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**From:** Dave Johnson [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, March 17, 2017 12:00 PM  
**To:** Zane  
**Cc:** G Charsley (Adler ANB); Myla Baker US; Ian Fitzpatrick  
**Subject:** Fwd: Daily Digest: 01:09 GMT 17 Mar 2017

Security / Medical / Tavel updates received from MedAire

DAVE JOHNSON

email: [REDACTED]

Begin forwarded message:

From: Daily Digest <medaireandcontrolrisks@travelsecurity.com>

Subject: Daily Digest: 01:09 GMT 17 Mar 2017

Date: March 16, 2017 at 9:10:21 PM =DT

To: [REDACTED]

Daily Digest

Africa

Cameroon: Douala: Exercise caution in New Bell area following repeated clashes between youths <x-msg://7/#1057284>

Members in the commercial capital Douala (Littoral region) should exercise caution in the coming days in the vicinity of the Shell New Bell junction following an outbreak of violence on 15 March by youths armed with sticks, bottles and machetes. The violence, which included attacks on passers-by, was triggered by the killing of a suspected thief in an incident of mob justice earlier in the week. Police intervened to re-establish order but caution should be exercised in the area due to the risk of further retaliation, which would pose incidental risk to bystanders.

More <x-msg://7/#1057284>

Rwanda: Western border areas: Gun attack in Rusizi district reflects MEDIUM travel risk in border region <x-msg://7/#1057304>

Two Rwandan nationals early on 2 March were killed and another injured in an attack by unidentified gunmen in the Bugarama area of Rusizi district (Western province), near the border with Burundi and Congo (DRC). The Rwandan authorities are attempting to identify the assailants, who reportedly fled to Burundi. The incident serves as a reminder of the MEDIUM risks associated with travel to the border with Burundi and Congo (DRC), where incursions by armed groups, shelling or stray gunfire can temporarily increase insecurity in adjacent areas of Rwanda.

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Senegal: Dakar: Expect, avoid further protests over mayor's arrest; related gatherings set for 17, 22 March <x-msg://7/#1057500>

Members in the capital Dakar over the coming days should anticipate and avoid all protests linked to the recent arrest of the city's mayor, Khalifa Sall, over alleged embezzlement of public funds. A hearing in the case is due to be held at the High Court from 09.00 (local time) on 17 March, and related demonstrations are possible on the day outside the court building and the Town Hall, as well as the Rebeuss prison, where the mayor is being detained. An additional pro-Sall rally is scheduled from 16.00 (local time) on 22 March in the city's Guediawaye suburb.

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South Africa: Gauteng province: Movement in vicinity of Springs Mall in East Rand can resume after attempted armed robbery (Revised) <x-msg://7/#1057313>

Normal movement in the vicinity of Springs Mall, in the East Rand area to the east of Johannesburg (Gauteng province), can resume after shots were fired during an attempted armed cash-in-transit robbery earlier on 16 March. According to local media reports, two police officers and a bystander were injured during a shoot-out near the mall's entrance; two suspects were later arrested. The incident highlights the high levels of violent crime in the country and the need to adopt sensible precautions, even when in comparatively secure areas.

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Americas

Argentina: Urban centres: Avoid protests related to teachers' strike on 21-22 March (Revised) <x-msg://7/#1057492>

Members in urban centres, including the capital Buenos Aires and provincial capitals, on 21-22 March should avoid demonstrations related to nationwide strikes by the CTERA teachers' union over a number of issues in dispute with the government, including education funding and salaries. Members should avoid common protest locations in Buenos Aires city on both days, including the education and labour ministries, Plaza de Mayo and the National Congress (see map).

More <x-msg://7/#1057492>

Brazil: Yellow fever outbreak

The yellow fever outbreak in Brazil continues. Initially affecting Minas Gerais State, cases have now been confirmed in the states of Espirito Santo, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Suspected cases are also under investigation in the states of Bahia, Rio Grande do Norte and Tocantins. In addition, other areas of Brazil are considered at risk for yellow fever. Travellers visiting any area at risk of yellow fever should be vaccinated at least ten days prior to arrival. In addition, some travellers to and from Brazil are required to show proof of vaccination to gain entry.

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Canada: Ontario, Quebec provinces: Reconfirm travel arrangements, continue to expect disruption associated with winter storm Stella <x-msg://7/#1057277>

Members travelling to southern parts of Ontario and Quebec provinces on 16 March should continue to maintain flexible itineraries and anticipate further travel disruption associated with winter storm Stella. Further snowfall is forecast to affect major cities, including the capital Ottawa, Toronto (both Ontario province), Montreal and Quebec City (both Quebec province) on 16 March. According to the authorities, many flights were delayed or cancelled at Toronto Pearson International Airport (YYZ, Ontario) and Montreal-Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport (YUL, Quebec) on 14-15 March. Members should reconfirm travel arrangements before setting out, to minimise inconvenience.

More <x-msg://7/#1057277>

El Salvador: San Salvador: Fatal shootout near city centre highlights persistent crime risks <x-msg://7/#1057491>

At least six people were killed on 15 March in a shootout between gang members and private security guards in the Mercado Central area in the centre of the capital San Salvador. The authorities subsequently launched a security operation and arrested five suspects. The violence erupted when gang members opened fire on a security guard and fatally shot three nearby street vendors, triggering the gunfight. Most shops and businesses in the area subsequently closed due to the unrest. The incident highlights the HIGH travel risk rating for the country, particularly the capital where, principally due to gang violence, travel should only be undertaken for essential business purposes.

More <x-msg://7/#1057491>

Mexico: Urban centres: Avoid protests related to national strike on 17-18 March by teachers' union <x-msg://7/#1057498>

Members in urban centres around Mexico on 17-18 March should avoid all demonstrations associated with a 48-hour nationwide strike by the CNTE teachers' union over educational reforms. Two marches will be held on 17 March: one in Tuxtla Gutierrez (Chiapas state) at 09.00 from Diana Cazadora to Parque Central, and a second in Morelia (Michoacan state), starting at 10.00 (local time) from Casa de Gobierno to the Centro Historico.

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Peru: Disruption related to heavy rainfall, flooding persists in several regions; maintain flexible itineraries <x-msg://7/#1057275>

Members in or travelling to Ancash, Huancavelica, Junin, Lambayeque, Libertad, Lima, Piura and Tumbes regions, as well as the capital Lima, in the coming days should plan itineraries accounting for likely disruption caused by continued heavy rainfall and resultant flooding. The flooding has damaged roads and bridges in the aforementioned regions. Clean-up and repair operations are under way.

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United States: Continue to monitor developments following court ruling temporarily blocking new immigration restrictions <x-msg://7/#1057479>

Members intending to travel to or from the US should continue to closely monitor developments linked to a recent Executive Order detailing new immigration procedures. A federal judge in Hawaii state on 15 March approved a nationwide temporary restraining order against travel restrictions within the Order, hours before the measure was to come into effect on 16 March. A similar ruling was subsequently issued by a federal judge in Maryland state. The rulings will prevent the various restrictions in the Order from being implemented at least until legal challenges against the law are adjudicated at an as yet unspecified date.

More <x-msg://7/#1057479>

Asia & the Pacific

Afghanistan: Kabul: Heavy gunfire reported near Habibiya High School on Darulam Road; avoid area </a> <x-msg://7/#1057483> SPECIAL ADVISORY

Unconfirmed reports late on 16 March indicate that heavy gunfire took place near the Habibiya High School on Darulam Road in the capital Kabul. Details of the incident are still emerging; more to follow.

More <x-msg://7/#1057483>

Afghanistan: Kabul: Reported militant threat to Green Village Camp; reconfirm itineraries, stand-fast procedures

The Ministry of Interior reported on 5 March that there is a potential militant plot to carry out a car bomb attack against the Green Village Camp in the capital Kabul. As yet, there are no precise details about the timing or nature of the suspected attack or the source of the threat information. Travellers in Kabul with appointments at the Green Village Camp should reconfirm their itineraries and continue to minimise time spent near the perimeter of the facility. Travellers at the camp should reconfirm stand-fast arrangements and procedures.

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American Samoa (US): Dengue outbreak <x-msg://7/#1057303>

A public health emergency was declared after cases of dengue fever were confirmed in American Samoa. Dengue is consistently present in the island and outbreaks are also ongoing in other Pacific islands. It is spread by mosquitoes and can cause a range of symptoms. It has no particular treatment. Some people, especially those who have been infected before, get a more severe form that can lead to fatal complications. Although a vaccine has been developed, it is only available in a small number of countries and is not recommended for travellers. Prevent infection by avoiding mosquito bites.

More <x-msg://7/#1057303>

Bangladesh: Avoid planned nationwide protests on 18 March over government's gas deal with foreign company

Members in the capital Dhaka and other urban centres on 18 March should avoid the vicinity of planned nationwide demonstrations over the government's agreement reached on 14 March with a South Korean oil and gas company, allowing the latter offshore gas exploration rights in the Bay of Bengal. The protest is being organised by National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports group to highlight various concerns, including the potential for increased gas prices and the trade deal's revision of corporate tax exemption benefits.

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China: Hong Kong: Expect localised disruption, make alternative transport arrangements during taxi operators' protests on 17 March <x-msg://7/#1057501>

Members in Hong Kong should expect localised disruption and make alternative transport arrangements during protests by taxi operators' unions in the morning hours of 17 March in the central business district (CBD). The organisers plan to surround the Central Government Offices and the Legislative Council (LegCo) building in the Admiralty area with 100 taxis, while 400 taxis will be parked on roads around the harbourfront area in Central district. The operators are

Protesting against a government plan to introduce 600 premium taxis in Hong Kong. The event in Admiralty will coincide with a discussion on the proposal in the LegCo.

More <x-msg://7/#1057501>

India: Delhi, environs: Anticipate road blockades by protesting ethnic-Jats on 20 March <x-msg://7/#1057521>

Members in the capital Delhi and the adjoining areas of National Capital Region (NCR) on 20 March should expect significant travel disruption during planned protests by the ethnic-Jat Akhil Bhartiya Jat Aarakshan Sangharsh Samiti (ABJASS) group. ABJASS, which has been campaigning for quotas for Jats in state government jobs and educational institutions, has threatened to block the prime minister's residence, the parliament building, and all highways and roads in Delhi on the day if its demands are not met.

More <x-msg://7/#1057521>

India: Fatal sexual assault of Irish national in Goa highlights need for stringent precautions <x-msg://7/#1057294>

The police on 15 March arrested a man from Canacona city (South Goa district, Goa state) on charges of raping and killing a female Irish national. The victim had travelled to South Goa with a friend on 13 March, to participate in the celebration of the Hindu festival of Holi (commonly referred to as the 'festival of colours'). Her body was found in Devbagh village the following day. The incident highlights the need for female travellers to adopt stringent precautions at all times to mitigate the risk of sexual assault, particularly in tourist areas.

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Maldives: Anticipate increased security, associated disruption during Saudi Arabian king's visit from 18 March <x-msg://7/#1057506>

Members should expect heightened security and associated travel disruption during Saudi Arabian King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud's visit from 18 March until at least 22 March. Roads along the capital Male's northern waterfront on 18 March, including in the vicinity of Republic Square where the welcome ceremony will be held, will be closed from 12.00 (local time) until the event ends on the day.

More <x-msg://7/#1057506>

North Korea: Malaysian nationals should continue to defer all travel due to government ban on leaving country

Nine Malaysians - three embassy staff and their family members - remain stranded in North Korea following a government ban on 7 March on Malaysian nationals from leaving the country. The ban appears to be applicable only to embassy employees as two Malaysian UN workers were able to leave the country on 8 March. Nonetheless, we continue to advise all Malaysian nationals to defer travel to North Korea during this period of heightened diplomatic tensions following the assassination in Malaysia of Kim Jong-nam, the half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. Members from other countries can continue to travel to North Korea, but should monitor developments closely and be fully aware of, and compliant with, the country's strict regulations throughout their visit.

More <x-msg://7/#1057514>

Pakistan: Islamabad: Anticipate heightened security, associated disruption during Pakistan Day celebrations on 23 March <x-msg://7/#1057486>

Members should expect disruption associated with heightened security measures and large crowds in the capital Islamabad on 23 March during Pakistan Day (also known as Republic Day) celebrations. About 5,000 security force

personnel will be deployed to secure the annual military parade at the Parade Ground in the Sharkarparian parkland area, east of the Islamabad Highway. Security checkpoints will be established at all entry and exit points of the city; the underpass at Faizabad interchange will be closed on the day.

More <x-msg://7/#1057486>

Europe & IS

Belarus: Urban centres: anticipate, avoid further protests over controversial tax (Revised) <x-msg://7/#1057508>

Members in urban centres should expect and avoid further protests to demand that the government annul a tax on those not in full-time employment. Related protests were held on 15 March in the capital Minsk, Hrodna (Hrodna region) and Mogilev (Mogilev region), as well as on 12 March in Babruisk (Mogilev), Brest (Brest region), Orsha (Vitebsk region) and Rogachev (Gomel region). Although President Alexander Lukashenko announced on 9 March that the controversial levy would be suspended for 2017, activists have threatened to hold further protests if the authorities do not take decisive steps by 17 March to permanently cancel the so-called 'social parasite' tax.

More <x-msg://7/#1057508>

Finland: Helsinki: anticipate disruption, cancellations during aviation workers' strike on 17 March <x-msg://7/#1057499>

Members planning to travel through the capital's Helsinki Airport (HEL) on 17 March should reconfirm flight schedules due to a planned strike by security and ground handling staff. The strike is set to take place from 15.00-19.00 (local time), as members of the Finnish Aviation Union (IAU) lobby for better benefits, despite a general industrial agreement for the sector. Due to the industrial action, national carrier Finnair announced the cancellation of 90 flights on the day. Further related strikes are possible on 22-24 March.

More <x-msg://7/#1057499>

France: Grasse: Movement in vicinity of Alexis de Tocqueville high school can resume following shooting incident (Revised) <x-msg://7/#1057327>

Movement in the vicinity of the Alexis de Tocqueville high school (lycee) in Grasse Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur region can resume after at least three people were injured in a shooting earlier on 16 March. The suspected gunman – a 17-year-old student at the school – is in custody, and the authorities have confirmed that the assailant acted alone. The motive for the shooting is not yet clear, but the police said they have no reason to suspect the incident is terrorism-related.

More <x-msg://7/#1057327>

France: Paris: Avoid protest on 19 March against alleged police brutality, racism <x-msg://7/#1057474>

Members in the capital Paris on 19 March should avoid a planned rally from Place de la Nation to Place de la Republique, to begin at 14.00 (local time). The demonstration, called the 'March for Justice and Dignity', has been organised in protest at perceived police brutality, racism and abuse against immigrants. A large turnout and a visible police presence along the protest route can be expected as similar events in Paris have resulted in unrest between participants and the police.

More

France: Paris: Avoid rally on 19 March over police conduct due to credible risk of unrest (Revised) <x-msg://7/#1057279>

Members in the capital Paris should avoid a rally on 19 March over alleged police brutality due to a credible risk of unrest. Participants will march at 14.00 (local time) from Place de la Nation to Place de la Republique.

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Netherlands: Rotterdam: Avoid vicinity of pro-Turkey rally on 17 March <x-msg://7/#1057502>

Members in Rotterdam (South Holland province) on 17 March should avoid the vicinity of a pro-Turkey march as a precaution. The event, called by several Turkish groups over a diplomatic dispute between Turkey and the Netherlands, will commence at 17.00 (local time) at the Rotterdam Central station and conclude at Schouwburgplein at 19.00. Recent related protests in Rotterdam have resulted in clashes between demonstrators and the police, as well as an emergency order imposed by the authorities overnight on 11-12 March.

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Mid East & N Africa

Bahrain: Karranah, Bilad al-Qadeem: Avoid anti-government protests on 17 March

Members in Karranah (Northern governorate) and Bilad al-Qadeem (Capital governorate) on 17 March should avoid the vicinity of two planned anti-government demonstrations due to the credible risk of localised unrest. The protest in Karranah will begin at 16.00 (local time), while the protest in Bilad al-Qadeem will begin at 20:00.

More <x-msg://7/#1057504>

Lebanon: Beirut: Avoid further protest on 18 March against tax increases <x-msg://7/#1057496>

Members in the capital Beirut should plan routes bypassing a protest on 18 March against recent tax increases. The Lebanese Communist Party has called for a demonstration from 13.00 (local time) outside the National Bank of Lebanon in the city's Hamra area. A related gathering took place on 16 March at Riad al Solh Square in central Beirut amid tight security. While the rally passed off without incident, all such gatherings should be avoided due to the potential for unrest.

More

Lebanon: South province: Reconfirm status of Coastal Highway due to potential for further roadblocks <x-msg://7/#1057271>

Members planning to travel between Sidon and Tyre (both South province) via the Coastal Highway (also known as Sidon-Tyre Highway) in the coming days should reconfirm its status before setting out due to the potential for roadblocks by truck drivers. Protesting truckers blocked the highway from around 07.00 to 19.00 (local time) on 15 March near the Zahrani bridge south of Sidon. They have threatened further protests if the authorities do not accept their demands.

More <x-msg://7/#1057271>

Morocco: Main urban centres: Unrest possible in Western Sahara during trial of pro-Sahrawi activists

Members in main urban centres of Morocco's Western Sahara should monitor developments and exercise caution due to the potential for unrest during the trial of 25 pro-Sahrawi activists involved in protests held in 2010 in Gdeim Izik. Following a suspension of proceedings, hearings resumed on 13 March in Sale (Rabat-Sal -Kenitra region), a suburb of the capital Rabat, where protesters have been demonstrating outside the courthouse.

More <x-msg://7/#1057292>

Turkey: Istanbul: Arrest of suspected militants, foiled plot highlight persistent risk to travellers from terrorism <x-msg://7/#1057325>

The security forces on 16 March arrested two suspected members of the extremist Islamic State (IS) group during a counter-terror operation in the Kagithane district of the commercial capital Istanbul (Istanbul province). The suspects were reportedly planning an attack similar to the 1 January attack on a nightclub in the city's Ortakoy area, in which 9 people - including 25 foreigners - were killed and 70 injured. While the arrest highlights the effectiveness of the security forces in tackling the terrorist threat, it also underlines the credible risk of attacks in the country. Members should minimise time spent near likely militant targets, including government and security force personnel and facilities.

More <x-msg://7/#1057325>

Turkey: Urban centres: Expect, avoid gatherings during Nowruz festival on 17-21 March <x-msg://7/#1057503>

Members in major urban centres, including the commercial capital Istanbul (Istanbul province) and the capital Ankara, as well as in the predominantly Kurdish south-east, should avoid all gatherings linked to Nowruz (Persian New Year, or spring festival) on 17-21 March. Events organised by the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and the Democratic Regions Party (DBP) are due to take place in numerous cities, including in Istanbul on 19 March. While gatherings organised by Kurdish parties are liable to be banned, travellers should nonetheless expect informal or unauthorised events to take place during Nowruz, which is predominantly celebrated by the country's Kurdish population.

More <x-msg://7/#1057503>

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More detail

Africa

Cameroon: Douala: Exercise caution in New Bell area following repeated clashes between youths

Level: Notice

Location: Douala - Cameroon;

Category: Communal unrest

Members in the commercial capital Douala (Littoral region) should exercise caution in the coming days in the vicinity of the Shell New Bell junction following an outbreak of violence on 15 March by youths armed with sticks, bottles and machetes. The violence, which included attacks on passers-by, was triggered by the killing of a suspected thief in an incident of mob justice earlier in the week. Police intervened to re-establish order but caution should be exercised in the area due to the risk of further retaliation, which could pose incidental risk to bystanders.

Advice

- \* Exercise caution in the area of Shell New Bell junction (see map). Avoid walking in all areas after dark; journeys after dark should only be conducted in a locked vehicle.
- \* Remain alert at all times and minimise journeys on foot.
- \* Monitor local media and liaise with local contacts to remain abreast of volatile gatherings/demonstrations and avoid them due to the credible risk of clashes. In the event of unrest, where possible to do so safely, return to your accommodation or office and remain there until the situation stabilises.
- \* In the event of being targeted by criminals, assume that they are armed and do nothing to resist or antagonise them.
- \* Monitor our alerts on Cameroon for further updates.

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Rwanda: Western border areas: Gun attack in Rusizi district reflects MEDIUM travel risk in border region

Level: Advisory

Location: Western province - Rwanda;

Category: Shooting, Conflict

Two Rwandan nationals early on 12 March were killed and another injured in an attack by unidentified gunmen in the Bugarama area of Rusizi district (<https://goo.gl/maps/Fy94sphCM8u>) (Western province), near the border with Burundi and Congo (DRC). The Rwandan authorities are attempting to identify the assailants, who reportedly fled to Burundi. The incident serves as a reminder of the MEDIUM risks associated with travel to the border with Burundi and Congo (DRC), where incursions by armed groups, shelling or stray gunfire can temporarily increase insecurity in adjacent areas of Rwanda.

#### Advice

- \* Seek itinerary-specific advice before travelling to western areas bordering Congo (DRC), where the security environment may be affected by the activities of armed groups operating in that country. Members travelling to the north-western border city of Gisenyi (Western province), in particular, should be aware of developments in neighbouring areas of Congo (DRC) prior to setting out. Remain vigilant and report any suspicious activities to the authorities.
- \* Border crossings with Congo (DRC) and Burundi may be closed without notice, and that visa requirements may change with little notice. Travellers to the Parc National des Volcans/Virunga National Park (along the Congolese border) and Nyungwe Forest (near Burundi) must seek a permit from the Rwanda Office of Tourism and National Parks (ORTPN); visitors should travel to these locations with locally licensed tour operators who liaise with park rangers and the security forces.
- \* If conducting cross-border road travel, ascertain the operating hours of the intended transit point before setting out. Carry relevant identification at all times for use at any spot checks.

- \* Register with your embassy and all relevant warden networks, and keep abreast of local developments through your local contacts.
- \* Monitor our alerts on Rwanda for further updates.

#### More detail

According to the Rwandan authorities, two of the casualties, including the fatality, were participating in a local civilian patrol. While the Rwandan military said that the attackers subsequently crossed into Burundi, this has been denied by their Burundian counterparts. Previously, two Burundian nationals in September 2016 were fatally shot in the same area of Rusizi district by Rwandan soldiers after they reportedly defied an order to stop; the two countries subsequently tightened security along the frontier.

Relationships between Rwanda and Burundi have been strained since Burundian president Pierre Nkurunziza in 2015 announced he would run for a controversial third term. Rwanda has denied claims by the Burundian government that it is arming and training Burundian rebels and sheltering people wanted by Burundi in connection with a failed coup there in May 2015. In this context, there is potential for further skirmishes along the border. While such incidents are unlikely to target foreign nationals, they can pose incidental risks.

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Senegal: Dakar: Expect, avoid further protests over mayor's arrest; related gatherings set for 7, 22 March

Level: Notice

Location: Dakar - Senegal;

Category: Protest

Members in the capital Dakar over the coming days should anticipate and avoid all protests linked to the recent arrest of the city's mayor, Khalifa Sall, over alleged embezzlement of public funds. A hearing in the case is due to be held at the High Court from 09.00 (local time) on 17 March, and related demonstrations are possible on the day outside the court building and the Town Hall, as well as the Rebeuss prison, where the mayor is being detained. An additional pro-Sall rally is scheduled from 16.00 (local time) on 22 March in the city's Guediawaye suburb.

#### Advice

- \* Liaise with local contacts to remain apprised of further protests. Avoid them to mitigate the risk of incidental exposure to any violence.
- \* Leave an area at the first sign of unrest or if you see a crowd forming. In the event of unrest, return to your accommodation immediately, where possible to do so safely, and remain there until the situation stabilises.
- \* Monitor our alerts on Senegal for further updates.

## More detail

A related protest on 10 March outside the Town Hall in Dakar was dispersed by the police with tear gas, while at least three people were arrested. The forthcoming gatherings are likely to be well attended and there is potential for localised disturbances. Particular caution should be exercised in the capital's Grand-Yoff district, a stronghold of support for Sall, where the mayor's arrest on 7 March triggered clashes between demonstrators and the security forces.

Sall, who has been Dakar's mayor since 2009, was seen as a potential candidate for the 2019 presidential election. His supporters claim that the arrest is politically motivated.

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South Africa: Gauteng Province: Movement in vicinity of Springs Mall in East Rand can resume after attempted armed robbery (Revised)

Level: Notice

Location: Springs - South Africa;

Category: Shooting, Violent crime

Normal movement in the vicinity of Springs Mall, in the East Rand area to the east of Johannesburg (Gauteng Province), can resume after shots were fired during an attempted armed cash-in-transit robbery earlier on 16 March. According to local media reports, two police officers and a bystander were injured during a shoot-out near the mall's entrance; two suspects were later arrested. The incident highlights the high levels of violent crime in the country and the need to adopt sensible precautions, even when in comparatively secure areas.

## Advice

- \* Violent crime poses a significant risk to travellers in South Africa. Familiarise yourself with the crime risk areas of your destination prior to travel. Be aware that even comparatively secure areas, including shopping malls and transport hubs, are not immune to criminal activity.
- \* Immediately report suspicious activity to the police or local security personnel. Police intervention could result in a shoot-out. If in the immediate vicinity of gunshots, find the nearest secure location and remain there until the situation has stabilised.
- \* Never resist an armed robbery; try to remain calm and quiet and avoid any action that could antagonise the assailant. Keep your hands visible - but not raised - as this may be interpreted by the attacker as an attempt to signal assistance.
- \* Anticipate heightened security following a gun-related incident in a public area and follow all directives issued by the authorities.

- \* Monitor our alerts on South Africa for further updates.

#### More detail

While the majority of such incidents occur in and around deprived urban areas where crime levels are heightened and the travel risks are rated as HIGH, no area of the country can be considered immune from crime. The threat is exacerbated by the proliferation of firearms in the country.

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#### Americas

Argentina: Urban centres: avoid protests related to teachers' strike on 21-22 March (Revised)

Level: Notice

Location: Argentina; </b>

Category: Protest, Road disruption

Members in urban centres, including the capital Buenos Aires and provincial capitals, on 21-22 March should avoid demonstrations related to nationwide strikes by the CTERA teachers' union over a number of issues in dispute with the government, including education funding and salaries. Members should avoid common protest locations in Buenos Aires city on both days, including the education and labour ministries, Plaza de Mayo and the National Congress (see map).

#### Advice

- \* Liaise with local contacts for information on demonstrations accompanying the strike in your area.
- \* Protests are likely to be well attended and largely pass off without incident. Nevertheless, plan routes avoiding them as a routine precaution and to minimise travel delays.
- \* Allow additional time for journeys in the affected areas on strike days.
- \* Do not cross any roadblocks erected by protesters, as this may prompt a hostile reaction.
- \* Monitor our alerts on Argentina for related developments.

## Brazil: Yellow fever outbreak

Level: Advisory

Location: Brazil; Category: Yellow fever

The yellow fever outbreak in Brazil continues. Initially affecting Minas Gerais State, cases have now been confirmed in the states of Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Suspected cases are also under investigation in the states of Bahia, Rio Grande do Norte and Tocantins. In addition, other areas of Brazil are considered at risk for yellow fever. Travellers visiting any area at risk of yellow fever should be vaccinated at least ten days prior to arrival. In addition, some travellers to and from Brazil are required to show proof of vaccination to gain entry.

## Advice

See your doctor well in advance of travel, and provide them with details of your intended destinations and route. Vaccination is both recommended and required for some travellers. The vaccination certificate becomes valid 10 days after the vaccine was administered. Vaccination requirements may change at any time.

## Vaccination is:

- \* Recommended for everyone > 9 months of age who will visit any risk areas within Brazil (see below for details). Travellers who have NOT been vaccinated are advised NOT to travel to outbreak areas.
- \* Required for travellers arriving from: Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo (including people who have transited in these countries). Travellers arriving from the USA are NOT required to show proof of vaccination.
- \* Required for some destinations after being in Brazil, as it is a country with a risk of yellow fever transmission. Some places require proof of vaccination if you enter directly from a risk country, others require proof if you arrive within 6 days of departure from a risk country (including having transited through a risk country). Always check the relevant country guide prior to your trip. Proof of vaccination is NOT required to enter the USA.

## Risk areas for yellow fever (see the International SOS map)

- \* All of the states of: Acre, Amapa, Amazonas, Distrito Federal (including the capital city of Brasilia), Espírito Santo, Goiás, Maranhao, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Minas Gerais, Para, Rondonia, Roraima, Tocantins.
- \* Some areas within the states of: Bahia, Parana, Piaui, Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro, Santa Catarina, and Sao Paulo state.
- \* The cities of Fortaleza, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and Sao Paulo currently do NOT have a risk of yellow fever.

## Prevent mosquito bites:

- \* Use an effective insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, PMD or IR3535. Wear protective clothing (long pants and sleeves, socks) as weather permits.

## For More Information:

- \* US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Yellow Fever Vaccination Clinics
- \* See "yellow fever" in the "Diseases and Prevention" dropdown and the Travel Advice Articles "Preventing Mosquito Bites" and "Using Insect Repellents Safely" on the International SOS Country Guide.
- \* See the Brazilian Ministry of Health yellow fever information portal (in Portuguese).
- \* About Brazil: see the International SOS Country Guide.
- \* Contact any International SOS assistance centre.

#### More detail

Health officials have declared a public health emergency over a yellow fever outbreak. Over 70 cases have been confirmed, however around 1,500 suspected cases, and at least 240 deaths, have been reported. More cases are expected, and further geographic expansion may occur, due to people moving between states, yellow fever infection in monkeys and low vaccination coverage. The confirmed cases were identified in Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Minas Gerais remains the state with the highest activity. The affected area in Rio de Janeiro state appears to be expanding with rural municipalities Casimiro de Abreu reporting cases for the first time.

Bahia, Goiás, Rio Grande do Norte and Tocantins have suspected cases under investigation. Areas of Bahia, Goiás and Tocantins are known risk areas for yellow fever transmission, however to date Rio Grande do Norte has not been considered a state with risk of yellow fever transmission.

Health authorities have increased distribution of yellow fever vaccine and implemented vector control activities in response to the outbreak.

#### What is Yellow fever?

Yellow fever is a viral disease that occurs in parts of Africa and South America. It is transmitted by mosquitoes. Although some people infected with yellow fever only have a mild illness, others develop a serious toxic form of the disease. The symptoms range from a mild influenza-like syndrome to a severe hemorrhagic fever with liver failure. There is no specific treatment for the disease. Between 20%-50% of people who have a severe case of yellow fever die from the disease. Because yellow fever can spread easily, many countries require proof of an up-to-date yellow fever vaccination before they allow travellers to enter the nation. Some require all travellers to be vaccinated before entry, while others only require vaccination if you have recently travelled from an infected (or endemic) country.

#### Yellow Fever Vaccination

Vaccination is only available through designated yellow fever vaccination clinics. They will issue a signed and stamped International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ICVP) which becomes valid 10 days after the vaccination, and is valid for the lifetime of the person vaccinated. Booster doses are sometimes recommended after 10 years, and your doctor will make an individual recommendation based on your circumstances.

#### Assessment

Authorities are concerned that the outbreak will grow, given the favourable factors for ongoing transmission of yellow fever. The recommendations and requirements for vaccination may change as more cases occur and new areas are affected. In March 2017, the World Health Organization updated its risk assessment for Espírito Santo and now recommends vaccination before travel to anywhere in that state.

## Advice for managers

If relevant to your employees or travellers, ensure they are aware of:

- \* Regional health threats including yellow fever.
- \* Vaccination requirements.
- \* Bite prevention measures including insect repellent and bed nets.
- \* What to do if they get sick during and after travel.

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Canada: Ontario, Quebec provinces: Reconfirm travel arrangements, continue to expect disruption associated with winter storm Stella

Level: Advisory

Location: Ontario, Quebec - Canada;

Category: Snowstorm

Members travelling to southern parts of Ontario and Quebec provinces on 16 March should continue to maintain flexible itineraries and anticipate further travel disruption associated with winter storm Stella. Further snowfall is forecast to affect major cities, including the capital Ottawa, Toronto (both Ontario province), Montreal and Quebec City (both Quebec province) on 16 March. According to the authorities, many flights were delayed or cancelled at Toronto Pearson International Airport (YYZ, Ontario) and Montreal-Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport (YUL <http://www.admtl.com/en> , Quebec) on 14-15 March. Members should reconfirm travel arrangements before setting out, to minimise inconvenience.

## Advice

- \* Members scheduled to travel to and from affected areas on 16 March should monitor local media sources and Environment Canada's website for up-to-date weather information, and be prepared to adjust travel itineraries accordingly.
- \* We do not hold information on specific flights. Contact the relevant airport, airline or your travel agent directly to reconfirm flight schedules before setting out.
  - Liaise with local contacts to ascertain whether overland journeys are feasible before undertaking travel. Ensure your vehicle is in good condition and appropriately equipped for the weather.
- \* Exercise caution when driving because of the dangerous conditions caused by snow and ice.
- \* Road journeys may take longer than usual during and after prolonged spells of snowfall or due to sleet; allow additional time to reach destinations.
- \* Monitor our alerts on Canada for further updates.

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El Salvador: San Salvador: Fatal shootout near city centre highlights persistent crime risks

Level: Notice

Location: San Salvador - El Salvador;

Category: Violent crime, Crime statistics

At least six people were killed on 15 March in a shootout between gang members and private security guards in the Mercado Central area in the centre of the capital San Salvador. The authorities subsequently launched a security operation and arrested five suspects. The violence erupted when gang members opened fire on a security guard and fatally shot three nearby street vendors, triggering the gunfight. Most shops and businesses in the area subsequently closed due to the unrest. The incident highlights the HIGH travel risk rating for the country, particularly the capital where, principally due to gang violence, travel should only be undertaken for essential business purposes.

#### Advice

- \* Travel to El Salvador should be for essential business purposes only. Seek itinerary-specific advice prior to travel due to the significant risk of exposure to violent crime.
- \* Rates of violent crime are high; take stringent security precautions to mitigate the risk at all times and in all areas. Avoid known trouble spots.
- \* In the event of being accosted by a criminal, assume that your assailant is armed; do nothing to resist or antagonise them, as this could elicit a violent response.
- \* Follow directives issued by the authorities and the security forces.
- \* Road travel should be taken during daylight hours only. Do not undertake movement on foot.
- \* Monitor our alerts on El Salvador for related developments.

#### More detail

The incident serves as a reminder that crime is a serious concern in San Salvador, a city with one of the world's highest homicide rates. Opportunistic and violent crime poses a major security threat to travellers, who may be targeted due to their perceived wealth, though local nationals remain the primary targets. However, most violent crime occurs in impoverished neighbourhoods dominated by 'maras' (youth street gangs) where foreigners travelling on legitimate business purposes unlikely to venture.

Transnational criminal gangs continue to remain the primary source of violence in the country. These heavily armed groups are largely concentrated in urban centres, especially San Salvador, and engage in drug-trafficking, kidnapping, carjacking and extortion, among other activities, to raise revenue. The latest incident, which may have stemmed from

an extortion attempt targeting vendors, occurred in a busy market area; violence in the historic downtown of San Salvador is typically attributed to Mara Salvatrucha (MS13) or the Barrio 18, two gangs active in the area.

Clashes between rival gangs and the security forces are not uncommon; further such violence remains possible, with the use of firearms in these confrontations posing notable incidental risks to bystanders.

## Assessment

The recent violence comes after the authorities on 10 February announced that 327 homicides occurred during the first 40 days of 2017, compared to 936 recorded during the same period in 2016. The approximate 65% decrease in murders was attributed to the government's extraordinary security measures which were implemented last year and aimed at combating criminal gangs; the legislative assembly on 9 February extended the set of measures until April 2018.

Despite the development, El Salvador still maintains one of the highest homicide rates of any country in the world; rates of overall violence will remain high overall due to the likely perpetuation of underlying causes including lack of economic opportunities, weak government institutions and the organisational inertia of criminal groups.

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Mexico: Urban centres: avoid protests related to national strike on 17-18 March by teachers' union

Level: notice

Location: Mexico; Category: Protest, Strike

Event Date: 17 Mar 2017 - 18 Mar 2017

Members in urban centres around Mexico on 17-18 March should avoid all demonstrations associated with a 48-hour nationwide strike by the CNTE teachers' union over educational reforms. Two marches will be held on 17 March: one in UxTLA Gutierrez (Chiapas state) at 09.00 from Diana Cazadora to Parque Central <<https://goo.gl/maps/gkzjMXqGccB2>>, and a second in Morelia (Michoacan state), starting at 10.00 (local time) from Casa de Gobierno to the Centro Historico <<https://goo.gl/maps/9NoB48RhT8r>> .

## Advice

- \* Avoid all demonstrations as a security precaution. Liaise with local contacts to plan routes bypassing known and likely protest locations.
- \* Maintain flexible itineraries and factor in additional time to complete journeys. Only undertake road journeys after ascertaining that the route is clear and secure immediately prior to departure.
  - Do not attempt to cross roadblocks, as this may provoke a hostile response from protesters. If you come across a roadblock, turn around and seek another route to your destination.
- \* Monitor our alerts on Mexico for further developments.

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Peru: Disruption related to heavy rainfall, flooding persists in several regions; maintain flexible itineraries

Level: Advisory

Location: Peru; Category: Flood, Landslide, Road disruption

Members in or travelling to Ancash, Huancavelica <<https://goo.gl/maps/aMepxvHQJny>> , Junin, Lambayeque <<https://goo.gl/maps/BttZvJjFSTq>> , Libertad, Lima <<https://goo.gl/maps/66nHuBbNzo22>> , Piura and Tumbes <<https://goo.gl/maps/Qi3XsAQWJNw>> regions, as well as the capital Lima, in the coming days should plan itineraries accounting for likely disruption caused by continued heavy rainfall and resultant flooding. The flooding has damaged roads and bridges in the aforementioned regions. Clean-up and repair operations are under way.

#### Advice

- \* Monitor the National Meteorology and Hydrology Service (Senamhi) and National Institute of Civil Defence (Indeci) websites (both in Spanish) for up-to-date information on weather conditions, as well as location-specific forecasts; be prepared to adjust travel itineraries accordingly.
  - Anticipate travel disruption during the rainy season and liaise with local contacts to ensure that all overland routes are clear prior to departure.
- \* Do not drive through flooded areas. If you see a flooded road ahead, turn around and find another route to your destination.
- \* There is potential for sudden disruption to electricity supply; ensure your hotel/accommodation has a back-up generator to minimise inconvenience.
- \* Monitor our alerts on Peru for further updates.

#### More detail

The authorities on 15 March declared a 5-day state of emergency in 34 districts in Lima and in 31 districts in Huancavelica. The flooding has displaced more than 55,000 people, while at least 43 people have been killed in weather-related incidents. Heavy rain and flooding are likely to continue until the end of the rainy season in April.

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United States: Continue to monitor developments following court ruling temporarily blocking new immigration restrictions

Level: Advisory

Location: United States;

Category: Entry restrictions

Members intending to travel to or from the US should continue to closely monitor developments linked to a recent Executive Order detailing new immigration procedures. A federal judge in Hawaii state on 15 March approved a nationwide temporary restraining order against travel restrictions within the Order, hours before the measure was to come into effect on 16 March. A similar ruling was subsequently issued by a federal judge in Maryland state. The rulings will prevent the various restrictions in the Order from being implemented at least until legal challenges against the law are adjudicated at an as yet unspecified date.

#### Advice

- \* Despite the temporary stay, travellers from the affected countries should continue to consult the relevant US diplomatic mission for more information on the temporary restrictions and anticipate possible additional screening measures on a case-by-case basis when travelling to the US.
- \* Nationals from countries not listed above are currently not affected by the Executive Order; however, the Order states that further countries may be added to the list of those affected by restrictions in the future. Monitor relevant developments in the coming weeks and months.
- \* We do not hold information on specific flights. Should related demonstrations occur at airports in the short-term, we do not expect they will affect flight schedules. However, in the case of protests, travellers should contact the relevant airline, travel agent or the airport's website directly to reconfirm the status of flights prior to setting out.
- \* Monitor our alerts in the US for further developments.

#### More detail

The Executive Order, signed on 6 March by President Donald Trump, originally set out, among other things, to impose a 90-day restriction on citizens of Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen from applying for visas to travel to the US. However, the latest judicial rulings mean these citizens will be permitted in the interim to continue applying for visas and undertaking travel to the US with valid travel documents.

Even prior to the temporary judicial stay, the Order's restrictions would not have affected citizens of the aforementioned countries with valid US visas, those who already hold legal permanent residence in the US (green card), and dual nationals travelling on a passport from a non-restricted country. The Executive Order would have also attempted to bar refugees from entering the US for 120 days and caps the number of refugees admitted at 50,000 per year.

The new Executive Order was drafted in response to a previous temporary judicial stay on a similar but distinct measure issued on 27 January, which included a 90-day restriction on the entry of Iraqi, Iranian, Libyan, Somali, Sudanese, Syrian and Yemeni nationals to the US, as well as the prohibition of all refugees from entering the country for 120 days. The new Executive Order would have recalled the previous order entirely and replaced it.

The primary differences between the previous Order and the new one include the removal of Iraq from the list of countries explicitly affected by travel restrictions, and the exemption from restrictions of individuals who as of 16 March

already assess valid visas for travel to the US. Despite the judicial stay, all travellers should expect increased scrutiny while passing through customs and immigration, including the possibility of being asked to undergo additional screening measures on a case-by-case basis.

## Assessment

The latest development indicates that, as with the previous Executive Order, further legal challenges and developments are likely to continue to emerge in the coming weeks and months. An appeal by the government against the temporary stay is likely to follow in the coming days.

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## Asia & the Pacific

Afghanistan: Kabul: Heavy gunfire reported near Habibiya High School on Darulam Road; avoid area **SPECIAL ADVISORY**

Level: Special Advisory

Location: Kabul - Afghanistan;

Category: Shooting

Unconfirmed reports late on 16 March indicate that heavy gunfire took place near the Habibiya High School <https://goo.gl/maps/h1iLwUoHr7v> on Darulam Road in the capital Kabul. Details of the incident are still emerging; more to follow.

## Advice

- \* Avoid the area until the situation becomes clearer.
- \* Anticipate increased spot-checks in the vicinity of the incident as the security forces conduct investigations. Allow for localised disruption and carry personal identification to ease movement through checkpoints.
- \* Monitor our alerts on Afghanistan for further updates.

## Advice for managers

- \* Account for staff.

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Afghanistan: Kabul: =reported militant threat to Green Village Camp; reconfirm itineraries, =stand-fast procedures

Level: Advisory

Location: Kabul - =fghanistan;

Category: Terror plot

The Ministry of Interior reported on 15 March that there is a =potential militant plot to carry out a car bomb attack against the Green =illage Camp in the capital Kabul. As yet, there are no precise details =bout the timing or nature of the suspected attack or the source of the =hreat information. Travellers in Kabul with appointments at the Green =illage Camp should reconfirm their itineraries and continue to minimise =ime spent near the perimeter of the facility. Travellers at the camp =hould reconfirm stand-fast arrangements and procedures.

#### Advice

- \* Travellers with =ppointments at Green Village Camp should reconfirm their itineraries =nd minimise time spent near the perimeter of the facility.
- \* Residents and guests at the camp should reconfirm stand-fast =rrangements and procedures in the event of a security incident.
  - =li class="">All movements outside secure locations should be =onducted with the advice and support of a dedicated local security =rovider as part of a comprehensive travel security programme. Members =hould liaise with their local security provider before undertaking =isits to the camp.
- \* Monitor our alerts on =fghanistan for further details.

#### More detail

Militant groups have =xpressed continued intent and capability to target locations housing =oreign personnel in Kabul. The warning is consistent with this pattern. =espite the apparent specificity of the warning, other locations of =imilar profile including secure compound facilities also remain =redible targets for militant attack.

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American Samoa (US): Dengue outbreak

Level: Notice

Location: American Samoa - American Samoa (US);

Category: Dengue fever

A public health emergency was declared after cases of dengue fever were confirmed in American Samoa. Dengue is consistently present on the island and outbreaks are also ongoing in other Pacific islands. It is spread by mosquitoes and can cause a range of symptoms. It has no particular treatment. Some people, especially those who have been infected before, get a more severe form that can lead to fatal complications. Although a vaccine has been developed, it is only available in a small number of countries and is not recommended for travellers. Prevent infection by avoiding mosquito bites.

#### Advice

Do the following:

- \* When outdoors, wear clothing that covers most of your body (long sleeves, long pants, socks).
- \* Use an effective insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, PMD, or IR3535.
- \* Ensure windows are covered with fly-wire. Use "knock-down" insect spray to kill mosquitoes in your room.
- \* Choose air conditioned accommodation if possible.
- \* Seek medical attention if you develop high fever, especially if you suffer "rigors" (shaking) or a rash.

For more information:

- \* About dengue: see "Dengue Fever" in the "Diseases and Prevention" dropdown on the International SOS Country Guides.
- \* About preventing mosquito bites: see the Travel Advice articles "Preventing Mosquito Bites" and "Using Insect Repellents Safely" on the International SOS Country Guides.
- \* See the International SOS Country Guide on American Samoa.
- \* Contact any International SOS assistance centre.

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Bangladesh: Avoid planned nationwide protests on 18 March over government's gas deal with foreign company

Level: Notice

Location: Bangladesh; </b>

Category: Protest

Event Date: 18 Mar 2017

Members in the capital Dhaka and other urban centres on 18 March should avoid the vicinity of planned nationwide demonstrations over the government's agreement reached on 14 March with a South Korean oil and gas company, allowing the latter offshore gas exploration rights in the Bay of Bengal. The protest is being organised by National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports group to highlight various concerns, including the potential for increased gas prices and the trade deal's revision of corporate tax exemption benefits.

#### Advice

- \* Avoid all associated demonstrations on 18 March due to the potential for localised disturbances. If you encounter any unrest, return to your accommodation or office, if possible to do so safely, and remain there until the situation stabilises.
- \* Liaise with local contacts to ensure that routes are clear of protests before undertaking any road movement. Where there is any doubt, journeys should be deferred. Strict journey management planning is necessary for all travel within Dhaka, where the travel risks are rated as HIGH.
- \* Do not attempt to cross roadblocks erected by protesters as this may prompt a hostile response.
- \* Further information on popular protest locations is available in our Dhaka and Chittagong city security guides.
- \* Monitor our alerts on Bangladesh for further updates.

#### More detail

Further details of the planned protests have not yet been announced. Potential popular flashpoints include Dhaka's energy and minerals resources ministry building and National Press Club <<https://goo.gl/naWr3i>>, as well as the Chittagong Press Club in Chittagong (Chittagong division). Any attempt by protesters to disrupt traffic by staging blockades or engage in unruly behaviour is likely to attract a strong police response. Any confrontations between demonstrators and the police can entail the use of rudimentary weapons, such as sticks and rocks. Bystanders face indirect risks during any such unrest.

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China: Hong Kong: Expect localised disruption, make alternative transport arrangements during taxi operators' protests on 17 March

Level: Notice

Location: Hong Kong - China;

Category: Protest, Road disruption

Event Date: 17 Mar 2017

Members in Hong Kong should expect localised disruption and make alternative transport arrangements during protests by taxi operators' unions in the morning hours of 17 March in the central business district (CBD). The organisers plan to surround the Central Government Offices <<https://goo.gl/maps/ZiazVthtZEU2>> and the legislative

Council (LegCo) building <<https://goo.gl/maps/wnotNU7mNot>> in the Admiralty area with 100 taxis, while 400 taxis will be parked on roads around the harbourfront <<https://goo.gl/maps/EdJZgRcLwgF2>> area in Central district. The operators are protesting against a government plan to introduce 600 premium taxis in Hong Kong. The event in Admiralty will coincide with a discussion on the proposal in the LegCo.

#### Advice

- \* Avoid the protests as a routine precaution.
- \* Where possible, plan journeys avoiding the aforementioned areas to minimise inconvenience. If travel through these locations is unavoidable, plan alternative routes and allow additional time to complete journeys.
  - Pre-book taxis or make alternative transport arrangements due to the likely limited availability of taxis during the protests. For further information on travel in the city, consult our Hong Kong city travel guide.
- \* Monitor our alerts on China for related updates.

#### More detail

The protests are most likely to pass off peacefully, but will result in localised traffic disruption; affected roads are likely to include Harcourt Road <<https://goo.gl/maps/BRVEkMvzSFx>> , Tim Mei Avenue, Tim Wa Avenue <<https://goo.gl/maps/TTdK4UHwd942>> , Lung Wo Road and Man Yiu Street <<https://goo.gl/maps/JTjdfcBpw672>> . Limited availability of taxis can be expected in the CBD for the duration of the demonstrations. The taxi operators have said they will hold a three-hour strike if the government does not scrap the proposal; a date for the work stoppage has yet to be announced.

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India: Delhi, environs: anticipate road blockades by protesting ethnic-Jats on 20 March

Level: Notice

Location: Delhi - India;

Category: Protest, Road disruption

Event Date: 20 Mar 2017

Members in the capital Delhi and the adjoining areas of National Capital Region (NCR) on 20 March should expect significant travel disruption during planned protests by the ethnic-Jat Akhil Bhartiya Jat Aarakshan Sangharsh Samiti (ABJASS) group. ABJASS, which has been campaigning for quotas for Jats in state government jobs and educational institutions, has threatened to block the prime minister's residence <<https://goo.gl/maps/ssdTzGKaNtz>> , the parliament building, and all highways and roads in Delhi on the day if its demands are not met.

#### Advice

- \* While normal travel in Delhi and nearby areas can continue, members should avoid the vicinity of the parliament building and minimise road movement to and from Delhi on 20 March to avoid incidental risks. Reconfirm your intended route is free of protesters before setting out. Monitor developments closely by liaising with local hosts/hotel staff/trusted contacts and via our alerts on India. Where there is any doubt, journeys should be deferred.
- \* If travel is unavoidable, allow additional time to complete journeys. Convoys of protest participants on highways may disrupt travel. Do not attempt to cross roadblocks erected by protesters as this may prompt a hostile response.
- \* Expect, but do not be unduly concerned by, a visible security force presence at affected areas. Members should maintain heightened vigilance, carry identification documents to ease passage at checkpoints and comply with all security force directives at all times.
- \* Do not stop to watch or photograph protesters and leave an area at the first sign that demonstrators and/or security force personnel are gathering, as this is often a sign of impending unrest.
- \* Avoid public discussion of sensitive issues such as religion, caste and reservations (quotas).

#### More detail

According to the organisers, tens of thousands of protesters are expected to attend the 20 March rally with tractors. The group has threatened to block all lanes and transit points into Delhi if the security forces prevent them from entering the city. A heightened security force presence should be expected around the prime minister's residence and the parliament building on that day. According to the police, security personnel will also be deployed to all of Delhi's entry roads and near the Jantar Mantar monument.

Reports indicate that vehicles carrying protesters will be prohibited from entering the city on the day. While widespread unrest is not expected due to pre-emptive security measures, significant traffic disruption is likely along major motorways leading to Delhi from the adjoining areas of NCR, particularly along the Delhi-Haryana interstate borders. Possible affected key routes include Delhi-Gurgaon expressway, National Highways 1, 2 and 10 and Delhi Noida Direct (DND) flyway.

After widespread criticism of violence and crime during ABJASS's 2016 protest campaign, during which more than 30 people were killed, recent gatherings by the group have been peaceful. However, clashes between protesters and the security forces remain possible, especially if demonstrators attempt to block major routes or engage in acts of arson and vandalism. Police are expected to use water cannon, tear gas, shells and lathi in response to any unruly behavior.

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India: Fatal sexual assault of Irish national in Goa highlights need for stringent precautions

Level: Notice

Location: Goa - India;

Category: Sexual assault

The police on 15 March arrested a man from Canacona city (South Goa district, Goa state) on charges of raping and killing a female Irish national. The victim had travelled to South Goa with a friend on 13 March, to participate in the celebration of the Hindu festival of Holi (commonly referred to as the 'festival of colours'). Her body was found in Devbagh <<https://goo.gl/WIX2P8>> village the following day. The incident highlights the need for female travellers to adopt stringent precautions at all times to mitigate the risk of sexual assault, particularly in tourist areas.

#### Advice

- \* Female travellers should take sensible precautions at all times to mitigate the risk of sexual assault and crime. Keep a trusted contact informed of your local travel schedules and details of transport arrangements, particularly if you are travelling at night. Plan itineraries, accommodation and transport options carefully.
- \* Decline politely but firmly any invitations which make you feel uncomfortable, even if faced by amicable pressure to accept. Avoid travelling alone after dark and maintain a formal tone with strangers.
- \* In the event of being verbally harassed, do not reply to any comments; the best course of action is to swiftly leave the area and seek assistance from the police or a local contact.
- \* Carry a mobile phone programmed with useful contacts, dress conservatively; avoid ostentatious displays of wealth, be wary of unsolicited approaches by overly friendly strangers, and watch food and drink in bars or nightclubs to avoid being drugged.
- \* The above advice is not exhaustive. Consult the Standing Travel Advice and monitor our alerts on India for more information.

#### More detail

Investigations are ongoing to see if other perpetrators were involved. In a separate incident in Goa on 7 February, a yoga teacher was arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting a female US national at his school in Korgao village (Goa state) on the pretext of teaching massage. The victim was attending a yoga training course as part of a tourist package when the alleged assault occurred.

While rape and sexual assault are amongst the fastest-growing crimes reported in India, the most common form of sexual harassment faced by foreign women is unwelcome verbal advances. Most incidents are opportunistic rather than planned and are more common in isolated areas and tourist destinations. The risks to female travellers can be significantly mitigated by adopting additional precautions, including avoiding accepting drinks from strangers or travelling alone after dark or in isolated locations.

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Maldives: Anticipate increased security, associated disruption during Saudi Arabian king's visit from 18 March

Level: Notice

Location: Maldives; </b>

Category: Road disruption, diplomatic event

Members should expect heightened security and associated travel disruption during Saudi Arabian King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud's visit from 18 March until at least 22 March. Roads along the capital Male's northern waterfront on 18 March, including in the vicinity of Republic Square where the welcome ceremony will be held, will be closed from 12.00 (local time) until the event ends on the day.

#### Advice

- \* Anticipate increased security and associated travel disruption, including temporary road closures, near the northern waterfront and other locations on King Salman's itinerary.
- \* Liaise with local contacts to be apprised of the locations that the king is scheduled to visit, and to ascertain that routes are free of traffic restrictions before setting out. Where possible, plan alternative routes to minimise inconvenience; allow plenty of time for important journeys.
- \* Monitor our alerts on Maldives for further updates.

#### More detail

Tensions have been heightened in recent days due to the government's alleged planned sale of Faafu atoll to Saudi Arabia (see our separate report on the issue). Temporary traffic restrictions and the deployment of additional police personnel will be in place along routes and locations on the king's itinerary as a result, including at the President's Office in the capital. Increased security will also be implemented at the One and Only Seethi Rah resort, Sheraton Maldives resort (<https://goo.gl/sf27xU>) (both North Male atoll) and Anantara Ihavah Villas (<https://goo.gl/sh1v6h>) (Baa atoll) where the king and his entourage are staying.

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North Korea: Malaysian nationals should continue to defer all travel due to government ban on leaving country

Level: Advisory

Location: North Korea; [/b>](#)

Category: Diplomatic issue, Travel restriction

Nine Malaysians - three embassy staff and their family members – remain stranded in North Korea following a government ban on 7 March on Malaysian nationals from leaving the country. The ban appears to be applicable only to embassy employees as two Malaysian UN workers were able to leave the country on 9 March. Nonetheless, we continue to advise all Malaysian nationals to defer travel to North Korea during this period of heightened diplomatic tensions following the assassination in Malaysia of Kim Jong-nam, the half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

Members from other countries can continue to travel to North Korea, but should monitor developments closely and be fully aware of, and compliant with, the country's strict regulations throughout their visit.

#### Advice

\* Malaysian nationals should continue to defer all travel to North Korea during this period of heightened diplomatic tensions. Members from other countries can continue to travel to North Korea, but should monitor developments closely and be fully aware of, and compliant with, the country's strict regulations throughout their visit. The use of well-established tour companies is essential.

\* Travel arrangements should be carefully checked before commencing journeys to North Korea to ensure that any government restrictions do not disrupt travel. These routinely change without notice.

\* As well as the specific restrictions, in-country travellers should ensure that they are fully aware of the additional sensitivities in North Korea. This includes avoidance of reference to South Korea and discussing sensitive issues, and respect for the regime.

\* Members in the country are advised to take active measures to ensure their profile minimises the attraction of suspicion or attention. These include:

- \* Avoid the discussion of political subjects, particularly those in relation to South Korea.

- \* Avoid carrying electronic items into North Korea, particularly mobile telephones and laptops. If travellers bring along their laptops, ensure all files or references to sensitive subjects are removed, including references to South Korea. GPS and radios should not be taken into the country.

- \* Do not bring books on North Korea or the Korean situation, South Korean newspapers or other written matter in the Korean language.

#### More detail

The government has said that the ban will remain in place until the case is 'properly solved'. Government restrictions on travel routinely change without notice in North Korea, and are sensitive to diplomatic tensions. While in North Korea, there are limited means of communication outside the country, and few avenues of recourse should foreigners encounter legal or other problems. Moreover, foreigners are vulnerable to arbitrary detention by the authorities and subject to significant government scrutiny, including monitoring of all communications and conversations. The government is also known to regularly restrict the movement of foreigners within the country at short notice.

#### Background

While investigations into Kim Jong-nam's assassination are ongoing, North Korea is widely suspected of orchestrating the 13 February killing, which occurred at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KUL, Malaysia). However, North Korea has denied any involvement in the incident. The Malaysian police have arrested two women – a Vietnamese national and an Indonesian – and are looking for four North Korean suspects, three of whom are believed to be hiding at their country's embassy in Kuala Lumpur.

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Pakistan: Islamabad: anticipate heightened security, associated disruption during Pakistan Day celebrations on 23 March

Level: Notice

Location: Islamabad - Pakistan;

Category: National day, Road disruption

Event Date: 23 Mar 2017

Members should expect disruption associated with heightened security measures and large crowds in the capital Islamabad on 23 March during Pakistan Day (also known as Republic Day) celebrations. About 5,000 security force personnel will be deployed to secure the annual military parade at the Parade Ground in the Shalimar parkland area, east of the Islamabad highway. Security checkpoints will be established at all entry and exit points of the city; the underpass at Faizabad interchange <https://goo.gl/h8GT3Q> will be closed on the day.

#### Advice

- \* Travel to Islamabad can continue with stringent security precautions; these include maintaining a low profile and implementing a thorough and robust journey management plan.
- \* Avoid the vicinity of the military parade on 23 March, as well as other locations where high-profile military or political figures are in attendance.
- \* Allow extra time to complete journeys on the day and anticipate considerable traffic restrictions in Islamabad. Carry identification documents to ease passage through any spot-checks and comply with all security force directives.
- \* Maintain awareness at all times, minimise exposure to likely targets for terrorist attacks and report suspicious behaviour or suspect packages to the authorities.
- \* This advice is not exhaustive. Consult our Standing Travel Advice for Pakistan and seek itinerary- and profile-specific advice prior to travel.

#### More detail

The authorities have imposed Section 144 since 14 March, prohibiting public gatherings of five or more people in the capital. Normal business services will be disrupted by the observance of Republic Day as a public holiday.

The heightened security measures around the celebration come amid concerns of targeted militant attacks after several high-profile incidents across Pakistan (see our separate report on the issue). The Pakistani military recently launched nationwide counter-terrorism operations, codenamed 'Radd-ul-Fasaad', raising fears of further retaliatory attacks by militant groups.

There remains a credible risk that anti-government elements, including Islamist militants, may use the date as an opportunity to carry out symbolic attacks. While such operations generally focus on government and military personnel and installations, Western interests, business-class hotels and crowded public places are also potential targets for Islamist militants.

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## Europe & CIS

Belarus: Urban centres: anticipate, avoid further protests over controversial tax (Revised) /b>

Level: Notice =br class=""> Location: Belarus; =/b>

Category: Protest

Members in urban centres should expect and avoid further protests to demand that the government annul a tax on those not in full-time employment. Related protests were held on 15 March in the capital Minsk, Hrodna (Hrodna region) and Mogilev (Mogilev region), as well as on 12 March in Babruisk (Mogilev), Brest (Brest region), Orsha (Vitebsk region) and Rogachev (Gomel region). Although President Alexander Lukashenko announced on 9 March that the controversial levy would be suspended for 2017, activists have threatened to hold further protests if the authorities do not take decisive steps by 17 March to permanently cancel the so-called 'social parasite' tax.

### Advice

- \* Avoid all demonstrations as a routine precaution. Liaise with local contacts for information on any related protest in your area.
- \* Anticipate a heightened police presence in the vicinity of demonstrations; follow all directives issued by the authorities.
  - Plan journeys avoiding rallies and allow extra time for travel on protest days to minimise inconvenience.
- \* Monitor our alerts on Belarus for further updates.

### More detail

There has been a series of well-attended rallies across the country in recent weeks denouncing a 2015 law that requires people who have not paid tax for at least 183 days of unemployment per year to reimburse the government for state expenditures. Despite the president suspending the controversial tax for this year, rallies planned for 15 March went ahead, with protesters demanding definitive steps by the government against the law. An upcoming rally in Gomel (Gomel region) had been scheduled for 25 March; it is unclear whether this will proceed.

In addition to the aforementioned locations, protests have also been held in Baranavichi, Pinsk (both Brest) and Vitebsk (Vitebsk). Further protests are also likely to be well attended, causing localised disruption. While a majority of the rallies have passed off peacefully, there remains a potential for scuffles between the police and protesters, particularly if a gathering is unauthorised.

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Finland: Helsinki: Anticipate disruption, cancellations during aviation workers' strike on 17 March

Level: Notice

Location: Helsinki - Finland;

Category: Airport disruption, Airline disruption

Event Date: 17 Mar 2017

Members planning to travel through the capital's Helsinki Airport (HEL <<https://www.finavia.fi/en/helsinki-airport/>> ) on 17 March should reconfirm flight schedules due to a planned strike by security and ground handling staff. The strike is set to take place from 15.00-19.00 (local time), as members of the Finnish Aviation Union (IAU) lobby for better benefits, despite a general industrial agreement for the sector. Due to the industrial action, national carrier Finnair announced the cancellation of 90 flights on the day. Further related strikes are possible on 22-24 March.

#### Advice

- \* We do not hold information on specific flights; contact the relevant airline or your travel agent to reconfirm flight schedules before setting out. If planning to travel with Finnair, visit the airline's website <<https://www.finnair.com/fi/gb/flightinfo>> for a list of cancelled flights.
- \* Residual delays are possible even after the strike ends as airlines attempt to clear the backlog of flights. Arrive early at the airport or check in online to prevent your seat being reallocated to a standby passenger.
- \* Monitor the Finnish Civil Aviation Administration's website and our alerts on Finland for related updates.

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France: Grasse: Movement in vicinity of Alexis de Tocqueville high school can resume following shooting incident (Revised)

Level: Notice

Location: Grasse - France;

Category: Shooting

Movement in the vicinity of the Alexis de Tocqueville high school (lycee) in Grasse - Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur region can resume after at least three people were injured in a shooting earlier on 16 March. The suspected gunman - a 17-

year-old student at the school – is in custody, and the authorities have confirmed that the assailant acted alone. The motive for the shooting is not yet clear, but the police said they have no reason to suspect the incident is terrorism-related.

#### Advice

- \* Movement can resume in the vicinity of Alexis de Tocqueville high school.
- \* Expect a heightened police presence and travel disruption in the area.
- \* Follow all directives issued by the authorities.
- \* Monitor our alerts on France for further details.

#### More detail

According to the police, the attacker was heavily armed with two handguns, a hunting rifle and two training grenades. An explosive device containing a black powder was also defused at the scene. Reports claim that the suspect had recently watched videos of mass school shootings and was preoccupied with the April 1999 Columbine high school massacre in the US.

The incident prompted the authorities to advise residents to remain indoors; schools in Grasse were also placed on lockdown while the situation clarified. The French authorities remain on high alert, with President Francois Hollande confirming on 16 March that the current state of emergency established after the November 2015 terrorist attacks in the capital Paris will remain in place until at least 15 July.

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France: Paris: Avoid protest on 19 March against alleged police brutality, racism

Level: Notice

Location: Paris - France;

Category: Protest

Members in the capital Paris on 19 March should avoid a planned rally from Place de la Nation to Place de la Republique, to begin at 14.00 (local time). The demonstration, called the 'E2020 March for Justice and Dignity', has been organised in protest at perceived police brutality, racism and abuse against immigrants. A large turnout and a visible police presence along the protest route can be expected as similar events in Paris have resulted in unrest between participants and the police.

## Advice

- \* Avoid all protests as a routine precaution.
- \* Plan routes bypassing the rally to minimise travel delays. If you encounter any unrest, leave the area immediately, return to your accommodation or office and remain there until the situation stabilises.
- \* Monitor our alerts on France for further updates.

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France: Paris: Avoid rally on 19 March over police conduct due to credible risk of unrest (Revised)

Level: Advisory

Location: Paris - France;

Category: Protest

Event Date: 19 Mar 2017

Members in the capital Paris should avoid a rally on 19 March over alleged police brutality due to a credible risk of unrest. Participants will march at 14.00 (local time) from Place de la Nation to Place de la Republique.

## Advice

- \* Avoid the 19 March rally to mitigate the risk of incidental exposure to any violence and to minimise travel delays.
- \* Do not stop to watch or photograph demonstrations. If you encounter any unrest, leave the area immediately, return to your accommodation and remain there until the situation stabilises.
- \* Liaise with local contacts and monitor our alerts on France for information on further protests.

## More detail

Perceived instances of police brutality and discrimination occasionally trigger unrest in low-income suburbs of major cities. Protests have been held across the country after the police arrested and allegedly assaulted a man on 2 February in Melunay-sous-Bois (Ile-de-France region). Some of these gatherings have turned violent, including in Paris, Montpellier (Occitanie region), Nantes (Pays de la Loire region) and Rouen (Haute-Normandie region).

Most recently, around 55 people were arrested on 7 March following clashes with the police during a related protest in Saint-Denis (Ile-de-France), on the outskirts of Paris. The police are liable to use measures such as tear gas and batons to disperse any unruly protests, which pose incidental risks to bystanders. Additional police personnel have been deployed to flashpoint locations and can be expected to swiftly contain any disturbances.

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Netherlands: Rotterdam: Avoid vicinity of pro-Turkey rally on 17 March

Level: Notice

Location: Rotterdam - Netherlands;

Category: Protest

Event Date: 17 Mar 2017

Members in Rotterdam (South Holland province) on 17 March should avoid the vicinity of a pro-Turkey march as a precaution. The event, called by several Turkish groups over a diplomatic dispute between Turkey and the Netherlands, will commence at 17.00 (local time) at the Rotterdam Central station and conclude at Schouwburgplein at 19.00. Recent related protests in Rotterdam have resulted in clashes between demonstrators and the police, as well as an emergency order imposed by the authorities overnight on 11-12 March.

#### Advice

- \* Avoid the 17 March rally to mitigate the risk of incidental exposure to any violence and to minimise travel delays.
  - Do not stop to watch or photograph demonstrations. If you encounter any unrest, leave the area immediately, return to your accommodation and remain there until the situation stabilises.
- \* Liaise with local contacts and monitor our alerts on the Netherlands for information on further protests.

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Mid East & N Africa

Bahrain: Karranah, Bilad al-Qadeem: Avoid anti-government protests on 17 March

Level: Notice

Location: Bahrain;

Category: Protest, Road disruption

Event Date: 17 Mar 2017

Members in Karranah (Northern governorate) and Bilad al-Qadeem (Capital governorate) on 17 March should avoid the vicinity of two planned anti-government demonstrations due to the credible risk of localised unrest. The protest in Karranah will begin at 16.00 (local time), while the protest in Bilad al-Qadeem will begin at 20:00.

#### Advice

- \* Protests by segments of Bahrain's majority Shia Muslim population are common. Avoid all demonstrations as a routine precaution as clashes often erupt between protesters and the security forces.
- \* During demonstrations, nearby roads may be blocked; anticipate travel disruption in the vicinity of demonstrations, plan journeys circumventing these areas and maintain a flexible travel itinerary.
- \* Expect but do not be unduly alarmed by a large security force presence in public areas. Carry photographic identification documents to ease passage through checkpoints or spot checks.
- \* Do not photograph or document demonstrations.
- \* Monitor our Bahrain alerts for further information.

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Lebanon: Beirut: Avoid further protest on 18 March against tax increases

Level: Notice

Location: Beirut - Lebanon;

Category: Protest

Members in the capital Beirut should plan routes bypassing a protest on 18 March against recent tax increases. The Lebanese Communist Party has called for a demonstration from 13.00 (local time) outside the National Bank of Lebanon in the city's Hamra area. A related gathering took place on 16 March at Riad al Solh Square in central Beirut amid tight security. While the rally passed off without incident, all such gatherings should be avoided due to the potential for unrest.

#### Advice

- \* Plan alternative routes on 18 March avoiding the Hamra area of the capital Beirut. Avoid all demonstrations as a precaution.
- \* Anticipate delays to road travel in the city centre and allow additional time to complete journeys.
- \* Follow all directives issued by the security forces.
- \* Do not self-drive unless you are very familiar with local driving conditions. For in-country travel, arrange experienced local drivers, taxi or limousine services through your local office, hotel or reputable provider.
- \* Contact your nearest Assistance Centre or consult our Lebanon pages for additional information and advice.

## More detail

Parliament on 15 March approved an increase in VAT and other taxes, which protesters claim will have a negative impact on everyday purchases. Reports suggest further protests over the issue are likely on 19 March. Large crowds and a heightened security presence will cause disruption in the vicinity of demonstrations.

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Lebanon: South province: Reconfirm status of Coastal Highway due to potential for further roadblocks

Level: Notice

Location: South province - Lebanon;

Category: Protest, Road disruption

Members planning to travel between Sidon and Tyre (both South province) via the Coastal Highway (also known as Sidon-Tyre Highway) in the coming days should reconfirm its status before setting out due to the potential for roadblocks by truck drivers. Protesting truckers blocked the highway from around 07.00 to 19.00 (local time) on 15 March near the Ahrani bridge south of Sidon. They have threatened further protests if the authorities do not accept their demands.

## Advice

- \* Reconfirm the status of the Coastal Highway before setting out. Liaise with local contacts to plan alternative routes in the event of renewed roadblocks. Do not attempt to cross any roadblocks erected by protesters, as this may prompt a hostile reaction.
- \* Avoid any related demonstration as a routine precaution.
- \* Do not self-drive unless you are very familiar with local driving conditions. For in-country travel, arrange experienced local drivers, taxi or limousine services through your local office, hotel or a reputable provider.
- \* Contact your nearest Assistance Centre or consult our Lebanon pages for additional information and advice.

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Morocco: Main urban centres: Unrest possible in Western Sahara during trial of pro-Sahrawi activists

Level: Notice

Location: Morocco; </b>

Category: Protest

Members in main urban centres of Morocco's Western Sahara should monitor developments and exercise caution due to the potential for unrest during the trial of 25 pro-Sahrawi activists involved in protests held in 2010 in Gdeim Izik. Following a suspension of proceedings, hearings resumed on 13 March in Sale (Rabat-Sal -Kenitra region), a suburb of the capital Rabat, where protesters have been demonstrating outside the courthouse.

#### Advice

- \* The security presence is likely to be increased near the courthouse in Rabat and in the Western Sahara region, particularly near government and security force buildings in Laayoune. Follow all directives issued by the authorities and carry relevant identification documents at all times to facilitate passage through any checkpoints or spot-checks.
- \* Monitor the situation closely, avoid all large gatherings as a basic security precaution and leave an area at the first sign of unrest.
- \* In Moroccan-controlled parts of the Western Sahara, travel outside the cities of Laayoune, Bu Craa and Dakhla should only be undertaken with the knowledge of MINURSO. Seek expert advice prior to travel in these areas. Landmines and unexploded ordnance pose risks away from main roads. Protests occur regularly and are likely to be violently broken up by the security forces.
- \* Liaise with local contacts and monitor our alerts for further updates.

#### More detail

While minor unrest is possible outside the court in Sale during the trial, more significant disturbances can be expected in main cities of Western Sahara, particularly Laayoune, especially if the defendants are convicted and subjected to heavy prison sentences.

The trial of the 25 activists by a civilian court started in November 2016. The defendants are accused of killing 11 members of the security forces on 8 November 2010, during the forced dismantling of the Gdeim Izik refugee camp, near Laayoune (Laayoune-Sakia El Hamra region).

A military court in February 2013 sentenced the defendants to imprisonment – between 0 years and life sentences – but the current trial was launched after a change in local legislation requiring that the civilian defendants be tried by a civilian court. The original trial was denounced by human rights groups as unfair.

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Turkey: Istanbul: Arrest of suspected militants, foiled plot highlight persistent risk to travellers from terrorism

Level: Notice

Location: Istanbul - Turkey;

Category: Terror plot, Security operation

The security forces on 16 March arrested two suspected members of the extremist Islamic State (IS) group during a counter-terror operation in Kagithane district of the commercial capital Istanbul (Istanbul province). The suspects were reportedly planning an attack similar to the 1 January attack on a nightclub in the city's Ortakoy area, in which 39 people - including 25 foreigners - were killed and 70 injured. While the arrest highlights the effectiveness of the security forces in tackling the terrorist threat, it also underlines the credible risk of attacks in the country. Members should minimise time spent near likely militant targets, including government and security force personnel and facilities.

#### Advice

- \* Travel to Istanbul can continue with standard security precautions.
- \* Minimise time spent in the vicinity of potential terrorist targets, including government and military interests and tourist sites. Report suspicious behaviour or suspect packages to the authorities immediately.
- \* Be prepared to respond immediately in the event of a terrorist incident and maintain flexible itineraries.
- \* Carry relevant identification documents at all times to ease passage through security checkpoints, follow all directives issued by the authorities.
- \* Monitor our Turkey pages or contact your nearest Assistance Centre for further information and advice regarding travel to the country.

#### More detail

The security forces also seized automatic guns and ammunition during the raid. The suspects are believed to be members of the same IS cell as Abdulkadir Masharipov, the militant who carried out the 1 January attack in Istanbul. While the arrests highlight the effectiveness of the security forces in tackling militancy, it also underlines the credible risk of attacks in the country. On 5 February, around 400 IS suspects were arrested during counter-terrorism operations across the country, including in the capital Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir (Izmir province).

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Turkey: Urban centres: Expect, avoid gatherings during Nowruz festival on 17-21 March

Level: Notice

Location: Turkey; Category: Key date, Travel security

Members in major urban centres, including the commercial capital Istanbul (Istanbul province) and the capital Ankara, as well as in the predominantly Kurdish south-east, should avoid all gatherings linked to Nowruz (Persian New Year, or spring festival) on 17-21 March. Events organised by the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and the Democratic Regions Party (DBP) are due to take place in numerous cities, including in Istanbul on 19 March. While gatherings organised by Kurdish parties are liable to be banned, travellers should nonetheless expect informal or unauthorised events to take place during Nowruz, which is predominantly celebrated by the country's Kurdish population.

#### Advice

- \* Avoid all Nowruz-related gatherings as a precaution. Liaise with local contacts for details of such events and to plan routes bypassing them.
- \* The potential presence of large crowds and attendant security measures during Nowruz gatherings are likely to cause localised travel delays. Plan journeys avoiding all such events to minimise inconvenience.
- \* Consult our Turkey pages for further information and advice on travel to the country.

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