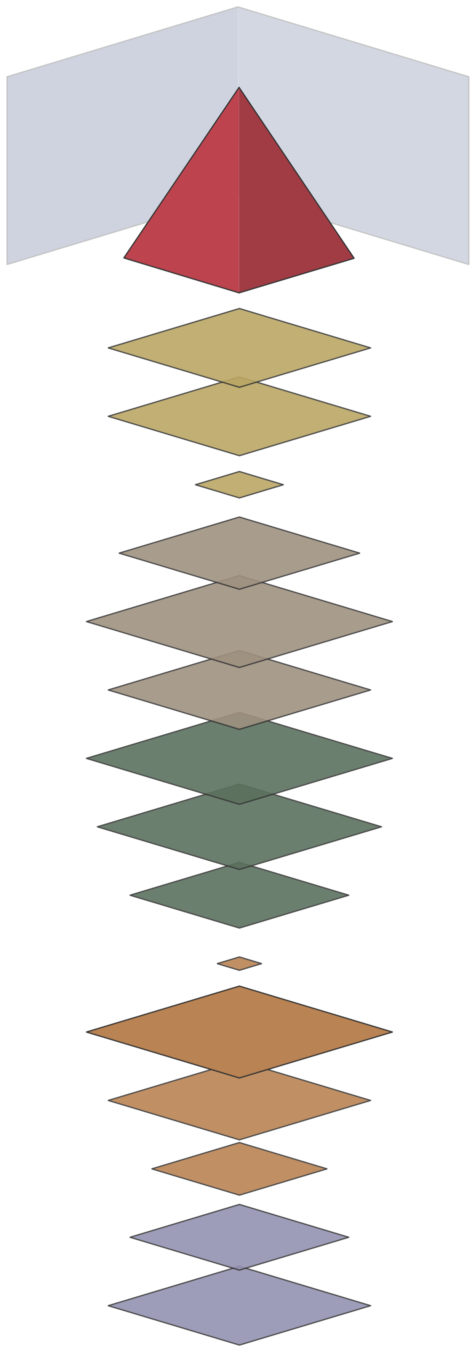
Africa
ORGANISED CRIME INDEX 2025

enact
Enhancing Africa's response to transnational organised crime

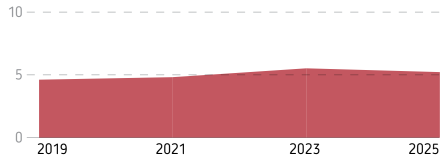
This project is funded by the European Union

SENEGAL



5.22 ↘0.30
CRIMINALITY SCORE

28th of 54 African countries ↘6
9th of 15 West African countries ↘2



CRIMINAL MARKETS	**5.33**	↘0.20
HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.00	↗0.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	6.00	↗1.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	2.00	↘2.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	5.50	↗0.50
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	7.00	↘0.50
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	6.00	0.00
FLORA CRIMES	7.00	↘0.50
FAUNA CRIMES	6.50	↘0.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	5.00	↗0.50
HEROIN TRADE	1.00	↘2.00
COCAINE TRADE	7.00	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	6.00	↘1.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	4.00	↗1.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	5.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6.00	↗0.50

CRIMINAL ACTORS	**5.10**	↘0.40
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00	↘2.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	5.50	↗0.50
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.50	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	6.50	↘0.50

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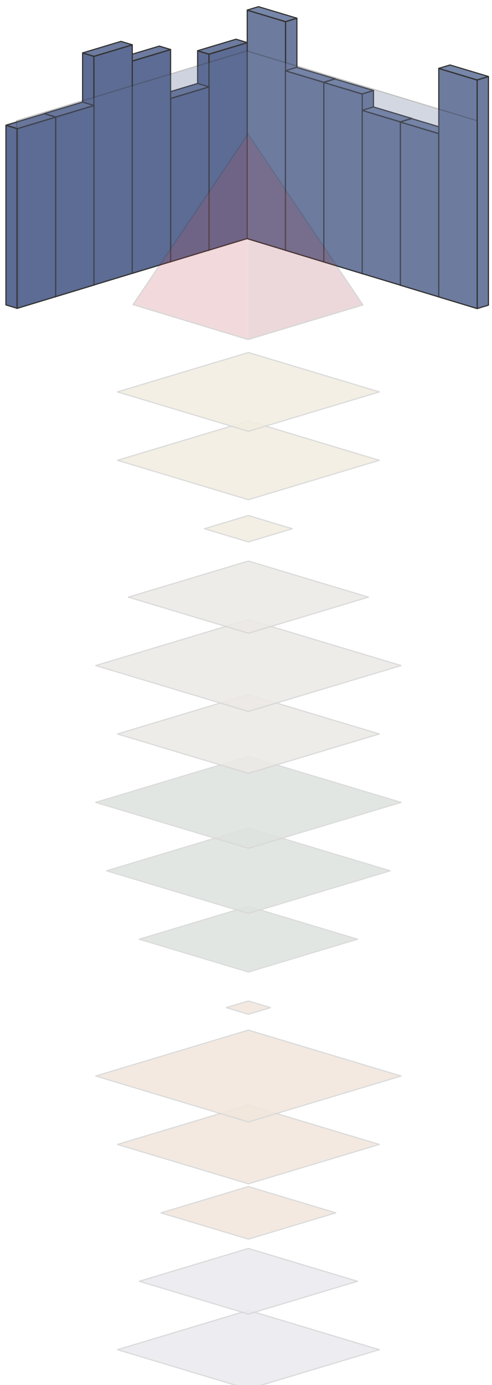
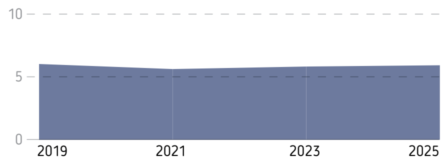


5.88 ↗0.08

RESILIENCE SCORE

2nd of 54 African countries -
2nd of 15 West African countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	5.50	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	5.50	↗0.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.00	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.50	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	5.00	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	6.00	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	7.00	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50	↗0.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.50	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	5.00	0.00
PREVENTION	5.00	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	7.00	0.00

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INTERPOL

GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

CRIMINALITY

Criminal markets

PEOPLE

Senegal serves as both a source and destination for human trafficking. Child exploitation through forced begging and labour is prevalent and sexual exploitation of women from Nigeria is on the rise, especially in mining areas like Kédougou. Women are regularly trafficked for sex around tourist sites, especially in Mbour, while boys from neighbouring countries labour in artisanal mines. Victims are coerced through debt bondage and identity document seizure. Quranic school teachers have also been widely implicated in cases of forced begging involving children from Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, in a practice widely perceived to be increasing. Cultural norms, corruption and foreign actors all contribute exploitation within Senegal, including forced labour on fishing boats sailing under Senegalese flags. Senegalese victims are also exploited abroad, with boys falsely recruited as footballers to Europe or North Africa only to be diverted into forced labour upon arrival.

Senegal has emerged as a key transit hub and source for human smuggling in West Africa, driven by widespread economic hardship, unemployment and political instability. Irregular migration from Senegal to Europe, particularly via the dangerous Atlantic route, has increased since 2020, and surged again in early 2023. Smuggling networks involved in the maritime route to the Canary Islands are increasingly organized and transnational, often collaborating with groups in neighbouring countries. Coastal cities are primary departure points. Smuggling networks are typically paid upfront in cash, but also using informal financial systems. Investments from smuggling proceeds are laundered through real estate, travel agencies and local businesses.

While there have been isolated incidents involving individuals impersonating law enforcement to carry out extortion, there is no evidence of a structured or widespread extortion and protection racketeering market in Senegal.

TRADE

Senegal's illicit arms trafficking market is not extensive but is concentrated in the south-east. In Kédougou, the proliferation of gold panning has led to increased firearm presence, with Malian gold buyers and local miners using automatic and homemade weapons for self-defence. Rising insecurity drives the local demand for arms, often sourced from Mali via the Faleme River. Madina Gounas has also emerged as a trafficking hub, with weapons entering from Guinea-Bissau and Guinea. Touba, another religious centre, has also seen significant arms circulation.

Senegal is a significant transit and destination country for counterfeit pharmaceuticals, primarily driven by local demand and economic pressures. Counterfeit medicines, including antibiotics, antimalarials and painkillers, are trafficked through complex networks which engage both the formal and informal sectors. Most counterfeit medicines circulating in Senegal are smuggled from Guinea and The Gambia, with smaller volumes originating in Mauritania and Mali. Local distributors and street vendors sell fake products to low-income buyers, while health professionals knowingly purchase high-demand medications from the black market to turn a profit. The resulting economic and health impacts include reduced public trust, increased healthcare costs and diminished labour productivity.

The country is also a transit and destination point for illicit tobacco, driven by high local demand and regional security challenges, including porous borders and weak law enforcement. Tobacco smuggling is prevalent along transit corridors across the borders with Mali, Guinea and The Gambia. The trade is fuelled by price disparities, oversupply by manufacturers and inadequate tracking of export products. Some legally produced Senegalese tobacco is sold illicitly at reduced prices to maximize profits. Economic instability and fiscal losses result from reduced tax revenues and disruption to tobacco tax harmonization.

ENVIRONMENT

Senegal has become a source and transit point for illegal timber, particularly rosewood, driven by high demand from Chinese furniture manufacturers. Timber trafficking is concentrated around Casamance, Tambacounda and, to a lesser extent, Niokolo-Koba National Park – with rosewood often smuggled into The Gambia and Mali before reaching China, in violation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Despite authorities reporting a decline in illegal logging, significant activity persists, driven by artisanal mining, construction and the locals' need for cooking fuel. Corruption among state actors and local authorities facilitates the illicit market through favourable commercial concessions and fraudulent permits, with profits laundered through global financial systems. Wildlife crime in Senegal, particularly poaching within protected parks, remains prevalent, although it has reportedly decreased in Niokolo-Koba. Sustained poaching is driven by high international demand and lucrative black-market prices. Key illicit activities include the trafficking of protected species and wildlife products, such as lion's teeth, crocodile and leopard skins, and ivory. Loosely organized criminal networks, involving local intermediaries working with foreign actors from Guinea, Mali and Mauritania, dominate these operations. Senegal also functions as a transit hub, particularly for grey parrots sourced from Central Africa and exported from West African capitals. Destination countries for wildlife products include China and Lebanon. Seizure data, though limited, highlights the persistence and high volume of trafficking, with recent coordinated operations uncovering significant illegal shipments. Though less affected than other West African states, Senegal experiences significant illegal gold mining and smuggling, primarily in the eastern Kédougou region. Within Niokolo-Koba National Park, illegal gold mining increased in 2023 following the discovery of a rich vein in the park, attracting miners from Mali and Burkina Faso. The rise in gold prices has fuelled interest, while diminishing agricultural yields have made illicit mining an increasingly important alternative livelihood. Extracted gold often moves through Mali to Dubai. Corruption, sometimes with foreign involvement, facilitates the issuing of mining licences. Environmental damage from mercury and cyanide use threatens agriculture and fishing.

DRUGS

There was no evidence of a sizeable heroin market in Senegal during the reporting period. Consumption of the drug has significantly declined over the past five years, in line with a dramatic decrease in trafficking.

Senegal has become a critical transit country for cocaine trafficking between South America and Europe, which is in a phase of sharp expansion. Maritime routes dominate, using both containerized and non-containerized routings. Coastal and overland routes from neighbouring countries, including Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone, funnel cocaine to the Port of Dakar, which has significant throughput and connections to Europe, making it attractive to cocaine traffickers. The Casamance region, which is marked by poor oversight, is bisected by cocaine trafficking routes from Guinea-Bissau. Local and foreign actors exploit informal entry points using different routes to smuggle the drug. Cash-intensive sectors including real estate and construction are vulnerable to laundering illegal funds, particularly in coastal cities and cash-dependent regions like Tambacounda.

The country is still a significant cannabis producer in West Africa; however, the involvement of rebel groups in the trade has declined as they have been disbanded. Historically, separatist factions in the Casamance region played a central role in cannabis trafficking, but their influence has diminished considerably due to Senegalese army operations since 2022. Cannabis cultivation continues, but its links to insurgency have been disrupted. Instead, local communities, particularly in the Karone Islands, remain the key actors cultivating cannabis, with cannabis profits supporting livelihoods. Seasonal cultivation, primarily by young people, sustains education and living expenses. While there is local consumption, most cannabis is trafficked domestically to cities like Dakar, often via coastal routes, or exported to neighbouring countries such as Guinea, The Gambia and Mali. External trafficking networks and local demand continue to shape market dynamics.

Senegal serves as a transit and destination country for synthetic drugs, influenced by wider regional dynamics. Tramadol consumption has surged in Kédougou, fuelled by supply from Guinea and Mali, and facilitated by criminal networks in which Guinean women are prominent. In Dakar, a drug known locally as volet – believed by authorities to be a form of MDMA – is widely consumed among young people, especially in nightlife settings, with criminal networks dominated by Senegalese and Gambians. The emergence of 'kush', a synthetic drug consisting of synthetic cannabinoids or nitazenes (potent synthetic opioids), since around 2023, which has been linked to fatalities in Sierra Leone, Liberia, The Gambia and Guinea, has raised concerns.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Senegal has recently faced a rise in cyber-dependent crimes, primarily targeting government websites and online systems through distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks. Reporting of such incidents, however, remains limited, as organizations fear incurring reputational damage. Additionally, ransomware attacks on banks, often trial runs by international criminal networks, have been reported. Notable hacking groups like Anonymous, and the lesser-known Mysterious Team, have been linked to these activities. Senegal also harbours Nigerian cybercriminals operating internationally, whose illicit proceeds are redirected abroad. Despite its ambitions to become a digital innovation leader, Senegal's cybersecurity infrastructure remains highly vulnerable to transnational threats.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes in Senegal include tax evasion, corruption, embezzlement, procurement fraud and cyber-enabled crime. The country is highly affected by tax evasion, with substantial annual losses arising from the use of foreign tax havens. Intra-group financial transactions and tax exemptions are also exploited. Cyber-enabled financial crimes, including bank fraud and phishing, have increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Identity crimes have also emerged recently, with fraudsters preying on vulnerable people and impersonating officials to convince them to pay them in exchange for purported favours.

Criminal actors

Criminal networks have a strong presence in Senegal, operating in a variety of illicit sectors. Domestic groups engage in human trafficking, smuggling of counterfeit medicines, illegal logging, wildlife crime and drug trafficking, and collaborating to varying extents with transnational networks. For example, domestic wildlife crime networks act mainly as transport facilitators for foreign poachers. Some factions of former separatist movements continue to operate as loosely organized criminal groups which are primarily involved in flora crimes and drug trafficking. There is no evidence of mafia-style groups operating in Senegal.

State-embedded actors in Senegal play a significant role in facilitating organized crime, particularly through corruption and bribery. These actors, including customs and border control officials, exploit their positions to enable the illicit transit of goods, including cocaine and counterfeit products. Health officials have been reported to divert medicines to street vendors involved in the trade, while customs officers are similarly implicated, accepting bribes to forge paperwork and conducting patrols with little to no oversight.

Foreign groups are heavily involved in Senegal's criminal markets, particularly cocaine, timber, human trafficking and counterfeit goods. West African nationals are involved in illicit gold mining and smuggling in Kédougou, while Chinese actors engage in wildlife crimes – particularly illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and ivory trafficking – illegal mining and human trafficking, including sexual exploitation and forced labour aboard fishing vessels. Corruption and procurement fraud involving foreign companies is prevalent, with high-value contracts often awarded without competitive processes. However, recent government initiatives signal potential progress in reducing foreign influence, especially within public sector-linked criminal activities.

The vast informal sector is the backbone of the country's economy, while real estate and construction are key avenues for laundering criminal proceeds. Beneficial ownership is obscured by proxies, allowing criminal actors to exploit legitimate enterprises. Corruption and collusion between private and public sector entities facilitate the diversion and laundering of public funds. The heavy involvement of private sector actors in the counterfeit medicine trade, including pharmaceutical vendors who play a key role in distribution, reflects the kind of systemic vulnerabilities that enable organized crime in Senegal.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Senegal faces complex challenges related to organized crime, influenced by a number of political, social and economic factors. While the government publicly condemns organized crime, particularly drug trafficking and smuggling, translating rhetoric into effective policy often rubs up against bureaucratic and resource challenges. Allegations of corruption and state penetration by criminal elements persist, though evidence is limited. The country remains one of Africa's more stable democracies. The election of President Bassirou Diomaye Faye marked a democratic milestone, with the promise of economic reform and social justice. Nonetheless, unemployment and fragile public finances continue to challenge governance and stability.

Legal frameworks and oversight mechanisms are in place, and the government generally operates with a certain level of transparency. However, challenges remain – particularly the inconsistent and politicized enforcement of anti-corruption measures. The recently elected leadership has introduced new anti-corruption initiatives, contributing to a gradual restoration of public trust. As a result, public perceptions of corruption have shown some improvement in recent years.

Senegal demonstrates a commitment to combating organized crime through active regional and international cooperation. The country adheres to key international conventions, including those addressing transnational crime, corruption, narcotics, arms trading and wildlife trafficking, reflecting its intention to align with global standards. Senegal's international engagement includes participation in joint operations and cross-border asset seizures, indicating a proactive approach to disrupting criminal networks. Extradition agreements have been made to facilitate international law enforcement cooperation. While involvement in security forums and intelligence sharing signals some commitment, challenges persist over bureaucratic delays and alleged corruption.

There are established legal frameworks targeting organized crime, focusing on timber trafficking, cybersecurity, transnational terrorism and drugs. Despite the introduction of the National Strategic Plan on Drug Control to foster a drug-free society, gaps remain in the form of outdated legislation and inconsistent enforcement. Notably, the legal framework for human trafficking does not clearly differentiate trafficking from migrant smuggling, leading to the inconsistent application of penalties. Wildlife trafficking laws also lack sufficient deterrent measures. In cybersecurity, Senegal has formalized efforts through the National Cybersecurity Strategy to enhance digital safety. Additionally, strategic initiatives like the Plan Sénégal Émergent and Sénégal numérique 2025 aim to leverage ICT for economic transformation and secure a digital future. The development of Senegal's national organized crime strategy, set to be finalized in 2025, is a key step in confirming its strategic priorities in this space.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judiciary, while formally independent and relatively reputable, faces challenges from political influence, corruption and resource limitations. A lack of independence within the Higher Council of the Judiciary has raised concerns about impartiality, especially for cases involving high-level officials and opposition politicians. Rural areas particularly suffer from underfunding and understaffing in the judicial system, leading to local reliance on traditional conflict resolution methods. The judiciary lacks specialized units to combat organized crime, and has limited expertise in handling complex financial offences. The prison system suffers from overpopulation and poor conditions, despite a recent initiative introducing electronic supervision to alleviate overcrowding – a regional first for West Africa. Senegalese law enforcement is well equipped and effective in combating organized crime. Nevertheless, it faces challenges due to over-centralization, limited resources and gaps in training, despite considerable experience. Specialized task forces address particular areas of organized crime, including wildlife protection and drug trafficking, with support from international partners. However, inter-agency cooperation is still hindered by a lack of coordinating tools and protocols. Efforts to improve capacity have included participating in multilateral initiatives on cross-border drug trafficking. The government's strategic approach has prioritized counterterrorism and cross-border crime while fostering regional and international cooperation, in recognition of the fact that broader instability is a key factor influencing security efforts. Senegal remains committed to maintaining its territorial integrity despite the challenges posed by porous borders and cross-border crime. The country's active role in combating piracy and cocaine trafficking in the Gulf of Guinea highlights its regional leadership in addressing transnational security threats. While the Casamance region continues to face insecurity due to sporadic banditry, instability has significant decreased following government operations against Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC) separatist fighters, and a formal disarmament ceremony marking the end of one rebel faction's activities.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

There has been demonstrable progress in combating money laundering and financial crime, leading to Senegal's removal from the Financial Action Task Force's 'grey list'. Despite this advancement, challenges persist, notably in addressing drug trafficking, which remains a key driver of illicit financial flows. The reduced surveillance offered by free trade zones near Dakar has facilitated money laundering. Senegal has bolstered its legal framework, yet implementation gaps and limited technical expertise hinder its effectiveness, resulting in low conviction rates for financial crimes. The real estate sector, particularly in urban areas, remains vulnerable to money laundering due to the prevalence of cash transactions, and opaque ownership structures, highlighting the need for enhanced regulatory oversight.

Organized crime has infiltrated licit markets, including medicines, tobacco and timber production, with some state-embedded actors profiting from their activities. However, national policies have been implemented to contribute to economic stability in legal markets, such is in the fight against illegal tobacco.

Senegal's new development strategy, recently unveiled, aims for a systemic transformation and national transformation by 2050, with a focus on reducing foreign dependency, increasing economic sovereignty and achieving sustainable growth. However, progress toward greater economic freedom has been uneven. The regulatory framework remains restrictive, discouraging dynamism and hindering private sector development. While some steps have been taken to streamline business formation, deeper institutional reforms that are necessary to strengthen economic freedom, foster long-term development and reduce poverty are still lacking. These structural shortcomings, combined with inflation, rising economic pressures and limited formal employment opportunities, continue to cause financial hardship and drive irregular migration to Europe. Senegal's financial outlook has also worsened, with international agencies downgrading its long-term ratings due to significantly weaker-than-expected fiscal and debt positions.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Senegalese government has increasingly recognized the importance of addressing victimization resulting from organized crime, including drug trafficking. The state has taken steps to address these issues, such as running a drug addiction treatment centre in Dakar, while NGOs and international organizations have collaborated to support victims through counselling, rehabilitation and reintegration services. In fact, the government increased its identification efforts for human trafficking victims. Despite these efforts, challenges remain, including limited resources and inadequate shelter services, particularly outside Dakar, which sometimes hindered law enforcement actions to remove victims from trafficking situations. Civil society organizations play a key role in complementing state initiatives, addressing service delivery gaps and advocating for compassionate, evidence-based approaches despite persistent social stigma around drug addiction. Senegal lacks comprehensive whistle-blower protections despite committing to introduce them under international conventions.

Despite regular public awareness campaigns about drug use and forced child begging, organized crime remains a significant challenge in Senegal, particularly when it comes to drug trafficking and use, human trafficking networks and, in some areas, the artisanal gold mining trade. There are community involvement initiatives in place and increased efforts to raise awareness, but local responsibility for combating organized crime varies. The government continues to collaborate with civil society and international partners to raise awareness and reduce vulnerabilities.

Senegal's civil society remains active with general freedom of assembly, except for LGBTQ+ groups. The media landscape, despite its diversity and historical pluralism, faces increasing challenges, including political bias in news coverage and constraints on press freedom. Although abuses against journalists were relatively infrequent, media personnel encountered intimidation and legal threats when addressing sensitive topics, particularly corruption. A controversial law has introduced prison sentences for defamation and the dissemination of content deemed to harm public decency or discredit institutions. The authorities restricted internet access and social media following opposition leader arrests, although these developments were linked to elections and the country generally enjoys a relatively vibrant civil society and media climate.