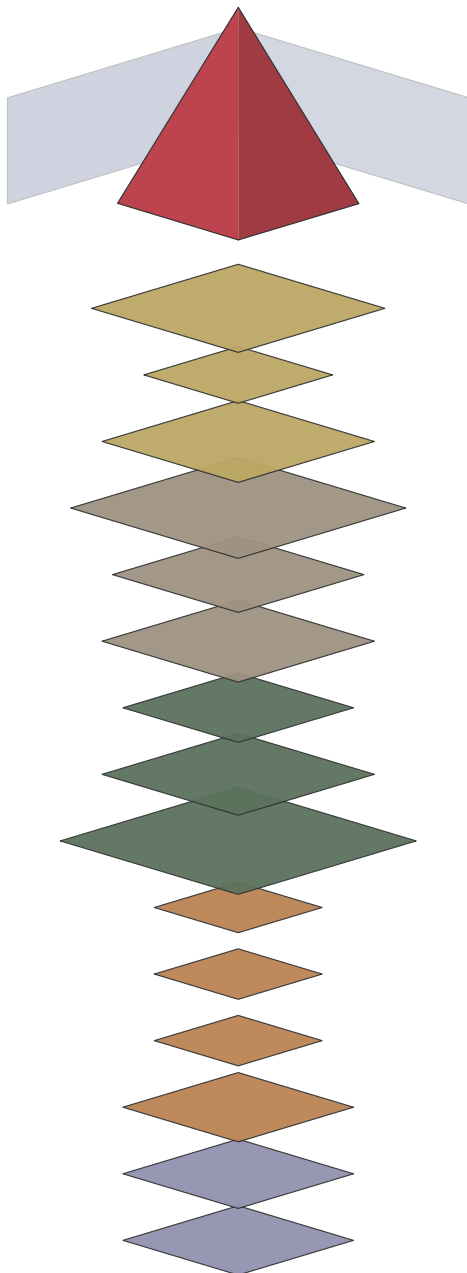
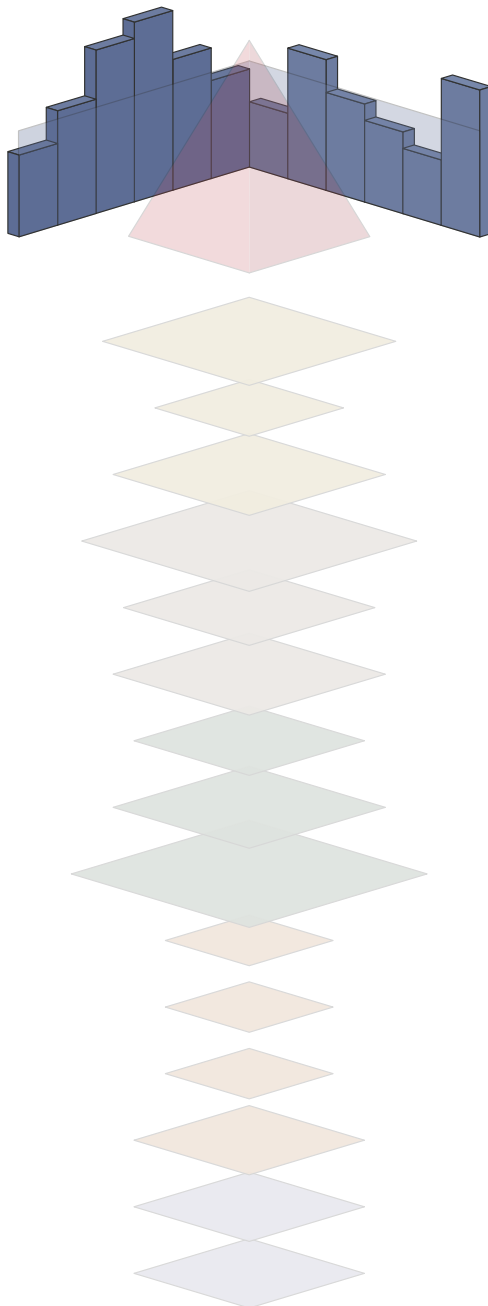


 **BURKINA FASO**



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 **3.46  
RESILIENCE SCORE**

**30<sup>th</sup>** of 54 African countries  
**10<sup>th</sup>** of 15 West African countries

<b>POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</b>	<b>2.5</b>
<b>GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<b>INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS</b>	<b>5.5</b>
<b>JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>LAW ENFORCEMENT</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT</b>	<b>2.5</b>
<b>PREVENTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>NON-STATE ACTORS</b>	<b>4.5</b>

 **5.92  
CRIMINALITY SCORE**

 <b>CRIMINAL MARKETS</b>	<b>5.83</b>
 <b>CRIMINAL ACTORS</b>	<b>6</b>



# CRIMINALITY

## Criminal Markets

### PEOPLE

Burkina Faso serves as a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking, children being the most frequent victims. The mining industry is the primary sector in which children are exploited, with hundreds of thousands engaged in hazardous work in artisanal mines. Child begging has also become more organized, as networks entice children with false promises of educational opportunities and promises from Quranic school teachers. Extremist groups, taking advantage of the country's widespread instability and insecurity, also recruit children to turn them into soldiers. Local officials involved in humanitarian food assistance programs have been accused of exploiting internally displaced women for sex trafficking.

Burkina Faso is also serving as a transit point as well as an origin country for human smuggling. The deteriorating security situation has led many Burkinabe to migrate irregularly to other countries, often relying on smugglers for assistance, while others organize their own travel. The country has faced significant violent extremist threats, two coups d'état and widespread violence perpetrated against civilians, resulting in the forced displacement of more than two million people (10% of the country's population). Protocols within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) allow for the free movement of people within the region, and intra-regional movement by far outstrips movements beyond the ECOWAS region. However, Burkinabe citizens also sometimes continue their route northwards towards Libya, as well as Mediterranean and Middle Eastern routes to Europe.

Extortion and protection racketeering are common practices, particularly in and around gold mines by state and non-state affiliated non-state armed groups. Violent extremist groups strive to gain control over mining sites and charge local operators for access. In addition, violent extremist groups establish checkpoints in the north and eastern regions, demanding zakat (a form of mandatory religious taxation) from specific communities in exchange for protection. The threat of kidnapping remains persistent throughout the country and is especially prevalent in the Sahel and Est regions.

### TRADE

The deteriorating security situation and the number of armed groups (either violent extremist groups or affiliated to the state) in Burkina Faso has made the country a destination for arms trafficking. Despite the enactment of a legal framework regulating the manufacture, trade and use of weapons in 2021, firearms are easily accessible. Self-defence is a major source of demand. The circulation of arms has aggravated the security situation, leading to increased violence and further need for self-protection, increasing the demand for weapons. Burkina Faso is a well-known hub for weapons trafficking, particularly weapons and materials stolen from security services. A wide range of actors, including entrenched criminal networks and various government entities involved in smuggling, contribute to the complexity of the situation. The proliferation of illegal weapons has resulted in heightened violence, weaponising intercommunal tensions in the Liptako Gourma region, which spans Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso is the epicenter of the violence in the Sahel with more than half of the country being outside of the government's control.

Counterfeit goods pose a significant problem, particularly widespread across the southern border region with products being smuggled into the country from coastal countries such as Togo, Benin, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Authorities have conducted operations in collaboration with customs surveillance units and the national police to seize and destroy tons of foodstuff as well as counterfeit medicines. Similar cases involve loincloths and textbooks intended for schools.

Illicit trade in excise goods, including cigarettes, occurs across the country. Various criminal groups, such as violent extremist groups, local militias and bandit groups take advantage of the weak state presence and lack of formal controls to smuggle contraband across borders. The Burkinabe government has tried to combat this by implementing a track and trace system managed by the tobacco industry. However, the system is currently falling short of its intended purpose. Politically influential individuals in Ouagadougou have played a pivotal role in facilitating the export and import of contraband cigarettes produced in Europe, which are then clandestinely shipped to Togo and Benin before reaching Burkina Faso and the wider Sahel (including Mali).



Violent extremist groups are a significant source of demand for smuggled goods, especially in and around the national parks across Burkina Faso's southern borders. The taxation of goods transiting areas under violent extremist group influence – both licit and illicit - is believed to contribute to their financing. Violent extremist group also tap into these illicit supply chains to resource themselves. Particularly important for their operations are illicit supply chains of cars and motorbikes, of which violent extremist groups are one of the major buyers.

## ENVIRONMENT

Armed groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have gained control over previously protected areas, leading to heightened environmental degradation and resource extraction. This includes the illegal sale of wood, charcoal and other materials. Insufficient forest management, corruption and an unclear land tenure (usufruct) regime have led to persistent deforestation. Despite being banned from multiple countries, rosewood continues to be exploited and traded in Burkina Faso. The practice is driven by factors such as the illegal issuing of exploitation permits, bribes to forest guards and officials and false information on customs documentation. The main demand for rosewood stems from Asia, which fuels this illicit market.

Increased control of armed groups over certain regions has also resulted in an increase in poaching activities. Smugglers and violent extremist groups are endangering protected species such as elephants and hippopotamuses in the national parks and reserves of the country. Poaching is motivated by various factors, including poverty, financial gain, ignorance, traditional medicine, revenge and physical aggression caused by encounters with wild animals. Pangolins, desert tortoises and primates are also victims of illegal hunting. There is limited information about the protection and trafficking of endangered animals because of the dangers involved in investigating wildlife crimes and more recently the security situation in the country. Recent seizures have included protected species such as ostriches, turtles, pangolins, leopards and tortoises, as well as ivory. Livestock theft, which is a significant criminal enterprise in northern and central Mali and throughout Burkina Faso, involving bandits, local militias and violent extremist groups, has severely disrupted local communities and their source of livelihood, and has been a common trigger for intercommunal violence.

Burkina Faso, a significant gold producer, faces challenges caused by illegal exploitation, corruption and the involvement of violent extremist groups in the artisanal gold mining sector. Artisanal gold mining sites

are believed to be a significant source of financing for violent extremist groups operating in Burkina Faso, most prominently JNIM. As violent extremist groups and their local affiliates seize control of gold sites, they also permit artisanal mining in previously restricted areas. Violent extremist groups have also directly attacked and targeted mining companies and staff. The prevalence of illegal activities and violent extremist groups attacks has had a detrimental impact on the mining sector with a decline in its attractiveness to investors.

Burkina Faso is also a transit point and destination for smuggled fuel from Nigeria, transiting predominantly through Benin and Togo. This highly organized and lucrative illicit market supports other forms of trafficking. Large trucks transport fuel and cyanide to the country's northern border, where the goods are either smuggled across with the assistance of customs authorities or unloaded just before the border and transported by smugglers using motorbikes or small vehicles.

## DRUGS

Burkina Faso serves as a transit country for the illicit heroin trade, particularly in conjunction with Mali and Niger. Heroin enters the territory primarily through routes that pass through Addis Ababa, Lomé, Cotonou and Lagos. Ouagadougou in particular functions as a hub for illicit drug trafficking, including trans-shipment of heroin to destination markets in Europe and North America, and cocaine trafficking from coastal entry points towards Europe, although significant instability throughout the country has made land routes risky.

Burkina Faso also continues to be both a transit and a source country for cannabis, which is consumed domestically. Crops can be found on farms where maize and millet are grown. The drug is cultivated in regions along the borders with Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo. However, it is not uncommon to find it in cities such as Ouagadougou, the northwestern periphery, Bobo in the Kou Valley and the region of Boromo. Cannabis is also trafficked between Benin, Ghana and Mali.

The synthetic drugs market is the most pervasive drug market in the country, with a steady traffic and abuse of such substances. A non-luxury drug, Tramadol, caters to a large market. In addition, annual seizures of amphetamines are high. Ghana and Nigeria, along with Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo, are the principal sources of amphetamines, Tramadol and other drugs that enter Burkina Faso through border areas in the centre-east, east, centre-south and south-west regions.



## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-attacks are common, with numerous government websites and institutions falling victim to the crime. The financial damage to the state of cyber-dependent crimes has been significant in recent years. Hackers are usually foreigners (cybercriminals from Indonesia, Albania and Sudan have been caught targeting institutional structures). As cryptocurrency trading has become increasingly popular in the country, there has also been an increase in fraud cases involving cryptocurrencies.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in cyber-enabled financial criminal activities in Burkina Faso, resulting in thousands of complaints each year and causing significant financial losses amounting to billions of West African CFA Francs (CFA). Most of the complaints relate to e-commerce fraud, which is often facilitated through social media platforms. Other cases, involving fake job offers, fraudulent procurement contracts and insurance policies targeting both individuals and businesses, have also been reported, with individuals posing as representatives of legitimate businesses, mining companies or humanitarian NGOs.

## Criminal Actors

Criminal networks involved in a wide range of criminal markets, including drug trafficking, wildlife and flora crimes, arms and human trafficking, operate within Burkina Faso or use it as a transit point. The deteriorating security situation, lack of government will and enforcement, as well as a hostile environment for journalists and human rights defenders means there is limited reporting on these networks. The country has experienced the highest incidence of violent extremism within the ECOWAS, resulting in over ten thousands fatalities and millions of people displaced in recent years.

Research indicates that corruption and embezzlement involve many state actors. It is believed that security forces and government elites facilitate directly the illicit flow of narcotics and other contraband, including fuel and cigarettes. Reports have also implicated private sector

actors in the informal economy and in smuggling activities within Burkina Faso. Influential businessmen, enjoying close connections with high-level politicians, have been linked to tobacco smuggling. Furthermore, small-scale private actors, including vendors, are involved in the smuggling of cyanide, which has become a pressing concern due to the rapid expansion of artisanal and small-scale gold mining in the country. Weakly implemented financial regulations leave financial institutions, real estate companies, transportation services, casinos and non-profit organizations vulnerable to be used as mechanisms for money laundering, and potentially in financing violent extremist activities. JNIM is known to tap into formal and informal financial systems in areas under its influence.

Given Burkina Faso's role as a transit country for illegal commodities, foreign actors play a part in the country's criminal environment. Drug networks, for instance, have links to Latin America. Smugglers from Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo supply traffickers in Burkina Faso, using well-established corridors for transportation.

Violent extremist groups, affiliated with the Islamic State or Al-Qaida, operate across vast swathes of the country. Some of these groups exhibit characteristics similar to those of mafia organizations, such as a recognized name, a defined leadership structure, territorial influence and identifiable members. Violent extremist groups tax all flows – both licit and illicit – through territories under their influence, and further extract finances through extortion and protection rackets. Violent extremist groups are directly involved in artisanal gold mining, kidnap for ransom and cattle rustling which represent important sources of financing. They are also actors in the vehicle theft market. Illicit supply chains are central to resourcing violent extremist groups, with fuel, cars and motorbikes particularly key commodities. Illicit economies constitute important elements of the governance strategies of violent extremist groups, particularly JNIM, helping them build legitimacy in the eyes of local communities. These concerns sometimes trump financial motivations in dictating how JNIM engages with illicit economies – for example, in a significant proportion of kidnappings ransoms are not requested, with the kidnapping driven instead by the desire to intimidate or gather intelligence.



# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

After the 2020 elections the re-elected government faced allegations of fraud and irregularities from the opposition, intensifying public anger and mistrust. The situation was aggravated by armed attacks within the country and an expansion of areas under the control of armed groups. In 2022, a military coup d'état led to the establishment of a transitional government, itself overturned in a second military coup in September of that year. The transitional authorities have prioritized counterterrorism and counter corruption efforts, the restoration of territorial integrity, national sovereignty and the diversification of military cooperation with other nations.

Despite ongoing efforts to combat systemic corruption the existing state structures continue to struggle to provide essential public services, and the lack of capacity and entrenched elites have hindered meaningful reforms. While financial disclosures by government officials are mandatory, they are rarely made public and penalties for non-compliance are not enforced. The municipal police force is considered the most corrupt public service in the country.

Burkina Faso has ratified relevant international treaties on organized crime and maintains close cooperation with international organizations and foreign governments to combat both crime and terrorism. The country has cooperation agreements in place to address issues such as child smuggling and trafficking. Since the second coup d'état Burkina Faso has experience increasing isolation on the international scene, and has revoked some of its bilateral and multilateral military cooperation agreements, including with France. There are ongoing concerns regarding the country's perceived increasing closeness to Russia. Burkina Faso has nevertheless established more robust legal frameworks than those in many other African nations to combat organized crime. They include laws addressing human trafficking, corruption, money laundering and terrorism. Recently, there have been significant regulatory initiatives to address the issues of arms trafficking and cybercrimes. However, corruption and insecurity have hindered their implementation and enforcement.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judicial system evolves continuously, with the assistance of international donors, to confront the growing threat of violent extremism. However, impunity for members of the security services (including the Volunteer for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP) forces, whose activities are particularly mired by allegations of human rights abuses) remains rampant and there is a need for more effective structures to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cases. Reports of extrajudicial killings by state forces and the VDP are widespread, most of which end up not being investigated and prosecuted. The fight against violent extremism consumes most of the judiciary's time and capacity, leaving less time to prosecute other criminal offences. Prosecution processes are often protracted, resulting in many alleged perpetrators spending years in prison awaiting trial. This situation gives rise to due process issues, leading to inefficiency and corruption. Children are reported to have been detained for alleged ties with extremist groups, despite being victims of trafficking or having been forcibly recruited as child soldiers.

Burkina Faso's law enforcement bodies lack the means to enforce laws governing organized crime and specific criminal markets effectively. While the threat of violent extremism has prompted international and national investment to strengthen policing and investigative capacities, the focus is primarily on countering violent extremism. The country has only one specialized law enforcement unit – an anti-drugs unit – and a High Authority for the Control of the Importation of Arms and their Use, which has not been active since its creation. There is also a lack of awareness among victims about rights and protection, leading to their reluctance to press charges. The military forces are inadequately trained and poorly equipped, significant challenges in facing the violent extremist groups operating across growing geographies of the country.

Burkina Faso shares a border with six other nations, many of which have serious security and insurgency issues, making border control challenging. The fact that large portions of Burkinabe territory remain outside the government's control has a significant impact on all aspects of life in the country, including crime prevention, which is hindered by limited access to certain parts of the territory. A number of illicit economies – including the trafficking of medical products – are believed to have expanded during this period of increased instability, in



part due to understandable de-prioritization by state forces. Almost half of the country's territory falls outside of government's control. The overall insecurity and lack of territorial control also have a significant impact on the economy, with security concerns leading to companies opting to leave areas in the north and the east.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Burkina Faso has implemented basic anti-money laundering laws and structures, but enforcement remains a challenge due to the weak capacity of the financial intelligence unit and the prevalence of a large informal economy. Despite some progress, funds laundered by the previous regime continue to circulate and the government has been unresponsive to requests for asset recovery. The country continues to face a significant risk of money laundering, particularly in the mining and insurance sectors. It has been placed under surveillance by international organizations and included in the 'grey list' of countries considered to have 'strategic deficiencies' but a commitment to improving their situation. While there have been efforts to combat money laundering there are still significant threats from criminal activities and insecurity. The government has introduced reforms to support business start-ups, but corruption within the business environment, alongside the deteriorated security situation, hinders formal employment opportunities, leading to a majority of young people engaging in the informal sector.

Burkina Faso grapples with high levels of poverty and alarming social development indicators. The decentralization of anti-poverty measures has shifted responsibility to local institutions and organizations, which often rely on foreign donors to help them to implement the measures. The artisanal mining sector, operates as an important economic safety net for many communities with few alternatives. However, limited (or no) regulation of the sector leaves it vulnerable to violations of worker rights, tax evasion and environmentally damaging practices. Moreover, the economic capacity of the country continues to be hindered by the ongoing insecurities in Burkina Faso, adversely affecting everyday businesses and the lives of citizens. There is also a growing informal market occupying a large part of the private sector in Burkina Faso exacerbated through the participation of violent extremist groups and organized crime groups.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Burkina Faso does not have a formal witness protection programme but has made significant strides in addressing human trafficking. The government has increased efforts to identify trafficking victims, established a 24-hour shelter in Ouagadougou and has provided food, clothing, healthcare and legal assistance in collaboration with NGOs and international organizations. However, long-term care for all victims remains inadequate due to insufficient funding and resources, which increases the risk of victims being re-trafficked.

The government has also not increased overall efforts to combat trafficking and has not prosecuted or convicted any traffickers, despite identifying potential victims. There are insufficient shelters for victims, especially adults, outside of Ouagadougou and funding constraints mean that the existing ones provide only short-term services. While there are legal provisions that encourage victim participation in trials and ensure their protection under anti-trafficking laws most victims are unaware of these protections and rarely receive them.

Efforts to prevent organized crime include initiatives such as training law enforcement officials and improved management of porous borders. In 2021, the government created a case management guide and consulted Quranic teachers about combating the practice of forcing children to beg. A dedicated telephone number has been created for reports of drug trafficking and the government has organized some awareness-raising programmes to prevent illicit drug consumption.

Burkina Faso's civil society is robust, with various organizations and associations advocating for causes ranging from literacy to women's rights, but under significant threat. Since the beginning of the military transition government, civil liberties have shrunk and human rights organizations face threats, harassment and abuse by the authorities. The Constitution guarantees freedom of assembly and the right to strike, but the government has used legal means to suppress union activity and a state of emergency has been extended to many provinces, restricting freedom of assembly. Journalists face increasing risks, with many elements of international and national media banned, and all restricted in what they can cover.

