



# Global Insights Report

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

---

Haiti, US Virgin Islands, Chile, Burkina Faso.

July 2023

[www.sps-global.com](http://www.sps-global.com)



## The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Global Insights Report

July 2023

# Haiti

## 1107 Kidnappings

The United Nations (UN) has documented 1107 kidnappings between January and October 2022

## 680 Kidnappings Port-au-Prince

The UN High Commission of Human Rights (OHCHR) documented 680 kidnappings in the capital, Port-au-Prince alone, through Q1 and Q2 of 2022

## 389 Threefold Increase in Kidnappings

There have been at least 389 documented kidnappings in the first 3 months of 2023, a threefold increase on similar estimates from the final quarter of 2022 (CARDH)

## 200+ Gangs

There are reportedly some 200 gangs in Haiti, about half of which reside in the capital, Port-au-Prince, many aligned to either the G-Pep or G9

## One Month Detention

March 2023, saw two US nationals kidnapped and held for ransom by criminal gangs resulting in nearly a month's detainment





# The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Global Insights Report

July 2023

## Haiti

Kidnapping for ransom and extortion have long been grave concerns in Haiti, a Caribbean nation grappling with a myriad of socio-economic and political challenges. Haiti's history of political instability, corruption, a weak judiciary, and the absence of effective governance structures, enable criminal organisations to exploit the vulnerable population. Lawlessness, abundant weapons, and high ransom payments result in rampant abductions. Rival criminal gangs undermine domestic security as green zones shrink nationally, with as much as 60% of the nation's capital controlled by criminal organisations whose illicit industry includes the kidnapping of Haitians and foreign nationals. The UN has warned of increasing criminal risks, with crime rates surging in 2023. More than 1,600 incidences, including homicide, rape, kidnapping, and lynchings, were reported in the first quarter of 2023, up from 692 during the same period last year, as competing gangs carve up the Haitian capital, seemingly kidnapping, raping, and killing at will. This compounds an already severe security situation, with the UN estimating as many as 1,107 kidnappings from January to October 2022, while a Haitian human rights organisation, CARDH, recorded 857 kidnappings through 2022. Such disparity in the figures underscores the extreme volatility of the situation and the lack of effective documentation, meaning that in all likelihood kidnapping rates far exceed those reported. However, these trends appear to have worsened through 2023, with the CARDH recording at least 389 kidnappings in the first three months of this year, marking a three-fold increase from their last quarter estimates for 2022.





## Haiti

Such extreme levels of violence have long been driven by the plethora of criminal gangs undermining Haitian safety. Violence by groups and gangs is not new in Haiti but over time they have increasingly entrenched their indemnity. The Brookings Institute reports that there are some 200 gangs in Haiti, about half of which reside in the capital, Port-au-Prince. The present gangs are primarily affiliated with two groups, G-Pep and G9, which frequently fight for control of Port-au-Prince and utilise indiscriminate

violence with relative impunity. Often composed of economically disadvantaged young men, they exercise control over the communities they dominate, imposing restrictions on essential aspects of everyday life, such as the ability to travel through rival territories for work, medical aid, and educational opportunities. As their brutality intensifies over time, they engage in heinous crimes including acts of kidnapping and extortion. Such risks are not limited to Haitian citizens, as highlighted in March

when two US citizens were kidnapped for ransom and released nearly a month later. An initial ransom of \$6,000 was reportedly paid by the family members before the kidnappers raised the price to \$200,000 per person. The exact details of the conditions of the couple's release are unverified but highlight the extreme risk to both foreign and domestic citizens throughout Haiti as criminal gangs continue to undermine safety.





## The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



# US Virgin Islands

## Gun Violence

Gun Violence increased by nearly 19% between 1990-2016

Source: Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence

## 4th Highest

### Homicide Rate

In the latest UN report to cover the US Virgin Islands the country held the 4th highest homicide rate at the time in the world at 49.26 per 100,000 people

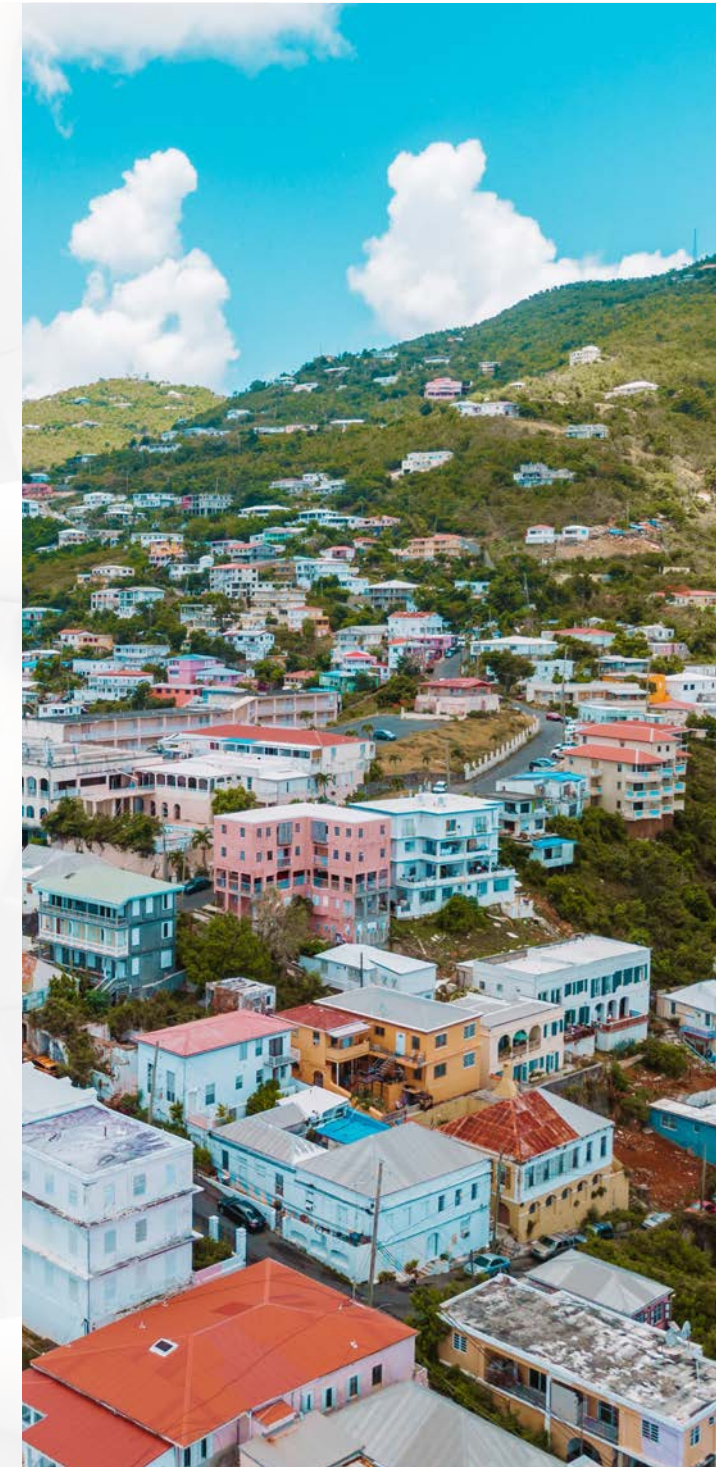
Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

## Gun Imports

### Second Highest in US

The US Virgin Island's gun homicide rate is almost nine times higher than that of the US mainland and has the second-highest rate of guns imported across its borders of any US State or territory.

Source: Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence





## US Virgin Island

The US Virgin Islands face an ongoing high criminal risk due to various factors. The islands' proximity to drug and arms trafficking routes alongside their popularity among tourists make them susceptible to criminal activities. According to the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, arms trafficking played a significant role in the US Virgin Islands' 2020 homicide rate, which was nine times higher than that of the US mainland. The islands have also experienced a substantial number of homicides and gun violence offences. In fact, according to the latest UN report covering the US Virgin Islands, the country at the time had the fourth-highest homicide rate in the world at 49.26 per 100,000 people. Violent crime, particularly in St. Croix and St. Thomas, is prevalent, with many of these criminal acts affecting the less affluent domestic members of society. However, despite these high crime rates, many foreign nationals visit these areas without incident. Most crimes tend to be personal and involve individuals with prior knowledge of each other, often connected to the illegal drug or arms trade. Although kidnapping incidents are relatively rare, they can occur in isolated incidents within the local population. In 2022, the island saw a man imprisoned due to kidnapping his wife, while allegedly under the influence of narcotics. This incident highlights the potential spill over effect of drug-related crimes into the residential communities of the islands and the isolated risk of domestic-based kidnappings.





# The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Global Insights Report

July 2023

## US Virgin Islands

Although incidents of kidnapping for ransom and USD extortion are rare, the US Virgin Islands continue to grapple with higher rates of violent crime compared to many other US territories and states. Various factors contribute to these high levels of violence, including poverty, limited educational opportunities, and the significant influence of the illegal drug trade. Most crimes in the US Virgin Islands are primarily drug-related, as rival gangs compete for control, leading to armed robberies, assaults, and homicides. This poses a serious challenge to the

public safety and well-being of residents and tourists alike, as these criminal gangs have occasionally endangered innocent citizens. Notable progress has been made in addressing this issue, such as the arrest and conviction of notorious gang leader Paul Girard in 2022. Subsequent arrests targeting the once-notorious Girard enterprise gang have been carried out, with many members of the organisation now imprisoned. In December 2022, additional members of the Paul Girard gang were arrested, and during the trial, past instances of the gang's involvement in homicides, extortion, and kidnappings

were revealed. While these gangs typically operate discreetly to maintain successful criminal businesses, drug-fuelled criminality can occasionally lead to isolated incidents of kidnapping or violent crimes affecting both domestic and foreign nationals. Following the island's record growth in tourism in the first half of 2023 up 17% on 2019 pre-pandemic levels, criminal activity on the island could pose a growing risk not only to tourists but to the reputation of the expanding tourist industry itself.





## The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Global Insights Report

July 2023

# Chile

## 32% Increase Homicide Rate

Chile witnessed a 32% rise in homicide rate throughout 2022 as the country suffers from the arrival of the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua. (Insights crime)

Source: Insights crime

## \$1.5 Billion USD

Chilean government announces a \$1.5 billion USD package to support security services due to growing criminal risks throughout the country.

Source: Chilean Government

## Rhysida Ransomware

Rhysida ransomware leaks 360,000 documents stolen in a ransomware attack on the Chilean Army.







# The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Global Insights Report

July 2023

## Chile



In the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, South America has witnessed a concerning surge in kidnapping incidents and according to national media sources, Chile is reportedly witnessing its highest number of kidnappings in over a decade. These alarming trends can be attributed to the broader deterioration of public security in these countries, influenced by adverse socioeconomic conditions and evolving criminal dynamics.

Taking advantage of the increasing prominence of organised criminal

groups and transnational gangs venturing into new territories, extortionists have seized this opportunity. Notably, they have been affiliating themselves with the Venezuelan Tren de Aragua gang or other Mexican-organised criminal groups when targeting victims in Chile. While the northern Tarapacá region maintains the highest criminal risk, the Chilean government has warned of a growing nationwide presence of criminal organisations, which, due to the relative absence of armed groups across Chile, have been able to quickly expand. Chile has now become the southernmost

destination for the Venezuelan Tren de Aragua gang, whose impact has already been felt as Chile's homicide rate rose 32% through 2022. This expansion into Chile has enabled the Tren de Aragua gang to establish and control a network of human smuggling routes throughout Latin America. The group has been known to be involved in illicit industries, including murder and extortion, throughout Latin America, and their growing presence in Chile threatens to expand the kidnap for ransom and extortion risks in the country.



# The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



## Chile

In response to growing criminality, the Chilean government has in recent months announced several measures, including a \$1.5 billion USD package to fight crime, alongside the deployment of the army on the northern border to prevent mass migration and slow the spread of criminal organisations. The introduction of new laws includes criminalising extortion as well as increasing penalties for kidnapping and some instances of firearm possession. Such action highlights not only the growing sense of insecurity within Chile but also the increasing risks posed by the kidnap for ransom, and extortion

industries as criminal organisations looking to establish a larger presence in the country.

Growing organised crime is not the only threat to Chile's security, as technological evolutions are also driving new forms of ransom and extortion risks. Significantly, a group of threat actors has utilised phishing attacks to infiltrate digital networks using Rhysida ransomware. Recently, the Rhysida ransomware gang made an announcement that they have made public approximately 30% of the data they claim to have stolen from the Chilean Army's network, in an attempt

to extort ransom payments. Their statements indicate that approximately 360,000 documents from the Chilean Army have been exposed. Such a large data breach highlights the growing audacity of cyber criminals that places even the largest businesses or state organisations at risk from criminal enterprises. As criminal organisations, both physical and cyber, continue to evolve, the country will continue to struggle to handle the rising security risks associated throughout much of Latin America and now expanding to Chile.





EMEA

Europe, Middle East, Africa



# Burkina Faso

## 27x Increase Kidnappings 2017-2022

There has been over a 27-fold increase in reported kidnappings from 2017 to 2022, rising from 8 to 219

Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project [ACLED]

## 97% Citizens Kidnapped

97% of kidnapping incidents recorded since 2017 targeted Burkina citizens

Source: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime

## 66 Women & Children

In January 2023, 66 women and children were kidnapped in an unprecedented mass abduction by armed assailants in northern Burkina Faso

## Government Expulsions

Government certifies expulsion of French military personnel in February 2023, with as much as 40% of the country under the control of Islamic Terror related organisations

Burkina Faso Government Officials





EMEA

Europe, Middle East, Africa



## Burkina Faso

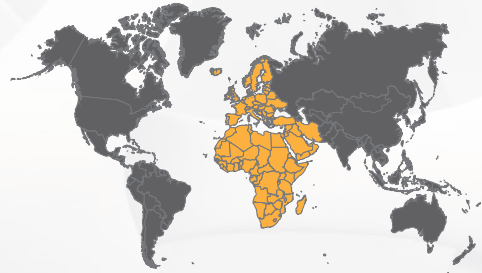
Since late 2016, the security situation in Burkina Faso has significantly deteriorated, resulting in a sharp increase in kidnappings. In 2017, ACLED reported only 8 kidnapping incidents. However, by 2022, this number has surged to 219, representing a more than 27-fold increase. The escalating presence and armed struggle of Islamic terrorist organisations, particularly Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), have been the primary drivers of this alarming trend. Islamic Extremist groups including JNIM now control approximately 40% of Burkina Faso's territory. The conflict, which started in 2021, has caused nearly 8,000 fatalities and displaced over 2 million people. In April 2023, the transitional military government agreed to a general mobilisation following the expulsion of French military personnel in February. This volatile climate is expected to further fuel instability and kidnappings as internationally supported counter-terror operations are replaced by local militias.





EMEA

Europe, Middle East, Africa



## Burkina Faso

JNIM strategically utilises kidnapping as a means of infiltration and consolidation. In Flore Berger's influential analysis, she argues that kidnapping trends in Burkina Faso indicate that JNIM primarily views kidnapping as a tool for governance rather than purely for financial gain. This stands in stark contrast to kidnapping incidents in the Sahel region during the early 2000s. With large withdrawals of Western interests and travellers from the area, there has been a dearth of foreign national targets. As a result, kidnappings now predominantly target local citizens, accounting for approximately 97% of incidents since 2017. This trend is reflective of a lack of opportunity rather than terrorist capacity, with JNIM retaining capacity alongside other groups to hold abducted foreign nationals for several

months if not years, as highlighted by the recent release in May 2023 of Australian NGO worker Dr Ken Elliott, following his kidnapping in January 2016. While such risks have long been present in the North and East of the country through 2022 JNIM expanded its operations and conducted kidnappings in at least 10 out of the country's 13 provinces highlighting the nationwide risk of not only opportunistic kidnapping of foreign nationals but the oppression, recruitment, and intimidation of local citizens.

An example of such tactics occurred in January 2023 when an unprecedented mass kidnapping resulted in the abduction of 66 women and children. As the government intensifies its general mobilisation efforts to regain territory,

Islamic terrorist organisations may respond with more mass abductions to instil fear in local populations. The deliberate targeting of women and children serves this precise purpose. It's essential to note that Islamic terrorist organisations are not the sole perpetrators of kidnappings in Burkina Faso. A Human Rights Watch report has highlighted at least 18 incidents of forced disappearances or state-sponsored kidnappings since February. These crimes are often perpetrated by state-armed militias throughout the country, frequently driven by ethnic motives. All these actors involved in criminal activities further undermine the overall security landscape and elevate the risk of kidnappings across the entire country.





## Propriety Information

The material provided in this report is based on the information made available at the time of writing and the conditions then in existence through open-source reporting and SPS proprietary human sources and represents the best judgment of SPS. The information provided in this report, which is issued without prejudice to liability, constitutes neither a warranty of results nor a surety against risks.

## Contact

For more information on our Kidnap, Ransom, Extortion and Piracy capabilities please contact our Crisis Management Team at [cmt@sps-global.com](mailto:cmt@sps-global.com)