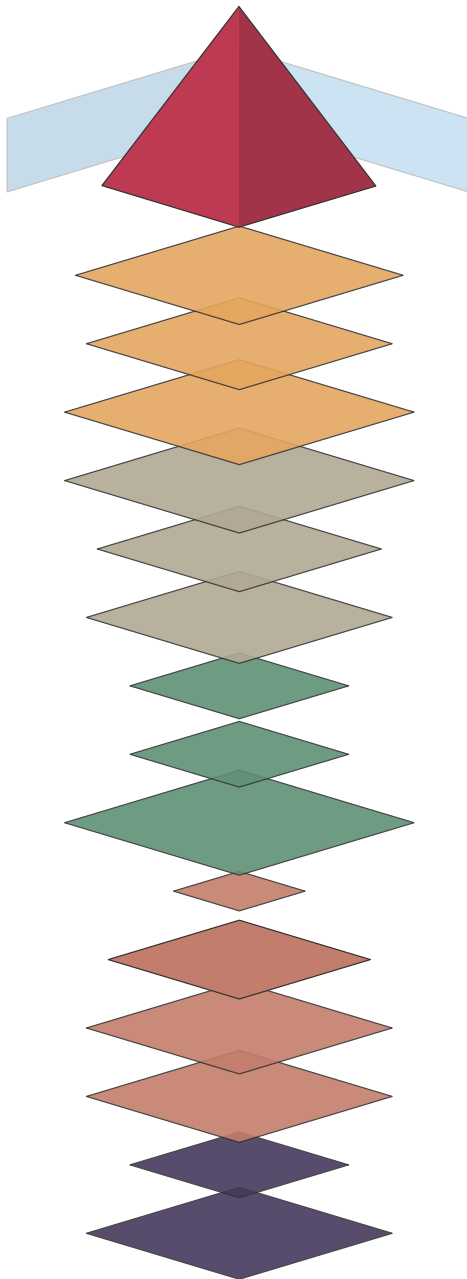


 **MALI**



 **5.93**
CRIMINALITY SCORE

50th of 193 countries
15th of 54 African countries
3rd of 15 West African countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **6.47**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	7.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	7.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	8.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	8.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	6.50
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	7.00
FLORA CRIMES	5.00
FAUNA CRIMES	5.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	8.00
HEROIN TRADE	3.00
COCAINE TRADE	6.00
CANNABIS TRADE	7.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	7.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	5.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	7.00

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **5.40**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	4.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	7.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	8.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	4.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	4.00

 **2.38**
RESILIENCE SCORE



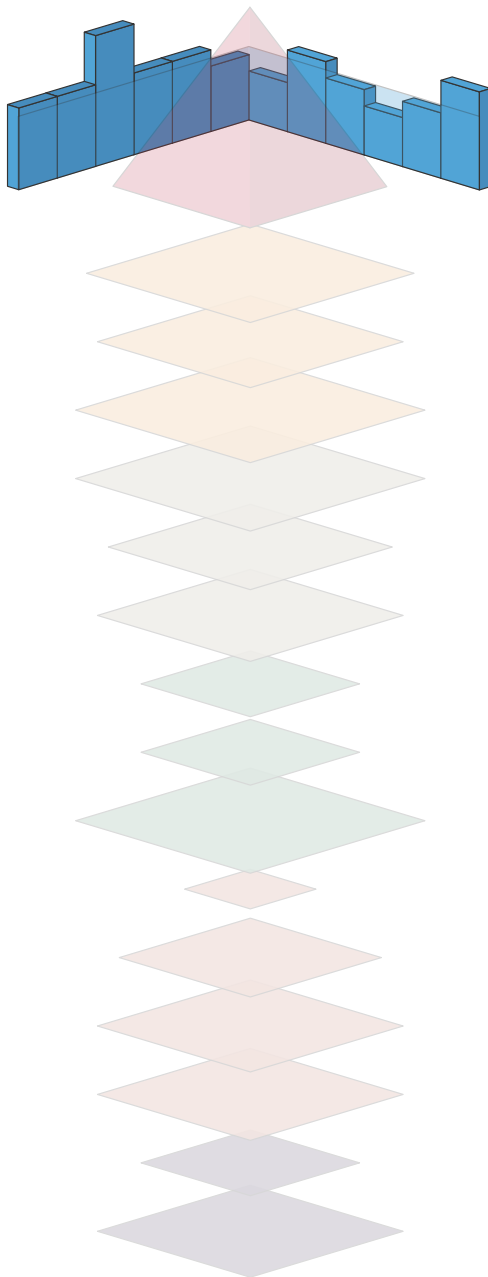
Funding provided by the United States Government.



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.

 **MALI**



 **2.38**
RESILIENCE SCORE

176th of 193 countries
45th of 54 African countries
15th of 15 West African countries

<u>POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</u>	2.50
<u>GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY</u>	2.50
<u>INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION</u>	4.00
<u>NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS</u>	2.50
<u>JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION</u>	2.50
<u>LAW ENFORCEMENT</u>	2.00
<u>TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY</u>	1.50
<u>ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING</u>	2.50
<u>ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY</u>	2.00
<u>VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT</u>	1.50
<u>PREVENTION</u>	2.00
<u>NON-STATE ACTORS</u>	3.00

 **5.93**
CRIMINALITY SCORE

 CRIMINAL MARKETS	6.47
 CRIMINAL ACTORS	5.40



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking remains a significant issue in Mali, as the country serves as a source, transit, and destination for forced labour and sex trafficking. Internal trafficking is more prevalent than transnational trafficking, and factors such as social and economic crises and financial insecurity have perpetuated these practices. Armed rebel and extremist groups operating in northern and central Mali recruit and exploit children, mostly boys, for combat, surveillance, and other tasks. Child recruitment extends beyond armed group as the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) have for the first time in three years recruited children to take part in hostilities. Debt bondage in salt and gold mines, forced marriage, and sex slavery of girls by armed groups are ongoing problems. Forced labour affects boys and girls from Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso in various sectors, including agriculture, mining, domestic work, transportation, begging, and the informal commercial sector. Instances of traditional slavery persist, with members of various communities subjecting individuals to hereditary slavery. Irregular migrants who get stranded in the country while transiting Mali to reach Northern Africa and/or Europe are also vulnerable to human trafficking in the forms of sexual exploitation and forced labour.

Mali serves as a key transit point for human smuggling in the Sahel region, with established networks facilitating the movement of Malians and sub-Saharan individuals across borders. A large proportion of the transport of migrants within Mali and into neighboring states, often erroneously termed 'migrant smuggling', is of ECOWAS nationals within the free movement area. Smuggling and transportation of migrants is prevalent in the northern regions, particularly through Timbuktu, where armed groups control territories and benefit from the human smuggling and migrant transportation industry. Signatory armed groups play an influential role in aiding smuggling activities. The country also has a thriving market for counterfeit documentation, aiding the irregular movement of people. The COVID-19 pandemic initially disrupted human smuggling as borders closed, preventing onward travel to Algeria. However, with the reopening of borders, smuggling activities resumed, and movements through Timbuktu increased, while movements through Gao have been negatively impacted by the insecurity caused by the resurgence of the Islamic State Sahel Province.

While extortion cases occur in Mali, they are less frequent than kidnapping cases. Kidnapping for ransom has become more common practice, with Malians representing more than 95% of targets. However, financial considerations

are not the primary driving factor behind the kidnapping industry, as armed groups use kidnapping as a tool to expand and consolidate influence over new territories. Extortion activities often take the form of violent extremist groups extracting zakat (a form of mandatory religious taxation) or armed groups demanding payment from communities in exchange for protection. Violent extremist groups have even besieged and cut off entire villages until payment and collaboration are provided. Armed groups also engage in looting and thefts, including of cattle, against herder communities.

TRADE

The ongoing conflict in Mali has led to a serious threat of arms trafficking, as weapons flow from the conflict in Libya and neighbouring countries. In 2012, armed groups arriving from Libya brought heavy machine guns and other materials, which continue to be used and supplemented through procurement from nearby countries. Widespread insecurity and weak law enforcement have upped the demand for weapons for self-protection, particularly in areas with high presence of armed groups, gold mining and pastoralist activities. Alongside arms diversion, captured weapons from the battlefield also contribute to arms proliferation, often resulting from attacks on arsenals and checkpoints. Bamako, Mali's capital, serves as a crucial hub for regional trafficking networks operating in the southern Sahel. Traffickers and criminal networks exploit the porous tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali for transportation and sales, taking advantage of easier illegal border crossings. The black-market availability of explosives is a concern, as armed groups show interest in these supply chains, providing explosives to artisanal and small-scale mining sites.

Counterfeit goods, particularly medical products, are a pressing issue. The illegal and counterfeit imports market in the country is primarily composed of pharmaceutical products, accounting for more than half of the market. Economic difficulties, shortcomings in health insurance coverage, and lack of access to pharmaceutical products contribute to the regular use of trafficked medical products by the Malian population. The illicit trade of goods extends beyond pharmaceuticals and includes health supplements, herbal products, as well as printing and packaging equipment. There is also a thriving contraband economy focused on smuggling foodstuffs and consumables from Algeria into Mali. Cigarette smuggling through Mali occurs at a high volume every year, destined for markets in the Sahel and North Africa. Billions of cigarettes are smuggled annually. Additionally, legally manufactured cigarette brands, mostly imported from the UAE, flood the region, mainly through the ports of Lomé and Cotonou. These cigarettes are

transported north, and are among the many goods taxed by violent extremist and political armed groups.

ENVIRONMENT

Illegal logging and the trade of precious wood, particularly rosewood, threaten Mali's forest conservation initiatives. Despite having limited forestland, the country has experienced a loss of tree cover for more than two decades. In fact, over half of Mali's protected forests have disappeared because of excessive timber exploitation by loggers for economic gain. Chinese companies have been exploiting legal loopholes to export large quantities of rosewood through authorized wood export companies. Despite timber export bans, the criminal market is thriving. The illegal trade of rosewood has also been linked to ivory trafficking, with Asian traders concealing ivory within the logs.

The illegal trade in wild animals and poaching is a danger to Mali's rich fauna, as thousands of animal species in the country are at serious risk of extinction. Despite being a landlocked nation, Mali is home to important ecosystems such as large lakes, which support rare species such as the furrowed turtle, marbled teal, and Senegalese turtle. The trading of black-crowned cranes has been highlighted as a concern, and there have been seizures of hawks and chimpanzees reported by forest managers. Heavy poaching of species such as the Gharial of Africa (a crocodile species) and the Dama gazelle occurs along the Mali-Senegal borders, leading to a decline in their populations. The desert elephants face threats from poaching, but anti-poaching units have helped reduce the threat despite the presence of non-state armed groups in the region.

Nonrenewable resource crimes, particularly in the gold mining sector, are big issues in Mali. The country is a big exporter of gold in Africa and is a transit point for the illicit trade of other minerals. While mostly exploited in the south for decades, the discovery of abundant gold mining sites in the northern regions has ignited informal artisanal mining activities, often supported by local authorities and armed groups. Some non-state armed groups, especially rebel groups such as the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) and violent extremist groups such as Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), profit from artisanal gold mining through protection rackets and control over certain sites. The involvement of criminal networks and government officials in the illicit gold trade is evident. The artisanal mining industry, comprising illegal and informal mining, has expanded in response to economic hardships. In addition, the common use of mercury and cyanide chemicals in gold mining poses considerable human and environmental risks, with smuggled chemicals entering Mali through illicit trafficking routes.

DRUGS

Heroin trafficking is known to occur in Mali, with most of the drug entering the country by air, albeit to a limited extent compared to other drug markets in the country. Mali is also a transit hub for the cocaine trade. Bamako is a trafficking hub, and the northern region serves as a major route for cocaine destined for Europe and the Middle East. Drug cartels based in Mali have been linked to large-scale cocaine seizures in neighbouring countries. The involvement of armed groups in protecting drug trafficking flows has led to frequent armed clashes along trafficking routes in the northern regions, although tensions have since 2020 diminished due to a series of agreements between armed groups controlling northern territories. The lack of response from the authorities raises questions about the capacity and willingness of Malian authorities to effectively combat drug trafficking. Added to that, individuals in the cocaine trade, also key actors of the conflict, have influential positions within institutional framework of the peace agreement, potentially shielding their illicit activities.

Mali's cannabis trade primarily serves as a transit point for regional trafficking, with the drug being moved through neighbouring countries as part of the larger Sahel trafficking network en route to European markets. Domestic production of cannabis (mostly for local consumption) is not substantial. Compared to cocaine trafficking, the cannabis trade involves a larger number of actors, as it is a criminal economy with lower entry barriers and is intertwined with the broader contraband economy. Members of armed groups and individuals associated with the peace process are participating in trafficking cannabis resin, leading to competition among rival actors.

Mali mainly serves as a transit country for synthetic drugs, particularly Tramadol and, to a lesser extent, methamphetamine. These drugs usually originate from Nigeria and are intended for foreign markets though the domestic consumption has been growing rapidly in Mali. Mali also acts as a transit country for South American synthetic drugs destined for Europe. Pills and other products that can be used as synthetic drugs often take circuitous routes as they are easy to move and many of them are licit substances with weak controls in place.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Mali has witnessed a rise in cyber-dependent crimes in recent years with several types of cybercrimes, such as ransomware and viruses, resulting in data breaches affecting private sector and public authorities.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes including corruption, embezzlement, and the misuse of funds are common occurrences, especially among public officials holding positions of power without facing any consequences. Mali also continues to grapple with serious levels of violent extremist groups activity, which are sustained through various forms of financial crime.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Criminal interests in Mali have permeated state structures and institutions, resulting in rampant corruption, misappropriation of resources, and involvement in political and economic affairs that facilitate transnational organized crime. High-level corruption and embezzlement of state resources have plagued multiple government administrations, with senior public officials implicated in cases of fraud and forgery. State-sanctioned security forces, including the police, customs, and ranger corps, frequently engage in petty extortion, notably in transportation activities across borders. Bribery has become commonplace for accessing public services, securing appointments, and obtaining certificates within the public sector. Additionally, influential traffickers have transformed into political entrepreneurs, wielding considerable influence during electoral campaigns in northern Mali.

Concurrently, smaller criminal networks in the country have witnessed notable expansion and diversification, engaging in activities such as arms trafficking, cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, human smuggling and trafficking, and cocaine trafficking. These criminal enterprises have become lucrative revenue streams for armed groups operating in

the region. Exploiting historical trade connections, these networks collaborate with various individuals and groups in criminal operations. In Mali's northern regions, trafficking networks often intersect with drug trafficking and politico-military factions. While alliances between armed groups and trafficking networks can form, conflicting interests within criminal economies often give rise to tensions and conflicts.

Non-state armed groups in Mali, particularly those affiliated with violent extremist groups, display characteristics reminiscent of mafia-style organizations. These groups derive their primary funding from illicit activities such as kidnap for ransom, cattle rustling and illicit gold mining, and indirectly with taxation of smuggled goods, protection rackets and extortion. They possess identifiable leadership structures, hierarchical organizations, named identities, and territorial influence.

Foreign actors have played a key role in the criminal activities unfolding in Mali. In the early 2000s, narcotics from South America were introduced into existing trafficking networks in the country, which were predominantly controlled by Arab businessmen and Tuareg smugglers. These networks initially focused on trafficking goods from neighbouring countries such as Libya, Algeria, and Mauritania. While foreign nationals, including Nigerians and Guineans, take part in specific criminal economies in urban centres, they do not exert complete control over the entire supply chain. The extent to which foreign actors from Sahelian countries such as Niger, Chad, and Sudan operate independently or within networks controlled by Malians remains unclear. Moreover, within the private sector, certain companies in Mali have been implicated in large-scale fraudulent operations related to import licenses.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The political crisis in Mali was triggered by two coups orchestrated by mid-ranking military officers in 2020 and 2021. The new leadership has taken a strong stance against crime and corruption, resulting in high-profile arrests of former political leaders accused of embezzlement. The current military leadership in Mali has exhibited an authoritarian drift, resulting in shrinking space for civil society, which reduce accountability and transparency. Corruption and organized crime, including human trafficking, drug smuggling, and kidnappings, are intertwined in Mali. High-level corruption and embezzlement of state resources have persisted across successive government administrations, hindering progress in anti-corruption efforts.

The country is also grappling with intercommunal violence as a result of violent extremist group's expansion, especially in central Mali. Disputes over land resources have intensified owing to population growth and conflict-insensitive development policies, leading to increased violence, especially in the context of ethnic polarization and the widespread availability of weapons. Mali faces challenges in land governance as it struggles to reconcile conflicting laws and customary regulations.

Mali has ratified numerous international treaties and conventions related to organized crime and corruption, demonstrating a formal commitment to combating these issues. However, the country's international relations have been deteriorating as a result of the authoritarian shift and confrontational approach of the military-led transition

authorities. As a result, many international cooperation efforts, including those targeting organized crime, are being discontinued. The legal framework in Mali regarding organized crime is constrained, as the country's legislation does not specifically recognize organized crime as a distinct offence. Instead, the penal code addresses offences such as participating in an association of wrongdoers or a terrorist group. The criminalization of corruption and money laundering offenses is covered by various laws, however, there is a huge gap between the legal provisions and their actual implementation.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judicial system in Mali faces significant obstacles, including chronic underfunding, corruption, and insecurity. High levels of impunity and restricted access to justice contribute to the entrenchment of organized crime in the country and hinder the restoration of the rule of law. Despite the existence of supervisory bodies and quality reports, those involved in illicit activities are rarely prosecuted because of resource constraints and a paucity of political will. Legal proceedings are particularly challenging when organized crime is concerned, and corruption pervades the judiciary, both in terms of bureaucratic corruption and insufficient judicial independence. The Malian judiciary has been plagued by neglect and mismanagement, with many judicial personnel abandoning their posts in the face of insecurity, mostly in northern and central regions. This has resulted in extended pre-trial detention for many detainees, as the courts struggle to process cases effectively. Customary justice institutions are often preferred by Malian individuals for civil disputes, but they do not have the capacity to enforce decisions, and law enforcement does not consistently support them. As for the penitentiary system in the country, prisons suffer from overcrowding, with inadequate sanitation and medical care. There were also instances of violence between detainees observed in recent years.

Law enforcement in Mali struggles with corruption, inadequate resources, and limited training. Local police and gendarmes have been accused of complicity in supporting forced labour and sex trafficking, while armed groups allied with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State continue to mount attacks on security forces in northern and central Mali, and increasingly the southern regions are affected by insecurity as well. Insufficient infrastructure and staffing further hamper the security services, particularly in the north, and checkpoints are marred by reports of bribery and extortion. The judicial police's services have been criticized for their poor quality and abuse of power, deepening concerns about the effectiveness of law enforcement. Impunity within the armed forces is a grave issue, with allegations of human rights abuses eroding trust and perpetuating violence.

Mali's territorial integrity is severely compromised by an ongoing insurgency, the presence of various non-state

armed groups, and political instability. The transitional government has restricted control over the capital and some major towns in the south, but state sovereignty is compromised in rural areas, the majority of the central region, and almost all of the north outside of regional capitals. These areas are administered by non-state actors, eroding Mali's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The porous borders of Mali contribute to instability and enable transnational organized crime, allowing illicit trade and trafficking to thrive through informal routes. The country has been recognized as a big transit point for the cocaine trade to Europe and the Middle East, particularly along the borders with Algeria and Niger. Controlling Mali's vast borders, which it shares with seven neighbouring countries, is tricky.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Mali faces significant difficulties in combating money laundering attributed to the prevalence of various illicit activities, including the trafficking of commodities, people, small arms, and narcotics. The country's cash-based economy also complicates efforts to track illegal financial transactions. There are concerns that sanctioned actors may try to launder gold and money through criminal networks, particularly to access Western markets and circumvent sanctions against Russian companies.

Mali's economic regulatory environment is considered weak. Trafficking plays a considerable role in the country's social and economic structure, with the illicit trade of goods deeply embedded. This includes the trafficking of fuel, subsidized foodstuffs, cigarettes, and other items, which are estimated to constitute a large portion of available goods in certain regions. Improving the regulatory system, particularly in the gold market, could greatly benefit the state's revenue and overall economic wealth. Illicit profits, including those from drug trafficking, are often reinvested and laundered through land deals and urban real estate markets, leading to speculative bubbles and distorting effects on the legitimate economy. Mali's cash-based economy adds to complications around efforts to detect and track illicit financial activities or the proceeds of criminal enterprises. The political transition delay in Mali has resulted in sanctions imposed by the ECOWAS from January to early July 2022, including the closure of borders, suspension of commercial and financial transactions (with exceptions for essential goods), and freezing of assets in ECOWAS central banks. These sanctions, coupled with economic situation worldwide with the Ukraine conflict, have already had an impact, with Mali defaulting on considerable interest and principal payments and inflation rates increasing.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

While the government collaborates with NGOs, international organizations, and ministries to refer trafficking victims to assistance services, the support remains insufficient. Most services are provided by NGOs funded by private and international donors, but there is a lack of standard identification procedures and formal referral mechanisms. The majority of identified victims were referred to NGOs for care, but coordination with government entities was reportedly poor. Services provided to victims, including shelter, food, counselling, vocational training, repatriation, and reintegration assistance, vary depending on the location, with limited support available outside the capital. It is notable that the government did not report identifying victims of hereditary slavery. Additionally, Mali doesn't have a witness protection programme.

Prevention measures undertaken by the government are limited to training and awareness-raising programmes. The government relies on international cooperation while carrying out these prevention activities. Despite these efforts, prevention efforts in Mali face challenges in coordination, enforcement, and capacity, requiring attention and improvement.

Civil society organizations in Mali play an important role in the country's political landscape. Despite the challenging

security situation in central and northern Mali, civil society organizations represent various interest groups and have contributed to the consultation on security strategies and policies, collaborating with security sector actors to enhance societal wellbeing, and actively engaging in public affairs. Civil society is generally viewed as more credible and responsive to public needs compared to political parties. However, increased insecurity has hampered the operations of civil society networks and organizations. Mali's press freedom has experienced strong setbacks under the military leadership, with the country ranking low in global assessments. The media landscape faces challenges such as self-censorship, with the pressure on journalists carrying out investigations leading to violence, human rights violations, and hostage situations. While media coverage of organized crime has increased, resource constraints and limited investigative capacity hinder comprehensive reporting. Authorities continue to harass media outlets regarding their coverage of security issues, and any criticism of the military can result in arrests on charges of undermining troop morale.

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