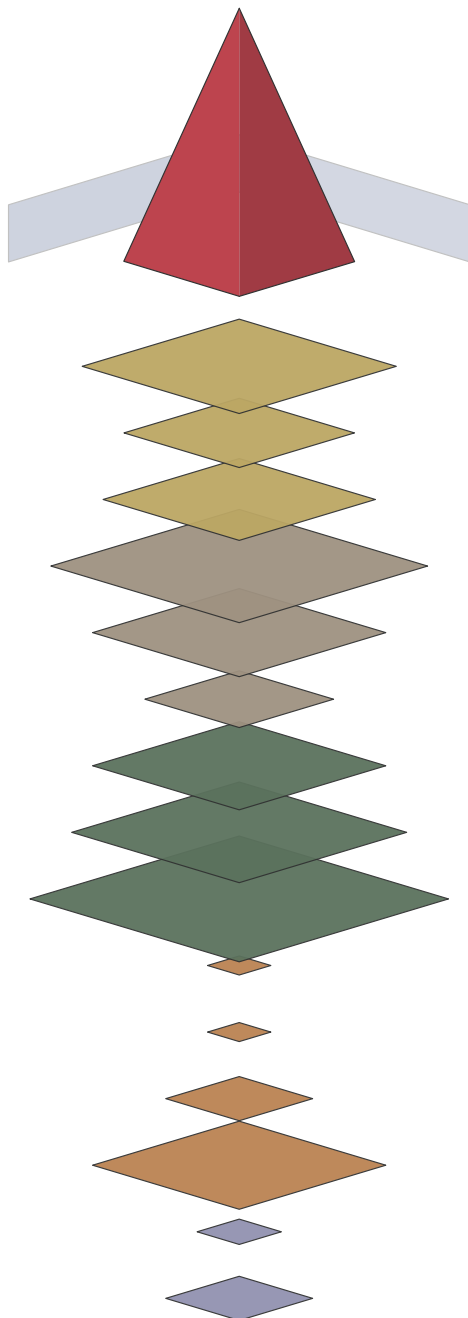


CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



6.75

CRIMINALITY SCORE

6th of 54 African countries

2nd of 11 Central African countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS

5.6

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

7.5

HUMAN SMUGGLING

5.5

EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING

6.5

ARMS TRAFFICKING

9

TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS

7

ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS

4.5

FLORA CRIMES

7

FAUNA CRIMES

8

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES

10

HEROIN TRADE

1.5

COCAINE TRADE

1.5

CANNABIS TRADE

3.5

SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE

7

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

2

FINANCIAL CRIMES

3.5



CRIMINAL ACTORS

7.9

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS

8

CRIMINAL NETWORKS

8

STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS

9

FOREIGN ACTORS

9

PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS

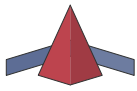
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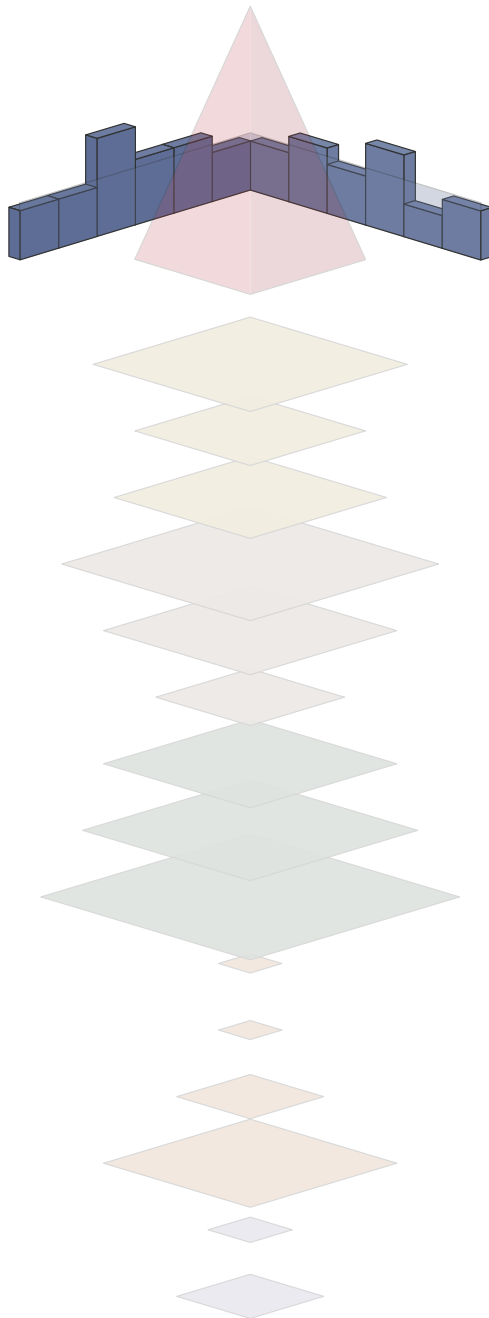
1.79

RESILIENCE SCORE





CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



1.79

RESILIENCE SCORE

52nd of 54 African countries

11th of 11 Central African countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	1.5
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	1.5
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	3
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	2
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	2
LAW ENFORCEMENT	1.5
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	1.5
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	2
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	1.5
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	2.5
PREVENTION	1
NON-STATE ACTORS	1.5



6.75

CRIMINALITY SCORE



CRIMINAL MARKETS

5.6



CRIMINAL ACTORS

7.9



CRIMINALITY

Criminal Markets

PEOPLE

The prevalence of trafficking in the Central African Republic (CAR) is estimated to be among the highest in the Central African region, with both domestic and foreign victims exploited. Labour exploitation is widespread and increasing as a result of the upsurge in violent conflict in the country, which has created large numbers of displaced people, who are vulnerable to exploitation. Both gold and diamond mines, many controlled by armed groups, have also been linked to forced labour, particularly of minors. Cases of child soldiers have also been documented. Child exploitation was also documented in the form of domestic servitude, sex trafficking, agriculture and artisanal mining for gold and diamonds. There have been reports of the enslavement of girls in the northern part of the country, with many trafficked to Sudan and Chad. Those seeking to leave the CAR are also vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. Chad and Libya are reported to be source countries for illegal labour for the informal mining sectors in the CAR, often being targeted by armed groups for that purpose.

Violence and instability have pushed many people to seek ways to leave the country. While most of the movement within the country and across its borders takes place without the facilitation of smugglers, some is smuggler facilitated. The main challenge for smugglers is not border restrictions but navigating the complex geography of the region, insecurity and competing smuggling groups. In 2021 there was an increase in the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers originating from CAR who were dispersed throughout Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Chad, the Republic of Congo, Sudan and South Sudan, as well as internally displaced people in the country. Extortion of civilians and traders, carried out by armed groups who impose taxes and levies on controlled key roads and access points, is prevalent. However, the Wagner mercenary group has also been known to demand payments at checkpoints, or engage in other forms of extortion.

TRADE

Despite a UN arms embargo that has been in force since 2013 weapons can easily be brought into the CAR. Armed conflict and porous borders contribute to the demand for illicit small arms and light weapons. Arms

are trafficked through the borders between Chad, CAR and Cameroon. One factor sustaining armed groups and driving instability in the country is the diversion of weapons from government stocks. Some of the weapons trafficking networks that supply armed groups are under the control of military officers. There is also evidence of the involvement of individuals in the security sector in illicit arms trafficking and contact with armed groups. Despite a bilateral agreement and in contravention of the agreed arms embargo rules there are still reports of Russian arms imports into the country.

Given the conflict and the absence of state authority, notably during the conflict period, as well as weak control over porous borders, trade in counterfeit goods is prevalent in the country. Counterfeit goods, including fake or low grade fuel and counterfeit cigarettes, in some instances originating from other African countries, among them Nigeria, are brought in through the porous borders between CAR and Cameroon. Counterfeit pharmaceutical products as well as veterinary products are easily accessible in the CAR, most of them imported from Nigeria. As combatting intellectual property crimes is not a priority for the CAR government, this criminal market remains a problem for the growth of the economy.

Similarly, illicit trade in excise goods is also prevalent, notably illicit cigarette and tobacco smuggling between state- and non-state-controlled territory and across the border into South Sudan and from as far afield as Nigeria via Cameroon. Cameroon serves as a major smuggling hub in the region, including for tobacco products that are brought into the CAR. These illicit activities rely heavily on a regional network of corrupt and bribable officials and other figures along the logistics chain, enabling excise goods to evade legitimate revenue interventions.

ENVIRONMENT

Armed groups, foreign actors and some local, but regionally well-connected, companies illegally exploit timber in the CAR and, since the disruption caused by the conflict, exports of timber have increased, with primary forest cover loss almost tripling between 2018 and 2021. With no forestry service functioning in most of the country, the lack of capacity to monitor logging groups and contracts and rampant corruption, these actors continue to operate, specifically collaborating with networks based in Sudan and South Sudan. Trafficking for international timber companies mostly takes place



on the CAR–Cameroon border, while local communities exploit timber mainly in the southern part of the country. Since the CAR authorities are unable to verify whether companies respect their contracts, fraudulent financial schemes such as underestimating the quantity, mixing timber cut in the CAR with timber cut in Cameroon and the extension of logging concessions are common.

As for fauna crimes, the CAR's legal vacuum allows armed groups and poachers to engage in transnational trafficking of elephant tusks and animals such as panthers and pangolins. Poachers from Sudan and Chad, along with armed groups that have developed relationships with foreign traffickers, enter the CAR by crossing the border with South Sudan. In addition, independent militarized poachers take advantage of the lack of governance and enforcement. Among the main trafficked items are ivory and big-cat parts, hidden in legal shipments of palm oil or cassava. Systematic bushmeat hunting is also increasing and elephant populations have decreased significantly. Poaching is carried out by a range of groups, including local communities, armed groups and armed pastoralists, and in poaching expeditions by gangs from South Darfur (Nyala) during the dry season. However, as animal populations have declined, these poaching expeditions have been redirected to Northern Cameroon and Southern Chad.

The illicit production and trafficking of diamonds and gold are especially prevalent and have increased in the CAR, with most smuggled abroad. The market also facilitates foreign money laundering operations and has been linked to armed groups. Foreign actors, such as private companies and the Russian mercenaries of the Wagner group, are also playing a significant role in the illicit gold and diamond market. There have also been reports of the involvement of foreign troops stationed in the country in smuggling diamonds and gold. The illicit market is linked to Sudan and Cameroon, where illegally exploited diamonds are laundered by middlemen, then transported to Europe, Asia and Dubai or Rwanda. The smuggling is enabled by ineffective controls and the power of trafficking networks. Fuel smuggled from Nigeria is also reportedly trafficked through Cameroon in the CAR.

DRUGS

As the landlocked country lacks transportation infrastructure, the logistical environment is not conducive to drug trafficking. Little is known about the heroin trade and the domestic use and supply of this drug. Similarly, there is limited evidence of a cocaine trafficking market in the CAR, and cocaine use is limited to the local elite. Cannabis, however, is widely used by the local population,

especially militiamen and young people. While there is no official information about cannabis trafficking, apart from some indications of the involvement of armed groups, given the country's location and the current organized-crime landscape, it would be unrealistic to conclude that it does not exist. There is, for instance, evidence of a steady flow of cannabis from the northern DRC across the Ubangui River. Foreign armed groups are cultivating cannabis between Sam Ouandja and the Sudanese border in the Haute-Kotto prefecture and are involved in trafficking it to Sudan. Tramadol has become a major issue in the country, mainly emanating from networks based in eastern Cameroon, Chad and Sudan and sold openly in several markets. Supplies are sometimes interrupted because of security and logistical problems, causing significant price fluctuations.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

No readily available open-source information suggests that the CAR is particularly prone to cyber-dependent crime on any scale other than to observe that its cyber security weaknesses and deficiencies make its citizens increasingly vulnerable.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Given the fact that the CAR is a well-known kleptocracy, the small banking sector and international bank transfers are under surveillance because of past incidents of state fund transfers to foreign private bank accounts. No further information about the existence of a significant financial crimes market could be found for the current reporting period.

Criminal Actors

A number of armed groups operate in CAR, all of which are involved in criminal markets. Their main source of funding is extortion and illegal taxation. Analysis of the conflict has revealed that the armed groups are self-funded and have economic ties with national political and economic actors. Some groups also have foreign support coming from Chad and Sudan. Some specialize in specific criminal markets, including mineral trafficking (diamonds and gold), kidnap for ransom, cattle rustling, human trafficking, smuggling activities, arms trafficking and wildlife trafficking. The groups were weakened by offensive operations carried out in 2021, losing most of their territorial control in the western parts of the country. Despite the government's declaration of a unilateral ceasefire, violence perpetrated by the armed groups and inflicted on both civilians and humanitarian



workers has persisted across the country. There are also numerous groups of unorganized traffickers, bandits, criminals, robbers, road gangs (zaraguinas), smugglers, thieves and counterfeiters.

The weakness of the rule of law has resulted in a large number of such criminal groups operating in the country. Self-defence groups often turn to banditry, largely focusing on cattle theft, and some rural gangs come from Chad and Sudan. Despite some progress in stabilizing parts of CAR since 2021, the internal dynamics of the country continue to provide fertile opportunities for ad hoc crime, theft, robbery, highwaymen, smugglers (primarily of cattle, gold, and diamonds) and other criminal elements. Armed groups apart, this type of crime is a substitute for employment, given that the formal economic sector cannot provide decent or regularly paid jobs. In this respect, the CAR can be described as one of the most insecure countries in Africa.

Many state actors in the CAR, including law enforcement officials and high-ranking members of the government, operate outside the law and cooperate with criminal actors. Some government officials are involved in embezzling public funds and in money laundering activities. Corrupt state actors are also often involved in criminal enterprises, mainly wildlife crime and diamond trafficking. Since the peace deal was signed in 2019 the government has included leaders from armed groups, which has blurred the lines between state and non-state actors, as well as

between legal and illegal activities. Recent arrests and the subsequent release of corrupt state officials have showcased the impunity and lack of accountability for such crimes. Reports also suggest that Central African Armed Forces and Russian mercenaries have carried out summary executions, arbitrary killings, torture, rape and forced disappearances during military operations.

Many foreign actors are involved in various criminal networks in the CAR, including human and arms trafficking, the illicit gold, diamond and timber industries and fauna crimes. Notably, Chinese and Wagner-affiliated companies are key vectors of illicit trade in the flora and non-renewable resource crimes sectors, especially in the western and eastern part of the country. Foreign actors range from citizens coming from neighbouring countries to private companies or peacekeeping contingents and are generally well connected with national networks. Russian mercenaries, who play a key role in the country, are involved in a number of criminal markets. Some foreign companies that operate in the mining sector are active in the illicit trade of non-renewable resources as well as in corruption and cooperation with criminal groups. There is also evidence that some local businessmen are financing armed groups. Cattle owners may also fund some self-defence groups in order to counter cattle thieves, while some traders support armed groups from their ethnic community.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

There is limited state presence in the CAR outside the capital, Bangui, and a lack of citizen participation and limited rule of law contribute to a weak governance system throughout the country. Certain political elites have been known to be active in illicit trade. Diamond trafficking, in particular, has played a key role in CAR politics, including at the highest levels of the government. In this respect, the CAR continues to be ranked among the most fragile states in the world. The country also has a poor record of transparency and accountability. While there is a legal framework and mechanisms allowing for transparency, the government is yet to implement them. Mining deals and state contracts are negotiated in secret, while public tenders are rare. International

groups have identified several suspicious bank accounts used to divert public funds from the country.

The CAR has ratified all but one of the international treaties pertaining to organized crime and the government relies heavily on the international community and benefits from significant humanitarian aid. However, a lack of capacity within the security sector, and the threat of armed groups, led to the deployment of the Wagner group in CAR. Security cooperation with Russian actors is well established. Economic cooperation with China is growing, while the EU suspended its training mission as well as its budget support at the end of 2021 and France withdrew its last military contingent in 2022 in response to Russian expansion in the CAR security sector.



The state is economically supported by the international community (the UN, the African Union and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa), for example. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic has assumed a degree of responsibility for security. There is also a heavy reliance on private military and security personnel outsourced to Russia and Rwanda, which raises concerns about intimidation and the violent harassment of civilians by foreign combatants.

There are few national policies or laws in CAR targeting organized crime. International NGOs have offered support to develop more effective law enforcement in forest and wildlife management, but the outcomes are not yet visible, while laws and strategies designed with the assistance of international partners are usually not implemented. However, by adopting a regulatory framework the CAR authorities have made modest progress in achieving some key benchmarks in curbing the proliferation of weapons.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judicial system has not demonstrated a will to combat organized crime, or the capacity to do so. The Appeal Court, which did not operate for three years, started working again in 2022 and the Special Criminal Court issued its first ever verdict in 2022. However, few provincial tribunals are operating and those that are functioning have very limited staff complements. There are serious levels of corruption in the justice system among magistrates, judges and prison staff, and most of the CAR's prison population is in pre-trial detention. A national strategy for the demilitarization of prisons was approved in 2019 and created with the support of several international actors, but there has not been any recorded change in the prison and justice system.

Like the judiciary, law enforcement agencies do not have the capacity to effectively combat organized crime. Although they are being rebuilt with the support of several foreign partners, corruption remains a significant problem, especially in the customs service, and the security sector reform designed by the UN has stalled.

CAR's borders are extremely porous. Local groups, along with Sudanese, South Sudanese, Chadian and Ugandan criminals, are known to circulate freely at the borders. The only functioning border posts are located between the CAR and Cameroon, but they remain deeply corrupt too. Additionally, while the customs services and gendarmerie are in charge of border control, they have a very limited capacity.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The country has not yet demonstrated a capacity to implement anti-money laundering measures. A special investigation unit for money laundering was created several years ago but has not recorded significant successes, and foreign banks have detected many incidents of money laundering in the country. The porous borders, the significant informal sector and illegal mining make the country prone to money laundering. While the CAR has taken measures to enhance economic capacity, the efforts have been inadequate and the country does not have the capacity to implement the measures.

The CAR is among the poorest performers in the world against numerous measures of economic capacity. In addition, the customs system is unreliable and businesses often bribe officials to gain tax exemptions. The government's attempts to regulate the economic sector are usually short lived and unsuccessful as it has no capacity to implement the appropriate regulations.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

There is little victim and witness support available in the CAR and the little support that is available is provided by international organizations and their local partners in civil society. For instance, since the conflict broke out, many international NGOs have set up trauma centres and counselling services in conflict areas, including the capital city. Although the government has made some effort to identify trafficking victims, victim services remain inadequate. Similarly, there is no evidence of any policies, strategies or campaigns to help prevent organized crime in the country.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are weak and focused more on conflict-related issues than on organized crime. Some international NGOs focused on good governance, anti-corruption and the protection of wildlife continue to operate in the country. However, corruption, combined with a lack of accountability and transparency, is prevalent among CSOs, which has affected donor confidence. The media environment is corrupt and dangerous. Local and international journalists covering the conflict have been intimidated, detained or killed. The government has often used bribes and intimidation to prevent reporting of corruption scandals. In this respect, the country continues to be a difficult place for media and journalists to operate in and official rapprochement with Russia has resulted in a surge of disinformation. Those who have committed crimes against journalists continue to enjoy total impunity.

