CHAD

Chad has a high criminality score, ranking 15th in Africa, which is driven primarily by the pervasive influence of various criminal actors in the country.

Mafia-style groups engage in a number of criminal markets, but predominantly illicit arms trafficking. Arms trafficking has been attributed by experts to have a severely negative and encroaching influence on nearly all parts of Chadian society. It is an illicit market that follows the same routes as refugees from neighbouring countries affected by conflict. There appears to be a significant link between these mafia-style groups and drug trafficking. Moreover, increased consumption of and demand for synthetic drugs are a concern.

Chad is positioned 48th in the resilience rankings, highlighting the country’s ineffectiveness in responding to organised crime. Although there are policies and laws in place, the extent of the criminal markets and actors significantly stymies efforts to build resilience.
Criminal Markets

There are numerous criminal markets prevalent in Chad, the most pervasive of which is the arms trafficking market, scoring 8.5. Chad’s borders with neighbouring countries are extremely porous and have become hotspots of illicit flows and trafficking of all kinds. Arms trafficking occupies a prominent place in the local criminal ecosystem. There are numerous corridors along which small and light weapons are trafficked, including between Chad and Sudan, Libya, Niger and the Central African Republic. The proliferation of armed groups and rebellions in the east and north of the country amplified this trend in 2018. Chad has been affected by the overflow of conflicts from Libya and the neighbouring Darfur region in Sudan, facilitated by border porosity between Chad and these neighbouring countries.

While no official statistics exist, consumption of Tramadol, one of the most prominent synthetic drugs in Africa, is...
known to be a problem in Chad, with consumption levels having exploded in recent years due to its availability and affordable price. Although more than half of the country’s pharmacies were shut down in 2018, some of which were involved in the clandestine sale of Tramadol, evidence suggests that this has had a limited success in slowing down consumption of the drug. Furthermore, there are high levels of cannabis trafficking into Chad, with cannabis being shipped predominantly along the pan-Sahel route. The convoys used to traffic cannabis into the country are often heavily armed, but there has been a slight decline in activity recently due to the conflict in the central Sahel region. Drug trafficking in Chad is known to be a profit-making activity to finance the purchasing of arms. 

Human trafficking has been a permanent reality in Chad, particularly at the borders with Sudan and Libya. Children and migrants originating from neighbouring countries en route to Europe via Libya are regularly trafficked. Labour standards and regulatory capacity in Chad are poor and hence instances of exploitative and bonded labour are common. Forced labour is particularly prominent in the extractive industries, including gold mining and charcoal production (though mainly through ad hoc facilitation, as well as in domestic servitude and the artisanal fishing industry. Sexual exploitation also occurs in Chad, but to a lesser extent.

Criminal Actors

Chad’s criminal actors score is considerably higher than its criminal markets score, which reflects the embeddedness of a number of criminal-actor types in the country. Chad is one of the few countries in Africa in which mafia-style groups exert the greatest influence among the types of criminal actors. Indeed, armed groups and rebels, which are highly prevalent in the north of the country, are taking advantage of the instability in Libya where they have their rear bases. These groups are heavily armed and engage in numerous forms of organised criminal activity, notably drug trafficking, arms trafficking and the trafficking of gold.

Criminal networks are also highly influential in Chad and similarly operate in a wide range of illicit economies. Loose networks are heavily involved in the labour exploitation of individuals in Chad, as well as in the illicit gold trade. In the north and eastern regions of the country, there has been a proliferation of ‘unorganised’ and informal traffickers, bandits and road gangs, all exploiting instability in these areas.

As for criminality emanating from within the state itself, corruption is omnipresent within the state apparatus. The primary offenders are the police and customs officers, who offer protection to traffickers in the country. Furthermore, officers in the country’s wildlife protection bodies are heavily linked to the illicit ivory market in Chad.

Lastly, foreign criminal actors also play a major role in the organised-crime landscape in Chad. The country lies at the epicentre of regional cross-border crime and the playground of criminal economies, such as human trafficking, arms trafficking, wildlife crime and smuggling. Foreign armed groups have strong links to Chad’s domestic criminal groups and they often collaborate in numerous criminal markets.
Chad has one of the lowest levels of resilience to organised crime in Africa, ranking 48th on the continent. The government has made efforts to assert its leadership, but these have been hampered by the resurgence of armed rebellions in the north of the country. Furthermore, government transparency and accountability is very low, and corruption highly pervasive.

Although Chad does have legislation in place to counter organised crime, implementation remains a challenge. Moreover, in some areas of the country, religious traditions and practices provide legitimacy to certain crime markets, namely human trafficking, where young women are often victims of modern slavery. The implementation of the legislation pertaining to organised crime is hampered by the ineffectiveness of the judicial system in Chad. In areas afflicted by rebellion, state presence and the judiciary are extremely weak.

Similarly, law enforcement in Chad is limited to the country’s major cities. Law-enforcement capacity has therefore remained geographically and functionally limited, and is often in conflict with traditional religious laws. Furthermore, corruption within Chad’s law enforcement agencies is rife, in particular among customs and border control, which often facilitate illicit cross-border trade. In Chad, vast areas in the north and corridors on the border with Sudan are partially or entirely beyond the control of the country’s central government, with criminal markets flourishing there as a result.

With regard to the social protection measures included in the Index, such as victim and witness support, and prevention measures, Chad simply does not have the capacity to intervene as necessary to enhance the country’s resilience to organised crime. There are some services offered to victims of organised crime, but these are restricted to the large cities in the country. Nevertheless, the government does appear to have the political will to tackle organised crime, as evidenced by its cooperation with the UNHCR and IMO to support victims of human trafficking.

By and large, the role and capacity of non-state actors in Chad to combat organised crime is geographically limited. A handful of organisations focus their activities on human rights and human trafficking, while a few local NGOs in the south have raised alarms about wildlife crime.

Overall, the main obstacle facing the Chadian government in the fight against organised crime is not necessarily a lack of political will, but rather a lack of capacity. The conflict in the north of the country has significantly reduced state capacity across the board, and there is no capacity to establish institutional and regulatory frameworks to combat organised crime. The situation in Chad, therefore, is a perfect illustration of the need for peace and stability in a country in order for it to tackle organised crime in an effective way.