



**PROSEGUR**

**GLOBAL RISK SERVICES**

# Global Intelligence Review

**April 21, 2025**  
Edition 40



## **GLOBAL**

**Death of Pope Francis will prompt heightened security surrounding Catholic landmarks and travel disruptions over the coming days worldwide.** On 21 April, the Vatican announced the passing of Pope Francis and has since initiated an official period of mourning, in conjunction with rituals to choose the next Pope. Prominent global Catholic landmarks, particularly those within the Vatican City and Italy, should expect a heightened risk atmosphere amid mass gatherings and an influx of mourners. A nine-day mourning period has begun, during which St. Peter's Basilica will host large crowds for public viewing, with the funeral scheduled between 25-27 April. The conclave to elect a new pope is expected to be held between 6-11 May. Italian authorities have implemented heightened security protocols, including restricted access to central Rome. Potential flight delays at regional international airports due to foreign dignitary arrivals and rerouted public transportation should be expected.

Internationally, pilgrimage sites such as the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes (France), the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Mexico), and Fatima (Portugal) are also anticipating surges in visitors, prompting local security advisories. Brazil – the world's largest Catholic country – has initiated a seven-day mourning period and will hold large-scale vigils and state-led mourning events that will likely lead to travel disruptions. The Philippines has issued crowd control warnings around major churches. The global mourning period is liable to produce attractive crowd and infrastructure targets for bad actors seeking to exploit this moment for anti-Western or anti-Christian symbolism. Travelers should plan journeys accounting for disruptions in countries with large Catholic communities and near important Catholic landmarks.





**Israel-Hamas War: Statements confirming plans to occupy Palestinian land after the Gaza war ends heighten risk of lone-actor attacks and civil unrest globally.**

On 17 April, Israeli Defense Minister, Israel Katz, stated that the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) would continue to occupy the security zones they have established in Gaza after the conflict has ended. Katz claimed the occupation of these zones was necessary to provide a security buffer zone for Israeli communities around Gaza. Various far-right officials have gone even further, calling for a full occupation after the war, with a military government controlling Gaza. This rhetoric undercuts Israel's aim to ensure its security by playing into Hamas' propaganda, which continues to subjugate and radicalize the Palestinian population. Hamas does not have widespread popularity amongst Gazans, as evidenced by the large anti-Hamas protests over three days at the end of March, which were subsequently and brutally suppressed. However, it is preferred over any type of Israeli governance or occupation.

The possible future occupation of Gaza is also not popular with large swaths of the Israeli population, which is likely to respond with protests in opposition as well as counter-protests in support of the action. Ultimately, the implementation of any plan to occupy Gaza will galvanize Hamas supporters, inspire domestic lone-wolf terrorist attacks, and stoke civil unrest in the Palestinian Territories, Israel, and globally. Increasingly existential rhetoric from across the ideological spectrum will contribute to an atmosphere that increases the likelihood of radicalization, while broad civil unrest raises the possibility of clashes with counter-protesters and law enforcement. Travelers should remain mindful of the upcoming 'Day of Rage' in support of Palestinians taking place on 22 April, which will consist of a day of worldwide protests across urban centers. Stakeholders are advised to continue tracking the expansion of IDF security zones and Israeli post-war plans for Gaza, as these will influence the development of a sustainable ceasefire, a long-term peace agreement, and the intensity of civil unrest within the immediate region and abroad.



## AMER

**Colombia: Monitor health risks over the coming months amid an uptick in Yellow Fever.** On 16 April, Colombia's Ministry of Health declared a national public health emergency following a significant surge in yellow fever cases, including 74 confirmed infections and 34 fatalities since early 2025. The central-west department of Tolima has been identified as the most impacted region, with 22 cases detected. Yellow fever is transmitted by mosquitoes and remains endemic in various parts of South America. The recent surge highlights gaps in mosquito control and vaccine distribution, which are particularly common in regions with limited health infrastructure. Although the overall case count remains moderate, there is a high fatality rate of 46 percent. The risk of transmission is considered low to negligible in high-altitude cities such as Bogota, Medellin, Cali, Cartagena, and Barranquilla due to the lower prevalence of mosquitoes. Travelers to Colombia should confirm their yellow fever vaccination status at least ten days prior to arrival, especially if planning to visit rural or forested areas, and take standard anti-mosquito precautions.

**United States: Politically motivated arson of Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro underscores intensifying risks to public figures due to heightened political polarization.** On 13 April, the assailant Cody Balmer climbed a perimeter fence on the property, evading posted security, and threw two incendiary devices through windows in the governor's residence, causing significant fire damage. He quickly fled the scene but later confessed to the arson at the Harrisburg police department and was arrested. Balmer admitted that he had harbored hatred toward Shapiro due to his stance on the Israel-Hamas War and had intended to physically assault him if there was an encounter during the arson. Examination of Balmer's social media revealed that he held staunch anti-government views and endorsed



radical action in response to political grievances. Although he has denied having any mental illnesses, he had reportedly stopped taking medication for an unknown condition in the days leading up to the attack. This incident highlights the increasing trend of domestic violent extremists (DVEs), often struggling with mental illness, who are radicalized alone online and then proceed to take violent action. It also underscores gaps in physical security for prominent figures and their residences during a period of heightened vulnerability, attributed to the tumultuous domestic political environment. Clients are advised to reassess their security plans for gaps and set up active threat monitoring procedures for assets.

**Puerto Rico: Widespread blackout highlights persistent infrastructure vulnerability, posing a risk of operational disruption.** On 16 April, the country experienced its second island-wide blackout in four months, leaving millions without electricity and thousands without access to potable water. The outage caused a full-day shutdown of business activity, severe traffic gridlock, and disrupted operations at Luis Munoz Marin International Airport, causing numerous flight delays and cancellations. As of 21 April, the majority of homes and businesses had power restored. Longstanding grid instability, exacerbated since Hurricane Maria in 2017, continues to undermine public confidence and critical infrastructure reliability. Each major outage is estimated to cost the island upwards of 250 million USD in daily revenue loss. The recurrence of these blackouts will continue to produce opportunistic criminal activity, fuel anti-government sentiment, and deter both commercial investments and infrastructure modernization efforts.

**Ecuador: President Daniel Noboa's reelection ensures persistent regional tensions, which are likely to inhibit transnational collaboration.** On 16 April,





Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum declined to reestablish diplomatic ties with Ecuador, referencing the 2024 raid on Mexico's embassy in Quito and questioning the legitimacy of the recent Ecuadorian election. Incumbent President Noboa secured reelection on 13 April, amid a militarized state of emergency, due to endemic criminal and drug cartel activity. Mexico's refusal to restore diplomatic ties is emblematic of Ecuador's increasing isolation from key regional partners, due to Noboa's perceived violations of democratic norms. Criticism of Noboa has grown stronger due to his perceived affinity for more authoritarian tendencies under the guise of combating crime. This diplomatic fallout highlights growing regional polarization throughout Latin and South America over the norms of democracy and the effectiveness of various crime-fighting strategies. Progressive governments with strong democratic norms, who focus on addressing the root causes of crime, increasingly clash with conservative leaders who often engage in more authoritarian actions and focus on a militarized-carceral solution to persistent regional crime. These domestic differences degrade conditions for international collaboration on essential transnational issues such as drug trafficking, immigration, and trade. This fragmentation also weakens Latin America's collective diplomatic front and risks undermining regional forums like the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR).



## EMEA

**Europe: Climate change is intensifying deadly environmental risks throughout continent.** Recently released data from the European Union (EU) shows that 2024 was the hottest year on record for the bloc. Europe is reportedly now warming at a rate twice the global average. Extreme heat, severe storms, wildfires, and prolific widespread flooding cost nearly 20 billion USD in damages and thousands of lives. Nearly 30 percent of the continent's river network was impacted by significant floods, a record-breaking heatwave gripped southeastern Europe during July 2024, extreme rainfall precipitated devastating flooding in Valencia, Spain during the Fall, and widespread wildfires scorched 110,00 hectares of land in a week in Portugal. These events elevate pre-existing environmental risks for businesses and travelers, creating delays and damaging property. Climate threats present an opportunity for investment in green energy production and infrastructure resilience projects. Renewable energy sources are now responsible for 45 percent of electricity in Europe. However, their infrastructure remains especially vulnerable to climate change, inviting innovation and improvement over the coming years.

**Niger: Kidnapping of Swiss national reflects deterioration of security landscape following a pivot away from the West.** On 13 April, a Swiss woman was abducted by armed assailants from her home in the Dagamanet district of [Agadez](#), in northern Niger. This is the second Western national kidnapped in Agadez this year, following the unresolved abduction of an Austrian woman in January 2025. Although no group has claimed responsibility, both incidents occurred in a region where Islamist militants affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS) maintain an active presence. These abductions come amid heightened instability since the July 2023 military coup, which ousted President Mohamed Bazoum and resulted in the



severing of counterterrorism cooperation with Western allies, particularly France and the US. The withdrawal of French and American forces has left northern regions, such as Agadez, increasingly vulnerable to militant activity and organized crime. The aim of these kidnappings is unclear, as there have been no accompanying demands or publication of information regarding the kidnapper's conditions. The targeting of Western nationals signals the rising popularization of kidnapping among insurgents and criminal networks, who are exploiting reduced state capacity and international disengagement. This trend further weakens the greater Sahel's already fragile security architecture. Travelers should always liaise with a local contact when moving through high-risk areas to mitigate risks.

**South Africa: Recent kidnapping underscores the prevalence of abduction as a criminal extortion tactic.** On 10 April, an American pastor was forcibly kidnapped from his church in the township of Motherwell, outside the city of Gqeberha (Eastern Cape province), by four armed men while leading a service. A ransom demand by the perpetrators was soon issued. On 15 April, he was rescued unharmed a few miles from his church by police after a shootout that resulted in the deaths of three of the suspects. This incident highlights the surge in kidnappings over the past decade, with 17,000 cases reported between April 2023 and March 2024. However, kidnappings for ransom only make up 5 percent of overall kidnappings. The majority of abductions are characterized as 'express kidnappings' – instances that usually take place over the course of only a few hours and are intended to extort large sums of money or valuables from victims. Additionally, while the bulk of kidnappings are coordinated by local crime gangs or desperate individuals, some have been orchestrated by transnational organized crime syndicates. Businesses should employ heightened precautions for employees traveling to the country, including





local armed protective agents, armored cars, and enhanced digital hygiene to mitigate risks.



## APAC

**Japan:** Continue to monitor a resurgence in whooping cough, which poses a **health risk**. As of April 2025, over 4,771 cases of whooping cough (pertussis) have been reported throughout the country, surpassing the total of 4,054 cases recorded for the entirety of 2024. Although the outbreak predominantly affects children, especially infants, who are at heightened risk for severe complications, adults who are immunocompromised or unvaccinated should exercise increased caution. The cities of Osaka, Niigata, and Tokyo are the most heavily impacted. If the outbreak escalates, it could negatively affect tourism and ease of mobility for foreign nationals. Travelers to Japan should ensure they are up to date on their pertussis vaccinations, avoid close contact with infants or crowded indoor spaces, and monitor local health advisories as the outbreak continues to spread.