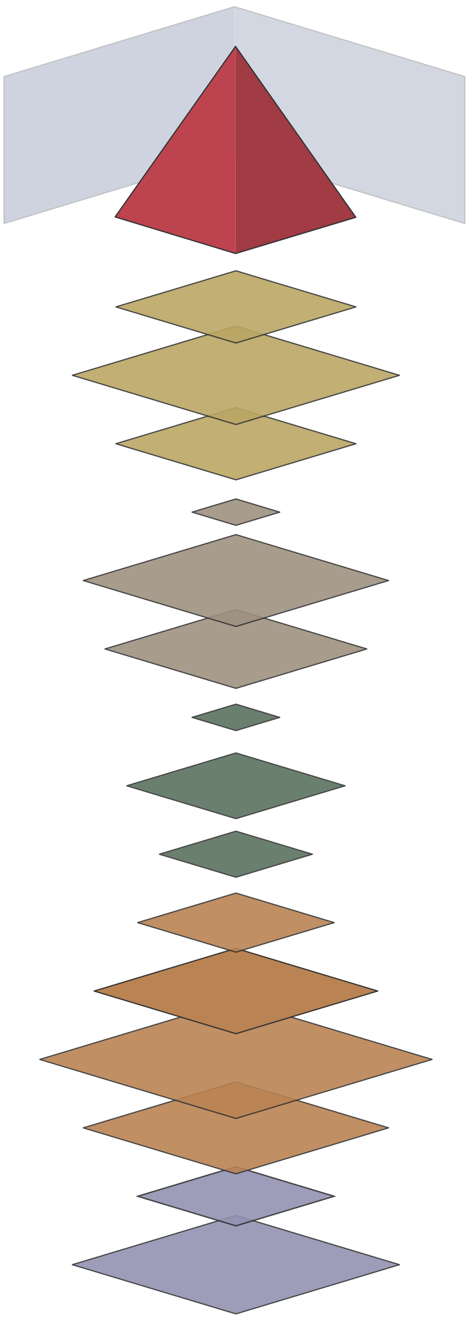
Africa
ORGANISED CRIME
INDEX 2025

enact
Enhancing Africa's response to transnational organised crime

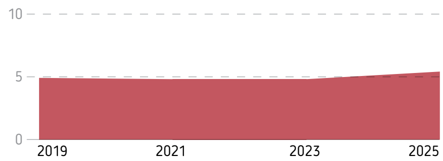
This project is funded by the European Union

MOROCCO



5.37 ↗0.57
CRIMINALITY SCORE

26th of 54 African countries ↗8
2nd of 6 North African countries ↗2



CRIMINAL MARKETS	5.53	↗0.43
HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.50	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	7.50	↗0.50
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	5.50	↗0.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	2.00	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	7.00	↗0.50
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	6.00	0.00
FLORA CRIMES	2.00	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	5.00	↗0.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	3.50	↗2.00
HEROIN TRADE	4.50	↗0.50
COCAINE TRADE	6.50	↗0.50
CANNABIS TRADE	9.00	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	7.00	↗1.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	4.50	↗0.50
FINANCIAL CRIMES	7.50	0.00

CRIMINAL ACTORS	5.20	↗0.70
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.50	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	7.00	↗0.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	7.50	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.50	↗1.50
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	4.50	↗1.50

ISS INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY STUDIES

INTERPOL

GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

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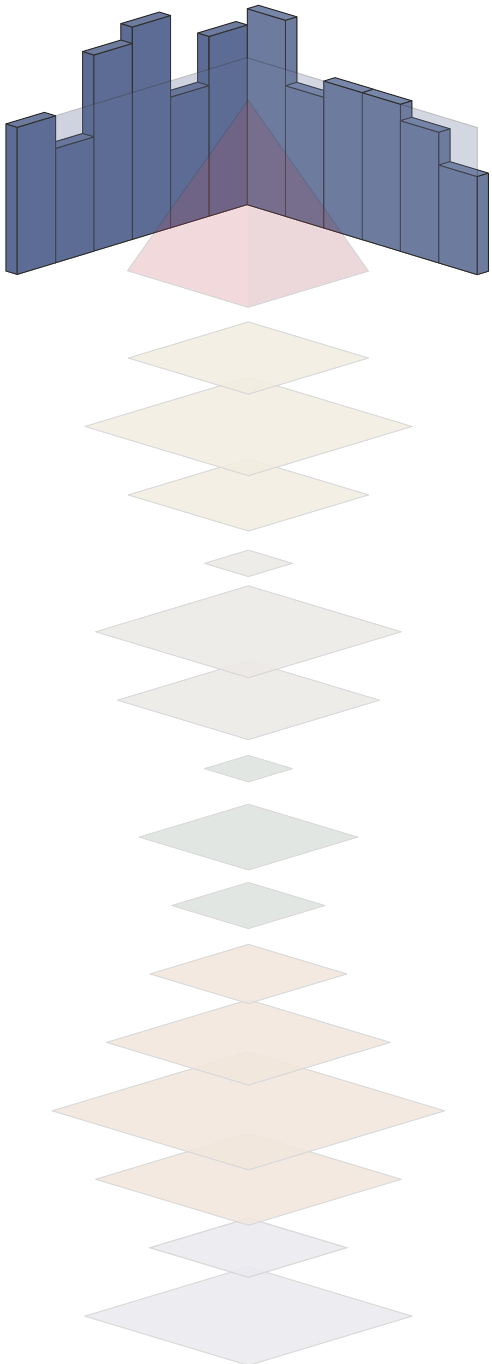
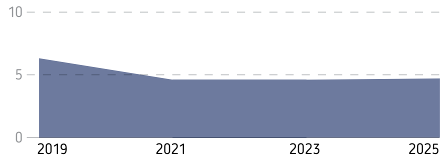


4.67 ↗0.04

RESILIENCE SCORE

14th of 54 African countries ↗1
1st of 6 North African countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	4.50	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	3.50	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.00	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.50	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	4.00	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.50	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	6.00	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	4.00	↗0.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	4.50	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	4.50	0.00
PREVENTION	4.00	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	3.00	0.00

CRIMINALITY

Criminal markets

PEOPLE

Human trafficking is entrenched in Morocco, with the country functioning as a source, transit and destination zone. Foreign migrants, particularly women and children, face heightened risks of forced labour and sexual exploitation while transiting to Europe. Moroccan victims are also trafficked abroad, especially to Europe and the Gulf. Trafficking also exists within Morocco, particularly in domestic work, agriculture, construction and the sex trade. Trafficking networks, often transnational, exploit systemic weaknesses including corruption, limited law enforcement capacity and socio-economic vulnerabilities. Some networks also engage in other illicit markets. In 2024, migrants – particularly sub-Saharan women – faced heightened risks due to forced relocations, economic coercion and xenophobic practices, creating an environment in which human trafficking could thrive. Involuntary displacement to remote areas left many individuals homeless and vulnerable to sexual violence and economic exploitation. Reports include attempted rape and abusive labour conditions, with some people unknowingly coerced into transporting drugs – further compromising their safety and stripping them of legal protection. Persistent structural vulnerabilities – including poverty, corruption and inadequate law enforcement – continue to enable trafficking activities. And migration restrictions, particularly those limiting the movement of sub-Saharan Africans within Morocco, have compounded these effects, by indirectly increasing migrants' exposure to trafficking. Child sex tourism and certain exploitative labour practices are worrying trends.

Morocco remains a pivotal hub for human smuggling due to its strategic location near Europe. In 2024, overall levels of smuggling activity persisted, despite tighter border controls. While sea crossings to Spain slightly declined, cases of land-based attempts, especially into Spanish enclaves, rose modestly. Migration across the Morocco-Algeria border also rose slowly, as migrants sought alternative paths to Europe. Smuggling networks are often led by Moroccan nationals and show flexible, evolving structures influenced by technology, migration shifts and political changes. These networks are frequently linked to drug trafficking and document fraud. Sub-Saharan intermediaries, particularly from Gambia and Senegal, play key roles in recruitment. Demand for smuggling services by Moroccan migrants is driven by restricted legal migration routes and socio-economic vulnerabilities. Although arrests and thwarted attempts increased in 2024, corruption and limited resources continue to hinder containment efforts. Extortion and protection racketeering in Morocco are closely linked to other forms of organized crime, including drug trafficking and human trafficking. These schemes primarily target legitimate businesses and vulnerable individuals, who are coerced into paying for protection or safe passage. Criminal networks, including transnational actors, use intimidation, threats and violence to enforce compliance, with irregular migrants frequently subjected to extortion, confinement and identity theft. These activities damage economic growth by increasing business costs and reducing investor confidence.

TRADE

The arms trafficking market in Morocco remains limited and mostly connected to other illicit economies, including drug and human smuggling, and relies on shared smuggling infrastructure. Morocco seems to be less exposed to arms trafficking than other countries in the region, but the armed movement in the Saharawi Republic continues to be a source of small and light weapons proliferation. Weapons often transit to Morocco from West African conflict zones, before onward movement to buyers in North Africa and Europe. Local demand for firearms is driven by domestic conflict, organized crime and personal security concerns, while regional demand stems from nearby countries facing conflict or political unrest. The illicit firearms trade contributes to violence and social fragmentation. Criminals launder proceeds via trade-based schemes, front businesses and real estate, aided by corruption within state institutions.

Morocco's counterfeit goods market remains entrenched due to its strategic location, well-developed infrastructure and persistent corruption. Despite a slight decline in visible illicit goods, underground activity remains strong, with established and smaller networks engaged in production, distribution and sales across sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, fashion and illicit alcohol. The market is both transnational – sourcing materials abroad and exploiting porous borders – and domestically driven, meeting demand from low-income consumers. Online platforms and informal markets facilitate access. Violence may arise from turf conflicts between operators or from coercive practices. Proceeds are laundered via real estate, front companies and offshore schemes, with corruption among customs officers, police and other state officials enabling the market's resilience.

Morocco serves as a notable transit hub for the illicit trade in excise goods, particularly tobacco and alcohol, due to its geographic position linking Europe, Africa and Western Asia. The market involves a range of actors, from transnational criminal groups to small-scale traffickers, and is supported by corruption within customs and law enforcement. High excise duties and accessible smuggling routes sustain demand, with a significant share of illicit tobacco originating from Algeria. A significant percentage of national tobacco consumption is supplied with smuggled products. In recent years, authorities seized hundreds of thousands of cigarette units and several tonnes of various tobacco forms – an indication of sizeable trafficking activity.

ENVIRONMENT

Though limited in scope and scale, flora crimes in Morocco, particularly the illicit trade in cedar timber, involve both organized syndicates and small-scale actors who engage in illegal logging and cross-border smuggling. While detailed data remains scarce, the trade is considered lucrative due to limited protections and enforcement. Despite Morocco's CITES membership, inconsistent legislation, weak enforcement and tensions between conservation and economic interests create a conducive environment for flora crimes. Corruption among public officials further enables the trade, which may operate alongside or within broader regional criminal networks.

Fauna crimes are a persistent and evolving issue in Morocco, involving a broad range of actors from poachers and traffickers to traders. Some organized crime groups operate independently, using sophisticated tools such as drones, encrypted communication and online platforms to coordinate and carry out illegal activities. These networks enable efficient poaching, trafficking and distribution operations without reliance on external facilitators. While the illegal trade in live Barbary macaques has reportedly declined, the trafficking of reptile species continues unabated and remains a key concern. In the marine environment, the use of illegal driftnets in the Alboran Sea and unregulated fishing along the southern Atlantic coast pose serious threats to marine biodiversity and violate national and international fishing laws. The trade is transnational, exploiting legal disparities and corruption, with demand driven by both domestic and international consumers seeking traditional medicine, exotic pets or luxury items. These crimes severely impact biodiversity, tourism revenues and ecological stability, especially as endangered species are at growing risk of extinction.

Despite strengthened efforts to counter non-renewable resource crimes in recent years, increasingly sophisticated smuggling networks exploiting weak border controls and advanced technologies have emerged in the country. The illicit trade, particularly in minerals, fossil fuels and sand, remains transnational, often involving coordinated criminal actors across borders. For example, a portion of fuel smuggled through Algeria is reportedly routed into Morocco. Illegal sand mining, largely linked to both domestic and foreign networks – including Spanish firms – threatens Morocco's coastal ecosystems and its tourism sector. Corruption and regulatory failures enable this trade and blur legal boundaries. This market also intersects with other criminal economies, such as drug trafficking.

DRUGS

Morocco remains a transit country for heroin originating in Asia and bound for Europe, due to its geographic position and established transnational trafficking routes. There has been an increase in the number of seizures of heroin, often in large quantities, during recent years. Domestic consumption endures, particularly among marginalized youth, who are also vulnerable to recruitment as low-level distributors. Socioeconomic disparities and limited access to services contribute to local market dynamics. The adulteration of synthetic drugs with heroin also heightens health risks. Criminal proceeds are laundered through domestic cash-intensive sectors and international financial mechanisms, including offshore accounts and shell companies. By these means, drug trafficking networks exploit systemic flaws in regulatory oversight.

Morocco serves as a strategic transit hub for cocaine en route from South America to Europe, with increasing seizures – one notable case of over a tonne was reported in early 2024 – indicating heightened trafficking activity. While consumption is largely driven by external markets, domestic use persists among affluent individuals and expatriates in urban areas. Trafficking networks are transnational and diversified, supported by facilitators including corrupt officials, logistics providers and money launderers. Enhanced law enforcement pressure has led criminal groups to adopt encrypted communications, cryptocurrencies and covert shipping techniques. Proceeds from the trade are laundered domestically and abroad, with pervasive corruption across multiple levels of the state enabling the market's continued operation.

Morocco remains one of the world's top cannabis producers, owing to its favourable geography and climate, especially in the Rif mountains. Although cannabis was legalized for industrial and medical use in 2021, illicit cultivation persists, partly due to delayed implementation and limited economic alternatives for small-scale farmers. Organized criminal networks, often with international links, continue to dominate the illicit trade, aided by corrupt officials and local facilitators. While thousands of cannabis growing licences have been issued and the first legal harvest occurred in 2024, it remains uncertain how effectively this has curbed illegal production. Seizures of cannabis resin continue at high levels, including a major interception of 5.4 tonnes in 2024.

Morocco's synthetic drug market has grown significantly, driven by evolving trafficking methods and low-cost production strategies. While most synthetic drugs, including ecstasy and psychotropic tablets, originate in Europe, domestic consumption is also rising, especially of 'pufa'

– a highly addictive, low-cost mixture often made from drug waste and toxic household substances. This trade is facilitated by transnational criminal networks. The government has intensified border controls, surveillance and prevention initiatives, and expanded international cooperation. Despite these measures, persistent demand and the flexibility of trafficking groups continue to thwart enforcement efforts.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Morocco's cybercrime activities are increasingly sophisticated. Offenders are exploiting emerging technologies such as IoT, AI and cryptocurrencies, and their operations have also been enhanced by encrypted communication and international criminal cooperation. Cybercriminal networks now include both small-scale actors and large, specialized syndicates engaged in activities like ransomware-as-a-service and business email compromise. State-sponsored cyber operations also remain a concern, especially amid ongoing geopolitical tensions. A distributed denial of service attack recently targeted Morocco's state news agency, highlighting vulnerabilities in national infrastructure and the potential for large-scale cyber disruptions. Despite the rise in politically motivated cyber-dependent attacks amid growing geopolitical tensions in the region, it remains unclear whether these incidents involve any organized crime elements.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes in Morocco, including fraud, embezzlement and abuse of authority, remain prevalent, particularly among powerful public officials. In recent years, several high-profile convictions and arrests of parliamentarians and former municipal leaders have illustrated this pattern. Embezzlement and abuse of authority are common offences. Meanwhile, vulnerable populations, including the elderly and digitally inexperienced individuals, are increasingly targeted by online scams and phishing schemes, revealing a broader exposure to financial crimes across the social spectrum.

Criminal actors

Some tribal groups in Morocco are engaged in criminal activity but are mostly not hierarchic in structure and do not constitute mafia-style groups. In Morocco, criminal operations tend to be more fragmented and decentralized than traditional mafias, despite their transnational connections and involvement in cross-border trafficking networks.

Criminal networks in Morocco tend to span multiple illicit markets, frequently involved in drug trafficking – particularly of cannabis resin – and human trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labour. Networks are often also active in counterfeit goods, weapons smuggling and cybercrime. Extortion from individuals, businesses and officials is prevalent. Domestic groups are entrenched nationwide and exhibit strong adaptability, particularly in the Rif region. These organizations also exploit corruption and manipulate political institutions, undermining state efforts to counteract their influence and disrupt operations. Law enforcement continues to respond with large-scale crackdowns and increased scrutiny of financial crime and cybercrime.

State-embedded actors play a significant role in enabling organized crime in Morocco. Corruption permeates various levels of governance, from local officials and law enforcement turning a blind eye to illicit activity, to high-level actors manipulating legal and institutional frameworks for criminal gain. These individuals often facilitate trafficking operations – including drugs, arms and human smuggling – by leveraging their institutional positions to provide logistical support, protection and access to critical resources. Their involvement extends to transnational financial crimes such as money laundering and embezzlement, which further entrenches criminal networks and undermines the rule of law and state integrity.

Foreign criminal groups have increased their links with domestic networks in Morocco, particularly in drug trafficking. While they do not control criminal markets within the country, Latin American cartels and European syndicates contribute to cocaine trafficking and refining, and to the export of Moroccan cannabis to Europe. These partnerships reflect a transnational dynamic in which foreign actors rely on local infrastructure and networks to facilitate illicit trade without establishing permanent or dominant control over the Moroccan criminal landscape.

Organized crime groups in Morocco frequently exploit vulnerabilities in the private sector to launder illicit proceeds. Real estate and financial services are key channels, with methods involving complex transactions, offshore accounts and investments in luxury goods. Other sectors such as construction, hospitality, transportation and gaming are also at risk, due to weak regulatory oversight and high profitability. Criminal actors are also reported to enlist legal and financial professionals to create opaque corporate structures or facilitate transactions that obscure the origins of illicit funds.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Morocco has taken steps to strengthen its governance and legal framework in response to organized crime, including enacting legislation targeting drug trafficking, human trafficking, terrorism and cybercrime. Resources allocated to enforcement have also been increased. Despite these efforts, governance challenges persist. Political power remains highly centralized, limiting the independence and effectiveness of democratic institutions. While reforms have sought to shift authority toward elected bodies, concerns remain over political interference, restricted civil liberties and limited space for opposition activity. Public trust in institutions is further undermined by perceptions of corruption and a lack of transparency in both political and administrative processes. Although Morocco holds regular elections and some institutional reforms have been implemented, civil liberties remain constrained in practice. Media freedom, freedom of assembly and the rights of political opponents are frequently curbed. While governance indicators show some improvements – such as efforts to refine regulatory systems and boost public service delivery – weaknesses persist in accountability, the rule of law and the combatting of corruption. Security threats and regional tensions further complicate enforcement efforts, allowing criminal actors to operate with relative impunity. While the state has made progress in building institutional capacity, efforts to combat organized crime remain inadequate in the absence of deeper political and governance reforms.

Laws that criminalize corruption-related offences have been passed, and an independent anti-corruption authority has been established in the country. Morocco has also enacted legislation promoting access to information, though gaps remain in enforcement and oversight mechanisms. The country participates in international anti-corruption initiatives and collaborates with global institutions on governance reforms. Domestically, Morocco has implemented technical tools such as digital procurement platforms, e-payment systems and whistle-blower protections to improve transparency. Government documents on budgets and public tenders are regularly published, and open data platforms have been launched. Despite these measures, corruption remains entrenched, with limited accountability for security forces and opaque governance structures reportedly linked to the monarchy constraining institutional transparency.

Morocco has demonstrated commitment to international cooperation against organized crime through the ratification of key international conventions, including those targeting transnational organized crime, corruption and the financing of terrorism. The country maintains bilateral and multilateral agreements with various states and international organizations to support joint action. It also collaborates with the EU on initiatives to curb people smuggling and human trafficking. This engagement is complemented by Morocco's participation in cooperative regional and global frameworks. As a result of its active role in these efforts, Morocco is generally regarded as a constructive partner in advancing international cooperation to combat organized criminal activity.

Morocco criminalizes a range of organized crime activities, including drug and human trafficking, money laundering and racketeering. Legal and procedural frameworks are in place to support the broad criminal justice process, from investigation to punishment. The framework that regulates the fight against human trafficking and smuggling is represented by a national policy on migration and asylum aimed to combat these crimes while improving migrant regularization and asylum procedures. The government has also legalized cannabis cultivation for medical, industrial and export purposes. By 2023, licensed farmers began growing for the legal market, a move intended to reduce reliance on the illicit cannabis trade and support socio-economic development in affected regions.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Morocco's judiciary remains under the influence of the monarchy, with the king chairing the Supreme Council of the Judiciary. Persistent problems hinder the system's effectiveness in addressing organized crime, including limited resources, corruption and the complexity of criminal networks. International actors have supported judicial reforms through technical assistance and capacity-building programmes aimed at enhancing efficiency and compliance with the rule of law. Nevertheless, corruption risks in the prison system remain high, with reports of harsh and overcrowded detention conditions, some described as life-threatening.

Morocco's law enforcement and intelligence services maintain specialized units focused on organized crime, supported by national funding and international assistance. Authorities collaborate with partners such as the UN, EU and INTERPOL to build capacity. In the reporting period, national police reported high crime-solving rates, reduced violent and drug-related offences and the dismantling of numerous trafficking networks. Cybercrime increased, despite digital reporting tools boosting its detection. Morocco's intelligence system incorporates inputs from civil society and the private sector. Regionally, it participates in information-sharing and joint initiatives addressing terrorism, trafficking and maritime crime, under frameworks including the Arab Maghreb Union and bilateral agreements with foreign governments.

Morocco's geographic location at the intersection of Africa, Europe and Western Asia makes it a key transit point for illicit flows, particularly along its porous land and maritime borders. Drug trafficking and human smuggling are facilitated by limited border infrastructure and proximity to Europe, including shared land borders with Spain's enclaves. Skirmishes in border regions continued, particularly near Western Sahara, adversely affecting the region's stability. To counter cybercrime, Morocco has implemented a national cybersecurity strategy and established dedicated institutions. The government has also promoted collaboration with private sector actors and participated in international cybersecurity initiatives.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Morocco has made significant strides to align its anti-money laundering framework with international standards. These efforts resulted in the country's removal from the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in 2023. Its financial intelligence unit, the Unité de Traitement du Renseignement Financier, plays a central role in financial investigations related to organized crime. Legal and regulatory frameworks have been developed to improve investigative capabilities. Morocco also engages with international partners and multilateral initiatives – including the EU, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the FATF and INTERPOL – to strengthen institutional capacity for detecting, investigating and prosecuting financial offences tied to organized crime. Nevertheless, significant deficiencies remain in key areas – particularly sanctions implementation, transparency, regulation of virtual assets, beneficial ownership and institutional capacity. These weaknesses continue to undermine the overall effectiveness of the system.

Bureaucratic hurdles and regulatory complexities continue to impede business operations in Morocco. Problems also persist in the management of property rights, land disputes and informal tenure systems. Despite poverty reduction and improved infrastructure, economic inequality remains pronounced, particularly between rural and urban areas. Limited access to education and healthcare in rural regions deepens these disparities. In areas underserved by formal financial institutions, unregulated money lending by criminal actors is a concern. Economic growth benefits a narrow elite, and the broader regulatory environment remains restrictive and uneven. That said, Morocco has specialized law enforcement agencies tasked with investigating criminal activities that impact the business sector and enforcing anti-corruption regulations. These agencies are tasked with enforcing laws prohibiting bribery in commercial transactions and fostering a more secure and transparent business environment.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Morocco has introduced policies to support victims of organized crime, including legal protections, healthcare access, counselling, shelter and reintegration programmes, particularly for trafficking victims. Despite these measures, implementation remains uneven due to resource constraints, limited coordination and limited public awareness of these services. Civil society and international organizations often fill critical roles in advocacy and support services. Persistent human rights transgressions, including corruption, judicial interference and discrimination, hinder effective victim protection. The penal code includes provisions for witness protection, and programmes exist to safeguard individuals who testify in organized crime cases, offering measures such as relocation, identity changes and security support to prevent retaliation or intimidation.

While Morocco lacks a comprehensive national strategy for preventing organized crime, community policing initiatives do promote local collaboration between law enforcement and communities. In drug policy, Morocco avoids extreme punitive measures but there remain concerns about proportionality of sentences, limited access to medicines and inadequate harm reduction services. The government works with NGOs and international partners to encourage crime reporting, including organized crime and trafficking. Public awareness campaigns, education and engagement programmes support behaviour change and risk reduction in vulnerable populations.

Civil society organizations in Morocco play a vital role in addressing organized crime through advocacy, victim support and crime prevention. However, journalists and activists face increasing restrictions. Independent media are subject to harassment, legal threats and politically motivated charges, particularly when reporting on organized crime or corruption. Several high-profile journalists released in 2024 continue to face professional bans and intimidation. Civil society actors, including environmental and human rights advocates, have been harassed or imprisoned. In 2024, a bill limiting NGOs' ability to initiate corruption cases was approved, confining this power to the public prosecutor's office and raising concerns over reduced transparency and weakened civil society oversight.