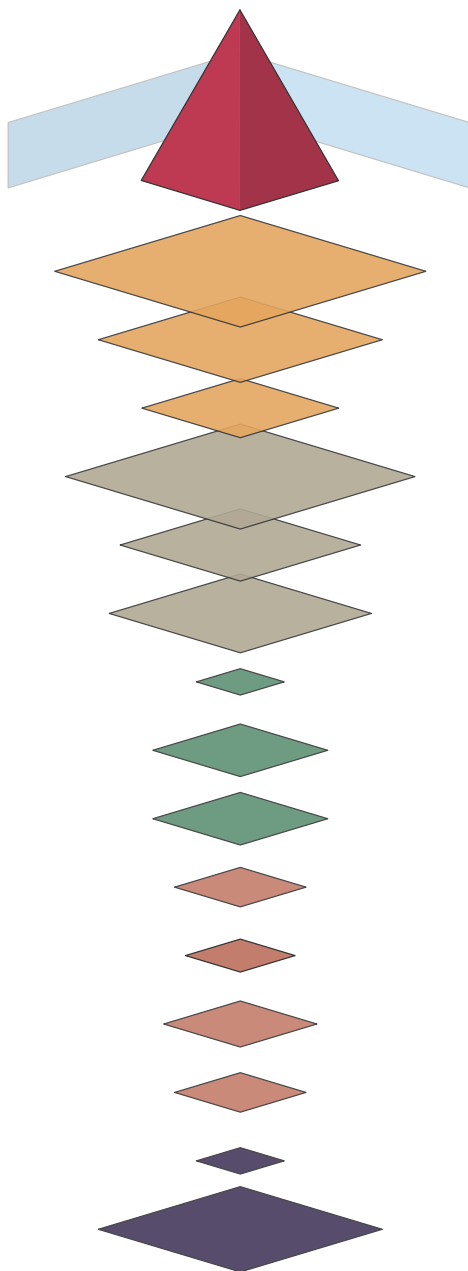


 **BURUNDI**



 **4.87**  
**CRIMINALITY SCORE**

**106<sup>th</sup>** of 193 countries  
**32<sup>nd</sup>** of 54 African countries  
**6<sup>th</sup>** of 11 Central African countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **4.63**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	<b>8.50</b>
HUMAN SMUGGLING	<b>6.50</b>
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	<b>4.50</b>
ARMS TRAFFICKING	<b>8.00</b>
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	<b>5.50</b>
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	<b>6.00</b>
FLORA CRIMES	<b>2.00</b>
FAUNA CRIMES	<b>4.00</b>
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	<b>4.00</b>
HEROIN TRADE	<b>3.00</b>
COCAINE TRADE	<b>2.50</b>
CANNABIS TRADE	<b>3.50</b>
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	<b>3.00</b>
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	<b>2.00</b>
FINANCIAL CRIMES	<b>6.50</b>

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **5.10**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	<b>2.00</b>
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	<b>4.50</b>
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	<b>9.00</b>
FOREIGN ACTORS	<b>4.00</b>
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	<b>6.00</b>

 **2.17**  
**RESILIENCE SCORE**



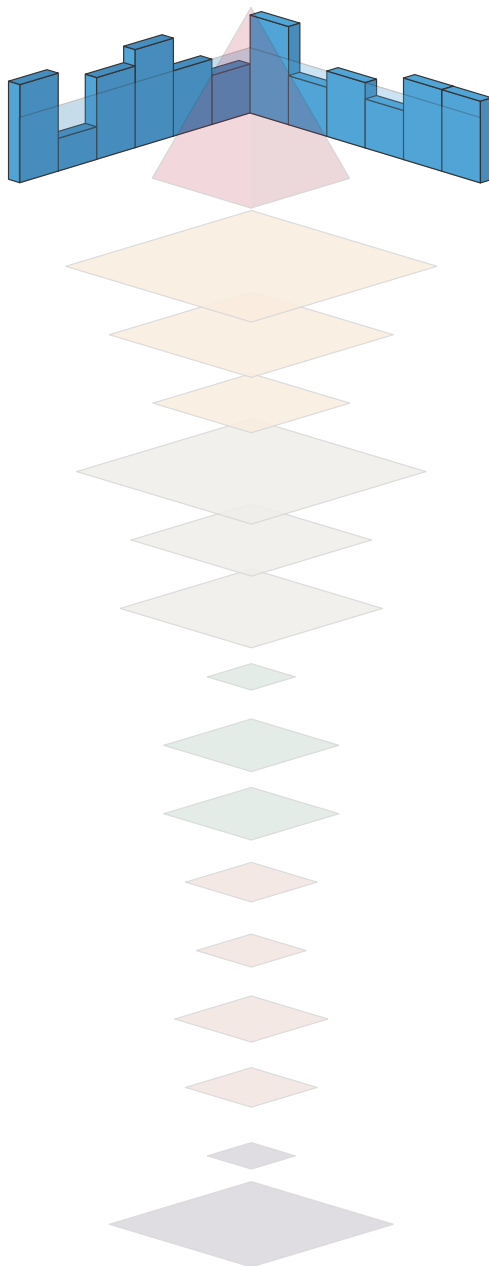
Funding provided by the United States Government.



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.

 **BURUNDI**





 **2.17**  
**RESILIENCE SCORE**

**182<sup>nd</sup>** of 193 countries  
**50<sup>th</sup>** of 54 African countries  
**10<sup>th</sup>** of 11 Central African countries

<u>POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</u>	<b>3.00</b>
<u>GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY</u>	<b>1.00</b>
<u>INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION</u>	<b>2.50</b>
<u>NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS</u>	<b>3.00</b>
<u>JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION</u>	<b>2.00</b>
<u>LAW ENFORCEMENT</u>	<b>1.50</b>
<u>TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY</u>	<b>3.00</b>
<u>ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING</u>	<b>1.50</b>
<u>ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY</u>	<b>2.00</b>
<u>VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT</u>	<b>1.50</b>
<u>PREVENTION</u>	<b>2.50</b>
<u>NON-STATE ACTORS</u>	<b>2.50</b>

 **4.87**  
**CRIMINALITY SCORE**

 <b>CRIMINAL MARKETS</b>	<b>4.63</b>
 <b>CRIMINAL ACTORS</b>	<b>5.10</b>



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# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Human trafficking continues to be a significant issue in Burundi, exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the regional political and security dynamics within the country and in the wider Great Lakes region, weak and ineffective governance and the lack of human and financial resources devoted to the issue. The country serves primarily as a source country, with internal human trafficking operations posing a greater threat than transnational operations. Labour and sexual exploitation are widespread, living conditions remain poor and human rights violations are common. Traffickers often target women and girls, especially for forced labour in the Gulf countries as domestic workers. While some measures have been taken to combat the crime, among them the closure of informal recruitment agencies and engagement in diplomatic negotiations with other countries to formalize labour immigration, such measures are open to exploitation by key political figures. The return of large numbers of refugees in recent years has compounded existing vulnerabilities, as both the returnees and those internally displaced remain in need of an income and are often left in situations that can be exploited.

While tighter controls over the borders with Tanzania and Rwanda have increased the role of human smugglers in helping people wanting to leave the country, they have also made smuggling more difficult. Many Burundians who have been displaced by violence and regional instability seek refuge in neighbouring countries, primarily in Tanzania, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda. Kenya and South Africa are also prime destinations for irregular Burundian migrants seeking employment opportunities. The country's political situation and ethnic polarization remain drivers of insecurity. The Imbonerakure militia, the youth wing of the ruling party, the Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie–Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD-FDD) continues to be the main player when it comes to extortion. However, since the new president, Evariste Ndayishimiye, came to power it has become less problematic. Notwithstanding, Burundian militiamen have reportedly been establishing checkpoints along smuggling routes to extort money from passers-by.

### TRADE

Trafficking of arms and ammunition has been a long-standing problem in the country and an important business, involving both civilian and military authorities. Many people own guns and Burundi is a transit country for the

regional weapons black market. Arms trafficking, primarily small arms and light weaponry and ammunition along its border with the DRC, continues to run rife, despite a host of local and international efforts to address the issue and to help strengthen the country's tracking abilities. The demand for trafficked arms stems from the conflict and insurgency throughout the region. In addition, financial prospects in an environment severely lacking in other economic opportunities incentivize criminals to engage in arms trafficking. Corruption among border agents is also a significant factor, facilitating arms trafficking and other crimes. Evidence shows that there is a link between arms trafficking and the high crime rates in these areas.

The most common counterfeit goods coming into the country are medical products, although there is a severe lack of data about the extent of the crime. Other types of illicit trade in excise goods are rife, with sugar, soft beverages and alcoholic beverages, illegally exported to neighbouring countries. These illegal businesses are generally in the hands of elite members of the ruling party and their associates. There is widespread abuse of regulations relating to the importation of certain goods and services.

### ENVIRONMENT

Burundi has launched a vast national reforestation programme to boost the country's dwindling forest cover, the result of excessive reliance on charcoal for cooking. The programme is expected to run until 2025. While charcoal and other timber-based products are a common and vital source of household energy, there is no evidence of related organized crime. However, information about the nature and scale of possible flora crimes remains unclear and anecdotal.

Burundi, a small country, lacks the wildlife diversity found elsewhere in the region. There are no statistics related to poaching and wildlife protection laws are not strictly enforced. It seems likely that it is primarily a transit country for fauna crimes. Nevertheless, poaching is believed to be an issue that is both under reported and largely unabated. Poached animals include elephants, pangolins, mountain gorillas and African grey parrots. Illegal fishing is a substantial problem in Lake Tanganyika. Burundi is also known as a transit country for wildlife trafficking from other regions, largely facilitated by corrupt Burundian officials. Ivory stockpiling in the country also continues to raise concerns.

The country is a marginal producer of minerals in the Great Lakes region. Both its industrial and artisanal mining sectors are more limited than those in neighbouring countries. Gold is the main mineral smuggled from artisanal mines. Illicit gold is both produced locally and smuggled into the country from the DRC, primarily from South Kivu, although

data about smuggling networks and smuggling routes remains limited. While the country's illicit gold trade is not as large as those in other African countries, gold smuggling is believed to have increased in recent years, reportedly facilitated by corrupt government officials. In addition to gold, and on a smaller scale, the presence of valuable minerals, such as copper, cobalt and platinum, coupled with Burundi's dire economic situation, provide incentives for mineral smuggling to flourish in the country. The 3TG minerals – tin, tungsten and tantalum – are by far the most profitable and most prevalently smuggled minerals in both Burundi and the wider region. The Burundian government is reportedly trying to develop the country's mining sector, although a series of ill-advised government measures is believed to have hindered the process.

## DRUGS

Burundi is a transit country for heroin and cocaine trafficked to Europe, largely due to the country's inadequate border controls. Both drugs are believed to come into the country via Lake Victoria and other eastern border sites before being trafficked to Europe by air, or elsewhere in Africa by land. Domestic heroin consumption is on the rise and heroin is often consumed in combination with substances such as anti-inflammatories and paracetamol in a local variant referred to as 'boost'. Given the high cost of cocaine and the extreme poverty in Burundi, domestic cocaine consumption is assumed to still be quite low.

Burundi is both a source of cannabis and a transit country for cannabis produced in neighbouring countries. Although there is a domestic cannabis market, cannabis produced in the country is often trafficked to neighbouring Rwanda. Burundi is also believed to be a destination country for cannabis trafficked out of the DRC. There is limited evidence of a notable synthetic drug market in Burundi and consumption of synthetic drugs in the country is believed to be quite low. Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the number of consumers and deaths associated with the use of 'boost'.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

The fact that the Burundian economy and administration are poorly connected to cyberspace makes the country less vulnerable to this type of crime. A spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior was recently reported to have said that the Burundi National Police is now well equipped to deal with cases of cybercrime.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes are prevalent in the country. Refugees in Burundi are most likely to fall victim to cyber-enabled financial crimes, regularly becoming the targets of online fraud and scams involving social media and mobile money.

Policies relating to telecommunications access, such as SIM card registrations, have also introduced risks for vulnerable users. There is widespread embezzlement of public funds. Public contracts, state subsidies, parastatals and local councils continue to be riddled with corruption. In 2021 the Minister of Home Affairs dismissed the accountants in all 119 local councils for diverting local taxes. The financial relations between the government and the country's main oil importer are a source of permanent controversy. Despite the fact that incidents of corruption linked with illicit cash transfers to European bank accounts have been well documented, the revelations have not led to prosecutions.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

There is a high level of complacency and direct involvement of state-embedded actors in criminal activities. Research suggests that smugglers cooperate extensively with corrupt state officials. This is especially true of border control officials, who are known to facilitate the cross-border transportation of illicit goods, especially between Burundi and the DRC. Members of the state security apparatus are often the perpetrators of violence. Although it is not carried out for profit, this organized violence serves to consolidate repressive government rule through intimidation, enabling corruption to continue unabated. Petty corruption among Burundian police officers is also commonplace. The complicity of high-ranking officials in organized crime has made the country a logistical hub for gold smuggling and human and arms trafficking operations. State officials in various departments, including police officials, as well as teachers of human trafficking victims, are known to be complicit in human trafficking. Leading officials in the ruling party are said to be corrupt, as well as involved in both organized crime and illicit economic activities at the national level.

While the evidence is sparse, it is believed that private transportation companies and banks are also involved in criminal activities. Given Burundi's role as a transit country in the regional criminal economy, some transportation companies are involved in smuggling, while some banks facilitate illicit financial transfers and money laundering. These actors are also involved in illegal mining, specifically within the gold industry, which is largely controlled by criminal consortiums composed of different actors, such as members of organized crime groups and/or corrupt officials in high-ranking positions, private sector actors and foreign actors who, collectively, benefit from criminal synergies. Private sector actors also collaborate with political actors to commit economic crimes such as the abuse of the exemptions policy, goods smuggling and human trafficking.

Evidence suggests a prevalence of networks operating in various criminal markets, including drug, human and arms trafficking. These networks reportedly include both non-state armed militias and government-affiliated militias as well as state security chiefs, high-ranking civil servants, politicians, local authorities and businessmen. The networks are also

often based on political affiliations within the ruling party and long-standing relationships among veterans of the civil war. As a result, they often reflect the factionalism within the CNDD-FDD. Smaller criminal syndicates appear to be heavily involved in organized criminal activity, although information about these groups remains limited. The Imbonerakure is allegedly involved in various illicit activities, including extortion, kidnapping, illegal taxation, smuggling and murder. It is the country's main criminal network and is reportedly present in every district in the country. In some areas it has more authority over the population than the police or local administrators. However, a decrease in the influence of the group was recorded in 2022 due to efforts made by the new government. Despite promises of fundamental reforms and other policies designed to address insecurity in Burundi since the election of the new president, including reining in the Imbonerakura, the group appears to have maintained its ties to the national intelligence services and security forces and to act as an arm of political repression.

Most of the foreign actors involved in criminal activities in Burundi come from within the region, although their impact is marginal. Human trafficking networks are run by Congolese, Rwandans, Kenyans, Tanzanians and others. One example is Rwandan officials who have allegedly been involved in recruiting Burundian refugees into militias supporting the Burundian opposition. As Burundi is a transit country for drugs, weapons and gold, many foreign actors from the region are involved in smuggling. Chinese nationals are also believed to be involved in ivory trafficking out of Burundi. Foreign businessmen from Lebanon and elsewhere in Africa are involved in trafficking networks under the protection of corrupt officials.

There is no evidence of the existence of mafia-style groups in Burundi, although some militias are known to have organized hierarchies and it is likely that they are involved in illicit trade. Burundian groups are more likely to be involved in criminal markets on an ad hoc basis, working in partnership with corrupt officials. However, they are known to not be involved in larger scale and more lucrative enterprises.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Persistent political unrest and ethnic tension continue to undermine governance. As a result, the government has made minimal efforts to combat organized crime, with crimes such as human trafficking ignored entirely. Many corrupt government officials are, themselves, believed to be involved in organized crime. Ethnic tensions within the government and throughout the country further undermine the ability to govern. The persistent deficiencies in governance, together with the pandemic, have resulted in increased economic hardship, higher poverty rates and public dissatisfaction with the governing and ruling elites, perpetuating the absence of government accountability. Weaknesses in judicial institutions/redress before the courts, corruption, an absence of transparency and non-payment of public sector salaries all affect Burundi's political leadership and governance. President Ndayishimiye has made efforts to dismantle corrupt networks within the public administration by removing high-ranking corrupt officials and nullifying contracts in the mining sector and private-public partnership projects. However, no institutional reforms have been enacted to reinforce good governance. Accountability is nearly non-existent, with ruling-party securocrats, the police and local administrators engaging in corruption. Misuse of public office for private gain persists with impunity in the country. Corruption at all levels of the government and the private sector drains resources.

Although Burundi is party to international organized crime agreements and is a member of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, its efforts at regional cooperation fail to prevent or combat organized crime. To improve the country's international image and end its diplomatic isolation President Ndayishimiye has taken public steps to re-engage with international actors. The Burundian comprehensive legal framework addresses human trafficking, wildlife trafficking, arms trafficking and drug trafficking. However, the laws are generally not enforced, creating a large degree of impunity. The country's parliament does not appear to have introduced any major legislative updates, initiatives or new laws in 2021 or 2022 to address organized crime other than modifications of the environmental code in relation to the protection of fauna and flora and the introduction of legislation to curb cybercrime.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judiciary is rife with corruption and, in the absence of effective systems and programmes, continues to be inefficient. Control over the judicial system has been tightened by legislative amendments made in 2021 which increased the powers of the president. Prisons are poorly managed, understaffed and overcrowded and over half of the prisoners are pre-trial detainees.

Given the lack of separation of powers and the tight grip of the ruling party on the state apparatus, law enforcement

is undermined by politicization and rampant corruption. Moreover, due to the involvement of high-ranking Burundian officials in both organized criminal activity and illicit business, Burundi's law enforcement capacity is severely limited. The country also lacks the capacity for supervisory, investigative and enforcement bodies to enforce anti-organized crime legislation. Instead, the government continues to focus its efforts on consolidating control and targeting the opposition.

Burundi has moderate territorial integrity, with all its borders under state control and a range of international agencies involved in assisting it to improve its border control and management systems. However, border officials lack proper training and cross-border smuggling and trafficking activities take place unabated. Armed rebels based in South Kivu in the DRC have successfully organized several attacks across the border, the most recent in August and September 2021. As a landlocked country, Burundi depends heavily for import and export transit on the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam and the Kenyan port of Mombasa, which, because of its allegedly lax and weak security and management, is susceptible to corruption.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Despite the fact that there is legislation in place and the country is party to the relevant conventions, it has no mechanism to combat money laundering. The government has now taken steps to develop its own financial intelligence unit, as required by the Financial Action Task Force, to bring the country in line with international anti-money laundering standards.

Unemployment rates continue to be high and most people live in rural areas without economic prospects, triggering an increase in human smuggling and trafficking. Despite the country's notable supply of minerals, the mining sector contributes very little to the economy because of illicit mining activities. There is almost no system of registration of individual mineworkers, reflecting inefficient regulation. Another problem is that state-embedded actors infringe on property rights and land conflict management is often driven by political motives, with the properties of prominent opponents in exile seized illegally. The rise of the informal economy also hinders the state's limited economic regulatory capacity and doing business in Burundi is extremely difficult. However, the government is taking steps to diversify its exports, to increase investment in certain sectors and to modernize its systems to facilitate trade.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The limited support available to victims of organized crime in Burundi is provided exclusively by NGOs. However, there is a lack of financial resources to carry out proper preventative work. As state officials or their associates are involved in most of the crimes, there are no meaningful mechanisms in place to control them. Drug rehabilitation centres are insufficiently stocked and understaffed. Burundi also lacks prisoner reintegration programmes and support for victims of human trafficking and modern slavery and has failed to update human trafficking statistics. Despite the deficiencies in victim identification and support, the Burundian government has made significant efforts to comply with minimum standards, including during the pandemic, a time when resources for vulnerable groups were increasingly at risk. The government increased screening for human trafficking indicators at the country's international airport.

Government repression has severely restricted the capacity of civil society and since the outbreak of conflict only civil society organizations that serve as government allies have been allowed to operate successfully. NGOs have been banned, and repressive state policies target independent media and anti-corruption activists. As a result, most of the work of tackling organized crime is done by a small group of civil society organizations with limited capacity and almost no political leverage. Corruption has also infiltrated these bodies and many local NGOs are involved in embezzlement. Media freedom has deteriorated substantially, with many journalists forced into exile, detained on false charges or intimidated when reporting on the misuse of public funds. Human rights activists have been arrested and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. Although the environment continues to be 'very hostile for journalists', the new president has sent positive signals about press freedom and acceptance of civil society involvement, including the release of journalists working for the news organization, a more tolerant attitude to international media groups and the return of an exiled anti-corruption campaigner.

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