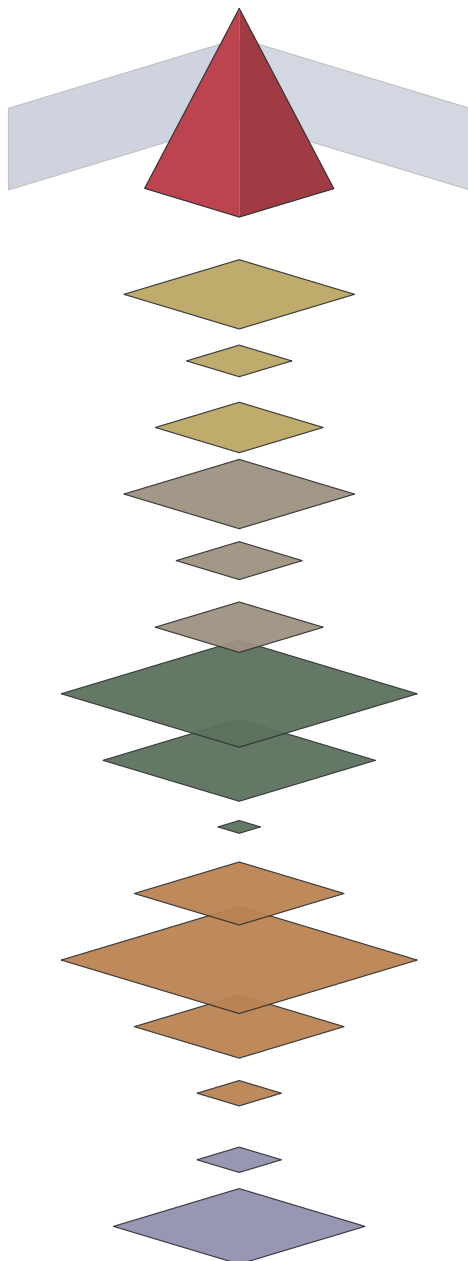


 **GUINEA-BISSAU**



 **5.1  
CRIMINALITY SCORE**

**28<sup>th</sup>** of 54 African countries  
**11<sup>th</sup>** of 15 West African countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS 4.6**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.5
HUMAN SMUGGLING	2.5
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	4
ARMS TRAFFICKING	5.5
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	3
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	4
FLORA CRIMES	8.5
FAUNA CRIMES	6.5
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	1
HEROIN TRADE	5
COCAINE TRADE	8.5
CANNABIS TRADE	5
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	2
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	2
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6

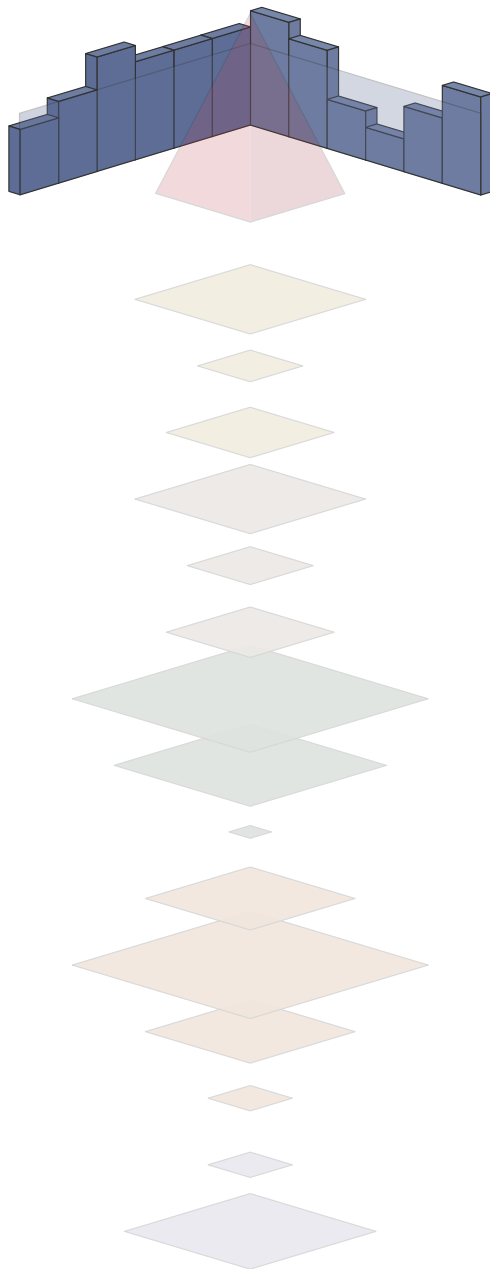
 **CRIMINAL ACTORS 5.6**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	8
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	8.5
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.5
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	6.5

 **2.58  
RESILIENCE SCORE**



 **GUINEA-BISSAU**





 **2.58  
RESILIENCE SCORE**

**43<sup>rd</sup>** of 54 African countries  
**14<sup>th</sup>** of 15 West African countries

<u>POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</u>	<b>2</b>
<u>GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY</u>	<b>2.5</b>
<u>INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION</u>	<b>3.5</b>
<u>NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS</u>	<b>3</b>
<u>JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION</u>	<b>3</b>
<u>LAW ENFORCEMENT</u>	<b>3</b>
<u>TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY</u>	<b>3.5</b>
<u>ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING</u>	<b>3</b>
<u>ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY</u>	<b>1.5</b>
<u>VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT</u>	<b>1</b>
<u>PREVENTION</u>	<b>2</b>
<u>NON-STATE ACTORS</u>	<b>3</b>

 **5.1  
CRIMINALITY SCORE**

 <u>CRIMINAL MARKETS</u>	<b>4.6</b>
 <u>CRIMINAL ACTORS</u>	<b>5.6</b>



# CRIMINALITY

## Criminal Markets

### PEOPLE

Human trafficking, specifically labour and child exploitation, is prevalent in Guinea-Bissau. Talibé children from Quranic schools are coerced into begging, street vending, and exploited in agriculture and mining sectors, locally and in Senegal. They are also trafficked from neighbouring countries, often with their parents' consent, under the guise of providing education. The illicit proceeds from these activities contribute to sectors such as trade and transport, fostering impunity. Complicity from civil society organizations and government officials is evident in child sex tourism. Girls from the islands are exploited in hotels, discouraging victims from reporting due to the perpetrators' influence in job provision and support.

Individuals contracting the services of human smuggling networks are primarily young adults seeking a better future abroad. While Guinea-Bissau is part of the Economic Community of West African States zone, allowing freedom of movement within the region, there is evidence of some reliance on low-level smugglers to guide people out of the regions of Gabu, Oio, and Bafatá. Reports have indicated that Bissau-Guinean nationals have travelled north along these routes to Libya, often losing their lives while crossing the desert on the Central Mediterranean Route. However, it remains unclear whether they directly paid for these journeys from Guinea-Bissau and how well-connected the smugglers in Guinea-Bissau are within the trans-Saharan trade. The deteriorated living conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the attempted 2022 coup are expected to increase the movement of people in West Africa, including internal displacement and cross-border migration. The fragility of Guinean-Bissau institutions, poor law enforcement, and the country's susceptibility to corruption also makes it vulnerable to extortion and protection racketeering, with a number of local criminal networks carrying out such illicit activities.

### TRADE

Guinea-Bissau experiences a moderate volume of trafficking of weapons, both incoming and outgoing. The country serves as an origin and transit point for illicit financial flows generated by arms trafficking in Africa. These financial revenues benefit violent extremist groups in the Sahel region, as well as in Western countries.

Armed groups in Senegal, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Republic of Guinea have engaged in the buying and selling of light weapons as conflict has shifted from one area to another. In the aftermath of the civil war which ended in 1999, the absence of a comprehensive civilian disarmament process contributed to the country's vulnerability to future instability. Small and light weapons are believed to be concentrated in the capital and border areas, mostly in the Casamance region with Senegal, where smugglers and officials have sold parts of these arms to rebels. Weapons also circulate along the border with Guinea-Conakry, and firearms are illicitly traded in exchange for other goods.

In Guinea-Bissau, there is illicit trade in counterfeit accessories, including jewellery. However, the main counterfeit products available countrywide are illicit pharmaceutical products, which are considered a healthcare hazard. While Guinea-Bissau imposes excise duty on certain products, such as tobacco, the weak judicial system in the country makes it easy for illicit trade of excise goods to occur. Tobacco smuggling is prevalent and exacerbated by the absence of a national tobacco control body.

### ENVIRONMENT

Illegal timber logging remains a pervasive issue in Guinea-Bissau, driven by organized criminal groups and involving high-level political and military officials. The country has witnessed significant deforestation, primarily because of the surge in rosewood logging to meet the demand from Asia. During the two-year military regime brought to power by the 2012 coup, illegal logging surged, leading to the brutalization and corruption of community leaders who opposed the destruction of forests. While the return to democracy in 2014 saw a decrease in the illicit logging trade, and the imposition of a moratorium on timber exports, the practice continued. Questionable concessions granted to Asian companies have escalated illicit logging practices. Notably, timber exports to China, the largest importer of illegal rosewood globally, have been substantial, resulting in a marked decrease in tree cover over the past decade. Guinea-Bissau's overreliance on timber has hindered economic diversification, and the dearth of recent forest inventory poses challenges for forestry technicians and environmentalists. The government's decision to end the forest moratorium in 2022, without explanation, raises concerns about the future of forest conservation efforts in the country.



The presence of illegal fishing vessels, corruption, and poor state administration contribute to challenges in the country's fishing sector. Fisheries in Guinea-Bissau involve legal and illegal fleets, with inadequate documentation of catches. Overlapping catches between the industrial and small-scale fishing sectors further complicate the issue. Weak border controls and bilateral agreements, particularly with China and Senegal, enable trawling in the Bijagós archipelago without consequences. The island of Caravela has also been invaded by foreign fishermen engaged in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing practices that harm the ecosystem. Fishermen from Senegal, Guinea-Conakry, Mali, and Sierra Leone have established themselves on the island, conducting selective fishing and exporting smoked fish to markets in the sub-region. Most of the fish are transported to the port of Dakar in Senegal. The trafficking of marine wildlife is a serious concern, and terrestrial wildlife, including chimpanzees, face threats from poaching for bushmeat, traditional medicine, and the illegal pet trade. The illicit non-renewables resource market appears to be non-existent or negligible in Guinea-Bissau.

## DRUGS

While heroin smuggling occurs in Guinea-Bissau, it is limited. By contrast, the country is a major trans-shipment point in international cocaine trafficking routes, and a significant entry point for cocaine transiting West Africa. The country plays a crucial role in connecting South American cocaine producers with consumer markets in Europe. Since 2016, Brazil has become an increasingly important export point for cocaine reaching West Africa, including Guinea-Bissau, leveraging both sea and air routes. The majority of cocaine enters Guinea-Bissau through maritime routes, taking advantage of the country's extremely porous coastline, although smaller volumes enter by air. The majority is then exported towards Europe. The cocaine trade has long enjoyed a high degree of state corruption, with elements within the military, political and criminal justice infrastructure implicated in protecting the trade. The 2022 Supreme Court acquittal of two notorious and previously convicted cocaine traffickers further heightened concerns of criminal capture of the judicial system. Cocaine is widely believed to contribute to electoral financing in Guinea-Bissau.

In Guinea-Bissau, cannabis remains the most-commonly-used drug among youth. The country serves as a transit point for cannabis produced in neighboring countries, destined for European markets. There is also local production of cannabis in small quantities along the Guinean-Bissau border with Senegal. There are some reports of synthetic drug trafficking and consumption,

including of methamphetamines. However, the scale is currently unknown. A recent study conducted on injectable drugs reveals that methamphetamine are emerging as the most frequently used drug in some parts of the country, ranging from 36% of participants in Bissau to 74% in Gabú.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Despite the low level of internet access and limited knowledge of the cyber world among the population, Guinea-Bissau has experienced a few cases of cyber-dependent crimes in recent years. As internet dependence grows in West Africa, it poses a potential threat to the country's democracy, with such incidents raising concerns about the integrity of the electoral system.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Even though financial crimes are prevalent in the country, embezzlement and corruption in Guinea-Bissau receive minimal coverage in the media. The prevalence of financial crimes in Guinea-Bissau is exacerbated by a sizable informal cash-based economy, inadequate monitoring and control at borders and islands, and under-resourced authorities.

## Criminal Actors

Corruption deeply permeates state institutions, with state-embedded actors establishing connections with local and foreign organized criminal networks involved in drug, timber and wildlife trafficking. State officials receive funds from criminal organizations to protect their illicit activities, creating a network that benefits state officials across a wide range of state institutions – including politicians, members of the judiciary, law enforcement and forestry commissions, and military leaders - at the expense of the general population. High-ranking military and political party leaders are allegedly involved in protecting drug trafficking for personal gain. Criminal interests in the cocaine trade are believed to manipulate the democratic process.

Bissau-Guinean businessmen have also played prominent roles as part of criminal networks coordinating cocaine trafficking, including by linking foreign criminal actors (predominantly European and Latin American actors) to state protection structures. Foreign actors play an influential role in both the cocaine trafficking and the illicit timber trade in the country. With regards to the cocaine trade, Colombian, Mexican and other Latin American networks have become less visible in recent



years, compared to dynamics between 2000 and circa 2007, while the influence of Nigerian organized crime groups and other West African criminal organizations has reportedly been on the rise. Moreover, Chinese citizens and companies are key players in illegal logging, often with the support of senior military officers and politicians who form partnerships with Chinese middlemen. European nationals who own hotels on the islands have been reported to exploit girls for sexual activities and engage in child sex tourism.

In Guinea-Bissau, private-sector criminal actors often become entangled in issues related to cocaine in transit to Europe, as well as money laundering through large investments in real estate. Moreover, there is a blurred line between the private and public sectors, as many politicians maintain private businesses, sometimes through close family members, while in power, benefiting from their positions.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Guinea-Bissau's political landscape is chronically volatile, and vulnerable to military interference. For example, the military occupied state buildings in support of the current President when he came to power in early 2020. The 2019 presidential election was marred by allegations of fraud, yet no audit has been conducted to address these claims. The electoral system itself suffers from insufficient regulations and is plagued by issues such as vote-buying. Corruption permeates the government, with politicians often being chosen and influenced based on corrupt practices and patronage networks. The protection by elements of the political infrastructure of cocaine increases the country's instability. The President publicly alleged that a February 2022 attack on the Governmental Palace, which resulted in the death of 11 individuals and was labelled an attempted coup by the authorities, was connected to cocaine trafficking – however evidence for this statement remains patchy. The dissolution of the National Assembly by the president, in May 2022, further contributed to the country's instability. Political protection of criminal markets – most prominently cocaine trafficking and illicit logging – is granted with impunity. The response to organized crime in Guinea-Bissau remains weak and ineffective, eroding public confidence in the government.

Although Guinea-Bissau has ratified various international treaties and conventions against organized crime and corruption, there is a prevailing perception that the country's international cooperation on these matters is weak, and that it may be unwilling to extradite major organized crime suspects. While Guinea-Bissau does have a number of laws pertaining to organized crime that meet international standards, there is a general

paucity of political will to combat most types of crime in the country, as politicians often have personal interests in their proliferation. Although a new national plan to address human trafficking was adopted, its implementation has been hindered by a dearth of funding and inadequate training for the police force.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judicial system in Guinea-Bissau faces numerous hurdles that erode its effectiveness in combating organized crime, including corruption, inadequate human and physical resources, and a shortage of specialized units. Prosecutors and judges also encounter funding constraints, compromising their efforts to combat crimes and limiting the scope of investigations and case resolutions. Additionally, the lack of independence within the judiciary and the susceptibility of judges to corruption and political pressure undermines the fairness of public trials. Although there is a long precedence for political influence over criminal justice infrastructure in Guinea-Bissau, it has accelerated since the current administration came to power in early 2020. This has been highlighted as a trend of concern both by civil society commentators and members of the criminal justice infrastructure in Guinea-Bissau. The 2022 Supreme Court acquittal of two notorious cocaine traffickers on suspect legal grounds fueled concerns of criminal capture of the criminal justice system. The prison conditions in the country are dire, and abuses against prisoners are rampant.

The law enforcement situation in Guinea-Bissau faces numerous challenges and shortcomings, mainly due to entrenched interests in the status quo. The police forces are inadequately trained and various issues such as low and



irregular wages undermine their effectiveness. Insufficient funding leads to limited resources for basic operational needs such as fuel for police vehicles. Furthermore, the involvement of police in arbitrary arrests of political figures raises concerns about the politicization of law enforcement units. While law enforcement measures and frameworks exist, their practical implementation falls short in many areas. The Judicial Police is the primary body for investigating organized crime, and has long operated with a remarkable degree of integrity given the prevailing institutional context. However, under the current administration, investment and political support for the judicial police have diminished and the body has lost much of its independence. Civil society commentators have expressed concerns regarding the increased executive influence over the force.

Guinea-Bissau's porous borders and inadequate law enforcement contribute to the smuggling of people and the transportation of children to neighbouring countries, where they are subjected to forced labour and begging. The border security between Guinea-Bissau and Senegal is often affected by low-intensity conflict with Senegalese rebels in the Casamance region. The country's geography also makes it susceptible to the smuggling of illicit goods, as commodities can easily enter and exit through its numerous islands. The Bijagós Archipelago and the extensive riverine geography of the coastline continue to serve as trans-shipment points for drug trafficking. While the government has taken steps to enhance oversight through military spending and civilian control, implementation remains inadequate.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Guinea-Bissau is confronted with difficulties in combating money laundering and violent extremist financing, mainly stemming from scarce resources, weak border controls, and a lack of political will. The country demonstrates low compliance with international standards on anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing. In fact, the US government categorizes Guinea-Bissau as a jurisdiction of concern for money laundering and financial crimes. Persistent challenges include effectively implementing laws and punishing money launderers, as well as a limited understanding of the associated risks.

The economic regulatory environment in Guinea-Bissau is characterized by weak regulatory quality and a lack of adherence to the rule of law, which hampers economic diversification. The country heavily relies on subsistence agriculture, cashew nut exports, and foreign

assistance. Although there are potential opportunities for economic development in the mining and offshore oil sectors, previous sanctions imposed on the country have delayed its economic growth. Additionally, Guinea-Bissau faces significant economic challenges, with a substantial portion of the population living below the extreme poverty line and vulnerability to exploitation and forced labour. The country's protection of property rights is poor, and establishing a business is burdensome.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In Guinea-Bissau, there is a lack of systematic support for victims and witnesses, as no established framework or witness protection programme is in place. The government has made little effort to identify and refer trafficking victims, and there is no comprehensive mechanism for victim identification. Victim protection efforts have been inadequate, relying heavily on international organizations and local NGOs that depend on international donors for funding. The limited funding has resulted in overcrowding in NGO shelters for child trafficking victims, compelling some volunteers to use their homes as temporary shelters. Moreover, victims have been unable to participate in investigations or prosecutions against traffickers and have not received proper restitution due to the government's absence of formal procedures. Foreign victims often find themselves without legal alternatives and are forced to return to their home countries.

Despite some limited efforts, progress in preventing trafficking in Guinea-Bissau has been hindered by the dearth of funding for anti-trafficking activities, which has compromised their effectiveness. Although a new national plan for combating human trafficking was adopted, there have been no convictions or prosecutions of traffickers. The government lacks resources to investigate Quranic schools to prevent forced begging, highlighting more obstacles in prevention efforts.

The media sector in Guinea-Bissau faces restrictions and limited press freedom, despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing freedom of the press. Censorship, intimidation, and attacks on journalists are common occurrences, and have escalated since early 2020. State-owned national TV channels and radio stations are subject to political influence and threats, including incidents of armed forces intimidating media outlets and attacks on journalists and broadcasters. Journalists often practice self-censorship when reporting on issues such as organized crime, government shortcomings, and military influence. Some journalists have fled the



country to escape threats and intimidation. Civil society organizations in Guinea-Bissau are described as weak, under-resourced, and fragmented. While NGOs generally have the freedom to operate, they face occasional intimidation and obstacles. The focus of civil society is governance-related issues rather than organized crime. Instances of violence and intimidation against activists have been reported, including assassination attempts, attacks on radio stations, beatings of young activists, and intimidation of individuals involved in strikes.

