and opportunities for political participation remain limited, with only advisory-level municipal council elections in place. In 2024, the government initiated electoral reforms through referendums aimed at assessing and potentially revising electoral laws to promote greater transparency and citizen participation, with public input sought on key aspects such as voting procedures and candidate eligibility. Nevertheless, the subsequent directive shifting the selection of Shura Council members to appointment by the Emir, sparked discussions about its implications for democratic participation and the future political landscape of Qatar. Still, the country has displayed a proactive stance towards the fight against organized crime with recent measures including reforms addressing forced labour, initiatives targeting money laundering and terrorism financing, enhanced cybersecurity provisions and agreements focused on preventing tax fraud. While Qatari citizens rank among the world's wealthiest, most of the population comprises foreign nationals who lack political rights, have few civil liberties and face constrained economic opportunities.

Corruption perceptions in Qatar remain relatively low compared to global standards yet concerns persist regarding the lack of independent accountability mechanisms for senior officials. While anti-corruption bodies exist, they primarily address low-level misconduct. Early 2024 investigations marked a shift, with senior figures prosecuted for significant financial crimes. Allegations of high-level corruption schemes prompted renewed official commitments to anti-corruption efforts. Measures include a national strategy as well as agreements with international partners to enhance transparency. However, Qatar's legal framework for access to information remains weak, with limited procedural clarity and inadequate protections for whistle-blowers.

Qatar is party to several international treaties aimed at combating organized crime and implements global standards to curb the illicit arms trade. It maintains partnerships with organizations like INTERPOL and UNODC to tackle various criminal activities – including human trafficking, cybercrime, counterfeit goods and drug trafficking – and holds extradition agreements with several Gulf states, reflecting its commitment to both bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Qatar has also taken part in regional conflict mediation processes, such as the ceasefire efforts between Hamas and Israel. Qatar possesses a comprehensive legal framework criminalizing organized crime activities and membership in criminal organizations. Following the rise of

cybercrime, stricter penalties were introduced, including harsher prison terms and higher fines. Qatar also prohibits the sale of digital goods and cryptocurrency under Islamic law to curb money laundering and terrorism financing. A National Cyber Security Strategy was also adopted. Nevertheless, legislative gaps persist, particularly in the criminalization of human trafficking and cyber-related offences.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

While Qatar's judicial system is constitutionally independent, judges are appointed by the Emir and often include foreign nationals on temporary contracts, raising concerns about judicial independence. The system has been criticized for susceptibility to corruption, lack of fair trial guarantees and conflicts of interest within public prosecution entities. In 2024, a new Judicial Enforcement Law was issued to streamline litigation and strengthen anti-money laundering efforts. A specialized court for trafficking cases was also established. Despite generally adequate prison facilities, reports cite mistreatment, overcrowding and poor medical access. Qatar has endorsed international initiatives to improve prison conditions, including the Nelson Mandela Rules.

Qatar maintains a developed law enforcement system, hosting a National Central Bureau for INTERPOL and specialized units, along with a community policing division focused on crime prevention and public security. Despite these structures, Qatari police have faced persistent allegations of ill-treatment, including enforced disappearances and arbitrary arrests, as highlighted in recent human rights reports. Although the government has introduced training initiatives emphasizing human rights and the proper treatment of detainees, the effectiveness of these measures remains questioned by international observers, reflecting ongoing concerns regarding accountability and police conduct in the country.

Qatar maintains generally secure borders, with its only land border, shared with Saudi Arabia, reopened in 2021 after a diplomatic dispute. Its land and sea borders are fortified by extensive surveillance systems, targeting threats such as human trafficking, smuggling and illegal fishing. In 2024, Qatar's authorities held a preparatory exercise to enhance maritime and border security, continuing broader regional cooperation efforts. Nevertheless, illicit trafficking persists, mainly through air routes. Qatar is also internationally recognized for its strong cybersecurity infrastructure and is projected to experience the region's fastest growth in cybersecurity spending, driven by increasing investment and the integration of artificial intelligence.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Qatar broadly complies with international standards on combating money laundering and terrorism financing, with two specialized financial units monitoring these activities. While not listed as a country of concern by key international bodies, Qatar's expanding financial and real estate sectors, large expatriate workforce and proximity to sanctions evasion routes contribute to ongoing vulnerabilities. Recent initiatives include partnerships with international organizations to deliver training and strengthen institutional capacities, as well as agreements to enhance cooperation and expertise sharing in financial crime prevention and anti-corruption efforts.

Qatar demonstrates moderate effectiveness in safeguarding its economic and financial systems from organized crime. While privatization efforts exist, major companies remain state-owned, and regulatory processes for private enterprises are often complex, particularly for foreign nationals. Transparency issues persist in public procurement and financial oversight of state ministries. Nevertheless, Qatar's economy showed resilience, with non-oil sector growth strengthening prospects in recent years.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Qatar has expanded efforts to protect victims of human trafficking by establishing reporting mechanisms, support centres and rehabilitation programmes. In addressing drug abuse, the government prioritizes treatment over criminalization. Nonetheless, significant gaps persist. Qatar lacks a national referral system for trafficking victims and authorities often rely on the penal code rather than specialized anti-trafficking legislation. Migrant workers remain vulnerable to exploitation and have limited access to complaint mechanisms. Official victim identification procedures are absent, and authorities continue to arrest and deport potential victims. The government's anti-trafficking shelter also restricts victims' freedom of movement, employment and self-referral during their stay.

Qatar employs various prevention measures focusing on awareness-raising for cybercrime, human trafficking and wildlife crime. Initiatives include public campaigns, training programmes and tools like electronic contract verification for domestic workers. There are also private efforts for prevention, such as the prevention of the illegal wildlife trade. In cybersecurity, Qatar launched a national strategy promoting resilience and technological advancement. Drug prevention efforts also continue through educational workshops. Despite existing whistle-blower protections, those reporting corruption or exploitation risk prosecution under current legal frameworks.

Despite claims of relative press freedom, Qatar's media sector remains under strong state influence, with censorship and limited domestic coverage aligned with national policy. Journalists often practice self-censorship to avoid penalties,

including imprisonment, although there were no reported detainments in 2024. Restrictions also extend to civil society, where NGOs are closely monitored and must obtain government permission to operate. Independent political parties, labour unions and human rights organizations are banned, and activists face harassment. These constraints contribute to limited cooperation between civil society and the government, affecting advocacy efforts and independent oversight.

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.