

# MONTHLY SECURITY FORECAST

MAY 2025

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# MONTHLY SECURITY FORECAST

## May 2025



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.



## BURUNDI

- Organisations with in-country workforce and operations should consider a range of security scenarios for an upcoming election and plan appropriately.
- Burundi is economically and politically unstable, and the risk of the security environment deteriorating cannot be ruled out.
- Protests could turn violent, and other security incidents could emerge.

### Situation

The parliamentary election will be held on **5 June**. Campaigning will run from **13 May** to **2 June**. Those elected will make up the 100-seat National Assembly.

In the 2020 legislative election, the National Council for the Defence of Democracy – Front for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) secured 72 seats. The CNDD-FDD has been in power since 2005.

The largest opposition party is the National Congress for Liberty (CNL). However, the Burundian Interior Ministry suspended the CNL in 2023 from organising activities. In 2024, Agathon Rwasa, CNL leader and vocal critic of the CNDD-FDD, was

controversially removed from his position while abroad, an act allegedly instigated by Burundian intelligence services.

In December 2024, Rwasa and his allies declared they would stand in the election as part of the newly formed Burundi Bwa Bose (BBB) coalition. Nevertheless, the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) rejected the coalition in January 2025, claiming Rwasa and other former CNL members could not stand for BBB as they were still a part of the CNL. The CENI stated this was in contravention of the electoral code and barred BBB candidates from the upcoming election. Rwasa has since withdrawn from the alliance, enabling other candidates in the coalition to participate.

Burundi continues to have a poor economy, infrastructural issues and shortages of basic goods. Recurrent power outages are reported in Bujumbura (Bujumbura Mairie province). The price of rice and milk has increased substantially in recent months. Fuel shortages have been ongoing for more than two years, heavily disrupting public and private transport options. The opposition has denounced the shortages, stating they will restrict its ability to travel across the country to campaign.

### Implications

The CNDD-FDD is likely to retain its majority in the upcoming election. It has an extensive patronage network and controls the security and intelligence services. The opposition is weak, disorganised and lacks the resources to mobilise popular support. The baseline scenario therefore suggests the CNDD-FDD will win the election, the opposition will fail to mobilise popular support and the situation will pass off peacefully.

The CNL has been organising small gatherings. However, the party has been recently weakened through systematic targeting of its members by the authorities and the CNDD-FDD's youth wing Imbonerakure,



renowned for violently suppressing dissent. Data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data illustrates the Imbonerakure often harasses, attacks or kills CNL members, suspected or otherwise.

During the electoral period, the Imbonerakure is likely to increase intimidatory violence against perceived opposition supporters. Local reports indicated the Imbonerakure had resumed night patrols in February in certain areas, establishing an informal curfew at 20.00 (local time) or risking violence after that time. Reports also suggest the youth wing is increasingly taking control of checkpoints from local police around Bujumbura.

Given the CNL's standing, BBB may represent the strongest opposition if it avoids infighting. If the BBB senses it has garnered significant popular support, and subsequently fails to acquire many seats during the election, it may consider calling for protests. However, during an International SOS Country Assessment Trip in 2024, several sources stated locals sought to avoid protests. This comes after dozens were killed during demonstrations amid a political crisis in 2015-16.

There is an underlying risk of regime change. Unverified claims of an impending coup d'état have been circulating for several months, though it is yet to manifest. However, given the stagnating economic situation and associated discontent reported at a political level, it should not be ruled out. Beyond this, certain elements of the military may disagree with the Burundian government's decision to support Congolese forces against the March 23 rebel group in eastern Congo (DRC) by deploying Burundian forces.

## Recommendations

Managers should ensure workforce avoids all gatherings linked to the general election. In the event of unrest, workforce return to their accommodation, office or other safe haven immediately, and remain there until the situation has stabilised. Expect heightened security during polling day and follow all official directives.

In-country workforce should refrain from discussing the political situation and any other sensitive political topics in public. Workforce should not photograph demonstrations, election facilities, government buildings and security force personnel and installations.

Internet and mobile telecommunications outages may occur during the electoral period. Ensure that communication plans are resilient and that workforce has access to multiple means of communication, such as mobile phones with local and international SIM cards and a landline phone. Communication means and call trees should be tested weekly throughout the electoral period.

Ensure contingency plans are up to date and ready to be implemented at short notice. Map the location of all workforce and keep an updated list of in-country employees and dependants, such as addresses,

### How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** Accredited security partners capable of working across the country.
- **Services offered:** From ground transport services to assisting with evacuations.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24-48 hours to activate, depending on location and availability of resources at time of the request.
- **Secure accommodation:** Yes.



main and alternative telephone numbers and passport details. Engage with our security teams to discuss tactical advice and planning. In-country workforce should avoid wherever possible the vicinity of political party headquarters and political rallies.

Ensure workforce can stand fast for **at least 72 hours** in urban centres and **at least one week** in remote sites during polling day and the release of results. This includes stockpiling essential supplies, such as fuel, water, food, medicine and a backup generator. Note that protests, enhanced security and checkpoints could prevent road movements and hinder access to basic provisions.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Large-scale protests erupt in urban centres denouncing the election's results	Although unlikely, such a scenario would result in clashes with the security forces and the potential use of live ammunition.
Disruption to telecommunications imposed by the authorities	There is a possibility of this occurring before and after polling day to control information flow. Communication with workforce could become difficult during a period of escalation, underlining the need for back-up forms of communication.
A military coup is attempted	There is a low likelihood of this occurring. However, were it to be attempted, movement restrictions and border closures would be implemented. This would result in significant operational difficulties and a reduction in evacuation options. Previous coups in Burundi have resulted in physical threats to civilians and loss of life.



## KENYA

- This year's Finance Bill cycle is a sensitive period and will be monitored by government critics and the broader public for the extent of proposed tax hikes and budget cuts.
- Any significant tax hikes and/or budget cuts are likely to result in a surge of anti-government sentiment and prompt calls for protests both against the bill and government.
- The security forces are likely to be pre-emptively deployed to key locations in the coming weeks. There is a credible risk of forcible dispersals and localised unrest at any related protest.

### Situation

The draft of the Finance Bill 2025-26 was tabled in Parliament on 30 April. Detailed information regarding revenue-increasing measures and their implications will become clearer as the bill goes through public participation throughout May. Based on the feedback received, the Finance and Planning Committee of the National Assembly will review the bill. It will then be submitted for presidential assent by **1 July**, after which the president has 14 days to approve or reject it.

This bill is expected to introduce new taxes and/or raise existing ones, to fund the increased government expenditure of 2.523 trillion Shillings (\$19.4 bn USD). The expenditure ceiling for 2025-26 is higher than the previous financial year by over \$1.5bn.

The government will also look to implement further debt management strategies to address the growing public debt, including tax increases, levies and reduction in public spending. As of January, Kenya's public debt stood at \$84bn, with over \$39bn comprising foreign debt. According to the World Bank, interest payments on

this debt consumed over 20% of the country's annual revenues in 2023. These measures were supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as part of its 2021 loan programme. However, Kenya prematurely ended its IMF programme in March, thus failing to secure the final \$850m. It is unclear if the government will manage to secure another loan programme **in the coming months**.

Additionally, cuts to United States Agency for International Development (USAID), instituted by US president Donald Trump in early-2025, will impact key sectors. These include healthcare and education, both of which rely on foreign funding. USAID cuts have resulted in the freezing of nearly \$2bn worth of aid globally. The impact of these cuts will exacerbate unemployment, affecting more than 34,000 jobs in the humanitarian sector alone. Further reductions in foreign aid are expected as similar measures are adopted by Kenya's European donors. While tax revenue remains the primary source of government income, foreign aid contributes a crucial component of funding these sectors.

Opposition to 2024's finance bill sparked months-long protests, particularly in June and July, and resulted in dozens of fatalities and hundreds of injuries. Notably, during the height of protests, live ammunition was used on several occasions outside the parliament building in Nairobi.

The widespread dissatisfaction with the proposed tax hikes, totalling \$2.7bn, ultimately led President William Ruto to reject the bill in 2024. The protests were primarily youth-led, a demographic already grappling with



high unemployment, stagnating wages and increasing costs of living. To replace the withdrawn finance bill, the government introduced tax amendment bills in December 2024, which included many of the same duties and taxes that had led to the rejection of the finance bill.

## Implications

There is significant potential for protests in response to the Finance Bill 2025-26. However, based on last year's unrest, the government will likely adopt language to avoid inflaming tensions. Kuria Kimani, Chair of the Finance Committee, has announced that this year the government will utilise social media platforms to enhance public engagement and gather constructive feedback. This may also alleviate some public concerns. Nonetheless, measures adopted to raise revenues, whether tax hikes or budget cuts, will trigger anti-government sentiment and related protests.

Ruto's measures in response to the 2024 unrest modestly eased tensions at the time, but anti-government sentiment persists given sustained cost-of-living challenges. Calls to mobilise against the bill have already surfaced on social media, although no specific demonstrations have been planned yet. There have also been repeated calls for Ruto to resign. In addition to the negative sentiment towards increased taxes and alleged corruption resulting money being skimmed from government coffers have further exacerbated public distrust of the current administration.

However, if protests do materialise, they are likely to be less intense and not as widespread or well-attended as those seen in mid-2024. The government is likely to be on high alert around key dates related to this year's budget, having learned from last year's unrest. Expect pre-emptive deployment of the security forces around protest hot spots. The protest movement from 2024 lacked a cohesive central organising body, and thus far no leading figure or organisation has emerged to spearhead related protests. This, coupled with the credible risk of violence and crime during demonstrations, may reduce broader public participation in gatherings. However, it is worth noting that some protests may occur as a result of mis or disinformation about the Bill or related gatherings.

In the capital Nairobi, key hot spots for unrest in the Central Business District will be Kenyatta Avenue, Kimathi Street, Moi Avenue and Thika Road. Low-income and high-density neighbourhoods are also key hot spots. Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission offices in major urban centres and key highways, such as the A2 between Nairobi and Nyeri (Nyeri county), are also expected to be focal points for demonstrations. These protests will be met with an increased security force presence. There will be a credible risk of localised unrest, including clashes with the security forces, stone pelting and vandalism to public and private property. The security forces

### How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** An accredited network of credentialed security partners with countrywide operations. All were reassessed during an extensive country trip in December 2024.
- **Services offered:** From ground transport services to assisting with evacuations.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24-48 hours to activate, depending on location and availability of resources at the time of request.
- **Secure accommodation:** Yes. This network was reassessed and expanded during a country trip in December 2024





are liable to use forcible means to disperse crowds, including tear gas and water cannon.

Protests will cause logistical disruption in their vicinity. This includes temporary business closures, a reduction in the availability of road and rail commuter services and increased traffic congestion.

## Recommendations

Closely monitor developments and identify key triggers indicating an increased risk of protests. These include significant tax hikes or cuts to subsidies, active social media campaigns against the Bill, the emergence of an organised group aimed at combatting the Bill and reports of protester casualties.

Organisations with operations in major cities should pay close attention to any signs of protests developing in the coming weeks. Ensure security protocols and business-continuity plans are up to date, reflective of the environment and rapidly implementable.

All anti-government protests will carry a credible risk of unrest and pose incidental risks to bystanders. Be aware that businesses in protest locations may be subject to vandalism and looting. During sustained protests, consider implementing flexible work arrangements to reduce workforce's exposure to unrest if your organisation is located near protest sites or flashpoints.

In-country workforce should have access to accurate and timely security updates and have clear guidance on actions to take during protests or related unrest. This should include avoiding protest sites, having necessary documentation to pass through any checkpoints and updating a pre-identified emergency contact in the event of a security incident.

Given the increased risk of mis and disinformation during periods of unrest, keep abreast of local developments by liaising with in-country sources, security networks and diplomatic missions, and by monitoring our Kenya alerts. Ensure mechanisms are in place to enable quick and effective dissemination of reliable information to your in-country workforce.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Large-scale protests break out in main urban centres following the tabling of the Finance bill	Protests carry credible risks of localised unrest, forcible dispersal by the security forces, and disruption to movement and business activities in affected areas. However, they are less likely to be widespread or prolonged without a central organising force, which is currently absent, and due to pre-emptive security measures.
Forcible security response resulting in demonstrator fatalities	The use of live ammunition and fatalities among protesters would prompt short-notice outbreaks of protests and related unrest. There would be an increase in violent unrest.
Protesters call for unruly gatherings, including targeting government offices and figures, and private businesses	This would drive sporadic violence in some areas. Such protests are more likely to descend into unrest and looting. However, the security forces will use forcible means to limit vandalism.
The government imposes a curfew and/or internet and telecommunications outages in main urban centres, including Nairobi	A curfew would only be likely in the event of a sustained campaign of widespread protests. In-country workforce should follow all official directives. Internet and telecommunications outages are unlikely to be implemented as a pre-emptive measure to deter demonstrations. If this does occur, travel to the country may need to be deferred until further notice.





## AFRICA: ON WATCH

**Ethiopia:** The appointment of Tadesse Werede as the head of the Tigray Interim Administration (TIA) is likely to ease regional tensions. The Tigray People's Liberation Front, which was at odds with the TIA's previous leader, has agreed to work with Werede. A resumption of tensions could threaten the 2022 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

**Niger:** Recent abductions of local and foreign nationals underscore the risk of kidnapping. On 13 April, a Swiss national was abducted in Agadez (Agadez) region. The security environment has deteriorated since the 2023 coup and French military withdrawal. Militant and criminal activity persists across Niger and the wider Sahel region, contributing to instability and increased likelihood of abductions.

**Tanzania:** Tensions are high following the main opposition party CHADEMA's disqualification from the October general election, after it failed to sign a mandatory code of conduct by the deadline. Additionally, CHADEMA's chairman, Tundu Lissu, was arrested on 9 April on charges of treason and publication of false information. CHADEMA will challenge the disqualification and Lissu's arrest, with protests possible.





## ARGENTINA

- The State Workers' Association (ATE) has planned protests for the coming month.
- Social unrest is highly likely to increase as the security forces are liable to use heavy-handed means to disperse protesters.
- Protests and strikes are likely to disrupt traffic and cause localised blockades along main roads in the capital Buenos Aires and halt operations for several industries.

### Situation

Throughout April, industrial and health workers' unions and other groups affected by economic policies called for protests and an industrial strike against President Javier Milei's office. These events are highly likely to continue in Buenos Aires city and other urban centres, including Cordoba (Cordoba province) and Rosario (Santa Fe province), in May as social unrest grows. The April strike, marking the third of its kind during Milei's term, underscores the high level of discontent held by unionised workers after one and a half years of public spending cuts affecting pensions and health benefits. Further, collective discontent is attributed to a new rise in inflation levels and a new loan granted by the International Monetary Fund to Argentina despite an ongoing accumulated debt repayment. Such economic conditions could further destabilise the economy

amid a high degree of uncertainty in the global economy.

The ATE held demonstrations every Wednesday in April near the National Congress in Buenos Aires. Participants included retirees denouncing the government's austerity measures, which led to the reduction of their pensions and limited state-provided medication. Football (soccer) fans have supported the demonstrations in defence of senior people. Argentinian football fans are known to be involved in significantly violent clashes with the police and rival teams. Their presence in these gatherings increases the likelihood of violent confrontations.

Anti-government demonstrations were well attended and caused significant yet localised disruption accompanied by a heightened security force presence. Demonstrations carried out by unionised workers galvanised dissent against the government's economic policies to such a point that a nationwide strike was called for 9 April. The call came from the General Confederation of Workers (CGT) alongside the Argentinian Workers' Centre (CTA) and human rights organisations.

Previously, calls to action have often intensified following discussions between the ATE and the government, typically in response to the latter not yielding solutions favouring the former's demands. One of the demands that has prompted a significant amount of discontent relates to a new charge on previously subsidised medicines to retirees.

In previous strikes and demonstrations, multiple people were arrested, before being released after some hours. Additionally, several bystanders, including photographers and media staff, were injured after violent escalations with the security forces.



### How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** Strong network of accredited security providers with nationwide operational capabilities.
- **Coverage:** Nationwide.
- **Services offered:** Meet-and-greet, secure ground transport, 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 request. Shorter in major urban centres such as Buenos Aires and Cordoba.
- **Secure accommodation:** Available in most major cities; hotels vetted by International SOS in Buenos Aires and Rosario.

The security forces have frequently used batons, rubber ammunition, water cannon and tear gas to disperse protests. Forcible police responses form part of the federal security strategy led by head of the Ministry of National Security Patricia Bullrich. The strategy was developed following the 9 April strike and is expected to continue throughout Milei's term in office as no alternative to prevent unrest has been agreed upon between the government, demonstrators and picketers.

### Implications

The growth of public discontent and the failure to reach an agreement indicate a likelihood of further anti-government protests and strikes in the coming weeks, and a potential for heightened security measures. Gatherings are likely to be well attended by the leading unions, local nationals and football fans. The intensity and frequency of demonstrations and strikes are highly likely to increase significantly over the coming weeks due to the government's continued inaction. Social unrest linked to related gatherings could result in operational disruption

and roadblocks, which pose a significant risk to business continuity in the area. Additionally, the temporary suspension of operations and unrest linked to protests and strike days are liable to cause flight, road or essential service disruptions.

The security forces are highly likely to continue using strict crowd-control measures, such as tear gas and water cannon, to disperse demonstrations and strikes opposing the Milei administration. While the government is liable to implement such control measures even in peaceful gatherings, protesters may retaliate by throwing stones, other objects or even Molotov cocktails. Any such instance could pose a significant threat to bystanders and business travellers in the area.

Hot spots for demonstrations in Buenos Aires include the National Congress, Plaza de Mayo and Casa Rosada. Additionally, roadblocks could be placed at key locations and on roads, such as Puente de la Noria and Viejo Puente Pueyrredon. Demonstrators can gather in other urban centres, including Cordoba, La Plata (Buenos Aires province), Mendoza (Mendoza province) and Rosario.

### 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 during protests and



strikes. Managers with local workforce should advise of potential for disruption and localised disturbances and ensure workforce is aware of ways to mitigate exposure.

Workforce should avoid related demonstrations and strikes and quickly leave an area at the first sign of unrest. Additionally, managers should consider allowing flexible working arrangements 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.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Clashes with the security forces are minimal. Protests occur without significant disruption	Workforce is liable to experience minimal-to-no delays or violence resulting from limited social unrest. However, this outcome is unlikely as disruptive demonstrations are highly likely to occur.
Protests and strikes proceed as planned, resulting in considerable traffic disruption and operational suspensions for multiple industries in Buenos Aires. The gatherings take place in other key cities, including Cordoba, Rosario, La Plata and Mendoza	This development is plausible due to recent mobilisations gaining popularity and presence in the city and its environs. Violent escalations are more likely to occur in Buenos Aires, whereas other cities are more susceptible to having an operational standstill with strikes in diverse industries.
Gatherings and strikes result in a harsher crackdown by the security forces, galvanising further protests and prompting additional organisations to join the protests in a more violent manner	This outcome is likely due to Milei's administration using heavy-handed measures in response to social unrest. The use of rubber ammunition, water cannon and tear gas are highly likely in this scenario.



## ECUADOR

- Gang-related violence will be more prevalent in El Oro, Esmeraldas, Guayas, Los Rios and Manabi provinces.
- Heightened security could affect operations and restrict movement in port cities and high-risk zones. Protests are possible.
- The 60-day state of emergency (SoE) expiring on **11 June** will uphold increased military and police deployments, likely followed by additional emergency declarations.

### Situation

President Daniel Noboa will begin his term in office amid widespread gang violence. Western provinces, including El Oro, Guayas and Manabi, continue to experience high rates of violent crime. This is more evident in Guayaquil and Duran (both Guayas) as well as Manta (Manabi), where shootings, targeted killings and attacks with explosives are frequent. These acts are primarily attributed to gangs such as Los Choneros, Los Lobos, Los Tiguerones and Los Chone Killers. Their operations involve drug trafficking, extortion and armed attacks, often carried out with military-style tactics and weapons.

On 18 April, armed men wearing military-like uniforms killed at least 12 people and injured nine others during a cockfighting event in La Valencia (Manabi). This incident

reflects the evolving techniques used to intimidate and destabilise communities. Gangs frequently share graphic videos of killings online, seeking to amplify fear and undermine public confidence in state institutions.

In response to the rising violence, the government has extended SoEs and broadened the security forces' scope by implementing curfews and joint patrols between the police and military. These measures are in place in the capital Quito; El Oro, Guayas, Los Rios, Manabi, Orellana, Santa Elena and Sucumbios provinces; Camilo Ponce Enriquez (Azuay province); and in all prisons across the country. However, the Constitutional Court has challenged the measures' legal basis. Noboa has framed the conflict as a so-called internal armed conflict, prompting debate over proportionality and constitutional limits. Despite large-scale arrests and weapon seizures, long-term results are limited. Homicide rates remain high with over 780 killings in February. According to local reports, many detainees have been released without charges due to a lack of evidence or overloaded courts.

In addition to the ongoing SoE, the government declared a state of maximum alert on 19 April following intelligence reports of a potential assassination attempt targeting Noboa and other potential terrorist attacks. The Minister of the Interior cited information suggesting hitmen from Mexico and other countries had entered Ecuador and were planning on targeting the president and other officials. In response, security protocols were activated and the security forces deployed.

Noboa's administration continues to pursue a hard-line approach seemingly without a parallel investment in structural reforms addressing poverty, unemployment and corruption. International cooperation remains limited. Although the US and multilateral institutions have offered some support, rumours of US military involvement have not materialised into formal agreements.



Although Noboa's re-election provided short-term political continuity, it is yet to resolve underlying divisions. The opposition, particularly the correísmo movement, remains active and has denounced an alleged electoral fraud in the recent presidential election. Although protests have been limited so far, the risk of unrest persists amid fraud allegations and dissatisfaction with the government's heavy-handed tactics.

## Implications

Security operations and instability in high-risk coastal provinces will persist. In El Oro, Esmeraldas, Guayas, Los Rios and Manabi, the government will uphold heightened military and police activity, including patrols, raids and curfews. These measures could disrupt movement, particularly in cities including Guayaquil and Manta, where criminal gangs often target port infrastructure to facilitate drug trafficking.

Heightened security in these areas may trigger retaliatory attacks. There is a sustained risk of further incidents like the one in La Valencia, which aim to challenge state presence and intimidate communities. Expect increased checkpoints, searches or collateral violence in these areas.

The state of maximum alert indicates an elevated threat level. This situation may lead to increased security measures, including expanded surveillance and frequent checkpoints in major urban centres.

The SoE is likely to be extended after its expiration in June. Operations in coastal provinces may face prolonged periods of restricted movement and administrative uncertainty. In turn, this could delay logistics, project activities and cross-province coordination. Humanitarian and development agencies might face challenges accessing specific zones or draw scrutiny when operating in areas with known gang presence.

Although Noboa benefits from a stronger mandate, his dependence on emergency powers rather than legislative negotiation could incite opposition protests in urban centres. These protests are not expected to be large in scale, though they could intensify if the government's actions are perceived as disproportionate or if security conditions do not improve in the medium term.

## Recommendations

Managers operating in Ecuador should continue to monitor developments closely and adapt quickly to changing risk conditions. This is important in HIGH-risk western provinces, where workforce must exercise stringent security precautions due to the precarious and volatile environments. In these areas, a full and personalised

### How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** A robust vetted network of security providers.
- **Services offered:** Updates and advice on various travel and security risks. Secure ground transport, meet-and-greet and evacuations, with appropriate notice.
- **Activation time:** Generally shorter in major cities such as Quito or Guayaquil but may vary according to provider availability and on-the-ground conditions. Preferred lead time for security or ground transport task is 24-48 hours.
- **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.



risk assessment is recommended, along with logistical support from a trusted and vetted security provider. Although non-essential travel can proceed to Quito and other central and eastern areas, workforce should always exercise caution and practice crime mitigation measures. This includes keeping a low profile, pre-arranging transportation and minimising non-essential movement after dark. Managers should remain abreast of developments throughout the month by monitoring International SOS alerts, maintaining close contact with local networks, and tracking indicators of a potential deterioration in the security environment.

Although the risk of major unrest remains low, workforce should remain cautious and take measures to reduce their exposure to potential protests or unrest, such as avoiding government buildings and central areas with heightened security. Business travellers in western provinces should minimise non-essential road journeys, avoid movement after dark and remain in secure locations near their accommodation. Workforce operating in western provinces should carry out well-co-ordinated journey management plans, have back-up transport options in the event of an incident and have a proper training on how to respond to crime-related incidents.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
An increase in anti-gang security operations	Noboa could call for additional security deployments or anti-gang operations in response to gang activity. This would lead to heightened security, checkpoints and the potential for gang-related clashes in peripheral areas of urban centres, particularly in HIGH-risk coastal provinces.
High-impact or co-ordinated attacks by criminal gangs in major urban centres	Although less likely, these attacks would pose serious incidental risks to bystanders. Such attacks would underscore the state's inability to address the security crisis, eroding public confidence in governance and creating an environment of heightened fear and uncertainty.
A conflict expansion between gangs and the security forces	Although this is unlikely, it would create an unsafe environment with the possibility of highly restrained availability of services.





## MEXICO

- The security forces deployed to the Mexico-US border will likely impact security dynamics in border cities and cause disruption along routes across northern states.
- In border cities, access to public services will likely be saturated by stranded deportees and migrants. Violent incidents are likely, particularly near border crossings and migrant shelters.
- Extended queues at border crossings have been reported due to exhaustive documentation and security inspections from customs authorities.

### Situation

Since February, the Mexican and US governments have increased the presence of military and security forces on the border. Operation Mirror, which is a joint operation that includes the deployment of the Mexican National Guard, Army and National Migration Institute, was implemented in April. The US government also has deployed and strengthened the presence of the Border Patrol and state forces, including the Texas National Guard and federal military personnel. The use of armoured vehicles and surveillance drones has also been reported. These policies underscore President Donald Trump's administration's goals of reducing trafficking of fentanyl and other illegal drugs, and inhibiting irregular migration.

Reports suggest that the number of migrant crossings to the US has decreased to a historic minimum in recent months. This reduction has been evident since February, when the number decreased to 8,347 crossings, compared with 29,101 in January, which marks a 70% decrease. Concurrently, the

US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) detained around 113,000 migrants and expelled 100,000 others, highlighting the heightened volume of operations carried out by CBP officers.

Moreover, the US government has discontinued the use of the CBP One app, which entails an online registration process and facilitates regular migration processes for migrants and asylum seekers. This has not only affected those waiting in Mexico but also those who have already crossed as nearly one million residence and work permits already granted have recently been revoked.

### Implications

Heightened security measures along the border together with the cancellation of the CBP One app have generated a high degree of uncertainty that has discouraged migrants from crossing into the US in the short term. However, this situation is unlikely to continue in the medium term as insecure conditions from volatile environments prevail in Central and South America, prompting new waves of migration in the coming months.

Despite Mexico's policies and strategies being implemented to prevent a potential saturation of migrant shelters in the border cities, local humanitarian and civil society organisations have forecast an influx that could deem them insufficient. Such an influx would likely trigger small-scale scuffles between migrant groups and residents across these cities due to pressure on resources and services. Although large-scale protests are unlikely,

small mobilisations are possible in neighbourhoods close to migrant shelters, migrant camps or near border crossings.

Increased security operations and personnel deployments near the shelters around migratory checkpoints are highly likely. Criminal organisations can take advantage of migratory caravans as they represent the opportunity to commit crimes like extortion, human trafficking and kidnappings. Although the migrant community is more vulnerable to these risks, organisations engaged in politically-sensitive work, including journalism, human rights and migrant advocacy, are also exposed to crime risks.

Long waiting times at the border crossings significantly disrupt supply chains. Increased security measures and overall border scrutiny have also slowed the crossing time. This has particularly impacted industries that rely on just-in-time delivery systems, like automotive, electronics, and perishable goods, which can further reduce the availability of these products in the market.

## Recommendations

Managers with assets and interests in Mexico should closely monitor developments related to the increasing deployment of the security forces along the US-Mexico border. We also recommended that managers monitor the Trump administration's migration policies and mass deportation plans along with their potential impacts.

Given that this situation has the potential to change rapidly, managers should also consider seeking information-sharing relationships with industry partners to enhance the situational awareness of their in-country workforce. In case tensions or disruption increase due to the presence of migrants or the security forces in border cities, consider alternate routes for ground movement or assess the feasibility of air travel. Managers should review and implement a security plan for their workforce in case of official or criminal checkpoints along routes, extortion, kidnapping or other related risks.

If the security environment deteriorates, travel should be essential only and precautions should be considered when undertaking ground travel between urban centres in border states. Consider hiring additional security resources.

For freight shipment operations, carry identification documents to facilitate passage through any security checks and customs, as well as all information related to the shipment and containers. Additional border transit time

### How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** 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 the capital Mexico City or Monterrey (Nuevo Leon state).
- **Secure accommodation:** Available in most major urban centres; hotels vetted by International SOS in Mexico City, Guadalajara (Jalisco state) and Monterrey (Nuevo Leon state).



should be factored in, as extended customs queues and thorough cargo inspections are anticipated. Comply with all official directives and assess possible contingency plans or alternative routes.

Organisations engaged in politically sensitive activities, including journalism, human rights and migrant advocacy, should review their exposure and consider additional protection measures. Carefully reassess relationships with local government officials, civil society organisations and other partners accounting for potential operational constraints.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
An increased number of mass deportations to Mexico	Mexico has already received nearly 20,000 deportees, including over 4,000 foreign nationals, all of which have required migration shelters and special services. These numbers remain low compared with the current shelters' capabilities installed by President Claudia Sheinbaum's government across border states since January. Nonetheless, the number of migrants returning through Mexico is forecast to surpass these installed capacities. Migrant camps are likely to be set up along public streets near formal shelters and border crossings. This could further impact security dynamics and cause scuffles with local residents.
Increased migrant caravans heading north of Mexico	Migrant caravans have been increasing in recent years. Despite current US migration policies disincentivising border crossings, this increase is likely to remain unchanged in the coming months. Moreover, under the US-imposed 'Remain in Mexico' policy, a unilateral measure, foreign migrants will likely be stranded in Mexico, especially in border cities including Ciudad Juarez (Chihuahua state), Nogales (Sonora state), Nuevo Laredo (Tamaulipas state) and Tijuana (Baja California state). Currently installed capacities of private and public migrant shelters put in place will become insufficient, leaving dozens of migrants unprotected. This could cause violent incidents and protests from inhabitants affected by this situation.
Further military and security force deployments at the border	The Trump administration has threatened to increase tariffs if adequate security measures are not implemented along the border. If these threats continue, Sheinbaum's government is prone to increasing the National Guard and military deployment at the border on top of the 10,000 personnel already deployed. Such security force increases could heighten stress on border cities, contributing to potential clashes between migrants and the security forces, or between the latter and organised crime members.
The government declares a State of Emergency due to the inability to face substantial migration influxes in northern states	Sheinbaum's administration has expanded migrant shelters but also forecasts they could end up operating at 900% of their capacity. Overwhelmed public services and limited integration prospects could lead to heightened tensions in northern cities, leading to local protests and heavy-handed security responses. Criminal groups could further exploit this instability, increasing risks of extortion and violence. If conditions deteriorate further. The government is liable to declare a State of Emergency to restore order and manage the crisis.



## REGIONAL

- The Atlantic hurricane season occurs annually from **1 June** until **30 November**.
- Meteorologists are predicting the 2025 hurricane season will be above average in terms of intensity and the number of named storms.
- Although June is the official start of the season, named storms have formed as early as May in recent years.

### Situation

Some forecasters predict the 2025 Atlantic hurricane season will see above-average storm activity and intensity, similar to last year's season. Thirteen to 18 named storms are projected for the season, though forecasters say there is potential for more. This includes seven to ten hurricanes, of which three to five are projected to reach strengths of Category 3 (middle on a five-tier scale) or higher.

Predicted warm waters in the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico (also known as the Gulf of America) will contribute to the forecast high number and intensity of storms. Additionally, La Nina or El Nino weather phenomena are possible later in the hurricane season. La Nina could cause greater activity at the end of the

season, while El Nino may have the opposite effect.

The 2024 season saw several destructive and historic storms impact the Caribbean, Central America and the US. Hurricane Beryl was the earliest Category 5 (highest) hurricane in recorded history and only the second hurricane ever to reach Category 5 status in July. Later, in September, Hurricane Helene became the strongest-ever recorded hurricane to strike the Big Bend region of Florida state (US). The storm caused widespread destruction hundreds of miles inland, particularly in eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina states (both US). It was the deadliest hurricane to hit the US mainland since Hurricane Katrina struck Louisiana state (US) in 2005.

The 2024 hurricane season as a whole resulted in hundreds of fatalities and billions of dollars in damage throughout the Caribbean, Central America and the US. Recovery efforts remain ongoing in some areas, including those in the US impacted by Helene.

The impact of the numerous 2024 storms illustrates the grave risks communities located well inland can face from riverine flooding. Despite Hurricane Helene making landfall along Florida's coast as a Category 5 storm, some of the most substantial damage occurred in Georgia, South Carolina (both US), South Carolina and Tennessee states. Some communities in these states were isolated for weeks, necessitating several requests for assistance from International SOS' Philadelphia Assistance Centre.

### Implications

Countries bordering the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of America (Mexico) can expect storm formation amid the approaching start of the hurricane season, possibly even as early as May. Some of these storms could develop into major hurricanes (Category 3 or higher) with little advance warning.



Tropical storms and hurricanes are often unpredictable and can grow in strength rapidly and deviate from predicted paths in unexpected directions. The forecast strength of a storm may also not indicate how destructive it will ultimately be. Category 1 (lowest) hurricanes and tropical storms have the potential to cause major damage depending on their behaviour and the preparedness of nations in their path.

Both coastal and inland areas in a storm's path are vulnerable to high winds, accompanying tornadoes (particularly in the US) and flooding. Buildings and infrastructure may be damaged or destroyed by life-threatening wind and floods. Coastal areas face an additional risk of highly dangerous and destructive storm surges. In some areas, an outbreak of looting and other crime may occur before governments are able to reimpose order.

Debris and strong wind have a high probability of causing extended power cuts. During peak summer months, the loss of air conditioning amid hot weather conditions can pose a risk to life in vulnerable populations such as the elderly. In 2024, numerous deaths were linked to high temperatures after air-conditioning units stopped functioning due to storm-related power outages.

Areas in the path of a storm can become isolated before, during and after its passage. Airports are typically closed ahead of a storm's impact, and flights out of the path of a storm may become fully booked prior to its arrival. Highways may also become clogged by evacuees, making pre-emptive evacuations difficult or impossible. Following a storm's passage, airports may be closed as debris is removed and any necessary repairs are made. Roads may also be flooded or blocked by debris, isolating impacted areas.

Floodwaters often contain contaminants, such as chemicals and faecal matter, increasing disease and infection risks for exposed individuals. Water supplies may become contaminated, and mosquitoes commonly reproduce in standing water following storms, leading to an increase in insect-borne illnesses that can persist for several weeks. Food supplies may run low as electricity is interrupted to refrigerators and freezers.

### How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** A vetted network of security and transport providers able to operate regionwide. Source network able to verify complex information from across countries. Assistance centres present in the US in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania state) and Phoenix (Arizona state), with an additional presence in Los Angeles (California state), Houston (Texas state), and Baton Rouge (Louisiana, all US). Assistance centre present in Mexico (Mexico City).
- **Services offered:** A robust offering of security services, including meet-and-greet, secure ground transport, 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 and assistance.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24-48 hours to activate, depending on location and availability of resources at the time of request.
- **Secure accommodation:** Yes, a list of recommended hotels assessed by International SOS in numerous cities regionwide. Advice for accommodation selection available via the Assistance Centres.



Spoiled food and unsafe water also raise the risk of diarrhoeal diseases, and wounds that are exposed to contaminated water are at risk of infection. Additionally, respiratory illnesses can spread rapidly, particularly in crowded shelters. Transport disruption and power outages can delay the treatment of injuries and illnesses.

## Recommendations

Managers should take advantage of the period ahead of peak hurricane season to refine hurricane-preparedness plans and train workforce on their implementation.

Managers and workforce with interests in areas commonly impacted by hurricanes and tropical storms should monitor official sources and stay abreast of forecasts involving developing and active storms.

Managers should have plans in place for workforce to evacuate from areas in the path of a hurricane and to ensure business continuity. For those who do not evacuate, a robust shelter-in-place plan should be established. Essential supplies, such as non-perishable foods, clean water and essential medicines, should be acquired well before a storm's impact as they may become unavailable due to panic buying as well as high demand in the days immediately after the storm has passed. Accommodation should be selected based on flood-resistance, generators and safe rooms. Electronic devices should be fully charged and workforce should have backup battery packs. If power is lost, usage of electronic devices should be limited to preserve battery life. Due to the possibility of looting and other crime after a storm's impact, appropriate precautions should be taken to avoid exposure to criminals.

Travel to locations forecast to be impacted by a hurricane should be deferred until after the storm has passed and damage assessments can be completed. If damage is severe, travel may need to be further delayed until rebuilding efforts are underway.

The US National Hurricane Center (NHC) regularly refines its forecasting to provide better awareness, forewarning and clarity, with changes made ahead of the 2025 hurricane season.

See the NHC's '[Products and Services Update for 2025 Hurricane Season](#)' (published in March) for more details.



Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Official sources forecast potential hurricane formation	The authorities, local government and businesses would begin to review or prepare disaster response plans for implementation. Individuals and businesses would begin to assess their preparedness for a storm, including ensuring access to medicines, food, water and other items should it be necessary to stock up for a stand fast period during a storm.
The NHC or US National Weather Service (NWS) issues a hurricane watch (indicating possible hurricane conditions) for your location	The authorities, local government and businesses would begin to implement disaster response plans. Individuals and businesses would ensure they have stocks of essential supplies. Supplies would likely be widely available at this point as panic buying would not have occurred. Some people may choose to evacuate ahead of the storm, depending on their risk appetite. Overland travel routes would be relatively clear and commercial airliners would likely have available seats.
The NHC or NWS issues a hurricane warning (indicating expected hurricane conditions) for your location	The authorities, local government and businesses would fully execute disaster response plans. A localised State of Emergency may be declared ahead of landfall. Individuals and businesses would be continuing to attempt to stock up on essential supplies. However, panic buying ahead of landfall may mean there are shortages. Large-scale evacuations ahead of the storm could take place. However, roads may be clogged with traffic resulting in hours-long delays. Air travel would continue, but commercial flights may be fully booked. Airport operations would likely cease 24 hours ahead of predicted landfall. The cessation of airport operations and clogged roads may render evacuations extremely difficult or impossible at this time.





## AMERICAS: ON WATCH

**Canada:** The Liberal Party on 29 April was declared the winner of the federal parliamentary election. Incumbent prime minister Mark Carney will continue in the role. All major parties accepted the results as legitimate. However, protests by opposition supporters are possible as Carney begins to implement policies in May, as the main opposition Conservative party also increased its vote share.

**Mexico:** A nationwide strike led by a teachers' union is planned for **15 May**, with potential disruption in urban centres. Confirmed demonstrations will occur in the capital Mexico City. The mobilisation, backed by other labour unions, aims to override a 2007 social security reform focused on pensions. Talks with the government in early-May could see the strike cancelled.

**Venezuela:** A parliamentary election is scheduled for **25 May**. Expect an increased military and police presence in opposition strongholds such as the capital Caracas, Maracaibo (Zulia state) and Valencia (Carabobo state). Previous elections have seen government crackdowns on dissent, including arbitrary arrests and suppression of protests. Post-election unrest is possible if results are disputed.





## AUSTRALIA

- A general election will be held on **3 May**.
- The key issue for voters is the cost of living, though Australia's relationship with the US has emerged as a fringe issue.
- Although the election should pass off peacefully, an increase in protests is likely during this period.

### Situation

All 151 seats in the House of Representatives (lower house of parliament) and 40 of the 76 seats in the Senate (upper house) will be contested. Parties or coalitions must secure at least 76 seats in the House of Representatives to be able to form a government. The main contenders are the Australian Labour Party (ALP, incumbent) and the Coalition (Liberal/Nationals), both of which have lost vote share over the last two elections.

Votes cast for non-major party candidates reached their highest level in the 2022 election, at 35.7%. Third parties and independents, such as the Green Party, One Nation and the Teals (an informal

grouping of centrist independents) have gained increased prominence. In addition, newer parties such as the Trumpet of Patriots and Australian Voice have emerged as an alternative to the traditional two-party system. This election will also be the first where the number of voters from the Generation Z and Millennial demographic cohorts will overtake that of previous generations. Those younger cohorts may be more willing to look beyond traditional parties when casting votes.

Cost-of-living pressures and the precarious nature of Australia's relationship with its primary security partner, the US, will be salient electoral issues. Both major political factions have proposed significant reforms to the housing market, tax cuts and commitments to cleaner energy sources. The fissures generated by US president Donald Trump's 'Liberation Day' tariff announcements and Australia's economic reliance on global trade have also prompted an unusual focus on foreign policy. Meanwhile, conflict in the Middle East continues to drive protest movements and tensions. Political parties' statements on the Hamas-Israel conflict have become a major voting issue, given the country's significant Muslim and Jewish populations.

There has been a spike in related protests ahead of the polls. Demonstrations have been led mainly by environmental (Rising Tide, Extinction Rebellion) and pro-Palestinian (Free Palestine Melbourne, Palestine Action Group Sydney) activist groups. They have shifted tactics from hosting mass gatherings to attempting to disrupt press conferences and other public appearances by key political figures. Among their targets are Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and opposition leader Peter Dutton. This method has also been adopted by the far-right Melbourne Freedom Rally (MFR) group. Several MFR members on 16 April managed to bypass security at Albanese's hotel in Melbourne (Victoria state) and confront him. Further such incidents are likely during and after 3 May. As such, expect heightened security and traffic disruption during rallies and public appearances by high-profile politicians.

On 19 January, chemicals which could be used as explosives and a list of synagogues were found in a van in Dural (New South Wales state). Other ostensibly antisemitic vandalism and arson incidents took place in



Melbourne and Sydney (New South Wales). However, the police later said these incidents were part of an elaborate hoax by organised criminal gangs seeking to divert police resources.

## Implications

We believe a mass-casualty event during the election is unlikely. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation maintains the country's terrorism threat level at 'probable' (middle of a five-tier scale). This corresponds to an increase in the number of Australians being radicalised and espousing extremist ideologies. However, earlier fears of a potential large-scale antisemitic attack have been allayed.

Although the 19 January security incident was a hoax, the possibility of attacks by radicalised individuals cannot be ruled out. In June 2024, a teenager was arrested in connection with a failed plot to target an ALP politician at the latter's office in Newcastle (New South Wales).

Current polls suggest that the most likely outcome appears to be a minority government. The increased popularity of alternative parties means that neither the ALP nor the Coalition is projected to win the 76 seats required outright. This would mean that the immediate post-election period would be marked by government-formation negotiations among the parties. This period is likely to be marked by an increase in online disinformation campaigns aimed at stoking political tensions, influencing party supporters and pressuring politicians to pursue or forgo agreements with other parties. Counter-demonstrations and protests are also probable, especially if parties perceived as 'moderate' are speculated to be negotiating with counterparts seen as more radical, such as the Green or One Nation parties.

## Recommendations

Workforce should expect increased travel disruption during the election cycle. To minimise this, they should liaise with local contacts for the locations of political rallies, public appearances and polling stations.

Although the risk of terrorism by transnational groups is low, there is a persistent risk of low-level attacks.

Report suspicious behaviour and/or packages to the authorities. In the event of a security alert or operation, comply with all directives issued by the authorities. Expect, but do not be unduly alarmed by, an increased police presence, particularly at sensitive locations such as places of worship, public squares, marketplaces and transport hubs.

### How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** An accredited network of ground transport and security providers. Assistance centre in Sydney and local offices in the capital Canberra, Melbourne and Perth (Western Australia state).
- **Services offered:** From ground transport services, close protection services, assisting with evacuations.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24-48 hours to activate, depending on location and availability of resources at time of the request.
- **Secure accommodation:** Vetted accommodation in all major cities across the country.

As a precaution, managers should establish plans to manage misinformation and disinformation, including updating workforce regularly on unfolding developments. Closely monitor the spread of viral messages promoting violence, propaganda and/or conspiracy theories targeting specific demographics and assess whether this raises additional risks to workforce, depending on their specific profiles. Workforce should be aware of political sensitivities when conversing with local colleagues, especially regarding party affiliations and issues related to the conflict in the Middle East.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Election results indicate a minority government	This would trigger negotiations between elected officials. This period may last up to several weeks, depending on the complexity of negotiations. It is likely to be marked by an increase in protests and online misinformation.
Reports of a resurgence in antisemitic or Islamophobic incidents including terrorism threats, vandalism and/or acts of arson	This appears unlikely as recent police operations have dampened such activity. However, the political atmosphere of an election is fertile ground for misinformation to spread. If such sentiments or incidents re-emerge, it would trigger increased fear, especially among the Jewish and Muslim communities, that a more serious attack may be impending. Heightened security measures are likely to be implemented, especially close to sensitive religious sites.
Violent targeting of politicians	This remains highly unlikely due to the capabilities of the security services. However, it is possible that a radicalised individual may attempt such an attack. Should this transpire, it would be likely to significantly disrupt election proceedings, possibly even delaying voting and the release of the results.



## SOUTH KOREA

- A snap presidential election is scheduled for **3 June**. This follows the impeachment and removal of President Yoon Suk-yeol (in office 2022-25).
- Sporadic gatherings will take place during the campaign period and on voting day. However, major security incidents are unlikely.
- A likely change in the ruling party and the country's foreign policy will fuel political polarisation.

### Situation

After Yoon Suk-yeol's impeachment was upheld on 4 April, the country entered a 60-day period during which a new president must be elected. Public officials intending to run must resign from their positions by **4 May**. The official campaign period will start on **12 May** and continue until 2 June. Voting is scheduled to take place from **06.00 to 20.00** (local time) on 3 June, followed by immediate vote counting. The president-elect will be inaugurated without the usual two-month transition period.

In the 2022 presidential election, the vote margin between the two main political parties' candidates was just 0.73%. However, this time the former Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) leader Lee Jae-myung is currently the clear frontrunner, despite ongoing legal troubles. He was recently acquitted of election law violation but has four other criminal investigations outstanding. Other prominent DPK

contenders include Gyeonggi province's governor Kim Dong-yeon and South Gyeongsang province's former governor Kim Kyong-soo.

Meanwhile the ruling People Power Party (PPP) has eight declared candidates, indicating internal fragmentation and a lack of a unifying figure. The party's leading candidate at present is former labour minister Kim Moon-soo. Acting President and Prime Minister Han Duck-soo is popular among conservative voters, including Yoon Suk-yeol's supporters, but has not yet declared an intention to join the race. As an economist, trade negotiator and former ambassador to the US, Han Duck-soo is widely seen as someone who will help steer tariff negotiations with the US.

Both major parties face multiple hurdles, including domestic polarisation that intensified during and after the December 2024 martial law crisis. There is an abundance of circulating social media content intended to discredit presidential contenders. Inter-Korean relations, which deteriorated significantly under Yoon Suk-yeol, and the economic response to the US' sweeping tariff policy are some of the other challenges awaiting the next president.

### Implications

#### *Domestic*

We expect the campaign period and voting day to pass off without major security incidents, despite heightened political polarisation. Given the political instability that followed the short-lived martial law declaration in December 2024, a high voter turnout is probable.



Political protests and demonstrations over socio-economic issues will take place ahead of the election, primarily aiming to draw candidates' attention rather than incite unrest. Although far-right rallies will continue in tandem with criminal proceedings against Yoon Suk-yeol, they will not gain much impetus. This is because the PPP is consciously attempting to distance itself from the former president to avoid alienating most of its voter base.

Current projections indicate a likely DPK landslide victory, due both to the negative perception of the PPP and Yoon Suk-yeol, as well as a rift within the party. A decisive DPK win would reduce the likelihood of major post-election unrest. However, if the PPP manages to regain public support by clearly dissociating from Yoon Suk-yeol and the far right, the race may narrow. This could lead to a more contentious post-election period, marked by disputes over the results. If the PPP remains the ruling party, protracted political gridlock will follow as the DPK attempts to undermine the PPP and mobilise anti-government demonstrations. A DPK win by a small margin would elicit a similar outcome.

Although socio-economic issues will dominate the campaign narratives to attract floating voters, debates over a South Korean nuclear deterrent will resurface. During Yoon Suk-yeol's term, the idea of South Korea developing its own nuclear arms gained traction due to waning trust in US deterrence and North Korea's continued weapons development. However, this may change if the DPK wins the presidential election, potentially triggering heated domestic discourse.

### *Beyond the border*

North Korea has a historical record of attempting strategic displays of military power during election periods in the South. It typically does this via missile or rocket tests, though in recent years it has also used more unorthodox tactics, such as sending waste-fuelled balloons over the border. Expect further similar provocations in the coming months. The North will seek to test the DPK, which is the likely election winner and traditionally takes a more conciliatory stance on inter-Korean relations.

However, if the DPK is victorious an immediate return to the so-called Sunshine Policy, under which South Korea pursues engagement and economic co-operation with the North, is unlikely. This is due to a significant shift in

### How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** A South Korea Assistance Centre in Seoul and a Regional Security Centre in Singapore. Security professionals can be deployed if required. An accredited network of logistics, security and medical partners present throughout the country.
- **Services offered:** From meet-and-greet, ground transport, travel arrangements to secure movement and static guarding. We also maintain a network of aviation providers in-country and across the region to assist with air charter evacuations.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24-48 hours to activate, depending on location and availability of resources at time of the request. For air charters, the lead time is likely to be a minimum of two to seven business days.
- **Secure accommodation:** Yes. Recommended hotels assessed in-person and via desktop research by International SOS in major urban centres.



international politics since the tenure of the last DPK president, Moon Jae-In (in office 2017-22). North Korea's enhanced partnership with Russia and the uncertainty surrounding US president Donald Trump's second term provide much strategic leverage for the North to disengage with talks.

A potential change in ruling party will put the recent reconciliation between South Korea and Japan to the test. Nonetheless, shared strategic interests, particularly in navigating the US' transactional foreign policy under Trump, are likely to sustain a bilateral commitment to security and economic co-operation.

The outcome of the snap election will also influence South Korea's balancing act between its trading partner, China, and its security ally, the US. A potential DPK-led government may take advantage of the current international climate under Trump's presidency to recalibrate relations with China. However, broader free and open Indo-Pacific and Korean Peninsula agendas require South Korea to maintain its security alliance with the US. This will fuel discontent among conservative and growing far-right groups, which will seek to mobilise demonstrations over the next five years.

## Recommendations

During the campaign period, political rallies will result in localised travel disruption. Most campaign events should pass off peacefully, though tensions between DPK and PPP supporters could lead to isolated incidents of unrest. Managers should liaise with local contacts and monitor political parties' social media to remain informed of election-related events. Plan journeys bypassing them to minimise exposure to disruption. Local nationals attending election-related events should be briefed on personal security measures and exercise vigilance in crowded areas.

Circulation of mis and disinformation on social media will be a major concern during the election period. Consult multiple and reliable sources and contact the International SOS Assistance Centre to help distinguish between facts, rumour and media sensationalism. Advise workforce to refrain from sharing unverified social media posts.

Reconfirm rostering on 3 June to ensure workforce can cast votes at designated polling stations. Recheck the status of appointments at government offices on the day.

The nature of these polls indicates there is potential for post-election demonstrations, especially if the results show only a small margin of victory. Closely monitor allegations of electoral fraud and minimise exposure to any related demonstrations as a precaution.





# MONTHLY SECURITY FORECAST

## Asia-Pacific



Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
An escalation in rhetoric by North Korea	We expect further hostile rhetoric from the North as it seeks to exert pressure on South Korea and its allies. It will conduct weapons testing and/or drills around polling day and the release of the election results. This is likely to be symbolic and we do not expect such action to trigger a conventional conflict.
The issuance of an advisory by a foreign government cautioning against travel during the election period	Although highly unlikely, this would lead to inbound travel restrictions, non-viable international insurance policies, and merit a review of International SOS' advice.
Unrest during a political event	Scuffles between supporters of rival candidates can occur outside event venues. The police will forcibly disperse crowds and are likely to make arrests.
An attack on a political candidate	Security will be increased at election-related events. Additional personal security will be provided to key leaders to prevent such attacks.



## ASIA-PACIFIC: ON WATCH

**India:** A Supreme Court hearing is scheduled for **5 May** on the Waqf (Amendment) Act, which regulates property endowment for charitable purposes. Expect further protests by religious groups and centre-opposition parties. Irrespective of the judgement, we expect gatherings in major urban centres, especially outside mosques. Security will be tight at key protest sites and in sensitive areas during court dates.

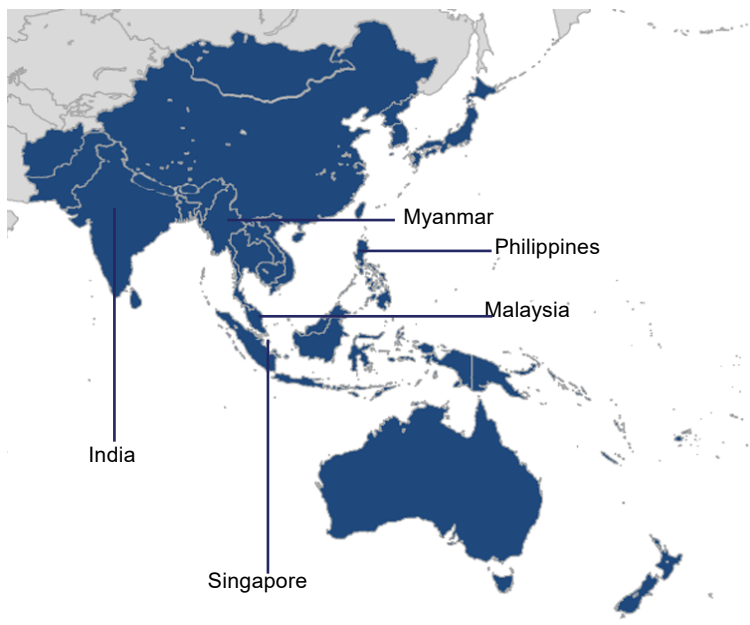
**Malaysia:** Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Gulf Cooperation Council leaders on **26-27 May** will attend the 46th ASEAN Summit in the capital Kuala Lumpur. Expect tight security and travel disruption around the venue, participants' accommodation and the airport (KUL). Book travel to and accommodation in Kuala Lumpur or the administrative capital Putrajaya as far in advance as possible.

**Myanmar:** Relief operations continue in the capital Naypyitaw and Mandalay and Sagaing regions, which were among the areas worst affected by the 28 March earthquake. Meanwhile, the military has carried out airstrikes to push for a strategic advantage in conflict zones. The pre-monsoon period, which lasts until **June**, will bring heavy rain, strong wind, hail and thunderstorms, complicating relief efforts.

**Philippines:** Polling in the mid-term election is on **12 May** for congressional and local government seats. There will be localised disruption around campaign rallies. The authorities have monitored targeted attacks on candidates and other political violence in semi-urban areas. Post-election, there are likely to be isolated incidents of violence in areas where the victorious candidate won by a narrow margin.

**Regional:** Buddha's Birthday (Buddha Day, Buddha Purnima or Vesak) celebrations will be held on **11-12 May** in parts of South and Southeast Asia. Celebrations will be held at Buddhist temples and monasteries, with processions nearby. Expect heightened security and travel disruption around related events. This is a long weekend in some countries, so expect a high volume of outbound travellers.

**Singapore:** A general election to select 97 MPs for 33 constituencies will be held on **3 May**. They are the first polls held under Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, contested by candidates from more than ten parties. The ruling People's Action Party is highly likely to maintain its parliamentary majority. Expect heightened security during the election period, which should remain peaceful.





## CENTRAL ASIA

- Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have reached landmark border agreements.
- The deals aim to resolve decades-long issues that have frequently resulted in cross-border clashes, ethnic violence and political disputes.
- Although the agreements mark a significant diplomatic development, there has been little consultation with local communities.

### Situation

After 33 years, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan finalised a border agreement on 13 March. The treaty demarcates their 600-mile (970km) shared border, finalises territorial swaps and sets the conditions for water and route access for local communities. Both countries announced an additional border resolution with Uzbekistan in the area where the frontiers of all three nations meet. Since March 2024, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have also reached agreements on their shared border.

This spate of diplomatic agreements seeks to resolve contentious issues in the region's conflict hot spot. The borders of these three countries converge in the Fergana Valley, a densely populated, ethnically diverse region. A lack of demarcated frontiers and competition over access to resources had fuelled ethnic violence

between local communities, as well as cross-border military clashes. Efforts to resolve these issues were complicated by numerous enclaves and exclaves, convoluted road connections and a growing population fuelling competition for resources.

The Kyrgyz-Tajik frontier had proved the most volatile in recent years. Cross-border violence meant crossings were shut and direct air links were halted. Major violence occurred as recently as September 2022. At that time, at least 59 people were killed and nearly 200 injured in Kyrgyzstan, while in Tajikistan 41 people were killed and 100 injured. More than 130,000 people were also evacuated from Kyrgyz border regions during this period.

Alongside the Kyrgyz-Tajik talks, Kyrgyzstan was also engaged in similar negotiations with Uzbekistan. Although their shared border was less volatile, it was equally complex. Reaching a final deal necessitated several territorial exchanges and the redirection of key routes to avoid inadvertent border crossings.

### Implications

Commitment to the deal from directly affected communities will be crucial for its successful implementation. The border areas are located far from the countries' respective capital cities, where the centres of power are concentrated. In 2022, when lethal violence broke out on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border, it was linked to a local dispute and reportedly took both governments by surprise. This illustrates how important acceptance from frontier communities and the respective border authorities will be in the coming months.

Political expression is tightly controlled in both countries, making it difficult to accurately evaluate the strength of local support for these agreements. Already, Kyrgyzstan has censured a politician for speaking against the deal and arrested a journalist who criticised the agreement online. The most vocal denunciations of the deal have



largely emanated from some foreign-based political opposition figures.

The true test will be how access to crucial resources is navigated during times of increased demand, such as access to water during the summer months. Agriculture, a water-intensive industry, is crucial to the Fergana valley and water access has been a key driver of past conflict. How state border guards and troops stationed at the frontier respond to local conflict will be another important metric of the agreement's success.

The new agreements will make regional counterterrorism efforts easier to manage and implement. The Fergana Valley has long served as an important recruitment base for regional Islamist extremists. With the extremist Islamic State-Khorasan group increasingly active across Central Asia, Iran and Russia, regional governments wish to strengthen co-operation against it.

International SOS continues to assess these border regions as HIGH risk. However, we will continuously monitor security conditions in the coming months and re-evaluate this assessment based on the deal's implementation.

## Recommendations

Travel to HIGH-risk border areas of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan requires careful advance planning and robust professional or local support networks. Ensure you are confident in your accommodation, communications and transport arrangements prior to travel, and make sure you have access to a well-stocked and secure safe haven.

### How we can help

- **Presence in-country:** An accredited network of transport and logistics providers that can operate across the region.
- **Services offered:** From 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 time of the request.
- **Secure accommodation:** : Our Assistance Centres can provide advice on accommodation choices.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Localised clashes between border communities over water, route access and/or other contentious issues	Localised clashes may occur in the first months of the deal's implementation. However if local security force personnel become involved, these may escalate to cross-border violence.
Cross-border gunfire and/or clashes between state militaries	Cross-border incidents cannot be ruled out. However, amid the diplomatic push for increased co-operation, additional mechanisms will be in place to defuse situations that could escalate into conflict.



## POLAND

- A presidential election is scheduled for **18 May**, with a likely run-off on **1 June** if no candidate secures a majority.
- Candidates include the capital Warsaw's Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski (Civic Coalition), historian Karol Nawrocki (Law and Justice (PiS) party) and Slawomir Mentzen (Confederation alliance).
- The election is crucial for Prime Minister Donald Tusk to advance his government's agenda, given the president's legislative veto power.

### Situation

The election will determine whether the presidency remains a check on government reforms or aligns with efforts to advance them. Current polling shows Trzaskowski in the lead, with Nawrocki comfortably ahead of Mentzen for second. A Trzaskowski-Nawrocki run-off remains the most likely scenario, though a contest against Mentzen is plausible if he gains further support.

Trzaskowski supports progressive social reforms, judicial independence and alignment with EU policy frameworks. Nawrocki defends his party's national-conservative agenda, particularly on migration policy. Mentzen promotes a libertarian-nationalist agenda marked by strong opposition to abortion and immigration, alongside critical messaging towards the EU and Ukraine.

The presidency carries significant influence through its veto power, which can block legislation passed by parliament unless the president's decision is overturned by a three-fifths majority of the Sejm (lower house of the parliament). Outgoing president Andrzej

Duda, who is term-limited, has used this power to veto several key proposals from the Tusk government. As such, the election outcome is critical to Tusk's ability to implement reforms.

The campaign has largely centred on domestic policy concerns, particularly healthcare, immigration and economic protection from EU regulations. Nevertheless, the election carries significant implications for Poland's foreign policy, especially its approach to the EU and support for Ukraine. Trzaskowski supports maintaining strong ties with NATO, deepening co-operation with the EU and sustaining long-term support for Ukraine. Nawrocki advocates a more cautious engagement with the EU, emphasising national sovereignty and prioritising Polish interests while maintaining alignment with NATO. Mentzen adopts a more radical stance, opposing further EU integration and promoting a transactional approach to foreign aid, particularly towards Ukraine, which he portrays as an economic and diplomatic liability.

Poland's security environment remains under scrutiny amid sustained Russian interference. The authorities have attributed cyberattacks and co-ordinated disinformation efforts to Russian-linked actors, including attempts to compromise election infrastructure. These campaigns amplify anti-Ukraine and anti-EU narratives, often aligning with far-right messaging. Although no breaches of voting systems have been confirmed, further cyberattacks and efforts to influence voters and sow doubts about the integrity of the election remain key concerns ahead of both rounds of the polls.



### Implications

The election outcome will have a profound impact on Poland's domestic and foreign policy trajectory. A Trzaskowski victory would align the presidency with Tusk's centrist, pro-European government, enabling more coherent policymaking. It would reaffirm support for Ukraine and reinforce Poland's role in the EU and NATO. It would also test whether the governing coalition's limited legislative progress reflects obstruction by Duda or deeper internal divisions.

If Nawrocki advances to the run-off and wins, the existing power dynamic will continue, with the president using veto powers to block Tusk's reforms. Nawrocki's campaign aligns with PiS's nationalist and socially conservative platform. He has pledged to prioritise Polish citizens over migrants and his presidency would likely preserve the PiS-era institutional legacy and prolong tensions with the EU over judicial independence, rule-of-law standards and migration policy.

A Mentzen presidency would present a more disruptive scenario. Although unlikely, his advancing to the run-off alone would signal growing public appetite for radical change. If elected, Mentzen would likely pursue a strongly nationalist agenda, opposing EU integration, resisting support for Ukraine and using the presidency to block international co-operation with Tusk's government. His rhetoric on sovereignty, migration and reproductive rights could deepen domestic political polarisation and strain Poland's international relationships.

Such polarisation could be further exacerbated by sustained Russian interference efforts throughout the election period, which aim to erode public trust in the electoral process. Although less likely, disruptive activities such as hoax bomb threats at polling stations and election-related events, as seen elsewhere in Europe, may also occur. While major cyberattacks remain a low-likelihood scenario, they cannot be ruled out. Far-right or pro-Russian candidates may benefit marginally from narrative amplification, though we expect the latter's overall electoral impact to be limited.

The election period may see localised disruption linked to protests. Demonstrations are possible in the lead-up to and the aftermath of each voting round, particularly if allegations of irregularities gain traction or if Mentzen performs better than expected, intensifying political polarisation. Although such protests are likely to remain peaceful, isolated incidents of unrest cannot be ruled out. Russian disinformation networks may amplify grievances or circulate misleading narratives about the integrity of the vote, potentially heightening tensions and increasing turnout at protests, especially in Warsaw and other urban centres.

### Recommendations

Managers should anticipate business disruption related to the upcoming vote and plan accordingly. Prior to 18 May, in-country workforce should be advised to carefully plan travel routes and allow additional time to reach destinations, particularly if travelling near campaign events or polling sites. With a run-off highly likely, mis and disinformation may continue in the post-election period and amplify the claims of illegitimacy of election results, providing justification for dissatisfied groups to continue voicing their grievances. If mis and disinformation fuels doubt about the outcome of the election and is widely believed, managers and in-country workforce should be prepared for localised disruption linked to protests. In the event of a nearby protest escalating into unrest,



### How we can help

- **Presence in-region:** An accredited network.
- **Services offered:** From ground transport to assisting with evacuations.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24-48 hours to activate, depending on the location and the availability of resources at the time of request.
- **Secure accommodation:** Yes.

workforce should leave the area immediately and avoid engaging with demonstrators under any circumstances.

Although the capabilities of the security forces and enhanced protocols will help lower the likelihood of political violence, such incidents cannot be entirely ruled out. Managers should ensure that all workforce members are aware of and familiar with designated exit strategies at their respective venues. In the event of a violent incident, workforce should evacuate only if it is safe to do so. Otherwise, workforce should shelter in place until the situation stabilises.

While unlikely, hoax bomb threats may occur at campaign events or polling stations. Workforce, especially foreign

nationals, should avoid election-related events and protests as a routine precaution. Although they may turn out to be false alarms, all threats must be treated seriously. If a bomb threat is received, managers must promptly notify local authorities and evacuate workforce from the area. Re-entry should only occur once it has been declared safe by the appropriate authorities.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
There are increased protests ahead of or during voting days	Expect demonstrations in the lead-up to and during voting, particularly in urban areas. Although most gatherings should pass off peacefully, localised disruption is anticipated and isolated incidents of unrest cannot be ruled out.
Mentzen proceeds to the second round of the presidential election or wins	If Mentzen advances to the run-off or wins, mobilisation by both his supporters and opponents is likely. Expect demonstrations in major urban centres, particularly in response to his anti-EU stance and rhetoric around abortion.
An election outcome is disputed or a result announcement is delayed	A delayed or contested result is possible, particularly if the vote is close or allegations of irregularities are raised. In such a scenario, challenges to the outcome are likely to be issued by losing candidates and protests could occur in some urban areas. Disinformation and misinformation are likely to be used to amplify grievances and undermine trust in the electoral process.
There is a major cyber-attack targeting electoral infrastructure or critical services	Although this is a low-likelihood scenario, successful attacks on voter databases, election platforms or critical infrastructure could disrupt election processes, undermine public confidence or heighten tensions.





## EUROPE AND CIS: ON WATCH



**Georgia:** Daily anti-government protests continue, though attendance has reduced significantly amid a broad crackdown by the authorities. Most demonstrations are peaceful, though related disruption may occur in central areas of the capital Tbilisi and other cities.

**Romania:** Expect further protests in May ahead of the re-run of the presidential election, with the first round on 4 May and the second on 18 May if no candidate wins outright. Demonstrations have followed the disqualification of far-right candidate Calin Georgescu. The vote is taking place amid heightened political polarisation and scrutiny of democratic institutions.

**Slovakia:** On 16 April, parliament passed a law tightening NGO regulations, mandating donor disclosures and imposing fines for administrative infractions. Critics have likened it to Russia's restrictive NGO laws. Expect protests to continue in May as civil society groups express concern over democratic backsliding and a foreign policy shift away from the EU and closer to Russia.



## IRAN

- Initial rounds of Iran-US nuclear talks have been positive, but progress is likely to be slow and incremental.
- Historical mistrust and external pressures, particularly from Israel, could derail the negotiations.
- A protracted stalemate or talks breakdown would increase the risk of US and/or Israeli military action against Iran, prompting significant retaliation.

### Situation

Several rounds of nuclear talks took place throughout April, marking a renewed push to resolve tensions over Iran's nuclear programme diplomatically. Iran's primary demands include an end to the US 'maximum pressure' campaign against it, sanctions relief and access to frozen Iranian assets. Iran is also seeking guarantees if the US breaches the new deal.

Meanwhile, the US is seeking to scale back Iran's nuclear programme and prevent the country from obtaining a nuclear weapon. The US has signalled that it is open to a compromise, since the complete dismantling of the nuclear programme remains a red line for Iran. One of the proposals reportedly under discussion is to transfer Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium to a third country. This has encountered resistance from Iran, which insists that it retains the stockpile under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

According to the IAEA's February report, Iran's stockpile stands at 18,286lb (8,294.4kg), 605.8lb (274.8kg) of which is enriched up to 60%. Highly enriched uranium is considered weapons-grade when it has been enriched up to 90%.

Efforts to negotiate a new nuclear deal began in March, when the US sent a letter to Iran communicating its demands and giving it two months to reach a deal. The US and Israel have threatened military action against Iran if a new agreement is not reached.

The US has pursued its 'maximum pressure' campaign against Iran during the ongoing negotiations, introducing new sanctions targeting Iran's oil exports, including trade with China. In addition, the US at the end of March deployed military reinforcements to Diego Garcia island, part of the British Indian Ocean Territory. The island has previously been used as a launch pad for US operations in the Middle East. There is already a heightened US military naval presence in the region given the ongoing US air campaign against the Yemen-based Houthi group.

Separately, reports in April claimed that Israel has developed plans to target Iranian sites in May. However, this scheme has reportedly not been backed by the US, which is prioritising the ongoing nuclear talks.

### Implications

The next few weeks will be critical in shaping the future of Iran's nuclear programme, US-Iran relations and the broader stability of the Middle East. Fresh rounds of talks are expected throughout May. The initial discussions



### How we can help

- **Presence in-region:** International SOS has on-the-ground presence, including offices and clinics across the region. A fully-staffed 24/7 Assistance Centre in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) hosts an aviation security team.
- **Services offered across the region:** Robust network of providers offering a range of medical, security and logistical support, including secure ground transport services, close protection officers, assistance with evacuations.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24-48 hours to activate, depending on location and availability of resources at the time of request.
- **Secure accommodation:** A network of recommended hotels assessed by International SOS in cities across the region. Advice for accommodation selection is available via the Assistance Centre.

have been described as constructive, with both sides showing willingness to engage in technical and high-level negotiations. However, the complexity of the issues at hand means that the two-month deadline set by the US will be difficult to meet.

A stalemate in or breakdown of the talks remains possible. Historical mistrust between the US and Iran, coupled with external pressures from regional countries such as Israel, could derail the process. Israel has consistently voiced strong opposition to any agreement that does not completely dismantle Iran's nuclear capabilities, fearing that Iran might eventually develop nuclear weapons. This stance could influence US negotiators to adopt a harder line, potentially leading to an impasse.

As such, the possibility of military action by Israel or the US against Iran cannot be entirely ruled out, especially if the talks fail to produce a satisfactory outcome. Israel has previously conducted covert operations to sabotage Iran's nuclear facilities and has hinted at the possibility of direct military strikes. The US, while currently focused on diplomatic solutions, has also maintained a posture of readiness to use force if necessary.

A military operation to set back the Iranian nuclear programme would be highly complex. It would also

require considerable resources, given the fact that Iranian nuclear infrastructure is spread out across the country, with some located in underground bunkers.

Such an operation would also provoke a strong response from Iran, the nature of which is likely to depend on who is involved in the attack. If Israel were to conduct the attack, the retaliation would likely to focus on that country and could involve cross-border air and drone strikes launched towards Israeli territory.

Israel has the military capability to launch such an operation against Iran on its own. However, US military backing would be needed to inflict significant damage on Iran's nuclear infrastructure, especially destroying underground bunkers, and protect Israel from Iranian retaliation. US direct involvement in military action against Iran would, in turn, expose US interests in the region to the risk of attacks.

The talks thus far reflect willingness to avoid a scenario with significant implications for Iran's national security, regional US and Israeli interests, and broader regional stability. Similarly, Saudi defence minister Prince Khalid bin Salman Al Saud's recent visit to Iran reflects other regional countries' intent to avoid escalation that could affect their national security.



### Recommendations

Closely monitor regional developments linked to Iran’s nuclear programme and the country’s relations with the US and Israel. Ensure that escalation plans are updated and rapidly implementable.

In countries where regional tensions are most likely to play out, such as Iran and Iraq, workforce should be able to stand fast in a secure location, such as their accommodation or local office, with enough provisions for at least 72 hours (i.e. food, water, essential medication, fuel and cash). Ensure workforce has access to reliable communications (primary, alternative and emergency means of communication) and understands who to contact in the event of an emergency.

Israeli and US nationals in countries across the Middle East and North Africa should continue to exercise caution and maintain a low profile amid heightened tensions.

Minimise time spent near all diplomatic missions across the region, particularly those of Israel and the US, as a precaution.

Account for flight disruption, as well as potential short-notice airspace closures across the region in the event of an escalation.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
A protracted stalemate or a breakdown in talks	Negotiations exceed the two-month US deadline, accompanied by little progress and escalating threats of military action.
Airlines pre-emptively reduce flights across the region	This is likely if regional tensions continue to escalate, accompanied by a protracted stalemate in talks and exchanges of hostile rhetoric between the US, Israel and Iran.
Reports emerge warning of an imminent attack on Iran	Foreign intelligence services have previously issued such warnings, including ahead of Iran’s 13 April 2024 military operation against Israel.



## ISRAEL

- Since conflict resumed in the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Territories) on 18 March, negotiation attempts have continued between Hamas and Israel via mediators.
- In response to renewed conflict in Gaza, isolated aerial attacks have been reported in Israel.
- Full-scale attacks against Israel remain unlikely. Hamas and Hizbullah's resources are diminished and regional players are repositioning foreign policies in light of the new US administration.

### Situation

The resumption of conflict began in response to Hamas' refusal to adhere to Israel's demands of releasing all remaining live hostages and the bodies of deceased hostages. The ceasefire saw the release of 25 hostages in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners, entry of aid, cessation of conflict and partial withdrawal of Israeli forces in Gaza.

Israel continues to carry out aerial strikes in Gaza causing high casualties and further infrastructure damage. Additionally, Israeli forces have restarted ground operations, with resumed control over the Netzarim Corridor and a gain in control of the Morag Corridor separating Rafah and Khan Younis (both Gaza).

In response to the Israeli forces' renewed conflict in Gaza, aerial attack attempts have been launched at Israeli urban centres such as Ashdod, Ashkelon and Tel Aviv. The air attacks have

come from Gaza, southern Lebanon and by the Houthis in Yemen. Hizbullah has denied that they have launched rockets into Israel. Israel has responded to rockets launched from Lebanon by targeting alleged Hizbullah and Palestinian militant positions across Lebanon, including in the capital Beirut.

Alongside aerial attacks, the risk of militant attacks remains high within Israel. Multiple Gaza- and West Bank (Palestinian Territories)-based militant groups have called for attacks in Israel due to the resumption of conflict.

In Israel, the resumption of conflict in Gaza also saw an increase in anti-government demonstrations calling for the release of hostages. Simultaneously, there have been multiple divisions within the Israeli government over the hostage situation and resumption of conflict. The government has attempted to dismiss leaders of government organisations, such as the Shin Bet leader Ronan Bar. Opposition groups and leaders have claimed these are attempts by the government to gain further control over the judiciary and security environment. These attempts caused a further spike in anti-government protests.

While the resumption of conflict has garnered denunciation from countries including Egypt, France, Iran, Jordan and the UK, there has been no regional escalation. Both Hamas and Hizbullah's resource capabilities have been diminished and Iran has yet to retaliate in response to resumed conflict in Gaza. Iran has recently experienced a change in foreign policy posture, including entering diplomatic communications with the US over nuclear talks. While Iran has sought to avoid an escalation of tensions with Israel and US, it is likely to retaliate if Israel initiates direct confrontation. Meanwhile, the US continues to support Israel's operations in Gaza while also attempting to assist Lebanon in formalising an agreement with Hizbullah to disarm. However, Hizbullah has repeatedly stated it has no intention to do so.



### Implications

Israeli military operations in Gaza are expected to continue if a ceasefire is not reached. Israel is unlikely to agree on a ceasefire unless the condition to release all remaining hostages is agreed upon by Hamas. Similarly, Hamas is not expected to agree to a ceasefire unless there is an agreed-upon end to conflict and further prisoner releases.

The continuation of Israeli operations within Gaza will result in further attacks against Israel. Israeli forces are expected to continue to counter isolated aerial attacks. Border areas with Gaza and Lebanon remain at a higher risk of damage from rocket attacks due to their closer proximity and reduced air raid shelter warning times. However, urban centres in central parts of the country will continue to be targeted. Full-scale attacks will remain unlikely due to the diminished capabilities of Hamas and Hizbullah. As Iran re-enters diplomacy with western countries, it is less likely to exchange air strikes with Israel than in previous periods of conflict within Gaza.

A heightened risk of militancy and militant threats will persist within Israel during the renewed conflict in Gaza. Prolonged conflict in Gaza is expected to result in further militant calls for attacks within Israel and on Israeli and Jewish assets in the region, partially in the West Bank. Likely targets include checkpoints, transport hubs, public spaces and religious landmarks.

#### How we can help

- **Presence in-region:** International SOS has six security and logistics partners in Israel, which can operate countrywide.
- **Services offered:** Security partner capabilities include meet-and-greet services, ground and secure transport services, close protection, mobile patrol services, procurement of essential food supplies and distribution.
- **Activation time:** Between two and 48 hours to activate, depending on location and availability of resources at the time of request. Capabilities are subject to change based on the security and operational environment at the time of request.
- **Secure accommodation:** International SOS maintains a network of vetted secure accommodation in Israel, including Haifa (Haifa district), Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

The Israeli government is expected make further government and judicial reforms and action against opposition figures in relation to the conflict in Gaza and national security. Such attempts are expected to continue regardless of the status of ceasefire negotiations and operations in Gaza.

Further Israeli operations in Gaza, continued unsuccessful hostage negotiations and Israeli government attempts at judicial reform will be met with further anti-government protests in Israel. Protests are likely to be undertaken in public spaces and in front of government institutions and headquarters. They are liable to be forcibly dispersed.

### Recommendations

Defer all travel to Gaza and areas of Israel within four miles (7km) of the border with Lebanon, Gaza and Syria. Essential travel to the rest of Israel can resume. Organisations and workforce that, due to the nature of their work, deem travel to these areas to be essential should conduct comprehensive planning and ensure access to secure accommodation with sufficient



essential supplies. Business travellers should be aware of the prevailing security environment and maintain constant situational awareness.

Closely monitor regional developments, ensuring that escalation plans are updated and rapidly implementable. Account for potential short-notice airspace closures and flight disruption in the event of an escalation of hostilities.

Stay abreast of the latest developments via International SOS alerts and verified local sources. Follow the advice and instructions issued by the emergency services and civil authorities in the event of rocket fire. Download the Israel Home Front Command mobile app if in Israel.

Avoid all protests in Israel, as a precaution and leave an area at the first sign of unrest. Expect heightened security near protests and follow all official directives. If travelling near a protest, ensure routes are clear prior to setting out and allow additional time for journeys.

There is a significant risk of militancy in Israel. Minimise time spent near likely targets, such as religious gatherings, public transport, military and government premises and personnel, and poorly secured and densely populated public areas.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
There is a further increase in anti-government demonstrations in Israel	Demonstrations pose incidental risks to bystanders if they turn unruly. The police are liable to forcibly disperse unruly demonstrations.
There is a sharp increase in militant attacks against Israel	An increase in the frequency of attacks or the carrying out of a major attack in Israel is expected to result in retaliation. This could take the form of military operations or direct strikes against militant targets. Heightened security in Israel can be expected in public spaces within urban centres.
Hizbullah announces or carries out a resumption of conflict	This would cause further volatility and risk to the security environment within Israel. There would be a heightened risk of rocket impact, especially in northern border areas with Lebanon.
A full-scale attack is launched against Israel by Hizbullah, Iran or other organisations	While the likelihood of this scenario is low, if a full-scale domestic or aerial attack is launched on Israel, it is likely to respond strongly with military retaliation in the form of direct strikes and military operations. This could lead to tit-for-tat attacks and an increase in regional tensions.





## SOUTH SUDAN

- Tensions have risen since vice-president Riek Machar, leader of the main opposition Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO) party, was arrested in late-March.
- Although the security situation in the capital Juba remains stable, clashes have erupted throughout the country.
- If the situation escalates, the 2018 peace agreement will be at risk of collapse and widespread hostilities could resume.

### Situation

Political tensions have risen in the capital following a wave of arrests of high-profile opposition figures. Machar has been under house arrest since 26 March. He is prevented from meeting members of his party or international mediators. Several other senior SPLM-IO officials have also been detained since March.

Since Machar's arrest, SPLM-IO has split into two factions. One of them has elected an interim leader, Stephen Par Kuol, who now deals directly with President Salva Kiir. The vote was rejected by the rest of SPLM-IO, which claims that Machar's position should be filled by the party's deputy chairman, Oyet Nathaniel. However, most of the senior party officials who oppose Kuol's nomination are in exile in neighbouring countries.

Machar's arrest follows an attack in early-March on a South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) base in Nasir county (Upper Nile state) by the White Army, a Machar-affiliated militia. Machar is accused of encouraging the White Army and inciting rebellion against the government. SPLM-IO has denied any involvement in the attack.

Since fighting began in Nasir in early-March, armed clashes and airstrikes have been reported in various parts of the country. These include Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile, Western Bahr-el-Ghazal and Western Equatoria states. Barracks where SPLM-IO troops are stationed near Juba were also attacked by SSPDF. Ugandan troops have been deployed in support of SSPDF and have participated in airstrikes against the White Army in Upper Nile. Clashes have continued despite calls for mediation by regional and international actors.

In parallel, a series of reshuffles have taken place in the Kiir-led administration and security apparatus. These appear to be in favour of installing Kiir's son-in-law, Benjamin Bol Mel, as his successor. Although an outsider to Kiir's Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), Bol Mel is a close ally of Kiir. As such, the recent reshuffling is likely aimed at dismissing senior members of SPLM who would oppose his formal appointment as Kiir's successor.

SPLM and SPLM-IO are the two main signatories to the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). The agreement, signed in 2018, marked the end of South Sudan's civil war and established a power-sharing system between the two parties.



### Implications

The scale of the recent clashes, coupled with the political tensions in Juba, indicates that R-ARCSS is at risk of breaking down. Although inter-communal fighting is common in South Sudan, the involvement of Ugandan forces marks a significant escalation. The arrest of Machar, a key signatory to R-ARCSS, and the split within SPLM-IO also make the future of the agreement uncertain. The Kuol-led faction of SPLM-IO says it remains committed to R-ARCSS. However, Oyet, who leads the other SPLM-IO faction, declared in late-March that the agreement had effectively collapsed due to Machar's arrest.

Fighting between SSPDF and SPLM-IO and affiliated militias is expected to continue in the coming weeks. Airstrikes by SSPDF, supported by Ugandan forces, are likely to persist. The most intense hostilities are likely to remain in Upper Nile state. However, they could spread to other Machar strongholds such as Jonglei and Unity states. Sporadic clashes and airstrikes could also occur throughout the country. Such hostilities may occur in EXTREME-risk areas of the country.

At present, the security situation in Juba is less likely to be affected than in the rest of the country. There is no presence of forces affiliated to SPLM-IO in the capital, which reduces the risk of clashes between them and SSPDF. However, if the situation escalates, SPLM-IO-linked troops stationed near Juba could attempt to reach the capital. Defections and changes of allegiance among armed troops could also occur. Either scenario would result in a rapid deterioration of the security environment, which could include clashes or widespread unrest.

Political tensions will remain high as long as Machar is detained. The split between SPLM-IO factions is likely to deepen in the coming weeks. Kuol's faction could attempt to overthrow Machar and denounce the rest of the party. Continued political issues in the capital are likely to further destabilise the security situation in the rest of the country and potentially lead to a complete collapse of R-ARCSS.

If R-ARCSS collapses, further fighting throughout the country and a return to full-scale conflict is expected. This would likely be between local militias of various ethnic and political affiliations. Both SSPDF and the military wing of SPLM-IO lack the resources to engage in large-scale fighting and generally rely on local militias.

#### How we can help

- **Presence in-region:** An accredited network of security partners. This varies by location.
- **Services offered:** From ground transport services to assisting with evacuations.
- **Activation time:** Up to 24-48 hours to activate, depending on location and availability of resources at time of the request.
- **Secure accommodation:** Yes.

Kiir is expected to further consolidate power by dismissing opponents within SPLM and forging alliances with the breakaway SPLM-IO faction. Bol Mel will continue to play a prominent role in the government and represent the country in international forums. A formal takeover by Bol Mel, for example in the event of Kiir's death, is unlikely to be well received and could lead to a deterioration of the security situation in Juba.

### Recommendations

Business-critical travel to Juba may be possible subject to an individual risk assessment of the current security



# MONTHLY SECURITY FORECAST

## Middle East and North Africa



situation and with an understanding that the security environment could deteriorate at short notice. Travel to the better-protected Palouge oil field in Upper Nile state, where travel by air is possible on a case-by-case basis, should be subject to an itinerary-specific, pre-travel threat assessment. Avoid all travel to the rest of South Sudan.

Managers with workforce in the country should keep abreast of local developments by liaising with in-country sources, security networks and diplomatic missions, as well as by monitoring our South Sudan alerts. They should brief workforce on related developments.

Organisations should ensure that they understand the exposure of their in-country workforce and assets. They should ensure that they have the ability to relocate workforce to secure, stand-fast locations. All in-country locations should have adequate supplies for at least seven days if access to essentials is compromised. This includes the provision of spare fuel, water and food, as well as access to reliable means of communication in the event of instability coupled with a prolonged airport closure. Such locations should also have manned security arrangements.

Managers should evaluate the comfort levels of workforce to remain in-country amid the current tensions. Workforce should be prepared to respond to a potential increase in other security threats, including widespread social unrest, in their area.

Business-continuity and contingency planning should be up to date. In-country workforce should have a robust and rapidly implementable escalation stand-fast and evacuation plan adjusted to current and potential scenarios. Evacuation plans need to consider the current operational, logistics and security challenges. Ensure that workforce is circumspect in online and in-person communications, bearing in mind local political sensitivities.

Organisations that are unable to adopt the above measures should reconsider operations and inbound travel. Organisations should be aware that our evacuation monitor level for South Sudan remains at EVACUATE NON-ESSENTIAL WORKFORCE.

Main indicators of deterioration	Assessment
Fighting continues to escalate between SPLM-IO-affiliated militias and SSPDF outside Juba	Fighting is unlikely to reach Juba, although it could lead to new arrests of SPLM-IO officials in Juba or governors in other states. This would further exacerbate political tensions and heighten the risk of breakdown of R-ARCSS.
Machar is convicted, confirming a prolonged detention	In Juba, Kiir would further consolidate his power. An increased presence of the security forces can be expected. Outside Juba, militias linked to Machar would likely mobilise and increase attacks on SSPDF targets.
Kiir formally announces the collapse of R-ARCSS	Although unlikely, this would indicate an imminent return to conflict throughout the country and would likely lead to a sharp deterioration in the security environment in Juba. Kiir and SPLM would attempt to consolidate power in Juba and further isolate SPLM-IO.



## MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: ON WATCH

**Algeria:** Monitor developments following diplomatic tensions between Algeria and Mali. Both countries withdrew their respective ambassadors and closed their airspaces to one another following the downing of a Malian surveillance drone by the authorities in Algeria. Tensions will remain high between the two countries, with Mali maintaining its allegations Algeria is supporting militancy in the region.

**Regional:** Israeli troops will remain in the Gaza Strip (Palestinian Territories), Lebanon and Syria indefinitely. This development will prolong instability in these locations. It will also contribute to further delays in an Hamas-Israel ceasefire and negotiations for the release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza. Diplomatic efforts for an Israeli troop withdrawal from Lebanon will also be hindered.

**Syria:** The US' decision to reduce its military presence in the country marks another shift in the security environment. However, the security implications of the withdrawal, including its impact on counterterrorism efforts in Syria, remains to be seen. At this stage, the decision involves a partial reduction of the US military footprint, which currently stands at around 2,000 troops.

**Yemen:** The US air campaign against the Houthi group will persist in the coming weeks. Meanwhile, Houthi military activity will remain closely tied to developments in Gaza, sustaining a threat to Israel and vessels passing through the Red Sea. Amid growing pressure, the Houthis may once again threaten neighbouring Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates with cross-border missile strikes.

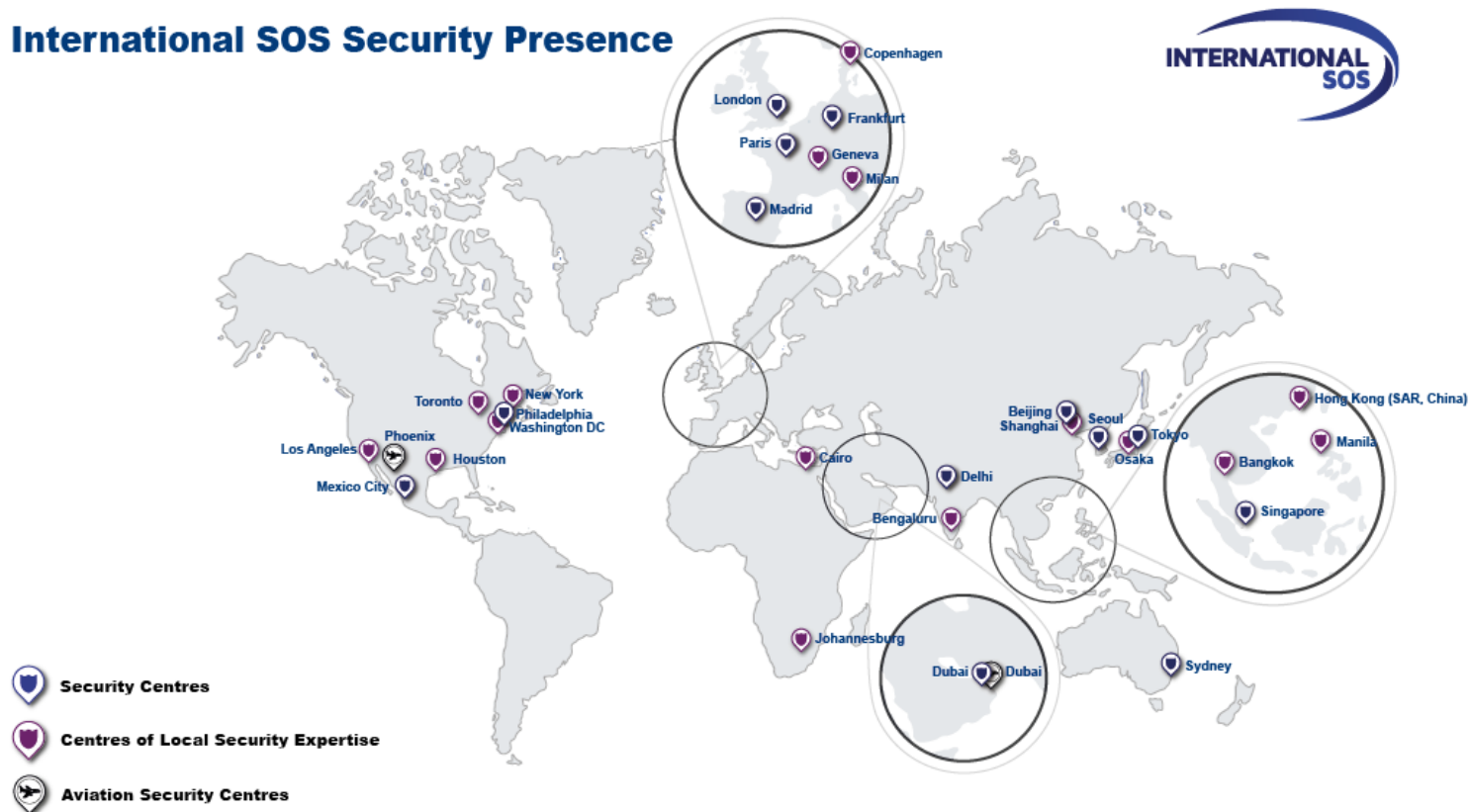




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