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GLOBAL

Ramadan: During the Islamic holy month of Ramadan anticipate transportation delays, heightened security, and greater sensitivity within predominantly Muslim areas already affected by tension over the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Ramadan began on February 28 and will last until March 30, marking a month-long period of special religious observances for Muslims around the world. The holiday period is characterized by increased travel, large public gatherings, and heightened security for mosques. Logistical disruptions are especially common across the Middle East and Southeast Asia with mass travel straining transportation hubs, interrupting supply chains, and exacerbating delays due to elevated security measures. This year, the confluence of Ramadan with the fragile phase two ceasefire negotiations in the Israel-Hamas conflict raises the overall risk environment. Islamic extremist groups have historically exploited this period to execute an increased number of attacks to commemorate their Jihadist mission and become ‘martyrs’ during an especially religiously significant time. Tensions surrounding the Israel-Hamas conflict will further heighten the risk of a domestic violent extremism in the west, targeting religious gatherings and Muslim communities. The rate of anti-Muslim hate crimes during this period is historically elevated because Islamic religious practices become more visible publicly. Additionally, large religious gatherings during Ramadan, such as mass prayers and celebrations, significantly increase the risk of crowd crush incidents resulting from inadequate crowd control measures. Developments in the phase 2 negotiations, may incite terror attacks in Israel, while Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilians and militants could escalate tensions globally. Travelers during Ramadan should remain informed of local advisories regarding travel delays, heightened security precautions, and avoid non-essential proximity to large religious gatherings in high-risk regions.



AMER

United States: Anticipate disruptions in state capitals nationwide during the continuation of “50 Protests, 50 States, One Movement” (50501) demonstrations. On 4 March, protests opposing President Donald Trump’s policies are slated to take place, continuing the momentum of the 50501 movement – launched on 5 February. The sustained nature of these protests suggests a prolonged period of political activism and unrest, with demonstrators expected to gather in key urban centers, government districts, and at symbolic locations in dozens of cities. While most protests have remained peaceful, the risk of clashes between demonstrators and counter-protesters or security forces persists, particularly in politically polarized areas. Public transportation and major roadways are likely to experience disruptions. Although rare, instances of targeted violence against protesters, such as vehicle ramming attacks or shootings, remain a potential risk, prompting authorities to implement heightened security measures. Travelers and businesses should anticipate transportation challenges and exercise caution near demonstrations.

United States: Expect increased violence on shared border with Mexico following deaths linked to improvised explosive device (IED) and the extradition of 29 high value cartel members to the US. On 26 February, an IED placed on a rural road in Tamaulipas state near the US-Mexico border detonated when it was tripped by a vehicle, killing two people and severely injuring another. Authorities suspect the IED was planted by drug cartels. The Tamaulipas government had warned travelers on 24 January to be vigilant of IEDs planted by cartels on rural roads. One of those killed was a Texas rancher, which prompted an announcement for all those in agricultural work traveling to and from Mexico to exercise increased



caution. On 27 February, Mexico extradited 29 high ranking cartel members in an unprecedented move intended to stave off President Trump's tariffs. Extraditions of cartel members from Mexico have historically been rare, and in the past, cartels have responded with extreme violence towards the Mexican government. This suggests a high likelihood that cartel elements will retaliate against the recent mass extradition. Travelers are advised to avoid rural roads along the US-Mexico border and maintain a heightened sense of caution in border regions due to the risk of increased violence between cartels and security forces.



EMEA

Israel: Exercise heightened vigilance across urban centers over the coming weeks following wave of terror attacks and amid heightened tensions over stalled ceasefire. On 3 March, one individual was killed and three others wounded in a stabbing attack at a bus station in Haifa. This follows the recent vehicle ramming attack in Haifa on 27 February that killed two people and left nine injured. Terror attacks in Israel tend to come in waves of closely grouped events over several weeks before petering out. The current wave started on 22 February with a foiled bus bombing plot in Bat Yam. Uncertainty continues to permeate Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza over the capacity for phase 2 of the ceasefire to be agreed upon and implemented. Both sides are prepared for the resumption of open hostilities, which would increase the risk landscape for anti-Israeli terror attacks. Travelers are advised to closely monitor the situation, exercise increased caution in public areas and create contingency plans in case conflict with Gaza-based militants rekindles.

Senegal: Monitor for possible resumption of conflict after new peace accord signed with Insurgent group Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance. On 25 February, Senegal signed a peace agreement with the Caesar Badiatte-led faction of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC), marking a step toward resolving one of Africa's longest running conflicts. The MFDC was formed in 1982 and is currently led by two faction leaders, Caesar Badiatte and Salif Sadio. It has sought independence for Casamance, a region geographically separated from northern Senegal by the country of Gambia and historically marginalized in national politics. The low-intensity insurgency has resulted in thousands of deaths and displaced civilians. Multiple previous ceasefires, including a notable one in 2022, have all failed due to the split in the internal politics of the group. While the current



agreement secured the disarmament of the faction led by Cesar Badiatte, the other key faction leader, Salif Sadio, refused to participate, leaving the peace process in limbo. The absence of full MDFC participation undermines the prospect for future long-term stability. Travelers to Senegal should exercise caution, particularly in the Casamance region, as the recent peace deal remains fragile, which could result in sporadic violence.

Morocco: Dismantling of Islamic State - Sahel Province (ISSP) cell highlights persistent threat of militancy in the country and North African region. On 24 February, the counter-terrorism agency of Morocco announced it had dismantled a twelve-member cell with ties to ISSP. The group, which was radicalized online, had branded themselves as “The Lions of the Caliphate in the Maghreb Al Aqsa” and were planning various remote-controlled bombings on Moroccan and international targets. The suspects were arrested across nine different cities and had been armed through ISSP smugglers and follows the dismantling of another ISSP cell on 31 January, whose members were also indoctrinated online by an ISSP representative. Extremist groups have increasingly sought to take advantage of insecurity in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger – all within the Sahel region – to entrench their presence and expand their operational capacity within neighboring countries. This is underscored by the frequent occurrence of domestic counter-militancy operations targeting and dismantling newly established ISSP cells.

Eastern Europe and Balkans: Crackdown on organizations receiving foreign funding highlights regional shift toward increased scrutiny on perceived threats to sovereignty and repression of civil society. Hungary and Serbia are the latest to act in accordance with this trend. On 24 February, Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban directed lawmakers to intensify efforts aimed at halting foreign funding



for various types of organizations – especially media groups – through new legislation. Orban has justified this goal as preserving national sovereignty. However, it has also been viewed as a way to target pro-democracy and opposition organizations that defy his increasingly authoritarian rule. On 25 February, Serbian police raided the offices of several prominent NGOs on the grounds that they had misused funds from the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Critics argue that this represents the government’s continued pressure on civil society groups. This action comes amid large scale sustained Serbian student demonstrations protesting pervasive government corruption that the Serbian government has claimed are being supported by USAID funds. Russian President Putin first popularized this avenue of authoritarian action with his controversial Foreign Agents Law in 2022, which has been imitated in different iterations throughout the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Heightened suspicion of foreign aid, businesses, and investments is a global trend, producing a more hostile international business environment within democracies and authoritarian-leaning states alike. These recent actions jeopardize confidence in the government transparency practices within Eastern Europe and the Balkans, reduce investor confidence, and raise the risks for travelers.

Romania: Expect persistent protests over the coming weeks after far-right previous presidential candidate is arrested. On 26 February, Calin Georgescu was detained by police on a series of charges, including inciting actions against the constitutional order, giving false statements, and setting up an organization with fascist, racist, xenophobic, and antisemitic characteristics. Georgescu emerged from obscurity to win the first round of last year’s presidential election in December 2024 – results that were annulled by the constitutional court after being presented with evidence of a campaign of Russian interference; elections had been reset for May



2025. Tens of thousands of far-right anti-government supporters rallied in the streets of Bucharest on 1 March – foreshadowing an increased period of civil unrest in response to Georgescu’s arrest. Georgescu has repeatedly denied the accusations against him, refuted that the December election was the victim of a foreign state’s campaign of interference, and now alleges the charges against him are politically motivated. It is currently unclear if Georgescu can stand as a candidate in the upcoming election due to his legal troubles. It is advised to monitor the situation closely in the lead up to the election in May as protests could escalate quickly in response to developments regarding Georgescu’s criminal case.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Monitor situation following conviction of Bosnian Serb leader, threatening stability and foreshadowing rising ethnic hostility. On 26 February, Bosnia’s Constitutional Court convicted Milorad Dodik – the current president of Republika Srpska – of failing to execute the decisions of the UN High Representative Christian Schmidt who oversees the implementation of the 1995 Dayton peace accord. This agreement ended the 1992 Bosnian War, which was started by Serbians seeking secession. The conflict resulted in ethnic carnage that killed 100,000 people and displaced millions. Bosnia has since been governed under a power-sharing system established by the Dayton agreement, consisting of the Bosniak-Croat Federation and the predominantly Serb Republika Srpska. Each area retains wide autonomy, sharing some joint institutions, and are governed by a rotating three-member presidency made up of a Bosniak, Serb, and Croat member. The indictment has spurred promises from the Bosnian Serb parliament to ban the operations of the state prosecutor, the state court, and the intelligence agency in the Republika Srpska, as well as block all legislative reforms preparing Bosnia for EU accession talks. Dodik has threatened radical measures in response to the decision, alluding to his long sought after goal of secession for the Republika Srpska from the rest of Bosnia. This has the potential to dramatically increase ethnic tensions and



provoke an uptick in civil unrest from supporters of Dodik. As the country plunges into unknown legal territory, the possibility of escalation stemming from protests, leadership within Republika Srpska, or Bosniak-Croat law enforcement has increased exponentially. Travelers are advised to monitor the developing situation closely, track the potential for a wider regional conflict involving Serbia, and avoid non-essential proximity to government sites that might serve as flashpoints for protests.

Ukraine: Failure to sign rare minerals agreement weakens Zelensky's negotiating position following hostile meeting with President Trump. On 28 February, a summit at the White House between the two leaders, meant to end with the signing of a rare minerals deal, became a televised session of exchanged reprimands that resulted in Zelensky leaving the White House – deal unsigned. The Ukrainian-US alliance, which has been steadfast since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, has been deteriorating over the past two weeks. Trump made unilateral overtures to President Putin and initiated reproachment negotiations in Saudi Arabia that did not include Ukrainian representatives. Zelensky's unsuccessful attempts to push back against these actions have instead only deepened the chasm between himself and Trump. On 24 February, the US refused to back a UN general assembly resolution condemning Russia for invading Ukraine and instead passed a UN security council resolution calling for peace in Ukraine without rebuking Russia. Early on 25 February, Russian President Putin called President Trump offering access to mineral deposits throughout Russia and Russian occupied Ukraine, as well as upselling business opportunities for US companies in Russia. On 25 February, President Zelensky, fearful of a unilateral resolution to the war that would leave his country enfeebled and devoid of territorial security assurances, appeared to extend an olive branch toward Trump by acquiescing to rare minerals deal in an attempt to mend his relationship with the US. The idea for a deal on natural resources was first floated



by Zelensky in the fall of 2024 to provide an incentive for greater US military aid. However, Trump appeared to take advantage of the offer to exemplify the broader US shift toward mercantile foreign policy under his administration. The hostile exchange on 28 February, surprised many observers and emphasized the shift in US support of Ukraine toward open support of Russia, complicating the prospects for future peace negotiations, and current US arms aid for Ukraine – potentially prolonging the war.

Nigeria: Plans to discontinue Visa-on-Arrival policy and replace it with strict pre-arrival clearance will complicate entry process for foreign travelers. On 26 February, authorities reiterated their plan to discontinue the popular Visa-on-Arrival program that allowed passport holders from citizens of all countries to obtain visas upon arrival for short visits, tourism, business, or emergency relief work. Minister of the Interior Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo cited potential security risks and the general unsustainability of the program. To enhance security, the government plans to employ an Advance Passenger Information program at land borders and upgrade the existing online approval system. The new system is set to take effect on 1 April 2025, but business sectors have warned that the move will discourage investors unwilling to wade through the lengthy visa application processes. By streamlining and modernizing the visa system, Nigeria hopes to improve border security without hindering business investment and operations.



APAC

Japan: Birth rates reach a record low for the ninth consecutive year, underlining continued deterioration of long-term stability for business landscape. Births in 2024 plummeted to a record low of 720,988 – a 5% decrease from the previous year – while deaths reached 1,618,684, resulting in a natural population decline of nearly 900,000 and exemplifying the severe demographic crisis. The total fertility rate has fallen to 1.20 births per woman, significantly below the replacement level of 2.2. Projections indicate that Japan’s population, which peaked at 128.1 million in 2008, could fall below 100 million by 2048 and to 87 million by 2060. This demographic shift threatens economic stability, as a shrinking workforce must support an expanding elderly population, intensifying financial pressures on social security systems and reliance on immigration to offset labor shortages. As the world’s fourth-largest economy, a shrinking workforce threatens Japan’s competitiveness, innovation capacity, and ability to sustain its contributions to the global supply chain, particularly in manufacturing and technology. Despite government initiatives to encourage childbearing, these measures have yet to reverse the declining trend. Cultural factors, including demanding work environments and traditional gender roles, further complicate efforts to boost birth rates.

Japan: Exercise caution and expect disruption over the coming days amid a large wildfire in Iwate Prefecture. On 25 February, a wildfire broke out in the town of Ofunato in the northeast Iwate Prefecture. The fire has burned over 2,100 hectares of land, destroyed over 80 homes, and killed one person. Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba pledged to deploy all firefighting and Self Defense Force (SDF) capabilities to prevent the loss of more homes. The cause of the fire is unknown, but they are common between February and April due to the combination of dry air, high winds,



and lack of rainfall. Avoid travel to the areas surrounding the Ofunato forest and follow official directives.