



Global Insights Report

Your reliable source of intelligence for Kidnap,
Ransom, Extortion and Piracy around the world

Nicaragua, Ecuador, Israel & Palestine, Mali, India

April 2023

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The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Nicaragua

1000+ Political Kidnappings

1,000+ political kidnappings reported since 2018
due to ongoing unrest

Source: Insight Crime

3,000+ Civil Organisations Shut Down

3,000+ civil society organisations forced to shut down
in the face of increased human rights abuses

Source: United Nations Human Rights Council

164 Corruption Ranking

Nicaragua ranks 164 (out of 180) in the global corruption
perception index

Source: Corruption Perception Index





The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Nicaragua

Since 2007, President Daniel Ortega's regime has become increasingly authoritarian, evidenced by the removal of political opposition parties in 2021. Moreover, the country has witnessed a surge in political violence, including mass unlawful detentions starting in 2018, leading to over 300 civilian fatalities and 2000 injuries (Human Rights Watch). Other forms of abuses such as arbitrary detentions, torture, political persecution, and sexual violence have also been reported, suggesting that the risk of kidnapping, ransom, and extortion throughout Nicaragua is linked to the State.

Political kidnappings have been reported, with human rights defenders being among the most targeted. According to Human Rights Watch, victims have been subjected to solitary confinement, daily interrogations, and lack of food following government-led abductions and unlawful detentions. Since the protests began in 2018, people from diverse political persuasions have been detained, with an estimated 222 political prisoners currently held. Moreover, the Ortega government has sought to expel its 'enemies', resulting in police and paramilitary forces forcing people to flee – approximately 250,000 Nicaraguans have left the country since the protests began.





The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Nicaragua

Despite government oppression largely targeting Nicaraguan citizens, there has been an uptick in express kidnappings targeting returning international travellers post COVID-19. These incidents occur frequently in the capital, Managua, where taxis are used to lure unsuspecting tourists, and gangs operating in the city often demand fast ransom payments from foreign nationals. In addition, human trafficking has become a significant problem in Nicaragua, with vulnerable domestic citizens and even foreign nationals being exploited, particularly women and children. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has placed Nicaragua at Tier 3 for human trafficking, indicating that its government is deemed to be “not making significant efforts” to combat it.

The government’s involvement in unlawful detention and kidnapping is just one facet of its corruption, as it also engages in extortion of businesses. A significant portion of the state apparatus is funded through the extortion of company taxes, which poses a pressing threat to commercial activities throughout the country. Despite some improvement in recent years, government intervention and extortion remain a constant threat, contributing to Nicaragua’s low ranking of 164 out of 180 countries in the corruption perception index. Businesses face ongoing challenges from state interference and taxation extortion, which continue to undermine operations.





The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



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April 2023

Ecuador

24 Kidnappings

24 cases of kidnapping reported in the first two and a half months of 2023, compared to 40 cases in 2022

Source: Ecuadorian National Police

300% Surge in Extortion

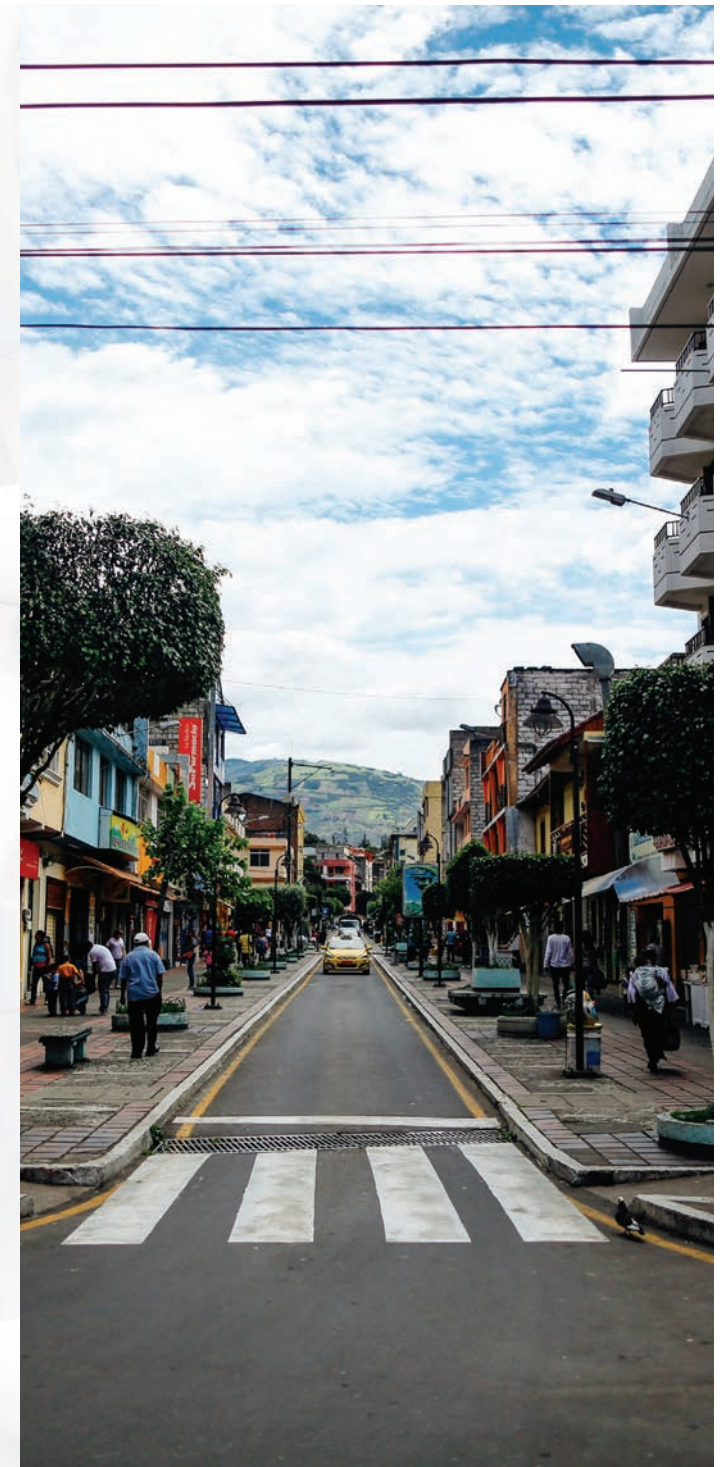
Extortion cases in Ecuador estimated to have surged by 300% compared to previous years

Source: Anti-Kidnapping and Extortion Police Unit (UNASE) report

9,049 Complaints of extortion reported in 2022

Legalised Possession

The Ecuadorian government legalised the possession and carriage of weapons of defence by the public in response to surging crime levels





The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Ecuador

The security situation in Ecuador has deteriorated due to the increasing influence of criminal groups taking advantage of the country's political instability. The Ecuadorian constitutional court recently approved impeachment hearings against the President, which may lead to the dissolution of the country's assembly and an early election. This instability is further exacerbated by rising violent crime rates, prompting the Ecuadorian government to legalise the public possession and carriage of handguns and other weapons for self-defence. In addition, several provinces have been added to the state of emergency already in place in Esmeraldas. The Ecuadorian Police are monitoring over 60 organized criminal groups, many of which are linked to the drug trade and Mexican cartels, including the Sinaloa Cartel and Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG).

Due to the surge in violent crimes, which has resulted in 434 deaths so far this year, police officers are being transferred from across the country to support the 8,419 officers already deployed in Guayaquil. The city is one of the provinces currently under a state of emergency.





The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Ecuador

Organised groups are taking advantage of the unrest in Ecuador and increasing their criminal activity. The number of kidnappings, which was comparatively low at 40 reported cases in 2022, has already reached 24 in the first two and a half months of 2023, according to the National Police. In late February, four people were kidnapped on the same day, and the kidnappers demanded a \$50,000 USD ransom. Fortunately, the Anti-Kidnapping and Extortion Police Unit (UNASE) safely recovered the victims without having to pay the ransom. However, this highlights the increasingly brazen practice of kidnapping for ransom. Express kidnappings are also common in Quito and Guayaquil, where victims – both foreign and domestic – are forced to withdraw funds from ATMs to secure their release after being targeted by criminals operating among an estimated 10,000 unauthorised taxis across the two cities.

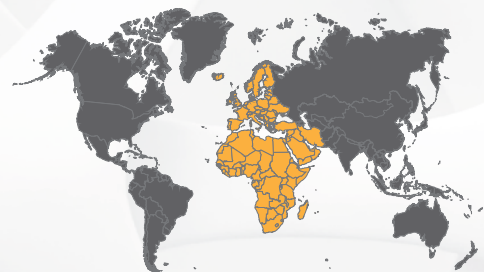
In addition to the surge in kidnappings, the UNASE has also noted a staggering 300% increase in extortion cases nationwide, with incidents rising from 3,033 in 2021 to 9,049 in 2022, and another 1,048 cases recorded in January 2023 alone. In March 2023, the situation escalated even further, when a security guard in Guayaquil was kidnapped and had explosives strapped to his body after his employer – the owner of the store where he worked – refused to pay extortion money to the criminals. This highlights the worsening security environment across the country, as kidnappings, extortion, and other criminal activities become more prevalent and extreme.





EMEA

Europe, Middle East, Africa



Israel & Palestine

866

Palestinians Illegally Detained

866 Palestinians illegally detained by Israel without trial or indictment, the highest in over a decade

Source: Israeli Prison Service

Mass Detainments

Israeli security forces responded with mass detainment, after seven Israelis were murdered in terrorist attacks between the 27th and 29th January

100+ Deaths 2023

100+ people have died in the Israeli – Palestinian conflict in 2023

Source: ACLED - Middle East

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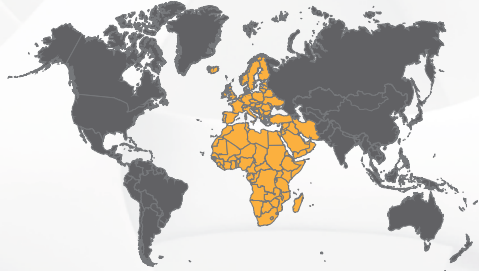
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EMEA

Europe, Middle East, Africa



Israel & Palestine

While kidnapping incidents in Israel and Palestine are not widespread, the ongoing political conflict and rising tensions in the region increase the likelihood of kidnap extortion and ransom for political purposes. In 2023 alone, over 100 deaths from political violence have been reported, highlighting the serious threat to personal security and livelihoods in the area. Furthermore, growing disillusionment with the Palestinian state has contributed to the rise of new, more

extremist militant groups in recent years, adding to the instability in the region. Previously, Hamas and other Palestinian factions have a history of targeting Israeli citizens through kidnapping for political gain. In November 2022, a Palestinian militia group known as the Jenin Brigades kidnapped an Israeli citizen in broad daylight while he was being treated as a patient at a hospital in the occupied West Bank. Like many Palestinian paramilitary groups, their actions are concentrated

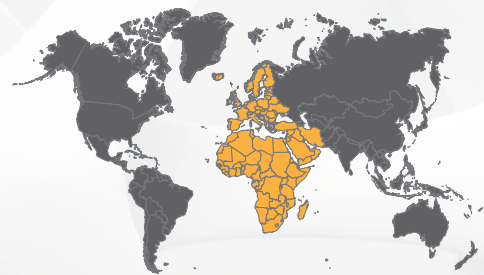
in refugee camps, particularly in Jenin, posing a high risk to vulnerable refugees and NGO employees. Since November, the region's increasing insecurity has contributed to further kidnappings and abductions, with five Israeli Druze men recently charged with revenge abduction, after forcing three Palestinian labourers into a vehicle at gunpoint in the city of Yarka. Kidnappings in the region are often associated with a violent threat and are tied to broader geopolitical turmoil.





EMEA

Europe, Middle East, Africa



Israel & Palestine

Since 2022, there has been a rise in violence and an increased risk of kidnapping in Arab communities throughout Israel. Family feuds, mafia turf wars, and violence against women and children have contributed to a rise in media reporting of kidnappings for ransom, particularly among the Arab community. There have been reports of alleged workplace kidnappings, resulting in ransom demands of more than \$111,000 USD to families. This includes employees abducting family members of their employers to settle salary disputes, as some people use kidnapping for ransom as a means of seeking justice in workplace disputes.

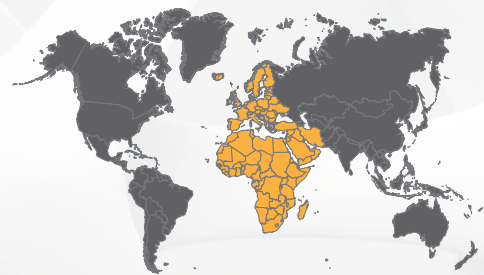
The threat of kidnapping and extortion exists not just among criminal organisations, but also at state level. The Israeli government has been accused of routinely launching raids into the occupied Palestinian territory and employing illegal detention practices. Israeli human rights organisations have noted this and published Israeli jail service data shows that 866 Palestinians are potentially being illegally detained by Israeli security forces – the highest number in more than a decade. Such practices may be seen as an overt warning to other political opposition groups of the Israeli state's heavy-handed practices.





EMEA

Europe, Middle East, Africa



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Mali

Kidnap Release

American humanitarian worker, Jeffery Woodke, released after being held hostage for 6 years (20th March, 2023)

2,300

French Troops Withdrawn

France withdrew 2,300 troops as Operation Barkhane concluded in November 2022

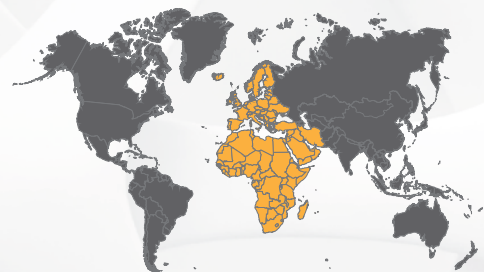
Red Cross Kidnappings

Two International Red Cross NGO workers kidnapped in northern Mali (4th March 2023)

WHO Kidnapping

A World Health Organisation physician was kidnapped from his vehicle by an Al-Qaeda-linked group (January 2023)



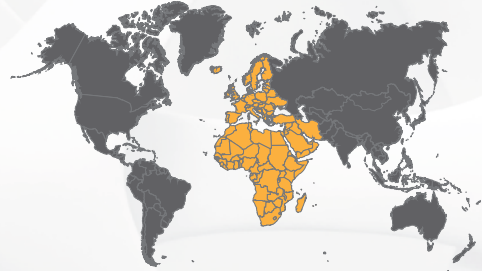


Mali

Kidnapping is still a frequent occurrence in Mali, posing a great risk to both foreign nationals and local citizens. Kidnappings are regularly linked to terrorist operations, as the withdrawal of French military assistance threatens to erode stability across the Sahel, particularly in Mali. The removal of all 2,300 French troops deployed in counter-terrorism operations within the country could allow extremist organisations to expand in the region, posing an ever-increasing threat to internationals and residents. The legacy of French military activities in the Sahel region continues to pose a significant risk to foreign nationals, with terrorist networks frequently targeting Western citizens in the area.

Kidnappings by Al-Qaeda affiliates and other transnational Islamist organisations remain a persistent threat, with groups such as Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) and Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) known to be active in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and across the wider Sahel region. The risk of kidnapping by terrorist organisations is particularly high in the Northeast region of Mali, although their operations often extend throughout the country, including the capital city of Bamako. These groups target foreign nationals for various reasons, but Western nationals are frequently kidnapped due to their perceived higher value in terms of ransom demands and media coverage. Recent kidnappings of Western NGO workers in Mali highlight the ongoing danger in the region.





Mali

The release of US aid worker Jeffery Woodke drew global attention when he was rescued in March after being held captive for over 6 years by transnational terrorist groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda in Western Africa. The capacity of terrorist operations to traverse borders makes mitigation more difficult and increases the likelihood of lengthy hostage detention. While the release of long-term captives is a positive development, it remains part of a larger current pattern

of kidnappings of NGO personnel and journalists in the region.

The risk of kidnapping persists in Mali, as evidenced by the recent abductions of a World Health Organisation (WHO) doctor in January 2023 and two International Red Cross NGO employees in March 2023. These incidents reflect the ongoing security challenges throughout the country, including those posed by Islamist terrorist organisations and the actions of

government forces. In addition to terrorist groups, government forces have been accused of mass shootings, kidnapping, extortion, and rape, posing further risks to residents. The situation has been compounded by the replacement of French military oversight with the Russian Wagner group, who lack the necessary training to protect civilians. The military themselves are therefore seen to be contributing to the risk of kidnapping and extortion.





APAC

Asia Pacific



India

20%

Kidnappings increased by 20% in 2021, compared to 2020

82 Murders

Reported a day

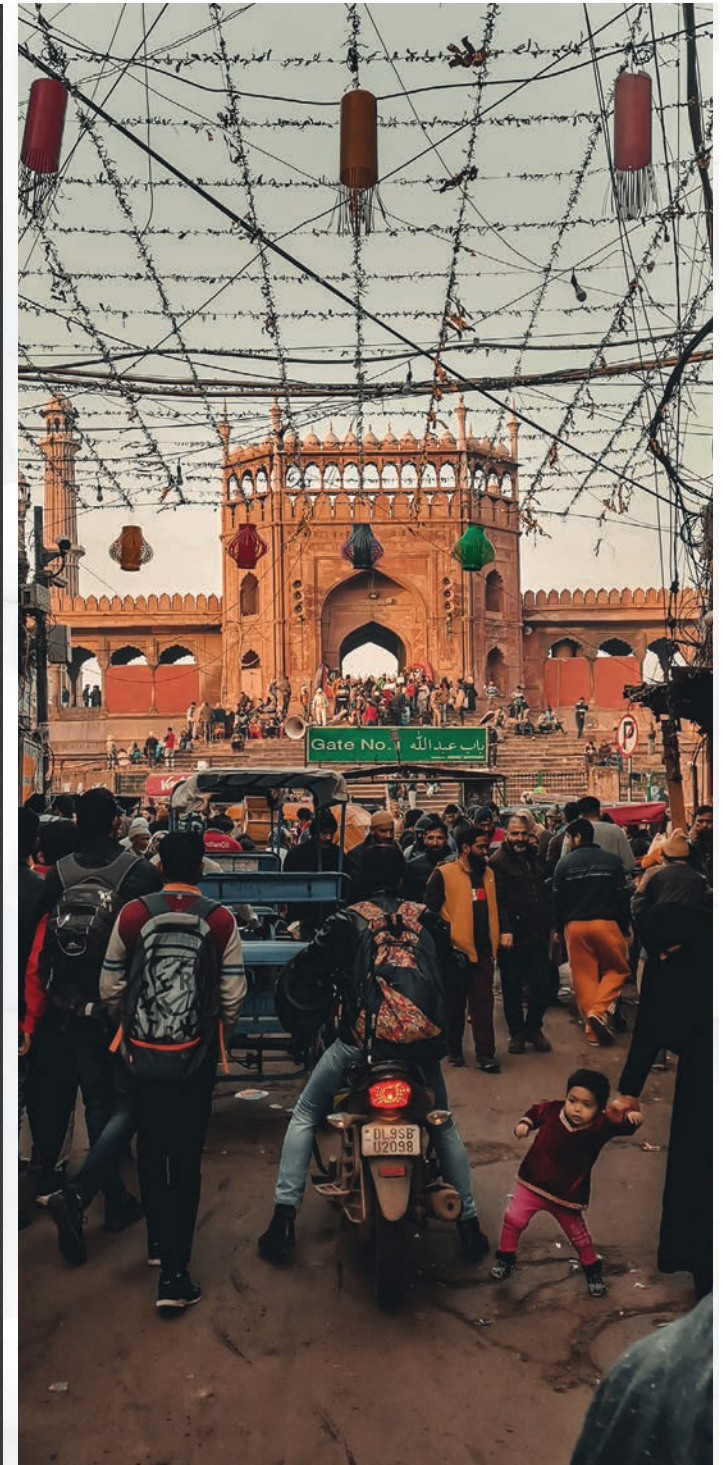
Source: National Crime Bureau (NCB)

\$155M

Cyber Extortion

Cyber extortion reached \$155 million (USD) in 2022, with an average ransom payment of \$1.2 million (USD)

Source: ECS Infotech





APAC

Asia Pacific



India

In its most recent report, The National Crime Bureau (NCB) has highlighted kidnappings as they rose by 20% from the previous year's figures. While overwhelmingly kidnappings target local and often low-income citizens, involving very low levels of ransom, kidnappings have been a consistent tactic of organised crime in the country, often holding local citizens of wealth for ransom, as groups such as the Lawrence Bishnoi gang demonstrate. An example of this occurred in Jaipur in January 2023, where a wealthy hotel owner was held for ransom of RS 5 million (USD \$62,000). While kidnapping, ransom, and extortion

tactics are widely used in the country, they primarily target local citizens.

Although the 2022 figures indicate a potential decline in the number of kidnappings, as evidenced by the Punjab region's 7.95% decrease from the previous year, nationwide figures (yet to be released) are still high. If the number of kidnappings reported in the upcoming 2022 NCB report decreases, it will likely be due to India's strong economic performance – having the highest growth rate among major countries – which means that poverty is less of a driving influence, rather than any broader

governmental effort to combat crime. Although the most recent year's figures have not been released yet, preliminary indications suggest that kidnapping rates will remain high and possibly surpass 2020 levels, making it a significant threat across the country. Kidnappings are prevalent in India's crowded cities and are often violent with fatalities. Due to India's vast population, dealing with kidnappings and reaching a resolution can be complicated, resulting in underreporting and an underestimation of the actual number of incidents.





APAC

Asia Pacific



India

In addition to kidnappings, India has also been grappling with extortion and cyber ransoms. Criminal gangs and individuals often use violent means to extort perceived wealthy citizens, putting foreign nationals at an increased risk. Extortion has particularly surged in the sex industry, with India now being the epicentre of the rising sexual extortion cases, which compounds the country's already prevalent problem of sexual violence. As technology advances, bringing new methods of exaction, extortion incidents have increased in various sectors of society. Individuals of all income levels are now at risk, with ransom demands ranging from \$181 (USD) to large corporate cyber ransoms totalling \$155 million (USD), as seen in recent media coverage. Not only is cyber extortion on the rise, it is also highly damaging to large Indian organisations, which have paid an average of \$1.2 million (USD) in ransom payments for data breaches. In 2022 alone, the country reported nearly 4,000 cyber-attack incidents. Due to the country's inadequate cybersecurity measures, both domestic and foreign businesses remain highly vulnerable.





Propriety Information

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