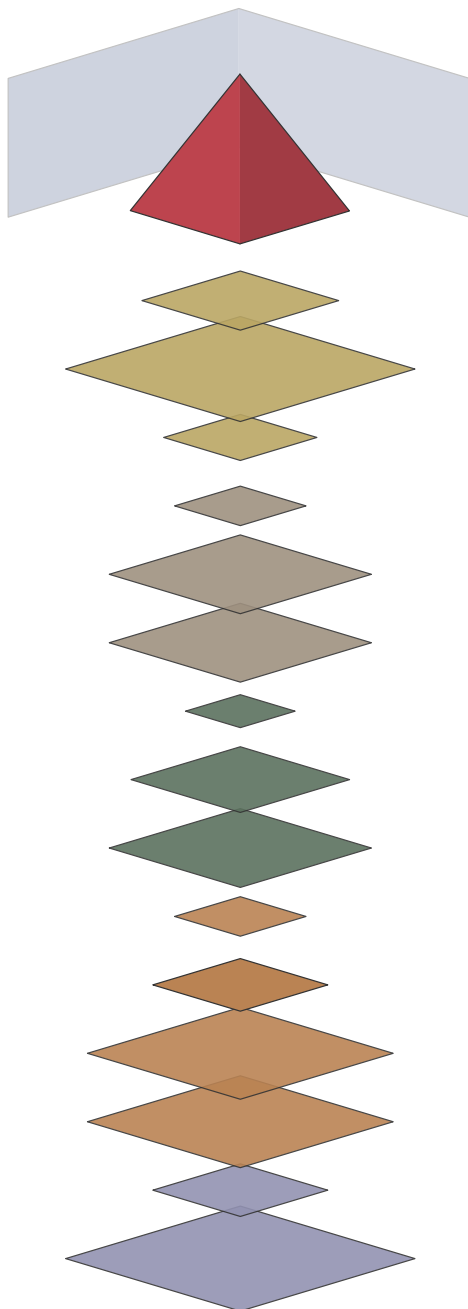




TUNISIA

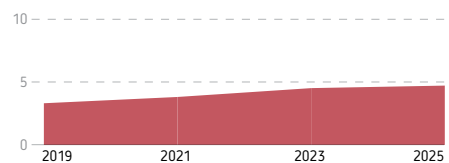


4.68 ± 0.23

CRIMINALITY SCORE

39th of 54 African countries ± 2

5th of 6 North African countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS

5.17 ± 0.17

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	4.50	± 0.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	8.00	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	3.50	± 1.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	3.00	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	6.00	0.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	6.00	± 0.50
FLORA CRIMES	2.50	± 1.00
FAUNA CRIMES	5.00	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	6.00	± 0.50
HEROIN TRADE	3.00	± 0.50
COCAINE TRADE	4.00	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	7.00	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	7.00	± 1.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	4.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	8.00	0.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS

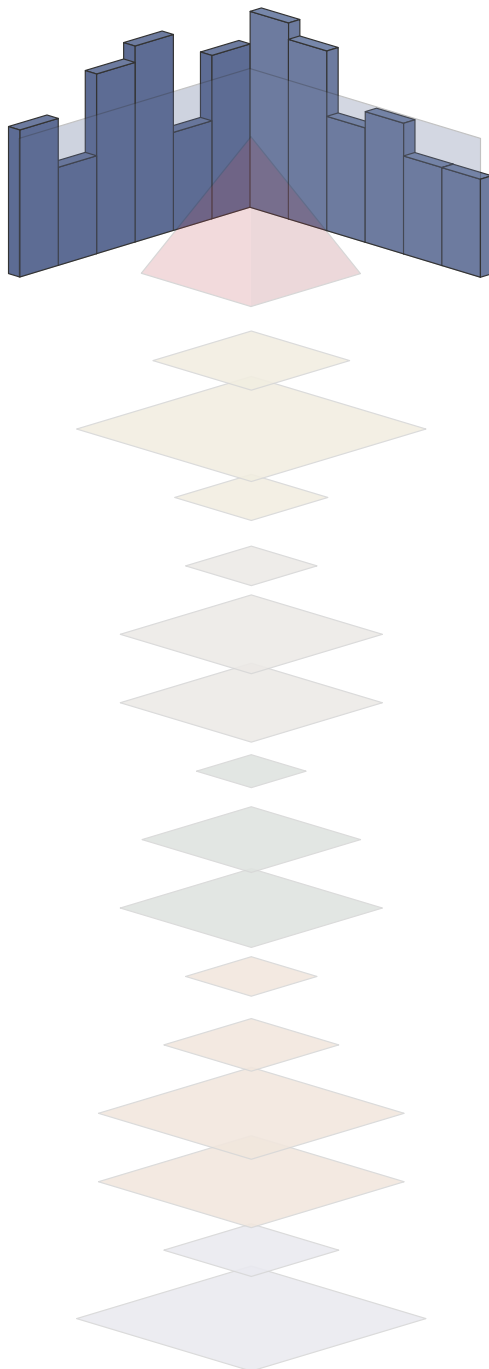
4.20 ± 0.30

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.50	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	4.50	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	6.50	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	4.00	± 1.50
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	4.50	0.00





TUNISIA

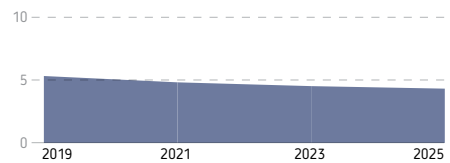


4.33 $\downarrow 0.17$

RESILIENCE SCORE

20th of 54 African countries $\downarrow 1$

2nd of 6 North African countries \downarrow



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	4.50	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	3.00	$\downarrow 1.00$
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	5.50	$\uparrow 0.50$
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.00	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	3.00	$\downarrow 0.50$
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.00	$\uparrow 0.50$
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	6.00	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50	0.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	3.50	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	4.00	$\downarrow 0.50$
PREVENTION	3.00	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	3.00	$\downarrow 1.00$



CRIMINALITY

Criminal markets

PEOPLE

Human trafficking in Tunisia remains limited in scale but persistent, with small, decentralized networks often involving a single intermediary. Tunisia functions as both a source and destination country, particularly affecting sub-Saharan migrants, especially women, who are subjected to forced labour and sexual exploitation. Trafficking is concentrated in urban hubs like greater Tunis, Sfax and Sousse. The use of debt bondage through deceptive recruitment continues. Meanwhile, there has been an increase in migrant kidnappings for ransom since late 2023 – with some victims subsequently ensnared in exploitative trafficking situations. Children forced into begging constitute a notable share of Tunisian victims. Despite legal frameworks addressing human trafficking, forced expulsions into Libya and state complicity contribute to continued exploitation and undermine protective mechanisms.

Tunisia has evolved into a key transit hub for human smuggling, becoming one of North Africa's primary departure points for irregular migration to Europe. Smuggling networks operate along the coastline – particularly in Sfax – and at land borders, exploiting growing sub-Saharan migrant flows and using cheap, often unsafe boats. Enforcement measures and international collaboration contributed to a slowdown in 2024, though departures remained high. While self-smuggling has reportedly declined, some migrants continue to organize their own journeys as networks adapt to crackdowns. Entries via the Algerian and Libyan borders persist, although at a slower pace compared to the previous year. Despite intensified controls and external funding for border management, migration pressures driven by economic and political instability continue to sustain smuggling operations.

Although historically limited to small-scale cases, such as informal parking fees, extortion and protection racketeering in Tunisia have notably expanded, especially in connection with migration. Recent reports point to a rise in kidnappings and extortion targeting migrants and their families. They are coerced for money or valuables – both by fellow migrants and by Tunisian nationals – often under threat of violence or abandonment in the desert. These developments include not only local incidents but also instances of complicity or collaboration with extortion networks operating in Libya and Algeria.

TRADE

Arms trafficking has long occurred across Tunisia's borders, often linked to regional conflicts and domestic extremist groups. However, compared to other illicit cross-border activities, this market remains limited, largely due to low internal demand, which is mainly driven by local hunters. Despite the accessibility of firearms in neighbouring countries and the presence of smuggling routes, there is currently no evidence of increased activity, though a future rise in demand could trigger expansion.

The production, import and transit of counterfeit goods in Tunisia – particularly leather products and footwear – is facilitated by established networks. While some counterfeit items are intended for export or purchased by tourists, a large share supplies the domestic market, where prolonged economic hardship has heightened demand for low-cost alternatives. These goods are widely available through both informal vendors and retail outlets. Their widespread circulation raises concerns over negative impacts on public health, environmental standards and the formal economic sector.

Tunisia serves as both a target and transit point for illicitly traded excisable goods, particularly cigarettes and alcohol, and increasingly e-cigarettes. Domestic demand is driven by high prices and monopolistic regulations. While small-scale smuggling networks operate widely across Tunisia's borders, the excisable goods trade is more centralized and lucrative, often involving coordinated criminal networks with potential ties to customs officials. These networks are transnational, leveraging cross-border routes and specialized knowledge of customs procedures. Though the goods are typically imported, local actors – including youth and former security personnel – benefit from the trade, which impacts formal markets and is linked to widespread domestic money laundering.

ENVIRONMENT

Although flora-related crimes – particularly illegal logging – surged in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, their scope now appears considerably more constrained. This activity, largely driven by domestic demand for charcoal, is not strongly linked to transnational networks. The primary hotspot is the Ain Draham region, where endangered Algerian oak trees have been felled. Although the market is relatively small, it contributes to deforestation, wildfires and ecological decline. Tunisia has seen a marked rise in fauna-related crimes, including the illegal trade of birds (such as goldfinches and houbara bustards), deer hunting and unauthorized fishing. While bird trafficking is linked to international demand, particularly in Gulf countries,



other activities remain largely localized. The environmental impact varies by activity but is often significant, with concerns raised about species at risk of extinction. Reports suggest past instances of tacit state tolerance, though current enforcement trends are unclear. Additionally, illegal kiss trawling and bottom trawling practices continue to deplete fish stocks and undermine the livelihoods of coastal fishing communities.

Fuel smuggling into Tunisia from Algeria and Libya remains significant, driven by cross-border price disparities. Although levels peaked after 2011, the activity continues at scale, involving both small-scale transport and larger operations using modified vehicles. Smuggled fuel is sold informally or to bulk consumers and has at times represented a large share of national consumption. Authorities have largely tolerated the trade due to its economic role in providing employment and affordable fuel. These dynamics have also influenced subsidy discussions in Libya. Additionally, limited smuggling of copper and other minerals from Algeria, along with some domestic theft, has been reported.

DRUGS

The heroin market in Tunisia remains relatively limited, with smuggling largely serving domestic consumption. Despite its small scale, recent law enforcement actions have uncovered networks using air travel to traffic heroin into the country. Several operations in recent years have led to the dismantling of these groups, including arrests linked to smuggling routes from Türkiye.

The cocaine trade is present in Tunisia, operating both as a transit point for regional trafficking networks and as a supplier to a small but persistent domestic market. Seizures have occurred across the country, though are most frequently reported in greater Tunis and coastal areas. In late 2024, authorities dismantled a trafficking network in Tunis, seizing considerable quantities of cocaine. Nationwide enforcement efforts have also increased, leading to several arrests. These developments reflect heightened law enforcement attention, particularly as the domestic market continues to show signs of activity.

Cannabis is the most widely used narcotic substance in Tunisia, with a large, consumer-driven domestic market and high usage rates, especially in the capital. Traffickers have increasingly targeted schools, prompting frequent law enforcement operations around educational institutions. While there were earlier signs of reform, recent years have seen a return to punitive enforcement strategies. Although media reports suggest an expanding cannabis trade, comprehensive data remains limited. In addition to domestic use, Tunisia also serves as a transit point within broader North African cannabis trafficking routes toward Europe. Seizures and arrests linked to cannabis occur regularly.

Tunisia has a sizable domestic market – that continues to expand – for synthetic drugs such as ecstasy, pregabalin and subutex, with ecstasy notably accessible among adolescents. These substances enter the market primarily through smuggling and to a lesser extent through diversion from legal pharmaceutical supplies. While some limited outward trafficking exists, the trade is largely driven by internal demand. The environmental and public health impacts are concerning due to the addictive nature and widespread misuse of these drugs.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crimes are present in Tunisia, with documented cases involving ransomware and the use of malicious software to compromise systems and access sensitive personal data. However, there is no current indication of a significant rise in overall cybercrime activity.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes in Tunisia, particularly tax evasion, significantly impact the economy and the state's ability to fund itself. Despite having a relatively high tax-to-GDP ratio compared to its neighbours, tax avoidance by high-net-worth individuals results in an uneven distribution of the tax burden, limiting the state's revenue and budget capacity. Although some activities are carried out by smaller actors, the enforcement environment presents risks that larger-scale operations may also engage in these practices. Additionally, there is a notable illegal currency exchange market, particularly in border regions and central parts of the country. In 2024, Tunisia also experienced a rise in fraudulent activities, ranging from phishing scams to insurance frauds.

Criminal actors

While there have been some indications of criminal groups operating like mafia-style organizations in Tunisia in recent years, particularly linked to broader political networks, these claims lack sufficient evidence. However, there have been substantiated reports of local criminal networks collaborating with foreign mafias, including the Italian waste mafia and groups involved in human trafficking in Libya.

Criminal networks in Tunisia operate across a range of illicit markets, including drug trafficking, human trafficking and illegal logging. These networks tend to be relatively small-scale, often functioning through intermediaries, though some activities, like counterfeit goods trading and gasoline smuggling, involve more specialized and larger networks. Other crimes, such as extortion and kidnapping, typically involve smaller operations. Many of these criminal groups are known to cooperate with local law enforcement and state structures. Notably, some groups involved in human smuggling have diversified into other illicit markets, including



the clandestine transport of migrants within Tunisia and – to a lesser extent – kidnapping for ransom. In 2024, the influence of criminal networks has slightly declined, largely due to successful law enforcement operations that led to the dismantling of several groups, particularly those involved in human smuggling.

Many criminal organizations in Tunisia operate with the tolerance or limited engagement of state actors, often due to corruption, a desire to maintain local peace, or an understanding of the role illegal economies play in local livelihoods. Corruption, particularly among security services and front-line bureaucrats, is widespread across various markets. Additionally, there are instances of more explicit criminal activity by state-embedded actors, although this tends to be on a smaller scale.

A variety of illegal activities in Tunisia have cross-border aspects, including human smuggling, trafficking and the trade in illicit commodities such as gasoline and cigarettes. Criminal networks in Tunisia often maintain connections

with international actors. In border communities, these connections may be rooted in kinship. There are indications of links to diaspora groups, and collaborations with criminal networks in Libya and Europe, particularly Italy, are present. However, these ties are primarily the result of the nature of the criminal activity and are more indicative of international networking by Tunisian groups rather than a substantial foreign criminal presence within Tunisia itself. A notable exception lies in the growing involvement of sub-Saharan actors in human smuggling and kidnapping for ransom, activities in which they assume decisive roles.

Various private sector actors in Tunisia are involved in or benefit from illegal activities, particularly in the realms of cross-border trade and organized crime. These actors contribute to the smuggling of goods, including the leasing of vehicles for criminal purposes, and actively participate in activities like sports betting and human trafficking facilitated by fake recruitment agencies. Private-sector actors are also playing a prominent role in money laundering activities.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Tunisia's political leadership has shifted toward an authoritarian-populist model, characterized by increased centralization around the presidency and the marginalization of the parliament and political parties. This dynamic has undermined the state's ability to build inclusive governance coalitions and engage effectively against organized crime. Measures of political rights, civil liberties and governance effectiveness reflect a consistent decline, pointing to a weakened institutional framework, which complicates sustainable resilience against organized crime. Nonetheless, the current leadership continues to frame the fight against organized crime – especially human smuggling and trafficking – as a national priority. Since late 2023, this has led to an intensified counter-smuggling campaign, targeting activities along Tunisia's land and maritime borders. The campaign has reduced irregular entries through land routes and reduced maritime departures to Europe. While these results suggest operational successes, concerns remain about the selective and politically charged nature of enforcement efforts, particularly their impact on migrants and civil society.

The Tunisian government has repeatedly emphasized the projects of combatting corruption and increasing transparency, but actions such as dissolving key oversight institutions such as the Supreme Judicial Council and anti-corruption bodies signal political interference and the

decline of institutional checks and balances. The role of human rights organizations has been curtailed, restricting oversight. Despite some digitalization efforts, key financial documents remain inaccessible. The political climate has led to a weakened democratic structure, raising concerns over the future of accountability and the rule of law, which are fundamental to any durable responses to organized crime.

Tunisia's approach to international cooperation in combating organized crime is complex, with mixed compliance to international standards. Extradition agreements with neighbouring countries have resulted in notable extraditions, and efforts to seize embezzled funds abroad have been made. However, Tunisia's resistance to what it perceives as 'external dictates' on financial and economic matters has complicated its relationships with international partners. Despite these tensions, cooperation with European countries, especially Italy, in areas like human smuggling remains strong. Tunisia also seeks greater cooperation from European countries and Turkey in extraditing individuals accused of corruption and recovering assets, although implementation of related conventions and alignment with local laws remain incomplete.

Tunisia's national legal framework against organized crime offers comprehensive coverage, criminalising acts of organized crime and ensuring the investigation, arrest, prosecution and punishment of offenders. The laws address various



types of organized crimes including smuggling, money laundering, market monopolization, human trafficking and cybercrimes. However, persistent challenges such as limited resources, insufficient training for judges, slow judicial procedures and politicization – evident in the use of the anti-cybercrime bill to suppress dissent – undermine the implementation of these laws.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Tunisia has specialized judicial units focusing on specific organized crime types, such as terrorism and financial crimes, with the Financial Judicial Pole leading these efforts. The National Guard and Internal Security Forces also have dedicated units for combatting organized crime, but these have struggled to counter its transnational aspects. Despite some successes in prosecuting and dismantling criminal networks, challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, political interference and the complex and adaptive nature of organized crime networks persist. Corruption within the judiciary and security forces undermines effectiveness, with some offenders evading punishment due to inadequate investigations or procedural issues. The prison system, largely controlled by the state, is undermined by corruption, overcrowding and failures to contain criminal activities, which hinder rehabilitation efforts.

In Tunisia, law enforcement units targeting organized crime face increasing politicization, limiting their effectiveness, particularly in cases involving influential state connections. Resources for these stem from both state and international cooperation, with recent years seeing increased funding and equipment for cross-border crime efforts. However, the effectiveness of Tunisia's intelligence agencies in preventing and responding to organized crime is difficult to assess. Law enforcement shares intelligence internationally and participates in mechanisms like Interpol and regional border management offices. The country has made progress in countering human smuggling, especially along its border with Libya, and maritime smuggling has slowed due to heightened law enforcement presence. In 2024, thousands of drug traffickers were arrested, marking a significant increase from the previous year. Authorities seized large quantities of drugs, including psychotropic pills and cannabis, and increased patrols near schools to combat drug trafficking.

Tunisia faces significant challenges in securing its borders, particularly in the southern regions bordering Libya and western areas near Algeria, where the terrain is rugged and vast. Criminal networks operate in these areas, providing livelihoods for local communities and maintaining social stability despite considerable smuggling activities. The country's proximity to Libya, a region marked by conflict and criminal activity, and to Algeria, where terrorist groups find refuge, exacerbates vulnerabilities to criminal flows. Tunisia's border control infrastructure is inadequate, with gaps in personnel and instances of corruption among officials.

While infrastructure improvements have been made, they are unlikely to fully address the challenges of controlling the border. However, there is no evidence of organized crime controlling major trade or transport infrastructure, suggesting that state authority remains generally intact.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Tunisia has implemented several anti-money laundering measures, including establishing a public committee for financial analysis in banks and financial institutions and revising relevant laws. Despite these efforts, the results have been deemed insufficient. Financial investigations related to organized crime, supported by intelligence and security initiatives, have been conducted, but often lack follow-through or judicial outcomes. Some experts highlight the growing politicization of money-laundering charges in political trials, and although official discourse points to increased efforts to tackle money laundering, no significant positive impact has been observed so far.

Tunisia has been facing a prolonged economic crisis for over a decade. A key consequence of this crisis is a rising cost of living and a sharp decline in purchasing power, which has significantly reduced local consumption. Although inflation has dropped, formal employment growth remains slow, and many Tunisians have turned to the expanding informal economy. Tunisia has a generally constrained economic environment, with persistent economic instability and rising debt. Despite a lack of major organized-crime involvement in key sectors, politically connected actors maintain near-oligopolies, creating structural barriers for newcomers and reinforcing economic exclusion.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In Tunisia, the state's focus on organized crime victim treatment and care is limited, with little progress in protecting victims' rights during criminal trials and insufficient victim support, especially for irregular migrants vulnerable to human trafficking or kidnapping for ransom. There has been no significant advancement in measures for victim care or witness protection, as there are no laws safeguarding whistleblowers or witnesses against criminal groups. Furthermore, although civil society plays a crucial role in supporting victims, their efforts have been increasingly constrained by a shrinking civic space, which has further hindered their activities. Lastly, witness protection programmes have had limited success, and official endorsement of such initiatives remains absent.

Tunisia has adopted national strategies to combat and prevent organized crime, particularly focusing on terrorism, human trafficking and drug trafficking. The country is involved in regional initiatives, working with the African Union, the Arab League and participating in United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime programmes. These regional strategies



target counterterrorism, human trafficking and drug control. Despite some successes, such as in addressing human trafficking, the effectiveness of these strategies has been questioned by civil society organizations. Difficulties persist, particularly in tackling the socio-economic factors that fuel organized crime. The strategies in place are seen as limited and vague, especially after the closure of human rights institutions such as the national anticorruption body – the Instance nationale de la lutte contre la corruption – which was dissolved in 2021. Its legislated successor body has not begun operations. This has led to a sense of resignation within civil society regarding its role in combating corruption, with the state limiting civic activism and its involvement in prevention initiatives.

CSOs and other non-state actors have attempted to play a key role in combatting organized crime in Tunisia, but their influence has significantly declined in recent years.

The state has become increasingly hostile towards NGOs, accusing some of espionage and collaborating with foreign countries, especially those working on migrant protection issues. The role of the media has also been constrained, with unprecedented restrictions leading to the imprisonment of journalists. Many reporters face harassment, and media freedom is suppressed, hampering transparency. Tunisia's environment for non-state actors, including CSOs and the media, has become ever more challenging. After the 2024 presidential elections, civil society and human rights activists faced growing harassment and arrests, including charges against prominent activists. Authorities have frozen CSO bank accounts and imposed tight financial scrutiny, while denying observation rights for key organizations. Tunisia's civil space has thus become increasingly constrained, with mounting risks for those working on organized crime, corruption and human rights.

