

MONTHLY SECURITY FORECAST

DECEMBER 2024

HEADLINES THIS MONTH

Africa

- 3 **Mozambique:** Protests to pose security risks, cause disruption in major urban centres
- 7 **Nigeria:** Multiple violent actors exacerbating insecurity in already-volatile region
- 9 **On Watch** – Congo (DRC), Regional, Somalia

Americas

- 10 **Argentina:** Disruptive anti-government protests to continue in December
- 13 **Haiti:** Security situation deteriorating further resulting in violence, reduced transport options
- 16 **Mexico:** Restructuring of criminal landscape to drive further violence in December
- 19 **On Watch** – Brazil, Ecuador, Regional

Asia-Pacific

- 20 **India:** Security operations in Manipur state to continue as security environment remains fluid, volatile
- 24 **Pakistan:** Baloch insurgent groups to continue terror attacks in coming months
- 27 **Regional:** Korean Peninsula tensions high due to North Korea's military posturing, persistent aggression
- 30 **On Watch** – Bangladesh, India, Regional

Europe and CIS

- 31 **Romania:** Protests, counter-demonstrations possible around election period
- 34 **Ukraine:** Expect further Russian airstrikes across country, escalation of hybrid operations in Europe
- 37 **On Watch** – Georgia, Germany, Netherlands

Middle East and North Africa

- 38 **Turkey:** Terrorist attack near capital Ankara highlights militancy risk
- 41 **On Watch** – Lebanon, Libya, Regional

MONTHLY SECURITY FORECAST

December 2024



The *Monthly Security Forecast* gives managers insight into our assessment of significant events and any likely changes to the risk outlook in the coming month, globally.

It covers key indicators or drivers of deterioration being tracked by our regionally based security specialists and provides recommendations on how you can prepare, factoring in any planning constraints we have identified.

Our *Monthly Security Forecast*, like our Insight Reports, is part of our broader Premium Workforce Resilience offer. It complements our *Regional Security Forecasts*, available weekly to all subscribers.

Legend	
Indicator & definition	Action required
Low likelihood of substantive change in reporting period (30 days unless specified)	None
Some likelihood of change; no substantive deterioration	Requires vigilance
Significant likelihood of substantive change	Increased readiness to adapt risk management plans
Critical change imminent	Action required to update or implement plans
Unpredictable high-impact, low-likelihood event	Be prepared to respond at short notice to account for workforce and/or amend plans

If you have any questions about the recommendations or assessments in this forecast, please call your nearest Assistance Centre.

MOZAMBIQUE

- Political tensions have been elevated since the 9 October general election over allegations of electoral fraud.
- Related protests will continue to pose security risks and cause logistical disruption in major urban centres.
- The protest movement will likely gradually move away from calls for mass demonstrations and increasingly focus on economic sabotage.

Situation

A general election was held on 9 October to elect the president, members of parliament and provincial representatives. The security environment remained broadly stable on polling day, despite a few instances of low-level unrest at some polling stations. The unrest was caused by allegations of vote rigging and logistical challenges, such as voting stations opening late.

Political tensions began to increase after the vote. This was driven by the allegations of electoral interference and after associates of independent candidate Venancio Mondlane were killed by unknown attackers on 19 October. Mondlane

accused the security forces of involvement in the killings and called for nationwide protests and strikes over electoral fraud. The first round of protests coincided with the release of the election results on 24 October.

The ruling Frelimo party won around 70% of the vote, retained all eleven provincial governor positions, and increased its seats in parliament to 195 out of 250. Frelimo's victory will allow its candidate Daniel Chapo to succeed incumbent president Filipe Nyusi (in office since 2015), who did not contest the vote due to term limits. Mondlane received around 20% of the vote, while the former main opposition party Renamo obtained around 5% and the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) around 3%. However, civil society groups and local and foreign observers cited various electoral irregularities and fraud.

Mondlane, Renamo and the MDM all rejected the election results, levelling allegations of electoral interference against the National Electoral Commission and Frelimo. This included ballot stuffing, manipulation of voters' rolls, voter suppression, and violence and intimidation. The parties subsequently launched petitions with the Constitutional Council challenging the election results. Mondlane maintains that he won the election based on a partial parallel vote count while Renamo has called for the results to be annulled.

Protests over the election results have occurred in various cities since their release. While these have mostly been driven by calls from Mondlane for gatherings, they are also reflective of longstanding socio-economic discontent, including high poverty rates. Beira (Sofala province), the capital Maputo, Moamba, Matola (both Maputo province), Nampula (Nampula province), Tete (Tete province) and Quelimane (Zambezia province) have been hot spot protest locations. Protesters have commonly attempted to march to government offices and blocked roads with burning tyres. There have also been a few reports of vandalism and looting during protests. On several occasions, the police have used tear gas and live ammunition against demonstrators. Dozens of people have been killed in protests, while hundreds of others have been injured or arrested.

Intermittent internet outages have been reported since the release of the results. The authorities have confirmed they are implementing the outages to restrict protests. The Muloza-Lebombo border crossing with South Africa has also faced disruption on several occasions due to protests in the nearby Ressano Garcia neighbourhood (Maputo). Notably, South African officials closed the border crossing from 6-9 November due to protests. Maputo International Airport (MPM) has remained operational throughout the post-election period, though short-notice disruption remains a risk.

Implications

Despite the petitions launched by the opposition, we do not expect Frelimo's electoral win to be overturned. The Constitutional Council has until **1 January 2025** to release its ruling. Some alterations to the results in favour of the opposition may be made. During the 2023 municipal elections, following the Constitutional Council's review, Frelimo maintained a large share of the vote despite widespread allegations and evidence of electoral fraud. Frelimo's sustained win will maintain heightened political tensions at least until Chapo's swearing-in ceremony, which is scheduled for **15 January**.

Nevertheless, protests over the election results are less likely to escalate over the coming month. Instead, the intensity and frequency of protests is either likely to remain unchanged or reduce. While support for the electoral challenges remains high, attendance at protests has slightly reduced in recent weeks. Protest fatigue and the threat of violence at protests have likely contributed to this. Efforts by the authorities to curtail gatherings, such as deploying the army and restricting the internet, have also likely reduced participation in protests.

Over the coming months, local weather conditions and the start of the festive season will also likely further curtail the protest movement. Mozambique's wet season began in November and will run until April. December until March are typically the wettest months, often characterised by torrential downpours. The Southwest Indian Ocean cyclone season will also be active during this period. Any storm systems will further reduce the appetite and feasibility of protests. People's willingness to protest will be further affected by the festive season, when there is typically a marked decline in protests.

Mondlane and Nyusi have both stated their openness to holding talks aimed at easing political tensions. Plans for such talks have not been announced, but should they be it would indicate that the situation was becoming more stale. Regardless, Mondlane has stated

How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** International SOS has a permanent presence in Pemba (Cabo Delgado), including a clinic, and an office in Maputo. We also have a robust security partner network capable of operating countrywide.
- **Services offered:** From secure ground transport services, active monitoring for travellers, security consulting and training, to assisting with evacuations.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24-48 hours to activate, depending on location and availability of resources at the time of the request. Lead times in Maputo will generally be shorter.
- **Secure accommodation:** Recommended hotels assessed by International SOS in Beira, Maputo and Pemba.

his intention to continue calls for protests until he is declared the winner of the election. Such statements may nonetheless be interpreted as posturing to pressure the government into some form of concession.

intention to continue calls for protests until he is declared the winner of the election. Such statements may nonetheless be interpreted as posturing to pressure the government into some form of concession.

It is also likely that the protest movement will gradually move away from calls for mass demonstrations and increasingly focus on economic sabotage. This would include disrupting operations at border crossings, ports and blocking main roads, causing increased logistical challenges for workforce in Mozambique. According to a credit ratings agency, Mozambique is estimated to have lost around \$390m, or 2.2% of gross domestic product, due to the protests. Border disruption and closures will increase the risk of shortages of certain goods from South Africa, including food produce such as tomatoes and potatoes. Nonetheless, where protests do occur, they will continue to cause credible risks to bystanders. Maputo will likely remain most affected by protests, followed by other main cities.

Recommendations

Travel to MEDUIM-risk areas in Mozambique can proceed. However, in-country workforce should exercise increased caution and maintain flexible itineraries due to unrest risks. Defer all travel to the EXTREME-risk Macomia, Meluco, Mocimboa da Praia, Muidumbe, Nangade, Palma and Quissanga districts of Cabo Delgado province. Closely monitor developments and organisation-specific triggers for indications of a deterioration of the security environment.

Brief workforce on protest risks and ensure they have access to accurate, timely updates and clear guidance on actions to take during gatherings. Ensure the information is sought through reliable local and international information and media sources, and International SOS alerts. Be mindful of which media sources are accessed due to the potential for biased reporting. Workforce should be advised to minimise non-essential movement on days where strikes or protests are called, and to avoid protest locations due to credible unrest risks.

Review escalation and crisis-management plans and ensure they are realistic, account for a variety of scenarios, and are rapidly implementable. Relevant stakeholders should be briefed on their roles and responsibilities. Ensure that you have up-to-date contact details for, and locations of, workforce.

Ensure that workforce understands how and whom to contact in the event of a security or medical emergency. Reconfirm that emergency communication protocols remain activated and account for intermittent disruption to communications networks. Ensure planning is in place for a potential shutdown of communications, including internet and telephone services.

Ensure that workforce can shelter in place in a secure location for at least 72 hours with access to essential supplies, including water, food, medicine and fuel in case the situation in their location deteriorates further. Workforce with established private security should be advised to co-ordinate with them about retained services as an additional layer of security.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Flight operations at Maputo international airport and/or other main airports are suspended or disrupted for more than 24 hours	Organisations will need to update escalation and evacuation plans to account for such disruption.
An increase in the scale, frequency and violence at election-related protests	This would pose increased risks and disruption to people in affected locations and would likely warrant the imposition of more restrictive security measures for workforce. The police's ability to respond to widespread unrest will be impacted by its logistical challenges, posing added risks.
The government imposes a state of emergency and/ or a curfew in Maputo or countrywide	This would likely be in response to an escalation in political tensions and protest risks. This would create operational difficulties for organisations in affected locations.
Mondlane is injured or killed	Opposition supporters would likely accuse the security forces of involvement, increasing political tensions. This would prompt an increase in opposition protests and related unrest and violence.

NIGERIA

- The Nigerian military in November announced the emergence of a 'new' Islamist extremist militant group, Lakurawa in the country's North West region.
- The authorities claimed that Lakurawa emerged following the July 2023 military coup in Niger, with militants from Sahelian countries expanding into Nigeria.
- However, Lakurawa has been known to be operating in Sokoto state since 2018, though had not managed to expand into Kebbi state until 2024.

Situation

According to a 7 November statement from defence spokesperson Major-General Edward Buba, Lakurawa was able to benefit from a breakdown in joint military patrols on the border following the coup in Niger. Comprised of militants from Mali and Niger, the group is reported to have successfully established a presence in remote areas of Kebbi and Sokoto, while also operating in Zamfara state.

A few days after this announcement, an attack on Mera village (Kebbi) was attributed to Lakurawa. Insurgents reportedly entered the village on motorbikes, killing 17 people and injuring several others. Local sources indicate

six people of Fulani ethnicity were killed in a reprisal attack some days later. Prior to this, in August, Lakurawa members killed three soldiers in an attack on a military base in Sokoto.

It is known that insurgents from Mali and Niger have been making periodic incursions into Sokoto since 2018. According to local reports, Lakurawa first entered Sokoto at the request of nomadic herdsmen to defend local communities against armed criminal gangs, locally known as bandits, from Zamfara. Over time, they have been able to gain influence in at least five local government areas, including Gudu, Tangaza and Silame, through a combination of ideological indoctrination and financial incentives to facilitate recruitment.

The North West region has long been vulnerable to militant expansion. Nigeria shares a long, porous and poorly patrolled border with Niger, where groups such as the al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for Support of Islam and Muslims and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara operate. Bandits have long been able to exploit these vulnerabilities to pass between the two countries undetected. Moreover, there has been evidence of militants from north-eastern Nigeria dispersing and even establishing local cells across the North West.

Implications

The existence of multiple violent actors will exacerbate insecurity in what is already a volatile region. There have been reports of Lakurawa members engaging in violent confrontations with bandits. Although their motivations differ, bandits and Lakurawa members employ many similar tactics against local communities, such as raids, cattle rustling, extortion and illegal taxation.

The group's emergence is also likely to stoke ethnic tensions and lead to further stigmatisation of ethnic-Fulani communities due to their perceived affiliation with Islamist militant groups. As the response to the Kebbi attack illustrates, local communities and vigilante groups may stage reprisal attacks targeting ethnic-Fulanis and suspected Lakurawa members.

In response to the Kebbi attack, the Nigerian military has carried out air and ground assaults on camps belonging to Lakurawa, employing the same strategy it uses to combat banditry. However, such security operations have also led bandit groups to relocate to other parts of the affected states, expanding the areas impacted by associated violence. Moreover, the Nigerian security forces remain overstretched, and their limited presence in remote areas of the North West will likely also enable further militant expansion and attacks on local communities. However, in the short-to-medium term, we expect this to remain confined to rural and isolated areas.

Recommendations

Managers should conduct regular assessments of the prevailing security situation and the mitigation measures required in their area of interest, considering the profile of both their organisation and workforce. Develop, maintain and brief local workforce on contingency plans tailored to the local risk environment, including procedures for incident response (such as ambushes, kidnapping or road traffic accidents), communications procedures and mobile/radio coverage (including an emergency contact list).

Establish a varied range of information sources, including the security forces, federal/state/local governments, traditional local authorities and fellow organisations.

Ensure that workforce conduct medium- and long-distance travel by air, where possible. Plan for essential road journeys to only be undertaken in daylight hours, considering weather and road conditions, and with a good journey-management plan, including: a knowledgeable, trained driver; well-functioning four-wheel-drive vehicle/s; emergency equipment (spare tyre, grab or run bag, first-aid kit, etc.); and robust communications.

Outside state capitals, accommodation in the region is limited. Accommodate workforce in a secure compound provided by a local partner/organisation. Ensure robust physical security measures around compounds, including high walls, CCTV cameras, strong access-control measures and bullet-proof rooms.

How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** An accredited network of security partners that can operate in all states.
- **Services offered:** From meet-and-greet to secure transport, including MOPOL escorts, to assisting with evacuations.
- **Activation time:** Depends on location and availability of resources at time of the request.
- **Secure accommodation:** Yes, in major cities such as the capital Abuja, Ibadan (Oyo state), Lagos (Lagos state), Maiduguri (Borno state) and Port Harcourt (Rivers state).

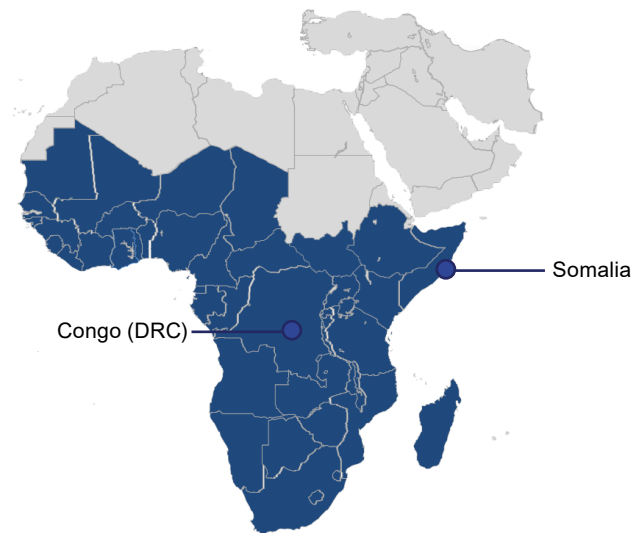
Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Attacks target urban centres across the North West region	This remains improbable in the short-to-medium term. Attacks are likely to continue to focus on remote areas.
The expansion of militant groups and attacks into other states across the region	The porous nature of borders and limited security force presence are likely to facilitate further such expansion, particularly in Zamfara, where spillover violence has already been recorded.

AFRICA: ON WATCH

Congo (DRC): Further protests denouncing planned constitutional changes are likely this month. Civil society groups, including Fight for Change, and opposition politicians have called on citizens to mobilise against perceived attempts by President Felix Tshisekedi to stay in power. There is a high risk of unrest at related gatherings.

Regional: The Southwest Indian Ocean cyclone season will continue **until 30 April**. Due to warmer-than-normal sea temperatures, there is a 50% probability that there will be above-normal activity this season, with nine-13 storms expected to form. Up to seven of these are expected to become cyclones. Comoros, Mayotte (France), Mauritius, Madagascar, Mozambique and Reunion (France) will be most affected.

Somalia: The African Union Transitional Mission will draw down by 31 December, replaced in January by the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM). Due to diplomatic tensions, Somalia has barred Ethiopia from participating in AUSSOM and welcomed Egypt's participation. The Islamist extremist al-Shabab group will seek to exploit any security gaps created from the transition and amid tensions.



ARGENTINA

- Anti-government protests by several union groups are expected in December.
- Government workers and transport unions, among other groups, are expected to organise demonstrations.
- Such gatherings have the potential to result in considerable traffic disruption and localised disturbances.

Situation

Several union groups are planning renewed protests in December against President Javier Milei's administration. The State Workers' Association (ATE) has called for a 24-hour strike on **5 December** to protest against the government's plan to implement merit examinations. The leader of the truckers' union Pablo Moyano has called for a general strike on the same day, with other transport unions expected to join the industrial action. Other unions that could potentially join the industrial action include the

Argentine Workers' Central Union, as well as aviation unions. Demonstrators will protest against the high cost of living, as well as the government's austerity measures. Such measures are enshrined in the Ley Bases law and include the privatisation of state businesses and tax incentives for investments.

Despite the involvement of several unions, the Argentina General Workers' Confederation (CGT) has announced it will not participate in the strike, instead attempting to engage in talks with the government to seek more favourable measures.

Milei's government has faced several strike measures since assuming office in December 2023, including general strikes in January and May. Transport unions have gone on strike as recently as October, while pilot and air traffic controllers went on strike in early November.

Implications

Related anti-government demonstrations are usually well attended, cause significant disruption and prompt a heightened security force presence. The demonstrations are most disruptive in central areas of the capital Buenos Aires but can also affect cities such as Cordoba (Cordoba province), Mendoza (Mendoza province) and Rosario (Santa Fe province). In the capital, demonstrators frequently march through high-impact locations such as Plaza de Mayo and Casa Rosada, and occasionally attempt to erect roadblocks through key locations and routes including La Noria bridge, Puerreydon and Saavedra.

A heightened security force presence can be expected on protest days, particularly in the vicinity of government buildings and along march routes. The police are liable to use tough crowd-control measures to disperse any unruly gatherings. These primarily include water cannon and tear gas, which have been deployed in previous strike-related protests against Milei's administration. They are often used when demonstrators block key roads or bridges and refuse to allow passage. The use of such measures can prompt demonstrators to retaliate by throwing stones and other objects or, in extreme situations, Molotov cocktails.

The 24-hour strike called by ATE and transport unions on 5 December is likely to cause significant disruption. It could prove to be a good indicator of the potential for further anti-government protests in the following weeks. If related protests are well attended, union leaders could call for demonstrations to continue. Such calls would become particularly salient if dialogue between the CGT and the government break down, prompting its decision to join the protests.

However, the most likely scenario is that related protests will transpire with notable disruption on protest days, but a lack of clear momentum and limited potential for unrest. Individual unions may continue to demonstrate throughout the month, similar to aviation unions in early November, related to issues specific to their sector. These could cause flight, road or other service disruption, but would be unlikely to result in violence.

Recommendations

Travel to and operations in Argentina can continue. Managers and workforce, particularly those based in Buenos Aires and other urban centres, should monitor developments and exercise caution on days when protests are taking place. Managers with local workforce should advise of the potential for disruption and localised disturbances, and ensure they are aware of ways to mitigate their exposure. Workforce should be advised to avoid related demonstrations and quickly leave an area at the first sign of unrest in their vicinity. In addition, managers should consider allowing flexible working arrangements, including working from home, for workforce whose commutes will be impacted, or for organisations with offices in areas likely to be affected by demonstrations.

Managers should closely monitor International SOS' security alerts and liaise with trusted local contacts to remain abreast of developments and related protests in their specific locations of interest.

How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** Strong network of accredited security providers with nationwide operational capabilities.
- **Services offered:** Meet-and-greet, secure ground transportation, executive protection, security site assessments, evacuations, security consulting and training, 24/7 threat monitoring, security and medical alerts, medical information, advice and assistance.
- **Activation time:** 24-48 hours to activate, depending on location and availability of resources at the time of the request. Shorter in major urban centres such as Buenos Aires or Cordoba.
- **Secure accommodation:** Available in most major cities; hotels vetted by International SOS in Buenos Aires and Rosario.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Armed attacks on government officials serving in rural areas Protests are postponed or pass off without major disruption	This outcome is possible, though disruptive demonstrations are likely to occur.
Protest and strike measures go ahead as planned and cause considerable traffic disruption in Buenos Aires and other urban centres	This development is likely due to the unions' significant mobilising power and public statements indicating their intentions to strike.
The strike on 5 December is well attended and results in a harsh crackdown by the security forces, which galvanises further protests and prompts additional unions to join the protest campaign	This outcome is unlikely as Milei's administration has carefully managed security responses to protests, as well as dialogue with individual unions. However, such a scenario cannot be completely ruled out, and instances of police violence have prompted an increase in the frequency of protests in recent years.

HAITI

- Since interim prime minister Garry Conille's (in office 2011-12, 24) replacement by Alix Didier Fils-Amie, Haiti's security situation has deteriorated, particularly in the capital Port-au-Prince.
- Widespread gang violence on 11 November resulted in numerous casualties in Port-au-Prince and targeted aircraft at the city's Toussaint Louverture Airport (PAP).
- As a result of the violence at the airport, the facility was temporarily closed. It has since reopened, though the US has restricted flights to and from Port-au-Prince **until 12 December**.

Situation

Fils-Amie, a businessman, was appointed as interim prime minister by the Transitional Presidential Council on 10 November. Conille initially decried his removal from office as unconstitutional, before acquiescing to the council's decision.

Conille's removal came as Haiti continued to make little progress in stemming widespread gang violence despite a Kenyan-led force aiding in security efforts. A corruption scandal involving high-level politicians also led to growing tension between the council and Conille and his cabinet.

On 11 November, the day after Conille was removed from power, widespread gang violence began throughout Port-au-Prince. This culminated in an attack on the city's airport, which resulted in three planes being damaged by bullets and the wounding of a flight attendant. In response, the airport was closed until 26 November. The US has restricted flights

to and from Port-au-Prince until at least 12 December. Despite initially restricting flights nationwide, the US has allowed flights to Jacmel (JAK), Pignon, Jeremie (JEE), Antoine-Simon (CYA), Port-de-Paix (PAX), and Cap-Haitien (CAP) airports.

Widespread violence has continued since the removal of Conille. On 14 November in the Solino neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince, hundreds of residents were forced to flee after battles between gangs and the security forces. The neighbourhood is one of the 15% in the city outside gang control. Thousands have fled in recent days due to the escalating violence throughout the city.

On 19 November, the Viv Ansanm gang collective led by Jimmy 'Barbecue' Cherizier attacked the upscale Petionville neighbourhood, which is filled with hotels and restaurants. It is popular with wealthy Haitians and foreign nationals. According to police sources, the attack was repelled and the gangs suffered heavy losses of personnel and materiel. Reportedly, numerous captured gang members were lynched by angry locals. Mob justice, often violent and led by 'Bwa-Kele' self-defence groups, is common in Haiti against suspected gang members and collaborators.

Overland travel in Port-au-Prince remains difficult and hazardous. Gangs control checkpoints throughout the city and the risk of robbery, extortion, kidnapping and murder by gang members remain major risks.

Implications

Gangs in Haiti often take advantage of political turmoil to attempt to expand their influence. The replacement of Conille by Fils-Amie and subsequent increase in gang activity fits a years-long pattern of cyclical violence in Haiti. Continued escalatory violence is likely throughout December.

Civil unrest surrounding the public's discontent with the security force's inability to prevent rising levels of violence and the removal of Conille are possible. Protests may escalate to violence, arson, looting and other acts of vandalism by demonstrators. The security forces may disperse such events using tear gas and live ammunition. Many protests in Port-au-Prince block major thoroughfares through the city which could pose further disruption to overland travel.

Mob justice will remain an ongoing concern in Haiti. Those deemed to be affiliated with gangs, even if those accusations are unfounded, face the risk of severe physical harm up to and including death. The security forces will often not intervene and in some cases encourage violent mobs.

While the restrictions on air travel to and from the US are due to be lifted in December, the restrictions could be reimposed with little warning. An extension of the US travel restrictions, including to all airports, would deepen Haiti's isolation and increase the difficulty of entering or leaving Haiti by air. Furthermore, closures of Toussaint Louverture Airport are possible with little warning and would make entrance and exit of Port-au-Prince by air extremely difficult.

Due to ongoing political tensions with the Dominican Republic and surging violence, the land border remains closed except for limited commercial activity. Haitian nationals are not permitted to enter the Dominican Republic for an indefinite period of time. Coupled with ongoing restrictions on air travel to and from the Dominican

How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** A vetted network of security and transport providers able to operate outside Port-au-Prince and in limited areas of Port-au-Prince. A network of sources able to verify complex information from across the country.
- **Services offered:** A robust offering of security services, including meet-and-greet, secure ground transport, supply drops, active monitoring for travellers, executive protection, evacuation assistance with appropriate notice, security consulting and training, 24/7 threat monitoring, security and medical alerts, information, analysis and advice on a range of security risks, travel and operational issues, medical information, advice and assistance. Services may be limited by the security environment including airspace, airport, and seaport closures, roadblocks, and immigration constraints but will be attempted on a best-effort basis.
- **Activation time:** Up to six-48 hours to activate for on-the-ground, depending on location and availability of resources at the time of request. For aircraft, a lead time of 48-72 hours should be expected. Due to the security situation, a longer lead time may be required for advanced planning.
- **Secure accommodation:** Yes. A list of recommended hotels assessed by International SOS in numerous cities nationwide. Advice for accommodation selection available via the Assistance Centre.

Republic, Haitian nationals currently have very limited options for leaving Haiti which may become unviable with little notice.

Recommendations

Defer all travel to Haiti. Those currently in-country should devise an evacuation strategy and execute it when it is feasible to do so. Business travellers' diplomatic authorities in-country should be notified of their presence.

If already in Haiti, ensure you have a sufficient stockpile of essential goods including food, water and medicine to enable a stand-fast period of up to seven days.

All travel in Haiti, whether overland or by air, requires advanced security and contingency planning. Contact International SOS for consultation in developing such plans.

In the event of encountering roadblocks, business travellers should not attempt to cross them. Co-operate with criminals' demands to avoid an escalation to violence.

In the event of a protest and/or violence, immediately leave the area if feasible. If unable to leave an area, shelter in place until it is safe to do so.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Airport/airspace closures are announced	This would significantly hinder people's ability to get out of Haiti as the land border with the Dominican Republic is also closed. Travellers may become effectively stranded depending on the extent of the closures.
Widespread protests are announced	The security forces would likely become overstretched and overland travel routes would be blocked. Gangs could take advantage of the situation to expand their control.
Roadblocks are put in place on vital overland travel routes	Certain parts of Port-au-Prince could become isolated until they can be cleared by security forces. Supplies could become limited and overland travel impossible for those affected.
Large-scale clashes occur between gangs and the security forces	It is likely that bystanders would be caught in a crossfire, resulting in numerous casualties. There could be widespread displacement of inhabitants due to combat with no clear ability to return. There would be a high likelihood of destruction of property and a high risk to life.

MEXICO

- Recent developments point to a restructuring of the criminal landscape that is likely to produce reprisals in both Queretaro and Guanajuato states in the coming weeks.
- Violence spilling over from neighbouring states into Queretaro is due to the rotation in key state government and security positions amid the conflict between criminal organisations.
- Despite a collaboration between federal and states governments to mitigate a broader escalation in Queretaro, further instances of violence are possible throughout December.

Situation

Previously considered a 'safe haven' from violent crime affecting nearby states, Queretaro state has experienced a surge in gang-related activity in recent months. A mass shooting in a bar in the state capital Santiago de Queretaro on 9 November underscores this trend. At least ten people were killed in the attack that initially targeted members of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) before turning indiscriminate.

Although a mass shooting of this scale is unprecedented in Queretaro, the incident follows a series of recent events pointing towards a decline of

the security environment. Such incidents include the killing of another individual with alleged ties to the CJNG in the upscale Juriquilla neighbourhood of the state capital.

The worsening security situation in Queretaro is linked to developments in neighbouring Guanajuato. The 9 November attack is being investigated as a potential reprisal for a shooting at a restaurant in Guanajuato, where seven people died. Prior to this, an armed group entered an addiction rehabilitation centre in Guanajuato and abducted more than ten people, killing four others in the process. These incidents are likely tit-for-tat violence amid the ongoing dispute between the CJNG and the Santa Rosa de Lima Cartel.

The recent turmoil in Guanajuato that is extending to Queretaro is partly linked to the rotation in key positions of local law enforcement institutions. This is due to the recent change in the Guanajuato state government following the general election. Notably, the Guanajuato state general attorney is due to leave office in **January 2025**.

Government rotations often affect the balance of power in the criminal landscape across the country. Such imbalances can trigger surges in violent crime as criminal groups vie for opportunities to expand geographically or operationally while entrant administrations get a full grip of security operations and strategy.

However, in recent years, Queretaro's Governor Mauricio Kuri had sought to open channels of communication with the federal government despite their different party affiliation. The positive opening of communication allowed for a swifter coordination between governments in the response after the 9 November incident.

Implications

Recent developments point towards a regional restructuring of the criminal landscape in both Guanajuato and Queretaro that is likely to continue producing violence in December.

While the full effectiveness of the joint security force strategy is yet to be seen, it will be a key factor in preventing an escalation of violence in the state in the coming month.

Further incidents of violence in bars, restaurants or other entertainment venues are possible and pose incidental risks to bystanders, such as being caught in crossfire. However, the likelihood of experiencing such incidents remains low as a protracted escalation of violence, if any, is expected to be moderate in the following weeks.

Despite the recent increase in criminal activity, International SOS assesses that Queretaro remains a MEDIUM-risk location. Petty and opportunistic crime are the risks that are most likely to impact business travellers and domestic workforce. The security environment in HIGH-risk areas of Guanajuato is expected to remain volatile while the relationship between the authorities and gangs continues to rebalance after the recent major changes in state and federal governments.

Recommendations

Managers supporting workforce in Queretaro and Guanajuato should implement business-continuity plans where possible, empowering workforce to work from home or from a site unlikely to be impacted by associated violence.

While spillover violence in Queretaro and MEDIUM-risk areas of Guanajuato should be limited, security managers should closely monitor developments in these states. Managers should consider seeking out information-sharing relationships with industry partners to enhance the situational awareness for their in-country workforce. They should also stay apprised of any security operations and the detention or killing of organised crime members, as these are known triggers for outbursts of violence and associated disruption. Should local sources suggest confrontations between criminal groups and the security forces are escalating, consider relocating workforce to secure accommodation elsewhere, where feasible.

Business travellers and workforce in Queretaro will benefit from increased precautions, particularly if going out at night or to entertainment establishments. Seek to vet restaurants, bars, nightclubs and other entertainment locations with local contacts before attending; choose seats close to the entrance and sit facing the entrance or the outside of the venue. Keep belongings close at all times and avoid overt displays of wealth.

How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** A network of International SOS offices, sites, and clinics, including an Assistance Centre in Mexico City. A robust network of logistics and security providers operating countrywide.
- **Services offered:** Meet-and-greet services, secure ground transportation, executive protection, security site assessments, evacuations, security consulting and training, 24/7 threat monitoring, security and medical alerts, medical information, advice and assistance.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24 hours to activate, depending on the location and the availability of resources at the time of request. Shorter in major urban centres such as Mexico City, Guadalajara (Jalisco state), and Monterrey (Nuevo Leon state).
- **Secure accommodation:** Available in most major urban centres; hotels vetted by International SOS in Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey, San Jose del Cabo (Baja California Sur state), Cancun (Quintana Roo state), and Paraiso (Tabasco state).

Workforce should review routes travelled during commutes to work and in other daily activities. Due to the persistent threat of criminal roadblocks and shoot-outs, especially in Guanajuato, enhanced precautions should be taken when undertaking ground travel between urban centres. If undertaking essential journeys through such areas, they should verify the status of routes with local contacts and resources prior to setting out. They should not attempt to drive through an ongoing roadblock or checkpoint, whether enforced by legitimate security forces, vigilante groups or armed criminals.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Additional targeted attacks in Guanajuato	Additional incidents in Guanajuato are likely in the coming weeks. However, an increase in frequency may indicate an escalation in violence and, therefore, the need for additional precautions. Monitor developments related to incidents in Guanajuato and Queretaro and any of our reassessments of the security environment.
Further shootings at bars and other entertainment venues in Queretaro	Further mass shootings would indicate a deterioration of the security environment. Such attacks often become indiscriminate despite initially being targeted, posing serious incidental risks to bystanders.
Shootings at bars in San Miguel de Allende (Guanajuato)	Shootings or targeted attacks in San Miguel de Allende would indicate a definite worsening of the security environment in Guanajuato and a likely spillover of violence to Queretaro, requiring additional security precautions in major cities of both states.

AMERICAS: ON WATCH

Brazil: Demonstrations linked to the indictment of former president Jair Bolsonaro (in office 2019-22) are likely in December. On 22 November, the Supreme Court indicted Bolsonaro for an alleged coup attempt following his defeat in the 2022 election. The country saw mass demonstrations in February when the investigation began. Protest hot spots include areas around government buildings and party-affiliated buildings.

Ecuador: Monitor developments and avoid demonstrations linked to persistent nationwide power outages. Scheduled daily outages lasting more than eight hours have been in effect since September due to drought conditions. Related protests took place in mid-November and are likely to recur in major cities, such as the capital Quito and Guayaquil (Guayas province).

Regional: The winter holiday season is often accompanied by a surge in petty and opportunistic crime. Key drivers of crime include increased expenditure of money due to payment of end-of-year bonuses, and increased travel and pedestrian circulation. Workforce should take additional precautions, including maintaining a low profile, concealing money and valuables, exercising situational awareness and avoiding displays of wealth.



INDIA

- Protracted unrest in Manipur state has intensified after suspected ethnic-Kuki-Zo militants on 11 November abducted ethnic-Meiteis from a relief camp in Jiribam district (Manipur).
- Additional security force personnel have been deployed following the imposition of a curfew and internet restrictions in several districts.
- Expect further security operations in Manipur as the security environment remains fluid and volatile following the recent ethnic violence and associated protests.

Situation

The security environment in Manipur has significantly deteriorated since May 2023. This is linked to persistent violence between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo ethnic communities over the former's demands for job reservations. Related heightened tensions have fuelled attacks by armed ethnic groups on rival communities. There have also been violent protests, acts of vandalism and arson, prolonged economic blockades and shutdown strikes.

Periodic escalations follow tit-for-tat acts of violence. This was demonstrated by two incidents in Jiribam on 11 November. Eleven suspected Kuki-Zo militants were killed by the security forces, while six Meiteis were abducted from a relief camp and later killed, allegedly by Kuki-Zo militants. This triggered widespread and occasionally violent protests by Meitei groups. Participants demanded greater security for the community, which primarily resides in Manipur's valley districts (Imphal East, Imphal West, Bishnupur and Thoubal).

The violence also prompted calls by Kuki-Zo civil society groups for statewide and districtwide shutdown strikes in Kuki-Zo-majority areas such as Churachandpur, Kangpokpi and Jiribam. They have also urged attacks by armed Kuki-Zo groups on Meitei settlements in inter-district border areas. Meanwhile, the transport of essential supplies along national highways (NH) 2 and 37 has been disrupted by frequent roadblocks organised by civil groups from both communities.

The authorities have responded to the unrest with prohibitory orders, suspensions of internet services and the 13 November deployment of an additional 7,000 security force personnel. Meanwhile, the home affairs ministry extended the geographical scope of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in Imphal East, Imphal West, Bishnupur, Kangpokpi and Jiribam districts. This legislation, which provides the security forces with additional powers to maintain public order, is opposed by Meitei and Kuki-Zo groups.

The prolonged nature of the unrest in Manipur has elicited widespread condemnation of the state and central governments. Members of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) have expressed concerns. Protesters have vandalised the residences of elected officials in the state capital Imphal and of BJP members in Jiribam district. A march towards the Raj Bhavan (governor's residence) in Imphal was forcibly dispersed by police officers, who fired tear gas at the demonstrators.

Manipur's chief minister N Biren Singh called an NDA meeting in Imphal on 18 November, which only 27 of the alliance's 53 legislators attended. Ten Kuki-Zo and ethnic-Hmar legislators abstained. The legislators passed a

resolution calling for military action by the central government against Kuki-Zo militants in Jiribam. It also urged the official declaration of Kuki-Zo militant groups involved in recent killings as 'unlawful organisations' within seven days. Meitei and Kuki-Zo civil society groups have rejected the resolution, with the former demanding a broader military crackdown and the latter denouncing alleged persecution of tribal minorities.

The NDA requires at least 31 legislators to retain a simple majority in the Manipur legislative assembly, which has 60 seats. However, the attendance of only 27 legislators at the 18 November meeting underscores the erosion of political support for Singh's government. In the 2024 parliamentary election, the BJP's main rival, the Indian National Congress, won both federal parliamentary seats in Manipur.

Implications

The recent security reinforcements, which include the highest single personnel deployment since the unrest began, highlight the severity of the recent escalation. Among their primary responsibilities will be the securing of sensitive targets for militants. These include key government offices, ministerial residences and security installations such as police stations and military armouries, which may be targeted for looting of weapons. Security will also be reinforced in inter-district border areas, such as those between Churachandpur and Imphal West, where armed groups are highly active.

There will also be an intensification of security operations in hill districts inhabited by the Kuki-Zo community, such as Kangpokpi and Churachandpur. Kuki-Zo civil society groups will condemn such activity and organise well-supported shutdown strikes in protest. Such action is also likely to be announced in response to the continued imposition of curfews and internet suspensions.

Security deployments in Jiribam, within which the recent violence was focused, will aim to secure NH-37. This will ensure provision of essential supplies to Manipur via neighbouring Asom state. Kuki-Zo and other tribal groups have said they will stop trucks en route to Meitei-majority districts, which include Imphal.

Any repeat of the 11 November abduction of Meiteis will trigger further spontaneous outbreaks of violence. Protests in Imphal and other Meitei-majority districts are likely to take place around government buildings, with an increased likelihood of violence. The police response will involve baton charges and the firing of tear gas, smoke grenades and rubber bullets to disperse crowds.

The Christmas (**25 December**) festive period is a sensitive date involving a heightened risk of violence. Prior to it, groups representing the Christian Kuki-Zo community may seek to close the borders between hill and valley districts, citing security concerns. Security will likely be reinforced around churches to prevent attacks by armed Meitei groups.

Further anti-Meitei attacks, as well as security operations targeting Kuki-Zo militants, will probably trigger defections by NDA partners and BJP legislators, citing personal security concerns. If Singh's government loses its majority, he is unlikely to survive a vote of confidence in the state legislature. With the security environment unfavourable for assembly elections, the central government may be left with little option but to impose President's Rule (central government control) in Manipur.

This decision and Manipur-related issues will be raised in the winter session of the parliament (25 November-**20 December**). Kuki-Zo groups are likely to support President's Rule due to their dissatisfaction with the state administration. However, Meitei organisations oppose it, as Singh belongs to their community, and any imposition of President's Rule will trigger further Meitei protests. Nevertheless, President's Rule would permit the central government to initiate tripartite peace talks with Meitei and Kuki-Zo community leaders. It will also centralise the security response as the authorities bid to swiftly bring the unrest under control.

Recommendations

Defer all travel to Manipur until further notice. Understand the exposure and ethnic profile of your in-state workforce and assets. Ensure that workforce in Imphal and the valley districts can stand fast for at least 72 hours in the event of a deterioration in the security environment. In the hill districts, ensure workforce have stand-fast capabilities of up to five days. Stand-fast capabilities should include assessed secure accommodation and safe area(s) with access to essential supplies. Maintain a local security and logistics providers' network which can operate across districts where other communities are the majority. Maintain access to reliable means of communication and ensure workforce understand whom to contact in the event of an emergency. Reconfirm that emergency communications protocols remain activated and account for intermittent disruption to communications networks.

Access and share the latest threat intelligence from in-country sources, diplomatic missions and International SOS alerts. Following the resumption of internet services, misinformation and rumours can trigger unrest. All information circulating on social media should be verified through reliable sources. Ensure workforce are circumspect in their online and in-person communications, bearing in mind cultural sensitivities and local sentiments.

Ensure that business-continuity and contingency planning is up to date and that you have a robust and rapidly implementable escalation stand-fast and evacuation plan adjusted to current and potential scenarios. Evacuation plans must consider the current operational, logistics and security challenges. Reconfirm the capabilities of local security and logistics providers, including the ability to support ground transport and any manned guarding arrangements.

How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** The Assistance Centre and Asia Security Centre is in the capital New Delhi, along with offices in Mumbai (Maharashtra) and Bengaluru (Karnataka). We have a network of logistics and security partners able to operate countrywide, as well as a network of International SOS sites and clinics.
- **Services offered:** From meet-and-greet and secure ground transport services to assisting with evacuations with appropriate notice. We carry out 24/7 threat monitoring and issue security and medical alerts on a range of risks and operations issues.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24 hours to activate in Tier-1 cities such as Bengaluru, Mumbai and New Delhi. Response times vary for other urban centres and rural areas, depending on location and availability of resources at the time of the request.
- **Secure accommodation:** Recommended hotels assessed on the ground and via desktop research by International SOS in major urban centres. Contact the Assistance Centre for advice on accommodation selection.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
The extension of prohibitory measures	Protests and/or strikes would be likely, with participants demanding the relaxation of curfews and resumption of internet services.
There are protests/shutdown strikes over the implementation of AFSPA	These would be more likely to take place at police stations in the affected districts. Such demonstrations would be forcibly dispersed by the police if necessary.
An attack by armed groups in inter-district border areas	This could involve attacks on Meitei farmers during the ongoing paddy harvest season. It could also entail attacks on churches ahead of and during the Christmas period.
An attack by armed groups in inter-district border areas. Incidents of ethnic violence, such as abductions and killings	This would trigger spontaneous, violent protests in valley districts, including Imphal. Protesters would target government and police buildings to demand justice.
President's Rule is imposed in Manipur	There would be a heightened security force presence, particularly in Imphal. Meitei and Kuki-Zo civil society groups could announce further protests against the central government.

PAKISTAN

- Extremist insurgent groups in Balochistan province are expanding and intensifying their attacks on the security forces and civilians.
- The insurgency threat is most acute in the EXTREME-risk areas of Balochistan. There are also risks in cities such as Karachi (Sindh province) where bombings have also occurred.
- The government and the security forces lack a credible strategy and operational capabilities to effectively contain and deter the threat posed by Baloch insurgent groups.

Situation

Baloch insurgent groups have intensified and expanded their attacks across Balochistan. Most incidents are attributable to the largest and most-capable separatist group, the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA). Between 15 October and 15 November, the BLA took responsibility for 15 attacks which killed 58 people and injured at least 145 others. While most of these attacks occurred within Balochistan, the BLA also boasts operational capabilities in other regions.

Baloch insurgent groups have waged a campaign since the early 2000s against Pakistan's federal

government over the exploitation of Balochistan's natural resources for the benefit of other provinces. The presence of large-scale infrastructure projects, especially as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), has further escalated militant activity, as they are perceived not to benefit Balochistan. The groups also accuse the government of economic deprivation, political marginalisation and state repression towards their demands of greater autonomy for the province.

The BLA primarily targets the police and the security forces. Security checkpoints and government installations are key incident locations. It has also intensified its attacks on civilian soft targets, with a focus on Chinese nationals and infrastructure sites. On 6 October, the BLA claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack near Jinnah International Airport (KHI) in Karachi that killed two Chinese nationals. Attacks targeting Chinese projects and nationals have also occurred around the port of Gwadar (Balochistan).

The group's attacks consist primarily of bomb attacks on security force vehicles, personnel or bases. Suicide blasts are increasingly used and are usually more deadly. On 9 November, a major terror attack by the BLA occurred at the state capital Quetta's railway station, killing 40 people. While the group said this attack targeted military personnel, many casualties were civilians. The group's elite suicide unit launched simultaneous attacks across multiple locations in the province from 25-26 August, killing over 70 people, including several civilians. Social media and messaging platforms are being used by the BLA to disseminate its propaganda. There has also been greater involvement of educated professionals in the insurgency, and the inclusion of female militants.

The BLA benefits from logistical and operational support by the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP, Pakistani Taliban) which is largely based in neighbouring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The rising resentment of the Baloch population and the increasing technological sophistication of groups makes the Baloch insurgency resilient.

The security forces conducted around 34 counter-terrorism operations nationwide from 15 October-15 November, killing 89 suspected insurgents. However, Pakistan's political instability and other crises reduce the prospect of a comprehensive political effort to contain the threat posed by the Baloch insurgency.

While elements of Pakistan's security forces are highly trained and capable, there are issues around corruption, low pay and poor training in some units which undermine their efforts. Additionally, the government's focus on containing political threats, notably its crackdown on the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, diverts resources away from tackling the militant threat.

Implications

The BLA and other Baloch insurgent groups will continue to commit terror attacks in the coming months.

The majority of the BLA's attacks will be concentrated within Balochistan, with Quetta being a major target. Further attacks targeting Chinese projects and nationals around Gwadar remain possible. However, one-off attacks in major cities in other provinces cannot be ruled out, especially given the BLA's operational capabilities in Karachi. The BLA will continue to focus its attacks on the security forces, and government personnel and sites. However, the recent intensification and location of attacks point towards the group's openness to target civilian sites.

Collaboration between the TTP and Baloch insurgent groups is likely to strengthen in the coming months. The sharing of arms, ammunition, tactics and even militants between the groups will likely increase the intensity of any upcoming attacks. Such cooperation also makes counter-terrorism more challenging, especially given the porous borders between Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and these provinces and Afghanistan.

The authorities' approach will continue to impede positive steps in reducing the mistrust of the Baloch population towards the government. A change is unlikely as agreeing to demands for greater autonomy would likely deepen the country's existing instability. The BLA's targeting of Chinese projects in the province will further inhibit economic growth and development, fostering more resentment.

How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** An accredited and robust security and transport partner network capable of operating countrywide or in specific regions. We also have a strong source network that can verify information.
- **Services offered:** From ground transport and security support services to assisting with evacuations. We carry out 24/7 threat monitoring and issue security and medical alerts on a range of risks and operations issues. Our vetted security partners may also advise on the necessity of a government escort during travel to certain locations.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24-48 hours to activate, depending on the location and availability of resources at the time of the request. Response times are generally shorter for urban centres such as Karachi, Lahore (Punjab province) and the capital Islamabad. They may vary in rural areas depending on the location and availability of resources at the time of request.
- **Secure accommodation:** Yes. Recommended hotels assessed by International SOS in major urban centres, including Karachi and Lahore. Advice on accommodation available via Dubai Assistance Centre.

Recommendations

Business-critical travel to Balochistan requires a pre-travel threat assessment, including confirmation of viability. A government and/or military escort is required in some areas, especially in Chagai, Dera Bugti, Kech, Kharan, Nushki, Panjgur, Quetta and Washuk districts, which are rated as EXTREME-risk locations due to high levels of sectarian violence, terrorism and banditry. Dedicated professional security support is essential in all areas due to the threat posed by ethnic-Baloch separatist insurgents who regularly target government and security-force interests as well as major infrastructure projects.

Managers with operations in Pakistan should ensure workforce is fully briefed on the prevailing security environment and necessary mitigation measures, which should be tailored to the local risk environment. Ensure escalation and business-continuity plans are updated, realistic and rapidly implementable. Managers should ensure they are aware of any profile-specific risks for their workforce and that security measures are enhanced if there is a heightened risk.

Managers should also maintain good lines of communication with workforce and be able to account for them in case of any escalations. Updates on the situation should be disseminated regularly, highlighting any ongoing or forthcoming issues and their implications. They should also ensure that an alternative form of communication is available if the primary means experiences difficulties.

In-country workforce should maintain flexibility in their itineraries to better respond to incidents and be prepared to minimise non-essential movement if required.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
The BLA intensifies its targeting of security and government sites, and conducts indiscriminate attacks on civilians	The BLA's leadership is likely to maintain its policy of attacking both the security forces and civilians, including Chinese personnel associated with developmental projects in Balochistan.
An increase in the number, scale and complexity of attacks launched by the BLA in major urban centres in HIGH-risk areas	The BLA is expected to conduct periodic attacks in HIGH-risk areas in the coming months. However, it will focus its operations in EXTREME-risk areas, where it has stronger operational capability.
There are reports of increased operational and logistical cooperation between BLA and TTP militants	We expect the BLA to further solidify its links with the TTP over the coming months. This will likely lead to more elaborate and sophisticated attacks in major urban centres in the country, while simultaneously undermining counter-terrorism efforts by the government.

REGIONAL

- North Korea's intensified military posturing and persistent non-kinetic aggression against South Korea have sharply escalated tensions on the Korean Peninsula.
- The North Korea-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership involves mutual military support. This further bolsters North Korea's leverage alongside China's backing.
- Although a full-scale conventional conflict remains unlikely, North Korean provocations around key events and broader geopolitical developments will persist.

Situation

On 31 October, North Korea tested a new type of intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), dubbed the Hwasong-19, reportedly designed to reach the US mainland. This action was followed by multiple short-range ballistic missile tests on 5 November, the same day as the US presidential election.

Furthermore, suicide attack drones were tested by North Korea on 14 November, with its leader Kim Jong-un reportedly calling for the 'mass production' of such drones. This latest military demonstration came as the second iteration of 'Freedom Edge', the joint military exercise involving the US, Japan and South Korea, was conducted.

In recent months North Korea has resorted to non-kinetic forms of aggression against South Korea, including waste-laden balloons, GPS spoofing, electronic jamming and cyber-attacks. Since May, North Korea has reportedly sent more than 5,000 waste-filled balloons across the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) into South Korea. The trash-balloon campaign has significantly disrupted the operations at the Incheon International Airport (ICN), where runway operations have reportedly been halted at least 12 times.

South Korea's intelligence agencies have also accused North Korea of frequent cyberattacks and electronic jamming directed against Incheon Airport. Between 29 May and 2 June, hundreds of civilian aircrafts and ships reported suspected GPS jamming near the inter-Korean sea border in the Yellow (West) Sea Northern Limit Line (NLL).

Moreover, there has been an increased military and diplomatic collaboration between North Korea and Russia in recent months. Both countries ratified a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership treaty in November, nearly five months after their leaders signed the accord during Russia's President Vladimir Putin's visit to North Korea. The agreement promises immediate military assistance to each other in the event of war. According to US, South Korean and Ukrainian intelligence assessments, more than 12,000 North Korean troops have been sent to fight along the Russia-Ukraine border.

Implications

Despite the recent developments, we assess that the likelihood of North Korea launching a full-scale, conventional conflict against South Korea and the US is low. This is due to the severe consequences for all involved. Nonetheless, North Korea will continue to resort to limited provocations along its land and maritime borders with the South, such as sending more waste-laden balloons and other non-kinetic methods of escalation.

Donald Trump's election as the US president has sparked speculation of a potential resumption of summit-level diplomacy and a gradual reduction in tensions on the Korean Peninsula, as was seen in 2018. However, an immediate return to a 2018 scenario is highly unlikely due to significant changes in the geopolitical and security situation both regionally and more broadly. Although the Korean Peninsula was a relatively independent issue during Trump's first presidential term, it has now become interlinked with the broader geopolitical situation presented by the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

In addition, North Korea's nuclear and missile programme has advanced considerably, which strengthens its bargaining position. Its growing collaboration with Russia, coupled with its enduring partnership with China, provides additional strategic leverage. North Korea's efforts to align itself with a united front against the US could gain further traction if Trump escalates tariffs and reignites a trade war with China, the country's primary ally and economic support.

The ratification of North Korea and Russia's Comprehensive Strategic Partnership will also likely embolden North Korea to carry out further military activities in the Korean Peninsula. Additionally, the possible transfer of sensitive technology from Russia to North Korea to enhance the latter's ever-advancing nuclear and missile programmes could significantly increase tensions in the region.

Trump's inauguration on **20 January 2025** will be a key date around which North Korea will likely undertake provocative, though largely symbolic, military actions. The day before Trump's 2017 inauguration, North Korea had reportedly readied two ICBMs for a test launch. North Korea typically launches missiles immediately before or after military exercises involving South Korea, around key dates, sensitive summits, and following key statements by the South regarding regional tensions. Such activities are liable to prompt deterrent actions, such as further military exercises and the imposition of sanctions by the US, South Korea and, potentially, Japan.

How we can help

- **Presence in-region:** Assistance Centres in Seoul (South Korea) and Tokyo (Japan). We have an accredited network of logistics and security partners able to operate across both countries.
- **Services offered:** From meet-and-greet and ground transport services to assisting with evacuations with appropriate notice. We carry out 24/7 threat monitoring and issue security and medical alerts on a range of risks and operations issues.
- **Activation time in South Korea and Japan:** Up to 24 hours to activate in major urban centres, depending on location and availability of resources at the time of the request.
- **Secure accommodation:** Recommended hotels assessed on the ground and via desktop research by International SOS in major urban centres. Contact the Assistance Centre for advice on accommodation selection.

Recommendations

Elevated tensions could make it more difficult for organisations to make informed decisions and exacerbate feelings of insecurity among your workforce. Managers should closely monitor any developments related to the Korean Peninsula using reliable sources of information and critical analysis.

The high-impact nature of any military confrontation requires that managers maintain robust plans to identify signs of a genuine escalation. Managers should also continue to closely monitor triggers that could precipitate escalated tensions in the Korean Peninsula and the wider region. An increase in the level of North or South Korea's military preparedness, advisories issued by various governments, or North Korean actions prompting military response could trigger an escalation in our advice. This may require a deferral of inbound travel and the maintenance of an appropriately heightened level of preparedness.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Hostile actions by North Korea such as weapon tests, and low-level incidents such as trash balloons and 'accidental' border incursions	Expect such hostile rhetoric and tit-for-tat exchanges to continue in the absence of any channels of communication between the two.
Firing along the border areas (DMZ or NLL) leading to casualties	This could lead to a potential flaring of tensions along the border and prompt retaliatory action. Both sides may announce further military deployments in the area. However, the situation is likely to remain contained to border areas.
Accidents stemming from missile tests, such as missile debris hitting an overflying aircraft, ship or Japanese territory	This could trigger Japan's J-ALERT (Japanese National Early Warning System) or civil defence drills in South Korea asking people to seek shelter. The aftermath could prompt a limited military response from the US and its allies.
North Korea carries out an above-ground nuclear test	This would see aggressive military posturing by South Korea and its allies along with unilateral military sanctions.

ASIA-PACIFIC: ON WATCH

Bangladesh: Disruptive protests by students will continue in urban centres, including the capital Dhaka, over socio-economic and political grievances. Demands range from changes in the Advisory Council, a ban on the Awami League party and its members and demarcation of universities to an increase in wages for garment workers. Expect protests near government buildings, university campuses and public grounds.

India: Security operations will increase in Jammu and Kashmir union territory's HIGH-risk districts along the Line of Control before the onset of deep winter. Militants increase infiltration attempts before snowfall reduces visibility and makes the terrain inaccessible. The security forces increase surveillance and patrols. Attacks on the security forces and their vehicles and checkpoints are likely over the coming weeks.

Regional: Security will be heightened across the region during the Christmas (**25 December**) and New Year (**31 December-1 January 2025**) holiday periods. Additional security personnel will be deployed around marketplaces, tourist sites, religious places, transport hubs and festivities to mitigate terrorism and petty crime risks. Demand and pricing for accommodation and transport will increase before and during the holidays.



ROMANIA

- Parliamentary elections are scheduled for **1 December**.
- Despite the low likelihood of a win, the far-right Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) is expected to make significant gains.
- Although widespread unrest is unlikely, protests and counter-demonstrations are possible throughout the election period.

Situation

Parliamentary elections are scheduled to be held on 1 December. This approximately coincides with the presidential election, the first round of which was conducted on 24 November. As no candidate secured a majority, a second round will be held on **8 December**.

Current polls indicate that the centre-left Social Democratic Party (PSD) is likely to win the parliamentary election with approximately 30% of the vote. However, the AUR is still expected to make significant gains in the upcoming election.

Recent polls indicate it is projected to secure around 20% of the vote, making it the second-strongest party in parliament. Notably, when the AUR entered parliament in 2020, it received 9% of the vote.

In the June 2024 European Parliament election, the ruling bipartisan coalition between PSD and the centre-right National Liberal Party (PNL) achieved a majority, capturing around 49% of Romania's 33 seats. The AUR also saw notable gains, receiving around 15% of the vote.

The parliamentary election is being held amid dissatisfaction with the current ruling coalition due to issues such as perceived corruption, something which the AUR has capitalised on. The rising cost of living in the country has further exacerbated such discontent.

Implications

Given the current political climate and recent polls, it is almost certain that a coalition will remain necessary to shape the upcoming government. Should the PSD win, the fastest way to form a government would be to continue its coalition with the PNL, though achieving 50% of the vote is considered unlikely and smaller parties would therefore need to be included in the coalition. However, on 7 October, the PNL announced the formal end of its coalition with the PSD, stating that it will remain in office until the election. This resulted from a Constitutional Court's decision, supported by many PSD judges, to disqualify the presidential candidacy of far-right politician Diana Sosoaca. The PNL leader described this as a threat to democracy while also highlighting the party's frustrations with the PSD's handling of critical issues and the growing divisions between the two parties.

Alternatively, a coalition could be formed with the centre-right Save Romania Union (USR) party and other centrist parties given that the PSD has ruled out forming a coalition with the AUR. Nevertheless, the formation of a government without the PSD and PNL would be difficult due to the number of seats they are projected to collectively hold in parliament. It is unlikely that another coalition would be strong enough to secure a stable majority without their involvement.

If the AUR makes significant gains in the parliamentary election, a more polarised parliament may emerge. The AUR may use tactics in parliament to slow down legislative processes and undermine the coalition's ability to implement reforms. Meanwhile, although participation in any ruling coalition is unlikely, its growing support base could indirectly influence the coalition's policy. For instance, AUR's nationalistic rhetoric is likely to resonate with segments of the electorate who are dissatisfied. As a result, changes to key policies such as immigration may need to be considered by the ruling coalition.

Although the election is expected to pass off largely peacefully, there remains a risk of small-scale incidents. Previous elections have seen incidents of voter intimidation and altercations at polling stations. During the European Parliament election, at least 10,000 votes were reportedly lost from official records in the capital Bucharest. Meanwhile, there is also a risk of disinformation campaigns aimed at undermining the electoral process. Foreign actors may attempt to influence the election, particularly due to Romania's proximity to Ukraine.

Most events during the electoral period are expected to consist of peaceful demonstrations. However, protests by the far right and its opposers have taken place across Romania in recent months. In June, supporters of the AUR gathered in Bucharest in front of the General Prosecutor's office. Further protests occurred for several days in June in Bucharest to denounce alleged corruption in the European elections. Protests are likely to take place in major urban centres such as Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca (Cluj County), and Iasi (Iasi County). In Bucharest, protest flashpoints include the Constitutional Court, Palace of the Parliament, University Square and Victory Square. Clashes between AUR supporters and counter-protesters cannot be ruled out, posing incidental risks to bystanders.

The Romanian authorities will increase security measures in the lead-up to and during the election. This will include a heightened security presence at polling stations, public areas and planned demonstrations.

Recommendations

Managers should monitor developments ahead of, and following, the election. Those with assets near demonstration hot spots in city centres should ensure that security protocols account for any disruptive gatherings around worksites. Workforce should be briefed on the risks stemming from any unrest and what actions to take in the event of being caught up in a protest.

Workforce should plan journeys bypassing all protests to minimise travel delays. In the event of encountering a demonstration, leave at the first sign of unrest and follow all official directives.

How we can help

- **Presence in-country:**
 - Assistance Centres in London (UK), Paris (France) and Madrid (Spain)
 - A robust security partner network capable of operating across the country
 - A network of International SOS offices
- **Services offered:**
 - Meet-and-greet
 - Secure ground transportation
 - Executive Protection
 - Evacuation services
 - Security consulting and training
 - Information, analysis and advice on a range of security risks, travel and operational issues
- **Activation time:**
 - The preferred lead time for security or ground transport requests is 24-48 hours
 - Lead times are generally shorter in major urban centres
 - Response time from security partners will depend on availability and security conditions on the ground.
- **Secure accommodation:**
 - Most business class hotels in Romania will have appropriate security protocols given the LOW risk environment
 - Our regional Assistance Centres can offer desktop assessments

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Political parties and their supporters organise large-scale demonstrations in key locations. These events turn violent	This is unlikely, though still possible. If such a scenario developed, widespread, violent protests could lead to the deployment of security forces to maintain public order.
The PSD win but is unable to form a coalition	Romania may face a prolonged period of political instability, leading to repeated attempts to form a coalition. If unsuccessful, snap elections would likely be called.
The AUR enters into a coalition government	This is unlikely based on current polls. However, were it to occur, protests against, and in favour of, the AUR are possible.

UKRAINE

- Outgoing US President Joe Biden has for the first time approved the use of US long-range missiles by Ukraine on Russian territory.
- Both Russia and Ukraine are pushing to be in the most advantageous position possible when US President-elect Donald Trump takes office in January 2025.
- Amid these escalations, Russia will launch large-scale airstrikes across Ukraine and escalate its hybrid operations elsewhere in Europe.

Situation

Trump's re-election comes at a precarious time for Ukraine in the conflict. Russia is making steady advances on the eastern front, while Ukraine is struggling with manpower and ammunition shortages, waning international political support and decreasing domestic morale. Several thousand North Korean troops have been deployed to Kursk (Russia), reinforcing an expected Russian offensive against Ukrainian positions in the region. Additionally, Russia continues to strike Ukrainian cities with large-scale missile and drone attacks.

Amid these challenges, Ukraine now faces the strong likelihood that Trump will cut off or significantly reduce US assistance after the leader's second term in office commences on **20 January 2025**. Trump has said he intends to end the conflict as soon as

possible. While he has not provided any details, US vice president-elect JD Vance has outlined a potential scenario for ending the conflict that would see Russia keep the Ukrainian territory it has taken and receive a guarantee of Ukraine's neutrality. This means Ukraine would not pursue NATO membership.

Amid these developments, Ukraine pressed the US for permission to use its long-range Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) inside Russia. On 17 November, Biden granted approval and two days later Ukraine used these weapons on Russian territory for the first time, striking a military facility in Bryansk (Russia). Previously, Ukraine was only permitted to use these long-range weapons with a range of 190 miles (300km) against Russian targets inside Ukraine.

Russia considers this authorisation and Ukraine's use of these weapons on its territory as an escalation of the conflict. Russian government has accused the US of adding fuel to the fire.

Implications

The push for an advantageous position in the coming weeks means heightened risks for remaining workforce in Ukraine. Russia will increase its aerial strikes on Ukrainian cities, focusing on critical national infrastructure. Russia has become adept at using large barrages of missiles and drones to evade Ukrainian air defences and inflict maximum damage. Aerial strikes will pose a heightened risk in the coming weeks.

The authorisation for Ukraine to use long-range weapons inside Russia will not have a significant impact on the overall trajectory of the conflict, where the momentum is currently with Russia. By granting this permission, Biden, a strong proponent of US support for Ukraine, is seeking to strengthen Ukraine's position as much as possible before Trump takes office. The weapons will help Ukraine defend the territory it has seized in Kursk,

approximately 40% of which Russian forces have retaken. Ukraine will target military sites in western Russia, but the long public debate over these weapons means that Russia has already moved much of its critical military equipment out of range. Not much has been said officially about stipulations attached to these weapons. However, we expect the US to have put stringent restrictions on their use, such as that they must solely be used against military targets.

The most likely Russian response to the use of weapons on its territory is to increase its strikes on civilian targets in Ukraine. Russia will also likely escalate its hybrid operations in the West, including sabotage operations in European states. It may further consider diplomatic forms of retaliation, such as the closure of Western embassies in Moscow.

However, Russia is unlikely to launch any direct retaliation against Western states. Such a direct attack would risk drawing NATO into the conflict, drastically escalating and changing the calculus of the current conflict, in which Russia currently has several advantages. Another plausible, though less-likely, option for a Russian response would be to conduct nuclear weapons tests as a signal to the West.

It is likely that Trump will reverse Biden's authorisation of Ukraine's use of ATACMS once he takes office in January and implement promised cuts in US assistance to Ukraine. European leaders may seek to increase their military support for Ukraine, but they are unable to match the level of weapons, ammunition and air defence support that the US provides to Ukraine. European countries are also dealing with declining domestic political support for continued high levels of assistance to Ukraine. In recent months, the German government, now facing snap elections in **February 2025**, has said it will halve its assistance to Ukraine in 2025.

Consequently, if US assistance to Ukraine is substantially reduced or cut, Ukraine will be unable to continue its defence against Russia. Russia will then have the upper hand in any negotiations. Aware of this, Ukraine will do all it can to gain any advantage on the ground in the coming weeks.

Recommendations

Remaining workforce in Ukraine should be prepared for significant disruption to power supply and ensure access to back-up power via a generator. Managers should ensure that workforce keeps all communication devices charged, has power banks (also kept charged), and that spare batteries and flashlights are on hand.

Foreign nationals and business travellers planning essential travel to Kyiv or the HIGH-risk provinces of Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Ternopil and Zakarpattia should undertake a careful risk assessment. Give specific regard to these heightened risks and carefully consider the robustness of your available in-country support network before proceeding with travel.

Latest podcast on Ukraine:



How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** We have an accredited network of trusted, professional security and logistics partners capable of operating countrywide, in areas not directly impacted by front-line conflict.
- **Services offered:** From secure ground transport services to Active Monitoring for business travellers, pre-deployment briefings and assisting with evacuations.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24-48 hours to activate, depending on location and availability of resources at the time of the request.
- **Secure accommodation:** Recommended hotels assessed by International SOS in Kyiv and Lviv. Our Assistance Centres can provide advice on accommodation choices.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Indirect Russian attacks on western targets which could include unclaimed attacks on western vessels in the Black Sea, or sabotage operations in European states	Russia may increase its hybrid operations in Europe in response to Western support for Ukraine. The potential for other indirect attacks cannot be ruled out, though Russia will avoid deliberately escalatory attacks that risk more overt Western involvement in the conflict.
Russia escalates aerial strikes on Ukrainian cities	We expect Russia to increase its missile and drone strikes on Ukrainian cities in the coming weeks, focusing on critical national infrastructure.
Ukraine launches further long-range missile strikes into Russia	Ukraine will target Russian military sites and equipment in western regions. We expect a cycle of tit-for-tat attacks in the coming weeks.

EUROPE AND CIS: ON WATCH



Georgia: Opposition protests will continue in the capital Tbilisi following a contentious election in October. The opposition says the election was unfair and is demanding fresh polls. However, the ruling Georgian Dream government is expected to proceed with the formation of parliament without acceding to the opposition's demands.

Germany: Monitor developments ahead of a potential no-confidence vote. Chancellor Olaf Scholz is expected to request the vote on **16 December** following the collapse of his three-party coalition. He is likely to lose the vote, after which he will have 21 days to dissolve parliament. A parliamentary election is expected to be held on **23 February 2025**.

Netherlands: Expect heightened security from **9 December** at land border crossings due to the reintroduction of border checks with Belgium and Germany. Enhanced checks will also be implemented for some flights from the Schengen zone. These measures, aimed at addressing migration, are set to last for six months.

TURKEY

- A 23 October attack by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) near the capital Ankara highlights the persistent risk posed by militant groups.
- President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his parliamentary allies have signalled being open to initiating peace talks with the PKK, but this is unlikely to yield results in the short term.
- Tensions will remain heightened in south-eastern provinces following the removal of elected pro-Kurdish officials from office.

Situation

On 23 October, five people were killed and 22 injured in a terrorist attack on the Turkish Aerospace Industries (TUSAS) headquarters on the outskirts of the capital Ankara. The attack was claimed by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). This was the deadliest attack led by the PKK since Turkey intensified its counter-terrorism efforts in 2017. In response, Turkey led a series of airstrikes in Iraq and northern Syria, claiming it hit 120 PKK-linked targets. More than 175 suspects were arrested in Turkey.

In the days following the TUSAS attack, the government also led a crackdown against elected pro-Kurdish officials, replacing them with state-appointed trustees. On 30 October, 18 people were arrested for alleged ties with

the PKK, including the mayor of Esenyurt, a predominantly Kurdish district of Istanbul. On 4 November, the mayors of three south-eastern cities, Batman (Batman province), Halfeti (Saliurfa province) and Mardin (Mardin province), were unseated for the same reason. All four mayors were replaced by trustees appointed by the government. This triggered a wave of protests throughout south-eastern provinces, where the population is predominantly Kurdish, resulting in clashes with the security forces. Smaller-scale pro-Kurdish demonstrations also took place in Istanbul in mid-November.

These latest developments came as tensions between pro-Kurdish forces and the government appeared to be easing. Since the beginning of the parliamentary session in October, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his allies have been hinting that peace talks with the PKK could resume. On 1 October, Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party and Erdogan's main ally in parliament, publicly shook hands with pro-Kurdish lawmakers. He had previously refused any engagement with them. He later declared that Abdullah Ocalan, a jailed PKK leader, could be released if the PKK laid down its arms. On 23 October, Ocalan was granted a family visit for the first time since 2020, apparently as a show of goodwill from the Turkish authorities.

Despite the TUSAS attack and the mayors' removal, both the government and pro-Kurdish forces continue to show openness to an eventual peace process. On 30 October, Erdogan backed Bahçeli's statements on Ocalan's release, stating that 'good news was coming'. On 9 November, the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Equality and Democracy (DEM) party issued a statement supporting Ocalan as a peace negotiator.

The last peace talks between the PKK and the Turkish government collapsed in 2015, resulting in an outbreak of violence. Since 2017, counter-terrorism efforts have reduced the threat of attacks by the PKK in major urban centres, though the risk remains elevated in south-eastern provinces. The PKK has been waging an insurgency in Turkey since 1984.

Implications

The 23 October attack highlights the continuing threat posed by militant groups in Turkey. Although the number of attacks has significantly reduced since 2017 due to intense counter-terrorism efforts, domestic and international groups retain intent and capacity to target Turkey. This includes the PKK, extremist Islamist groups and leftist organisations.

Until an official peace process is initiated, the threat of militant attacks by the PKK and affiliated groups will remain. These attacks generally target government and military personnel and assets and take the form of roadside bombings, ambushes, kidnapping and, occasionally, mass casualty bombing. Most of these attacks occur in the south-east, but major urban centres, such as Ankara and Istanbul, are also sometimes targeted.

Despite the recent tensions, the Turkish government is likely to remain open to a peace process with the PKK. Faced with the regional instability created by the Israel-Hamas conflict, Erdogan will attempt to create a strong national unity within the Turkish borders. The DEM party has been highly critical of Israel's actions in Gaza, creating some distance between it and Syrian pro-Kurdish forces, supported by the US.

If it proceeds, the peace process is likely to face many hurdles. It is unclear how much control Ocalan retains over the PKK. The TUSAS attack, occurring on the same day as Ocalan met his family, demonstrates a certain disconnect between the leadership and the fighters. Disagreements within pro-Kurdish forces, which are spread across Iraq, Syria and Turkey, are likely. Even if a deal is struck, splinter groups could emerge. On the government side, competition and disagreements between Bahçeli and Erdogan could also derail the process.

Meanwhile, further removals of elected pro-Kurdish officials could occur, triggering new waves of protests. In the south-east, these protests are liable to erupt into unrest and clashes with the security forces could take place. Smaller gatherings causing localised disruption could also be organised in urban centres such as Ankara or Istanbul. However, tangible progress in peace talks would reduce the likelihood of pro-Kurdish demonstrations taking place across the country.

Recommendations

Travel to Turkey, which we rate as a MEDIUM-risk country, can continue with standard security precautions. To mitigate the risk of militancy, managers should advise workforce to minimise time spent in the vicinity of potential terrorist targets. This includes governmental and military interests, symbolic foreign interests, places commonly frequented by Westerners, high-profile cultural institutions, political party offices and rallies, places of worship and transport hubs.

Workforce should avoid all protests as a precaution. Managers should ensure that workforce has access to reliable information about planned demonstrations in its vicinity. Workforce should be advised to plan daily movements to avoid protest routes and leave an area immediately if a crowd begins to gather.

Although we assess most of the predominantly Kurdish eastern and south-eastern provinces to be MEDIUM-risk locations, we advise clients to seek professional security or logistical assistance before travel to the region. This is to mitigate the risk of Kurdish militancy and the effects of regular Turkish security operations in the area. The region includes Agri, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Erzincan, Erzurum, Iğdir, Kars, Mardin, Mus, Siirt, Tunceli

MONTHLY SECURITY FORECAST

Middle East and North Africa



and Van provinces. We advise to defer all non-essential travel to the region bordering Syria.

We also advise clients to defer all non-essential travel to urban centres in Diyarbakir, Hakkari and Sirnak provinces, which we rate as HIGH risk. Workforce in these areas should liaise with local contacts for information on short-notice curfews or other potentially disruptive security measures, including access restrictions on internet and mobile networks. We advise clients to defer all travel to the rural areas of these provinces, which have been most affected by clashes with the PKK since 2015.

Managers should monitor local and regional developments that could lead to further restrictions on already-limited departure options. This includes the resumption of hostilities along the front lines and increased international operations against the Yemen-based Houthi group.

How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** An accredited network of security and logistics providers.
- **Services offered:** Secure ground transport services, close protection officers and assistance with evacuations.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24-48 hours to activate.
- **Secure accommodation:** Yes.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
The government abandons the idea of peace talks and returns to its hard-line approach to the PKK	The status quo will likely remain. The counter-terrorism measures in place should prevent any major outbreak of violence by the PKK, but the risk of isolated attacks persists.
The PKK claims a new militant attack in or near an urban centre	This is likely to negatively affect the peace negotiations' prospects and result in further security operations throughout the country and renewed Turkish airstrikes in Iraq and northern Syria.
More pro-Kurdish elected officials are removed and replaced by government-appointed trustees	This would trigger a new wave of protests in the south-east, which would cause localised disruption. Such protests would be liable to erupt in clashes between the security forces and protesters.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: ON WATCH

Lebanon: Monitor developments around the implementation of an Israel-Hizbullah ceasefire. The risk of ceasefire violations by either side persists as they implement a gradual withdrawal of their respective forces from southern Lebanon within the next 60 days. Israel has reiterated its intent to intervene if Hizbullah violates ceasefire conditions by attempting to rearm and/or rebuild its infrastructure in the south.

Libya: Liaise with your security provider to stay abreast of developments as the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity will introduce new regulations in areas under its control from **December**. The interior minister in November announced the decision to reinstate morality police, impose mandatory hijabs, prohibit women from travelling without a male guardian and restrict gender mixing in public spaces.



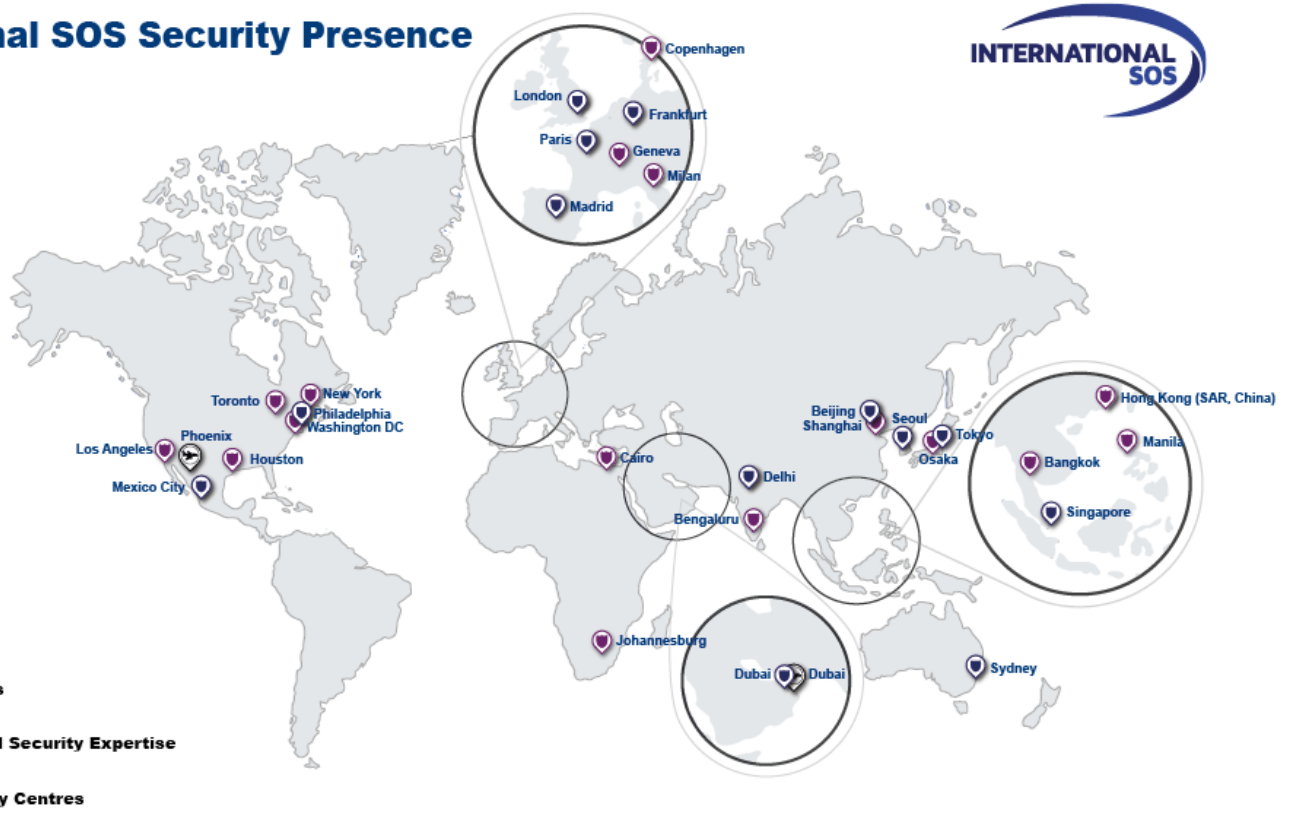
Regional: The stalemate in the Israel-Hamas ceasefire negotiations is expected to protract in the coming weeks. The dismissal of Israel's defence minister, Yoav Gallant, who advocated a ceasefire as Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Territories) started to wind down, followed by Qatar's suspending its role as a mediator in talks in November, will further delay negotiations.

Regional: Tensions in the region will remain heightened as uncertainty persists around Iran's potential retaliation following Israel's late-October strikes on Iranian soil. Iran's muted reaction to the attack throughout November was likely linked to the renewed push in Israel-Hizbullah ceasefire negotiations. Nevertheless, the risk of renewed Iran-Israel confrontations will persist. disrupt flight operations in other countries across the region.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS AND UNPARALLELED SERVICES

International SOS and its network of partners combine the world's leading security and medical risk specialists. With an access to over 3,200 security specialists led by our 200 dedicated security experts based in our Assistance Centres and offices around the world, we provide a comprehensive suite of integrated security risk services for the global workforce and managers tasked with keeping people safe, secure and healthy. We deliver timely, actionable security intelligence, analysis, advice and on-the-ground assistance.

International SOS Security Presence



For follow-up questions about the assessments or recommendations in this Report, please call your nearest Assistance Centre.

Copyright © International SOS, 2024. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part prohibited without the prior consent of the Company.