



Global Insights Report

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

Colombia, Zimbabwe, Philippines, Piracy and Unlawful Detainment.

May 2023

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The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Global Insights Report

May 2023

Colombia

3465

Fewer Kidnappings

Kidnappings decline from 3600 incidents in 2000 to 135 in 2021

Source: Office of Ombudsman 'Defensoría del Pueblo'

246%

Increase in Extortion

Incidents of extortion increase by 246% from 2012 to 2021

80 Hostages

A Chinese owned oil field becomes a protest site. 80 people are taken hostage, including local police (March 2023)

16 Soldiers kidnapped

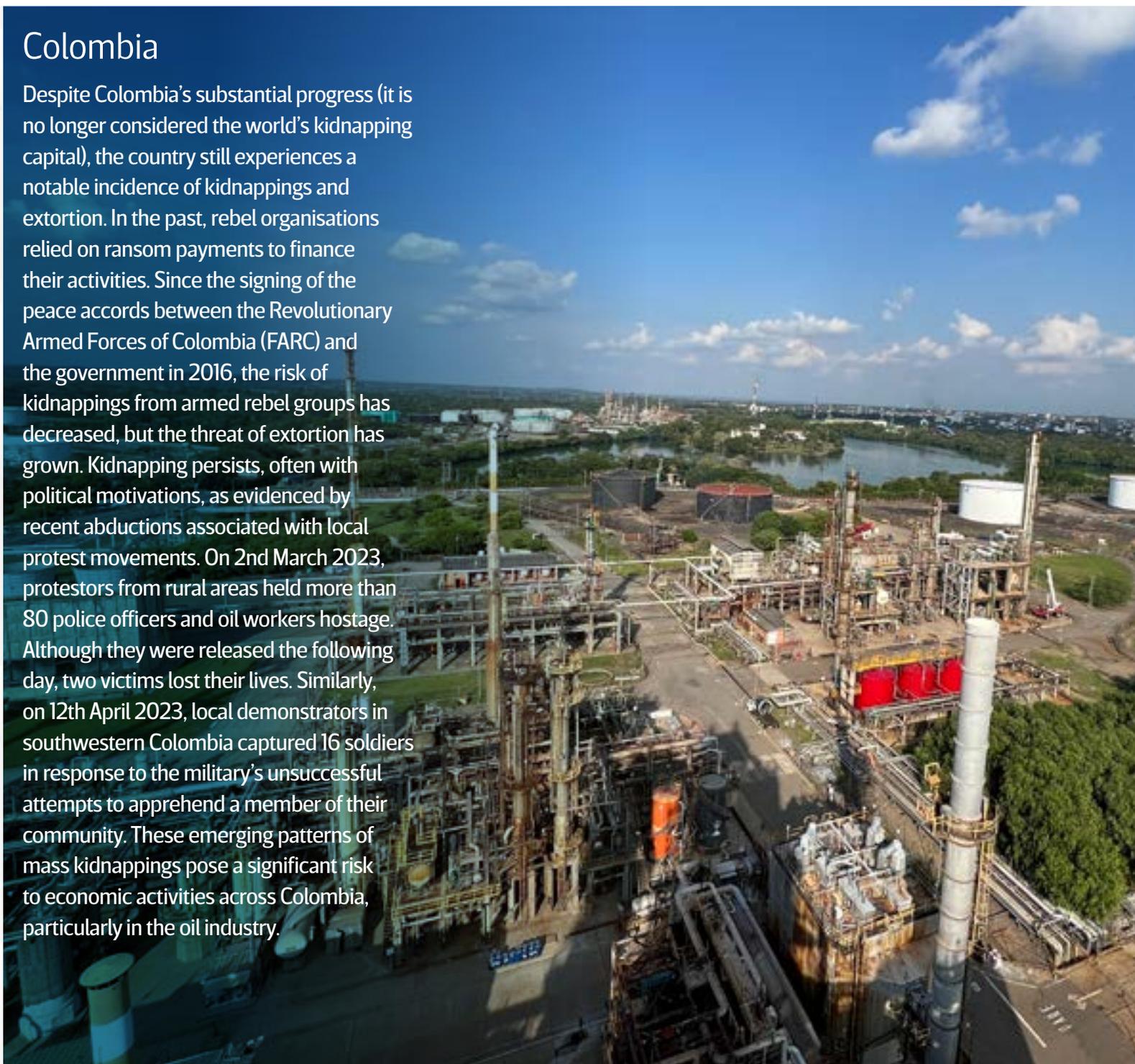
16 Soldiers kidnapped by indigenous protesters in southwestern Colombia in retaliation to the military's failed attempt to arrest a community member (April 2023)





Colombia

Despite Colombia's substantial progress (it is no longer considered the world's kidnapping capital), the country still experiences a notable incidence of kidnappings and extortion. In the past, rebel organisations relied on ransom payments to finance their activities. Since the signing of the peace accords between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the government in 2016, the risk of kidnappings from armed rebel groups has decreased, but the threat of extortion has grown. Kidnapping persists, often with political motivations, as evidenced by recent abductions associated with local protest movements. On 2nd March 2023, protestors from rural areas held more than 80 police officers and oil workers hostage. Although they were released the following day, two victims lost their lives. Similarly, on 12th April 2023, local demonstrators in southwestern Colombia captured 16 soldiers in response to the military's unsuccessful attempts to apprehend a member of their community. These emerging patterns of mass kidnappings pose a significant risk to economic activities across Colombia, particularly in the oil industry.





The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Colombia

The threat of kidnapping has evolved significantly, shifting from prolonged abductions for ransom to express kidnappings, which are faster and resource efficient. These express kidnappings, characterised by quicker payment demands, have been identified as a growing risk by national authorities. They are increasingly occurring in Colombia's popular cities where fake taxi operations have become more prevalent. Among the targeted victims are wealthy businesspeople and tourists, particularly older foreign nationals who are perceived as both affluent and vulnerable. An Israeli tourist narrowly

escaped an express kidnapping attempt in Medellin after being lured into a kidnapper's vehicle.

Despite a significant decrease in the overall threat of kidnapping, there has been an upsurge in extortion incidents. Factors such as corruption, ongoing conflicts, and the limitations of Colombia's security forces have created an environment where criminal organisations – particularly remnants of the FARC – can demand protection payments in areas with minimal police presence. These areas are typically rural, impacting significantly on the local population. The number

of reported extortion incidents has seen an increase of nearly 250% from 2,315 in 2012 to 8,021 in 2021.

The departments of Casanare, V, and Meta have experienced the highest number of reported extortion threats. These departments have a history of government neglect, a significant presence of the FARC in the past, and they voted against the 2016 peace accords. These factors highlight the fact that extortion and kidnapping incidents are still influenced by politics, in addition to the lingering effects of past and ongoing conflicts.





EMEA

Europe, Middle East, Africa



Zimbabwe

49 Kidnappings & Sexual Violence

49 cases of kidnapping and sexual violence reported in 2019

Source: Office for High Commissioner for Human Rights

208,027 Criminal Cases (Oct-Dec)

208,027 criminal cases reported to the police in the final quarter of 2022 – a 45% increase from the first quarter

Source: Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency

58th Criminology Ranking

Zimbabwe ranks 58 out of 193 worldwide for criminality

Source: The Global Organised Crime Index

25% Bribed

25% of public servants paid a bribe in the last 12 months

Source: Transparency International

Global Insights Report

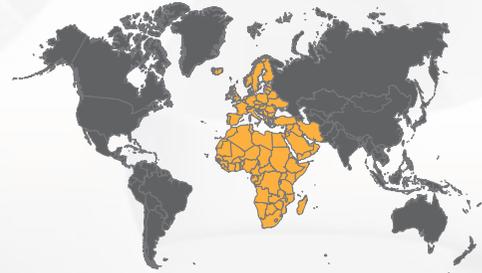
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EMEA

Europe, Middle East, Africa



Zimbabwe

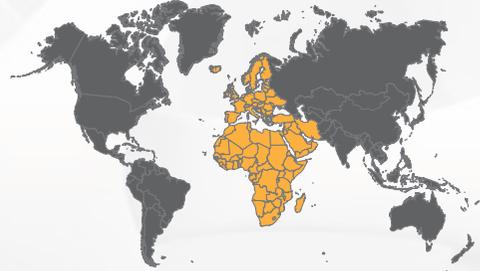
Despite experiencing isolated incidents of kidnapping over recent years, Zimbabwe faces an ongoing battle with high levels of criminality. This poses a significant risk of an increasing number of kidnap-for-ransom and extortion (KRE) cases, especially as the country gradually eases COVID-19 restrictions and seeks to attract foreign travel and investment – particularly in its lucrative mining industries. The past year has seen Zimbabwe grappling with the global challenge of high inflation, with prices soaring by 172% (according to the IMF). This sharp rise in basic commodity prices has led to a series of political demonstrations in the capital city of Harare. Furthermore, there has been a 45% increase in reported criminal cases from the first quarter to the fourth quarter of 2022, with over 200,000 criminal cases reported in the final quarter alone. This exponential surge coincides with skyrocketing food and fuel prices, which has incentivised criminal behaviour.





EMEA

Europe, Middle East, Africa



Zimbabwe

The reported figures for 2022 indicate not only an increase in criminality but also a trend of escalating violence, particularly in the form of armed robberies (as highlighted by national media sources). These patterns of criminal activity heighten the risk of kidnap-for-ransom and extortion incidents, as criminal gangs seek financial gains. Criminal groups are also involved in activities such as sex trafficking and forced labour, further exacerbating the risk of kidnapping. Zimbabwe serves as both a transit point and a destination market for human trafficking, with transnational criminal networks operating in the country. Zimbabwean nationals, especially young citizens, are most at risk. The

UN Commission for Human Rights has highlighted 49 cases of kidnapping and sexual violence, although it is likely that the actual figures are much higher. These criminal networks often exploit poverty-stricken individuals, enticing them away and subjecting them to forms of modern slavery. Not only do they supply illegal domestic mining operations within Zimbabwe, but they also contribute to the sex industry in South Africa.

The escalating KRE risks in Zimbabwe are not solely attributed to increased criminality but also to government corruption. Recent media reports have shed light on cases involving members of the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) and police officers extorting small ransom

payments ranging from \$20 to \$500 (USD) from motorists. This corruption within the government undermines the country's efforts to combat the growing risk of crime, particularly KRE incidents. Startling statistics from Transparency International reveal that 25% of public sector workers have admitted to paying a bribe within the past 12 months, while 60% of the population believes that corruption has worsened during the same period. These findings indicate that Zimbabwe not only needs to address the surge in criminality but also tackle internal corruption, as both factors contribute to an increasingly alarming risk of kidnap for ransom and extortion.





APAC

Asia Pacific



Philippines

Alarming Rise

Philippines sees an “alarming rise in kidnappings” over 2022

Source: Movement for the Restoration of Peace and Order (MRPO)

105,568

Crimes (6 Months)

105,568 crimes recorded from July 2022 to January 2023

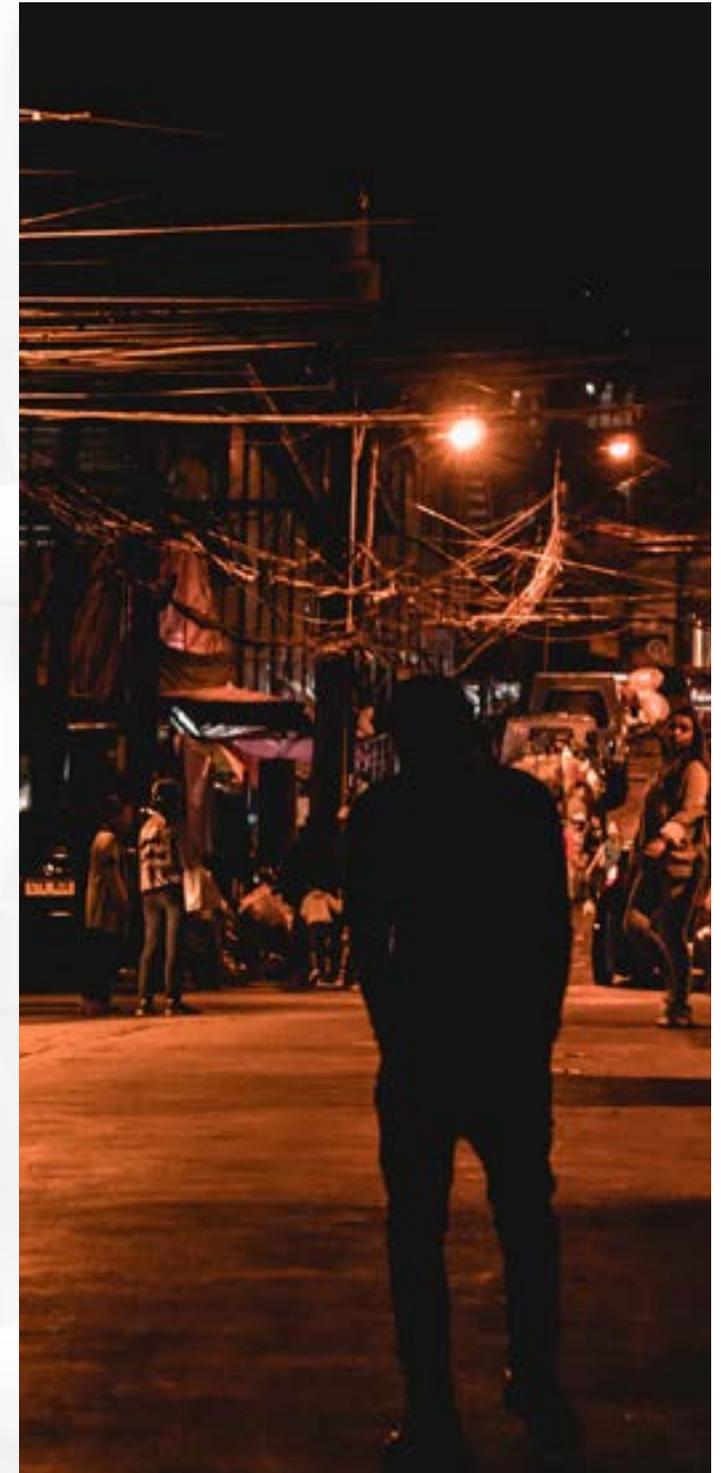
Source: Philippine National Police

6th

Criminality Ranking

Philippines’ criminality ranks 6th of 46 countries in Asia

Source: Global Organised Crime Index





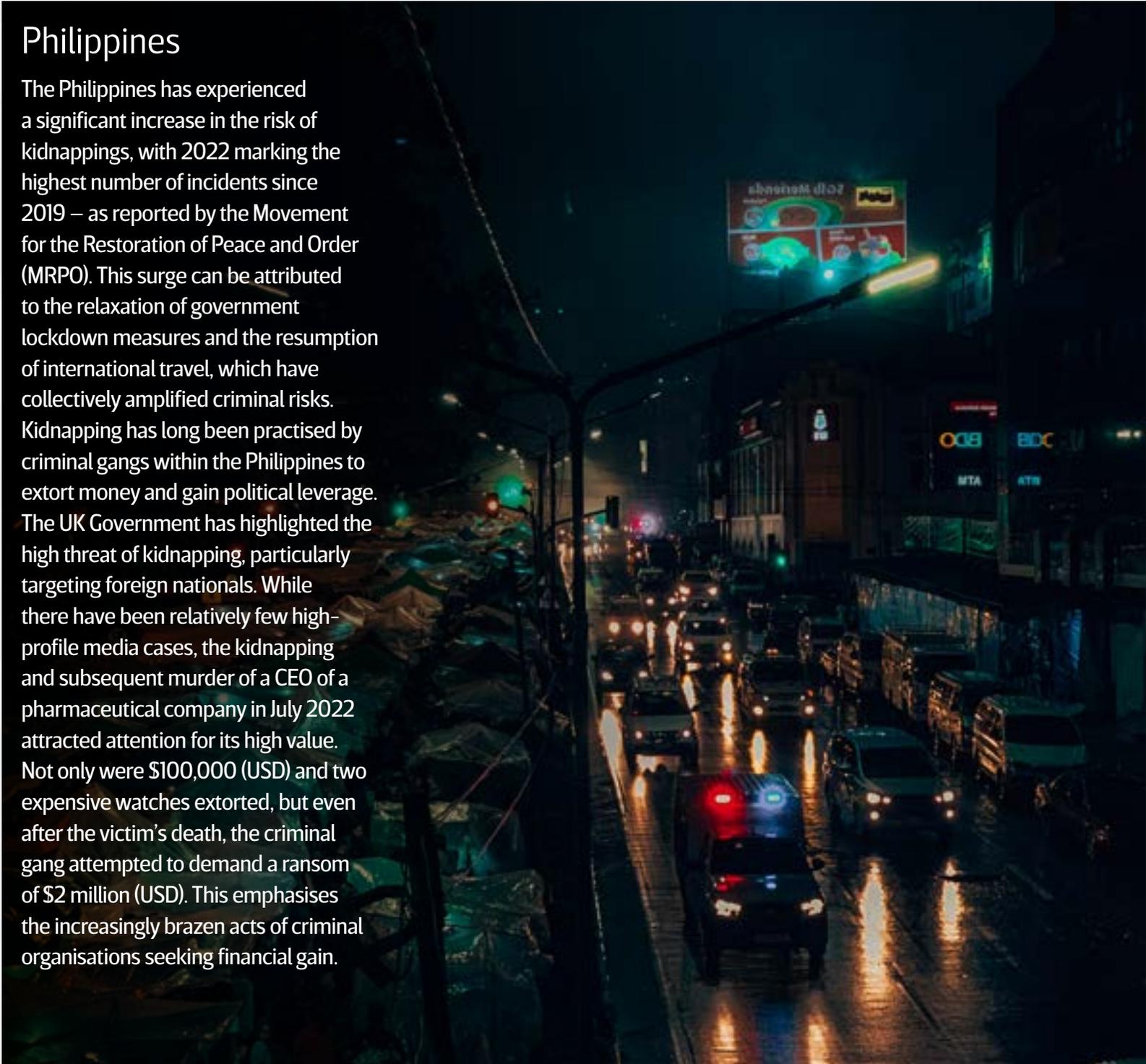
APAC

Asia Pacific



Philippines

The Philippines has experienced a significant increase in the risk of kidnappings, with 2022 marking the highest number of incidents since 2019 – as reported by the Movement for the Restoration of Peace and Order (MRPO). This surge can be attributed to the relaxation of government lockdown measures and the resumption of international travel, which have collectively amplified criminal risks. Kidnapping has long been practised by criminal gangs within the Philippines to extort money and gain political leverage. The UK Government has highlighted the high threat of kidnapping, particularly targeting foreign nationals. While there have been relatively few high-profile media cases, the kidnapping and subsequent murder of a CEO of a pharmaceutical company in July 2022 attracted attention for its high value. Not only were \$100,000 (USD) and two expensive watches extorted, but even after the victim's death, the criminal gang attempted to demand a ransom of \$2 million (USD). This emphasises the increasingly brazen acts of criminal organisations seeking financial gain.





APAC

Asia Pacific



Philippines

Although there have been limited recent impacts on Western travellers, the risk of kidnapping remains present in the Philippines, particularly in the southern regions such as Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago, as well as in offshore areas within the proximity of the Sulu Sea and Celebes Sea. The US State Department has acknowledged the risk to foreign nationals and issued cautionary advice regarding kidnapping risks in the country.

The highest risk in the Philippines is faced by foreign nationals from China. Nearly half of the reported kidnappings in 2022 were linked to the Philippine Offshore Gaming Operation (POGO) sector. Since gambling is illegal in China, thousands of Chinese individuals travel to the Philippines to participate in gambling activities, and to work in an industry known for its history of violence and kidnappings.

Kidnappings within the POGO industry are challenging to prevent and accurately quantify due to a lack of cooperation from victims, making it difficult to obtain reliable statistics. In September 2022, there was a wave of kidnappings – falsely reported as 56 incidents – in a span of 10 days. While the actual number

was lower, it still highlights the prevalent risk, particularly within the Chinese-Filipino community.

Although the POGO sector is primarily responsible for the Philippines' kidnapping rate, other risks include human trafficking and crimes driven by financial motives.

The presence of Islamic terrorist groups in the Philippines, particularly in the southern region, poses an additional kidnapping risk. Groups such as Daesh (ISIL), Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) engage in ideological warfare and continue to plan attacks across the country. These groups view foreign nationals as legitimate targets and perceive them to be of higher value. Consequently, they may target foreign nationals through kidnappings, often collaborating with criminal elements in the country. Humanitarian aid workers, journalists, and businesspeople are most vulnerable.



Piracy

33% Decrease

27 attempted piracy incidents reported from January to March 2023 – almost 33% down from the quarterly average of the preceding four years

Source: International Maritime Bureau (IMB)

300
Piracy Incidents

300 incidents of piracy and maritime robbery recorded in 2022 – 5% down from 2021

Source: Maritime Information Cooperation and Awareness (MICA)

11 Crew Members
Affected

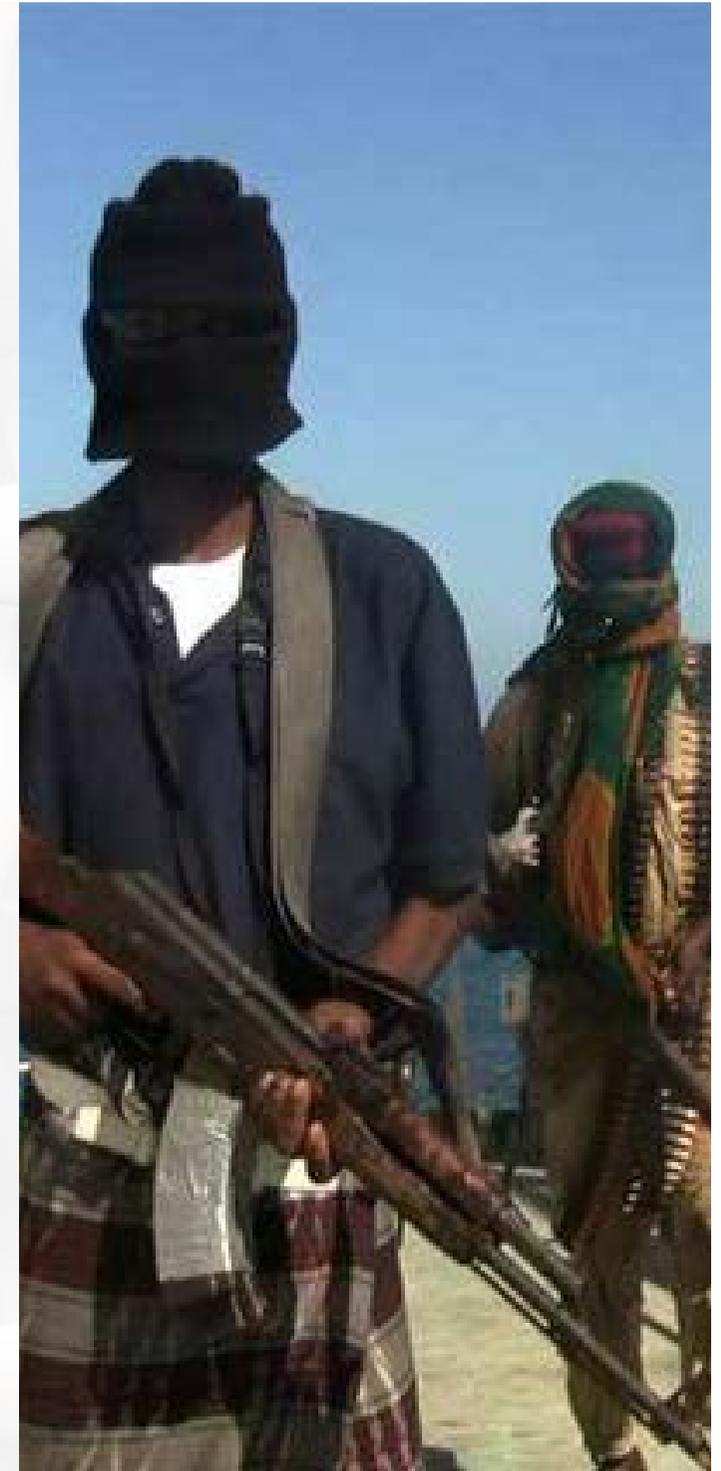
11 crew members affected by piracy – including 2 hostages and 6 kidnappings – from January to March 2023

Source: International Maritime Bureau (IMB)

Singapore Strait

Singapore Strait experiences a growing piracy threat, with almost 30% of global incidents reported between January and March 2023

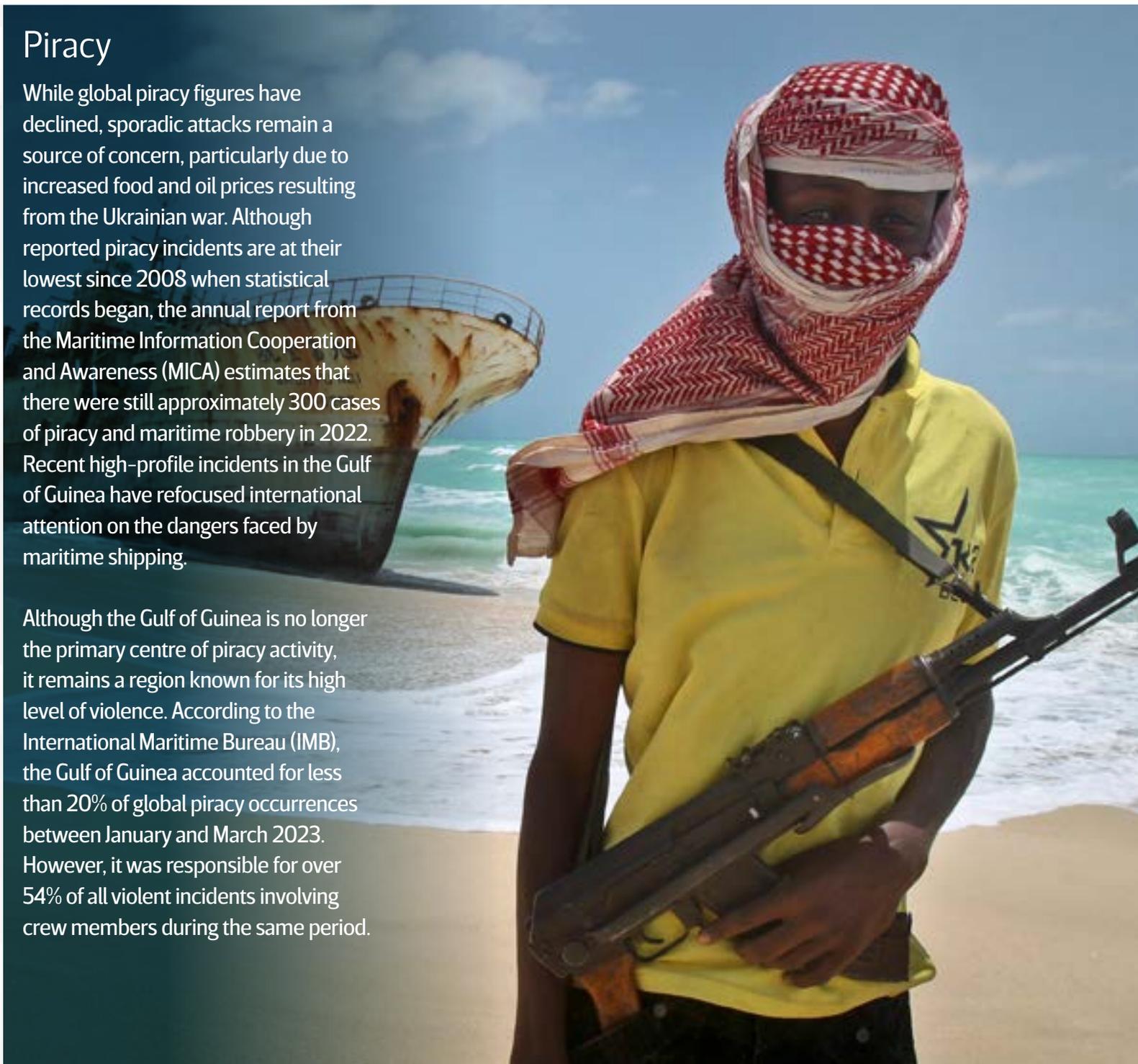
Source: International Maritime Bureau (IMB)



Piracy

While global piracy figures have declined, sporadic attacks remain a source of concern, particularly due to increased food and oil prices resulting from the Ukrainian war. Although reported piracy incidents are at their lowest since 2008 when statistical records began, the annual report from the Maritime Information Cooperation and Awareness (MICA) estimates that there were still approximately 300 cases of piracy and maritime robbery in 2022. Recent high-profile incidents in the Gulf of Guinea have refocused international attention on the dangers faced by maritime shipping.

Although the Gulf of Guinea is no longer the primary centre of piracy activity, it remains a region known for its high level of violence. According to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), the Gulf of Guinea accounted for less than 20% of global piracy occurrences between January and March 2023. However, it was responsible for over 54% of all violent incidents involving crew members during the same period.



Piracy

After a series of attacks on small regional oil tankers in West Africa, there has been a concerning escalation with international ships becoming targets in recent months. In one of the most brazen raids in recent history, six crew members of a Danish-owned, Liberian-flagged oil and chemical tanker were kidnapped on March 25th, 140 miles off the coast.

This was followed by another attempted boarding of a Singaporean-owned tanker on April 11th. These incidents highlight the Nigerian pirates evolving tactics, and raise concerns of a potential increase in piracy activities as operational challenges on land persist.

Despite this, the Gulf of Guinea has witnessed a steady decline in reported piracy incidents, thanks to increased

international efforts and funding. Nigeria, for instance, reported spending approximately \$195 million (USD) on anti-piracy measures in 2021. It is crucial to maintain such investments in the face of a global economic downturn to ensure sustained success in combating piracy in the region.

While piracy cases in the Gulf of Guinea have decreased, the threat of piracy has escalated in the Singapore Straits and along the Peruvian coast, making up nearly half of all global maritime crimes in 2023. In the Singapore Straits, there has been a significant surge in piracy and maritime robbery cases during the first quarter of 2022 and 2023, compared to the same period in the preceding three years (2019-2021). This increase is

attributed to the targeting of international shipping in Southeast Asia, following the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions. Notably, these incidents are characterised by their relatively small scale, with 58% involving no more than three unarmed pirates. However, the escalating piracy trend in the region, reaching a seven-year high in 2022, poses a potential threat of evolving into more dangerous techniques.

Similarly, Peru has witnessed a 30% rise in piracy cases during the first quarter of 2023, compared to the average for the same period over the previous four years. This increase indicates the expanding global concerns that now extend beyond Africa.





UNLAWFUL DETENTION

Unlawful Detainment

580% Increase

Average number of wrongfully detained US nationals by foreign states soars by 580% in two decades (2012-2022 vs 2001-2011)

Source: James W Foley Legacy Institute

1 in 3 Held Without Trial

1 in 3 inmates are held without trial (out of 11.5 million global prisoners) Source: United Nations

27 Countries

27 countries involved in the state-run unlawful detainment of American citizens since 2001

Source: James W Foley Legacy Institute

6 Countries

6 countries represent 62% of the foreign unlawful detainment of US citizens

Source: James W Foley Legacy Institute





UNLAWFUL DETENTION

Unlawful Detention

According to a report funded by the United Nations, the wrongful and unlawful detention of both business and recreational travellers by state or non-state groups is increasingly posing a significant security risk. The report reveals that one in three prisoners worldwide are being held without trial, often subjected to prolonged pretrial detention, which falls far short of internationally agreed-upon standards.

While regions such as North Africa and the Middle East have long been associated with the risk of unlawful detainment and the absence of fair judicial process, the escalation of

conflicts in Europe and growing tensions in Asia have vastly expanded the reach. As conflicts evolve, so do the accompanying security risks, necessitating heightened vigilance and concerted efforts to address this pressing issue. A ground-breaking study conducted by the James W Foley Legacy Institute has unveiled the threat landscape faced by American travellers. The study highlights a significant shift in the patterns of unlawful detainment, indicating a decline in the number of Americans held unlawfully by non-state actors from an average of 12 per year to 7 per year over the past two decades (2001-2011 vs 2012-2022). However, this decline has been overshadowed by a

disturbing shift. As of 2023, the primary risk to international businesspeople and recreational travellers stems from the actions of increasingly authoritarian state powers. Alarming statistics from the past two decades reveal a 580% surge in the average number of US nationals wrongfully detained by foreign states (2001-2011 vs 2012-2022), soaring from an average of 5 individuals annually to 34. This growing threat not only targets Americans but extends to citizens of all nationalities, as the global risk environment undergoes transformations due to escalating conflicts worldwide.





UNLAWFUL DETENTION

Unlawful Detention

Rising tensions with China and Russia amid the Ukrainian war have had a detrimental impact on travel security in the Western world. A recent case involving the US declaration of “wrongful detainment” of Wall Street journalist Evan Gershkovich in Russia, on charges of espionage, highlights the concern. Unlawful detainment has historically been utilised as a political bargaining tool, and in the current era of expanding great power rivalry, the risks to foreign travellers have increased.

These risks are particularly pronounced for members of national governments or high-profile individuals who are vulnerable to being prosecuted on fabricated charges. The decline in global freedom, as evidenced by Freedom House’s calculation of 17 consecutive years of diminishing freedom, further emphasises a world that is increasingly indifferent to the principles of the rule of law and human rights.





UNLAWFUL DETENTION

Unlawful Detention

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The dangers of unlawful detainment pose a significant threat not only to foreign nationals but also to citizens within their own countries. The recent resurgence of authoritarianism has raised concerns about the potential for mass detainments based on politically motivated charges, as witnessed in regions such as Turkey, Israel, and Latin America. As we look towards 2023 and beyond, the use of unlawful detainment by state powers is expected to increase, resulting in more frequent and prolonged imprisonments of foreign nationals. The world's growing political divisions contribute to this concerning trend.



Unlawful Detention

MAP OF COUNTRIES WHERE U.S. HOSTAGES AND WRONGFUL DETAINEES ARE CURRENTLY HELD



The statistics highlight the escalating global risk. Between 2001 and 2005, only five countries wrongfully detained US nationals. However, by 2022, this number had significantly risen to 19. Since 2001, 27 different nations have unlawfully detained US nationals.

Image Source: James W Foley Legacy Institute, "Map of countries where U.S. hostages and wrongfully detained are currently held", Accessed via : <https://jamesfoleyfoundation.org/american-hostage-report-2022>



Propriety Information

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