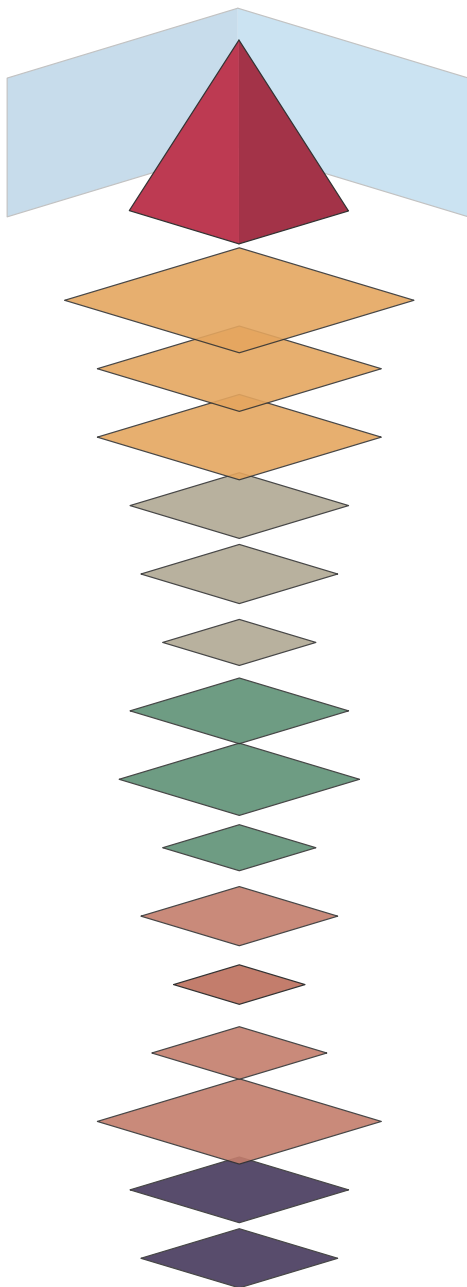


 **BANGLADESH**



 **5.12**
CRIMINALITY SCORE

89th of 193 countries
26th of 46 Asian countries
5th of 8 Southern Asian countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **5.03**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	8.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	6.50
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	6.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	5.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	4.50
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	3.50
FLORA CRIMES	5.00
FAUNA CRIMES	5.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	3.50
HEROIN TRADE	4.50
COCAINE TRADE	3.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	6.50
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	5.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	4.50

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **5.20**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	6.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	7.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	4.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	3.00

 **4.42**
RESILIENCE SCORE



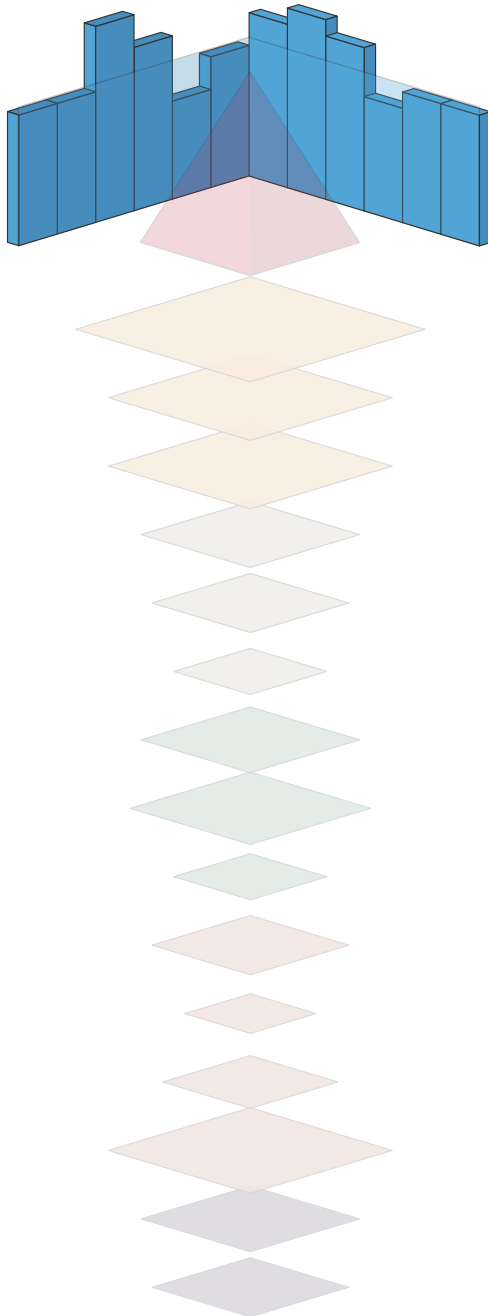
Funding provided by the United States Government.



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.

 **BANGLADESH**





 **4.42**
RESILIENCE SCORE

118th of 193 countries
22nd of 46 Asian countries
3rd of 8 Southern Asian countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	4.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	4.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	5.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	3.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	4.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	3.50
PREVENTION	4.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	4.00

 **5.12**
CRIMINALITY SCORE

 CRIMINAL MARKETS	5.03
 CRIMINAL ACTORS	5.20



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Bangladesh is a source and destination country for human trafficking, with a particular focus on sex trafficking. Traffickers exploit men, women, and children who seek work in other parts of South Asia, the Middle East, South East Asia, Africa, Europe, and the US. Bangladeshi women and girls are also exploited in forced labour and sex trafficking abroad, including through arranged marriages by Asian traffickers. Within the country, adults and children are exploited in legal or illegal brothels and private hotels, using false promises of work, debt-based coercion, and force. Vulnerable groups in the country, especially religious minorities and Rohingya refugees are also targeted for sex and labour trafficking. Corrupt law enforcement officials are paid to produce sex work licences that falsely indicate a victim's willingness or desire to engage in sex work. Human trafficking for organ transplantation is also prevalent in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's human smuggling market overlaps with its human trafficking market, with vulnerable Rohingya refugees, women, and children being prime targets. Organized crime groups and state-embedded actors collude to smuggle people within the region and to Gulf countries. Although Rohingya refugees often seek aid from smugglers to continue their journeys after arriving in overcrowded camps, other people, such as Bangladeshi citizens, are voluntarily smuggled out of the country. Large-scale irregular migration across the India-Bangladesh border has caused political and ethnic tensions in certain Indian provinces. Climate-induced displacement in the country is also of great concern, with millions internally displaced due to the natural disasters caused by climate change, such as cyclones and water crises, rendering them vulnerable to trafficking. Corruption plays a major role in the market, with local authorities and ruling party leaders often receiving bribes. Legal recruitment agencies, their agents, and immigration consulting firms are also allegedly involved in fraudulent manpower businesses and human smuggling.

Extortion is a prevalent concern in Bangladesh, with various groups using threats and violence to extract money from businesses, individuals, and even refugees. The National Liberation Front of Tripura, an insurgency group from India, reportedly uses kidnapping and extortion to raise funds, and criminal gangs inside the Rohingya refugee camps have been involved in kidnappings. Extortion rings also operate in Dhaka, with some linked to organized crime groups known as mastan. Marginalized members of society, including those living in slums, are forced to pay inflated costs for basic services due to the involvement of mastan in the market

for social protection. The prevalence of extortion fees has been cited as a reason why small and medium businesses in Bangladesh are not willing to pay income tax, and these fees also contribute to high production costs in the country.

TRADE

Arms trafficking is a moderate issue in Bangladesh, with Cox's Bazar serving as a strategic route for smugglers to reach India and Nepal. In addition, local criminal elements drive a small market of arms arriving from Myanmar. Small arms are often used to serve the interests of a small yet influential section of the political elite, with mainstream political parties allegedly maintaining armed cadres to attain their goals. This is evidenced in frequent violence and politically-motivated killings across Bangladesh. Rohingya refugees reportedly participate in the trade due to a lack of alternative livelihood opportunities. Local buyers from Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, and Moheshkhali, including left- and right-wing extremists, Islamist terrorist organizations, criminal organizations, political cadres, and the Chittagong Hill Tracts insurgents, fuel the market demand.

Counterfeit goods, including cosmetics, personal care items, clothing, and pharmaceutical products are available in urban and rural markets in Bangladesh. International companies have reported systemic violations of their intellectual property rights in the country, but police are unlikely to initiate independent investigations due to insufficient enforcement resources. The Mitford Market in Dhaka is known for being a hub for counterfeit pharmaceutical products in the country, and there is a growing threat of illegal exports of pharmaceuticals to other countries in South and South East Asia. As for the illicit trade in excise goods, the trade of biris, cheap hand-rolled cigarettes, is estimated to be higher than cigarette smuggling into Bangladesh. The black market for alcohol is also prevalent big due to partial bans and heavy taxation. Although the size of the illegal market does not significantly affect the country's economy and society, the shadow economy is relevant in Bangladesh, and there may be illegal trade in other goods.

ENVIRONMENT

Major flora crimes in Bangladesh include illegal felling, forestland encroachment, and deliberate fire-setting. Timber smuggling across the borders with India and Myanmar is also a notable issue. Despite the Bangladeshi government's participation in international events and training to combat flora and fauna crimes, combating these crimes on a domestic level is not recognized as a major policy concern. Criminal groups, state actors, and other stakeholders, including private sector actors such

as timber traders, sawmill owners, furniture traders, as well as politicians, are reportedly involved in forest and environmental crimes.

Wildlife trafficking along the India-Bangladesh border is on the rise, driven by the growing demand for non-native species among animal hobbyists and collectors, mainly in southern India. Bangladesh also plays a considerable role in the illegal wildlife trade by acting as a transit point for illegal fauna to richer economies. Despite the low number of tigers in the country their poaching remains a concern as its prevention is not a priority for local government officials. Moreover, Bangladesh has the highest per capita consumption of fish-based animal protein in the world, and there are concerns about fisheries crimes, especially illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the country.

The non-renewable resource criminal market in Bangladesh is not large, but illicit trade of natural gas is a concern. Illicit sand mining is also prevalent in several regions. Rapid urbanization in Bangladesh has led to an increase in these activities, which have threatened flood embankments and farmland. The weak legal framework and state employees' low salaries may also contribute to non-renewable resource crimes.

DRUGS

Bangladesh serves as a transit point for heroin produced in neighbouring countries. Domestic criminal networks and mafia-style groups facilitate trafficking, and corruption among border security and law enforcement officials contributes to the trade's profitability. The increased cultivation of poppy in Myanmar following the coup that occurred in 2021 is expected to result in more trafficking and seizures of the drug in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is also a transit route for cocaine to larger markets, with loose criminal networks and mafia-style groups trafficking in this drug. International cartels use the country's ports as a safe route for smuggling drugs into Europe and South East Asia. Domestic cocaine use remains low, and most of the profits are believed to be accrued by foreign actors. Porous borders, extensive corruption, and outdated drug detection systems make Bangladesh an attractive transit point for the drug trade.

Although the production, sale, and possession of marijuana are illegal in Bangladesh, the use of cannabis for recreational purposes is socially acceptable. Cultivation of cannabis is widespread in various regions, and smuggling of cannabis across the country is common. Many cannabis dealers operate in Dhaka, forcing many vulnerable street children into drug dealing. Although the profits from the cannabis trade are accrued domestically, foreign demand drives the trade.

Bangladesh is the biggest destination in South Asia for yaba (a methamphetamine-based stimulant) produced in Myanmar, with a market estimated in the billions of US

dollars. These drugs are primarily smuggled into Bangladesh through the borders at Teknaf and Ukhia upazilas of Cox's Bazar and Naikhongchhari upazila of Bandarban District. Yaba is also reportedly being manufactured in India and smuggled into Bangladesh via Kurigram District in north Bangladesh and the sea route along southern districts. The profits from the synthetic drug trade are primarily accrued domestically, and corrupt officials may benefit from bribery.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cybercrime cases in Bangladesh have been increasing steadily during the last decade, with web-based attacks, data breaches, and denial of service attacks among the top 10 threats. Ransomware is the most significant risk, with demands having doubled. Bangladesh is increasingly vulnerable in cyberspace, with numerous attacks resulting in asset losses.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

In recent years, as Bangladesh's economy has grown, the country has experienced a rise in financial crimes. Authorities have recently reported a substantial increase in suspicious financial transactions and activities, mainly involving e-commerce and multi-level marketing businesses. However, this is not necessarily indicative of a rise in fraudulent activity but could rather be the result of improved reporting mechanisms and increased awareness.

Tax avoidance and evasion are also prevalent in Bangladesh due to the country's poor tax culture, low compliance rate, and robust informal economy. Multinational corporations, especially those from Asia, have been accused of tax evasion. Organized syndicates are reported to be exploiting their victims by using fake and false advertisements that persuade consumers to invest for quick profit-making. Mobile banking has also increased in Bangladesh, with officials of these financial institutions involved in organized financial crimes, including fraud and embezzlement of funds.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Organized crime in Bangladesh is prevalent due to high levels of corruption and a lack of government transparency and accountability. Criminal actors are known to influence democratic processes through state-embedded corruption and participation in anti-government activities.

The mafia-style groups, *mastan*, operate across multiple criminal markets in Bangladesh. These groups allegedly control public services such as water, gas, and electricity, and are involved in various criminal activities including extortion, drug dealing, and contract killings. They operate via hierarchical structures and use gangs to conduct their criminal activities on the streets. Street children are often

hired as illicit labourers for mastan groups, who commit crimes including political violence, extortion, and drug dealing. These groups appear to control notable amounts of Bangladeshi territory, with some reportedly linked to the major political parties in the country. In addition to mafia-style groups, criminal networks operate in Dhaka and across all of Bangladesh's criminal markets, engaging in criminal activities such as extortion, kidnapping, and blackmailing. These networks allegedly have transnational linkages throughout South Asia, especially in India and Sri Lanka, as well as in Pacific countries such as Australia and New Zealand. There are growing concerns about youth participation in criminal networks, with many blaming their membership on unemployment and political stagnation.

Foreign actors have also been involved in cybercrimes in the country, and Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh have become centres of criminal activity including arms trafficking, human smuggling and trafficking, and drug trafficking. Moreover, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, a violent insurgent group based in Myanmar, is reportedly increasing its role in criminal activities at the camps. Foreign private sector actors, specifically Chinese companies, are accused of being involved in illegal activities, including smuggling of counterfeit and excise goods and tax evasion. Wealthy businesspeople in the country are known to have links with criminal groups, often as a source of security and a means of intimidation against rival businesses. The link between business elites and political intimidation and violence has expanded as the country's economy has grown.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The state has reportedly monopolized the police force to maintain its political advantage, and measures like the digital security regulations restrict freedom of speech and human rights. Corruption is a serious issue, and efforts to tackle it have been weakened by politicized enforcement and subversion of the judicial process. The Anti-Corruption Commission has become ineffective due to political interference, and there are no regulatory mechanisms in place to scrutinize sources of party funding. Even though public sector salaries have increased, bribery remains widespread and is an important source of income for public officials, who face little scrutiny.

Although Bangladesh has signed many international conventions, there is little evidence to suggest that the country is complying with them or with international human rights standards. Nevertheless, Bangladesh participates in international forums and trains law enforcement officials through international organizations. The country has enacted laws that criminalize corruption, extortion, active and passive bribery, money laundering, and the use of public resources or confidential state information for private gain. However, there is no legislation in place to prevent child marriage, forced sex work, human smuggling, or crimes related to flora, fauna, and non-renewable resources. Although there are laws related to human trafficking, they have been poorly enforced. Similarly, there are several laws related to cybercrime, but enforcement is inefficient because the government lacks officially recognized national cybercrime policies.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The justice system in Bangladesh is highly influenced by political partisanship, resulting in a loss of public confidence. Many laws that govern the criminal justice system date back to colonial times, making it difficult for the poor and vulnerable to access justice. The prison system suffers from overcrowding, delays in judicial proceedings, poor living conditions, and a lack of necessary skills and training among staff. However, there are ongoing reform efforts, such as tackling overcrowding, addressing case backlogs, and providing free legal aid. Efforts at rehabilitation have been deemed ineffective, as prisoners who are ostracized by society are more likely to reoffend due to a lack of employment opportunities.

The law enforcement system in Bangladesh is plagued by corruption and politicization. Human rights violations committed by law enforcement agencies, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and enforced disappearances, have been widely reported, raising international concerns. However, Bangladesh has made efforts to increase the capacity of law enforcement through training that strengthens service delivery, advocate for gender equality, and ensure a better interaction with the community, as part of the Police Reform Programme. Progress has also been made in encouraging women to join law enforcement teams, with increasing numbers of female officers in law enforcement.

Bangladesh's borders are difficult to monitor, which makes the country vulnerable to organized crime, including human trafficking and human smuggling. Nonetheless, the country's territorial integrity appears to be strong, and criminal actors do not control territory in a manner that would challenge the Bangladeshi military. Bangladesh participates in the UNODC-World Customs Organization Container Control

Programme and has established specialized cybercrime police stations and an all-women cyber-support service to combat cybercrime.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Efforts have been made in recent years to combat money laundering and terrorism financing activities, however such efforts have been deemed to be directed mainly at corporate businesses rather than organized crime. Nevertheless, Bangladesh is no longer considered a country with strategic anti-money-laundering deficiencies, and despite limited law enforcement capabilities, its efforts to combat this crime have been increasing.

The Bangladesh economy continues to be one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, thanks to stable macroeconomic and export-oriented industry-led growth. The economy has bounced back from the COVID-19 pandemic relatively quickly, and employment figures have mostly recovered. However, there are concerns about a shortage of raw materials and lower growth rates in remittances due to a decrease in work opportunities and pandemic-related restrictions. The private sector remains weak due to insufficient investment and lack of regulatory predictability, and corruption remains high in the Bangladeshi land administration. The fragile rule of law continues to undermine economic development, and state ownership and interference in the financial sector remain high.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Victims of organized crime in Bangladesh mainly rely on support from NGOs, some of which receive funding from the government. However, women and girls face particular challenges when accessing victim-support services. Nonetheless, a lack of access may also be experienced by other segments of the population, as most crimes go unreported. The government has developed a rapid

victim identification mobile app and introduced a method for victims of trafficking to file police reports virtually, but foreign victims do not have access to government services. In addition, witness protection in Bangladesh is virtually non-existent, and prevention efforts are likely to be informal, relying on community and police pressure on the families of offenders. Nevertheless, the government has implemented a national anti-trafficking action plan, including national awareness campaigns and helplines for reporting crimes. The government has also conducted several campaigns to raise public awareness about drug use, including social media campaigns and the establishment of anti-drug committees at schools.

Press freedom continues to be a persistent concern in Bangladesh. The government has targeted and censored its political opponents, including news outlets, journalists, academics, and critics. Digital security regulations have been used to suppress criticism of the government on social media platforms, resulting in arrests and restrictions on freedom of expression. Furthermore, concerns have been raised about privacy violations due to the government's procurement of phone-hacking software. The government's draft data protection law has also been criticized for containing loopholes that could be used to suppress the rights of citizens. NGOs have faced restrictions on their operations, with officials authorized to cancel or withhold the registration of NGOs that make derogatory remarks about constitutional bodies. The government has used this to suppress human rights activist groups and has also banned several NGOs providing aid to Rohingya on the grounds that they were facilitating an anti-Rohingya repatriation campaign. Furthermore, pressure from Islamist groups has limited the activities of NGOs supporting minority religious groups and LGBTQ+ rights.

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