

Welcome to a new year!

Ares Risk Management is here to help and support the travelling business community, keep you and your personnel safe while travelling – especially if your business takes you to some of the worlds **at risk, crisis or conflict** zones.

Before our Travel Trends & Risk Report, we'd like to remind you that when travelling abroad, even to countries which are considered "safe", we live in a dangerous world. While conflict or terror attacks might not be prevalent in the country or city you are visiting, all countries and cities suffer from crime, be aware of the types of crime you might encounter. We would also like to remind you that weather may cause disruption to your travel plans. We also advise that you consider health issues and ensure that you are immunised (if need be) prior to travelling. It is also worth noting that some over the counter and prescription medications which are legal and freely accessible in the UK and Europe might be considered contraband in other countries so please **be sure that you are aware of the issues you may face when travelling abroad!**

If you are travelling at any time this year and would like a more detailed country and regional risk assessment, before deciding whether you need the services of an International Executive Close Protection Team please do not hesitate to contact us at:

**[Ares Risk Management.](#)**

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## LOOKING BACK AT DECEMBER 2018

### ~ SETTING THE SCENE FOR THE JANUARY OUTLOOK ~

In December, deadly clashes punctuated the weeks leading up to general elections in both the **Democratic Republic of Congo** and **Bangladesh**, and disputes over the results could trigger more bloodshed in January.

**Nigeria** suffered a high rate of insurgent attacks and a rise in violent crime in its northern regions ahead of elections in February-March.

In **Sudan** and **Togo**, security forces clamped down on anti-government protests, and **Burundi** further isolated itself from its neighbours.

In **Nicaragua**, the political situation remained tense amid growing government attacks on NGOs and journalists, and in **Indonesia**, a West Papua pro-independence armed group launched a deadly attack in Papua.

In **Yemen**, a ceasefire agreement offered a glimmer of hope; new UN-led talks in January could lead to wider de-escalation, but if they fail the battle for Hodeida could resume.

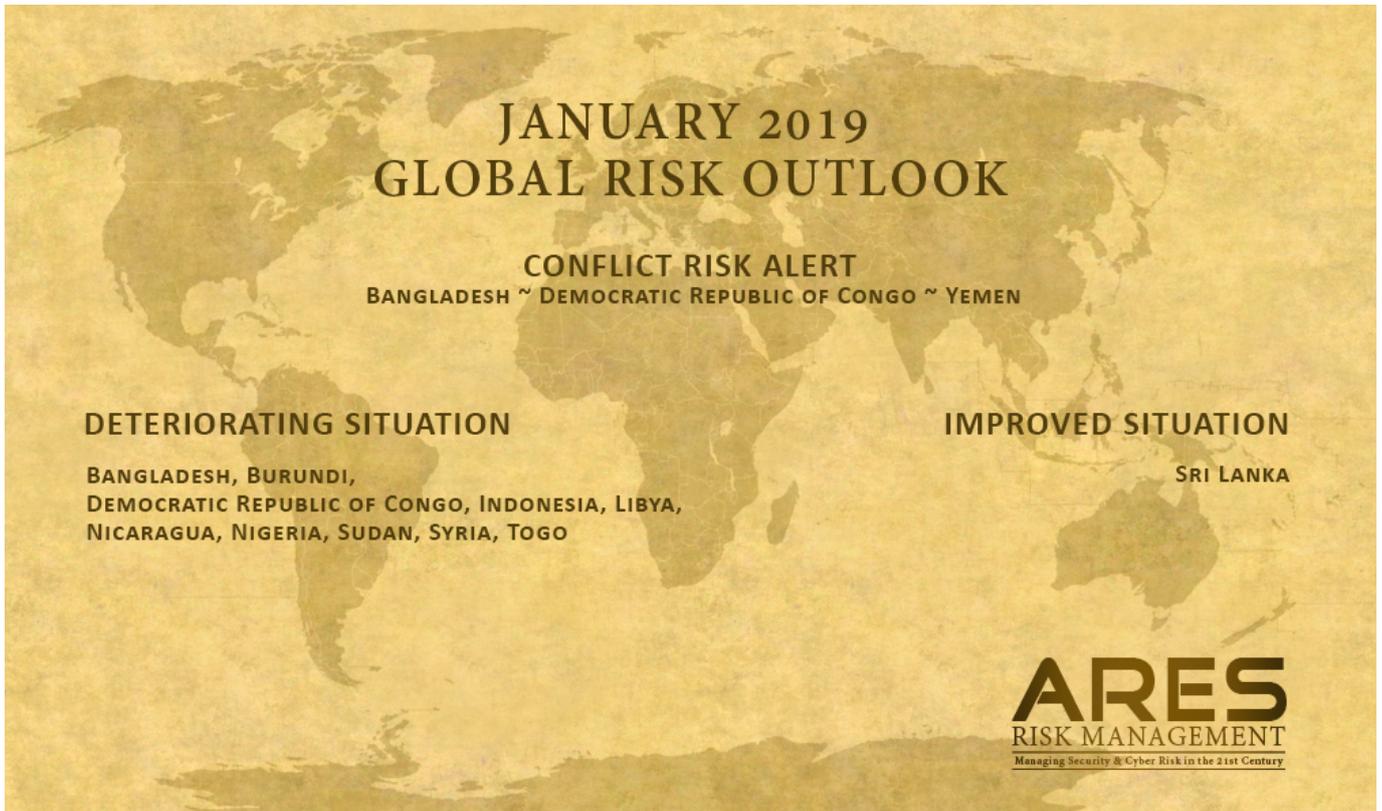
President Trump's announcement that the U.S. would withdraw its troops from **Syria** upset a fragile balance of forces in the north east, and in **Libya**, tensions rose after ISIS attacked the foreign ministry.

Sri Lanka’s President Sirisena reappointed the deposed Prime Minister Wickremesinghe, signalling an end to the constitutional and political crisis that had shaken the country.

In Guatemala, the president’s attempt to dismantle a UN-backed anti-corruption body prompted a political crisis, while a significant confidence-building measure in Georgia’s conflicts with its breakaway republics broke down.

In East Asia, a summit between the leaders of North and South Korea opened up prospects for denuclearisation.

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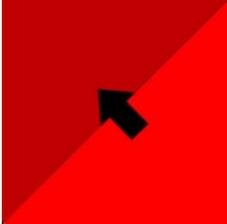
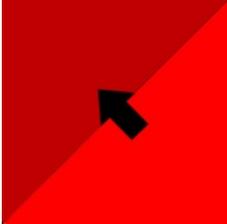
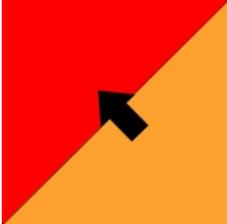
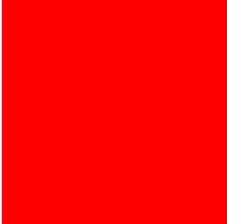
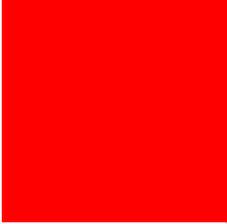
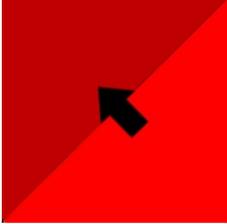


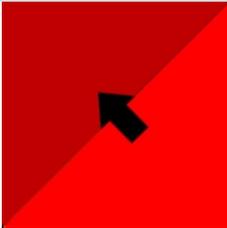
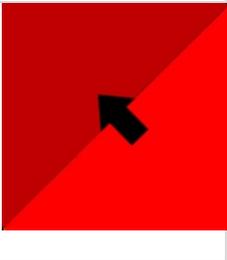
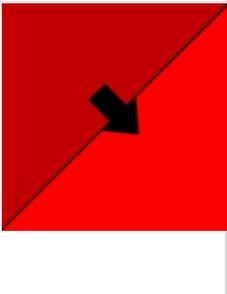
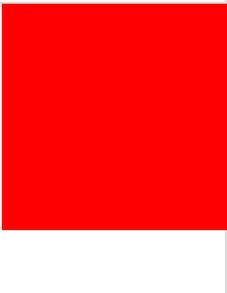
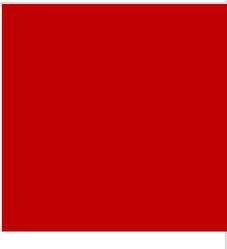
Risk Colour Code Legend

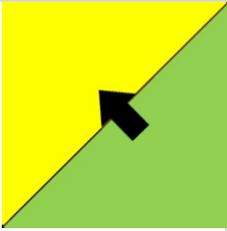
Very High Risk	High Risk	Moderately High Risk	Moderate Risk	Low Risk
Dark Red	Red	Orange	Yellow	Green

**It’s important to note that “Low Risk” does not mean “No Risk”!**

# The January Traveller's Risk Summary

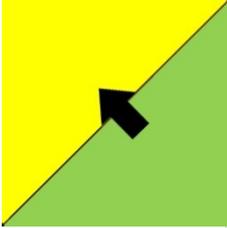
	<p><b>DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC of CONGO</b></p> <p>The Democratic Republic of Congo finally went to the polls on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December after some weeks of delay. The risk of violence will be high in coming weeks, as losers may dispute results. In particular, the electoral commission's decision to postpone voting in some areas afflicted by Ebola and ethnic violence until March. This is a huge risk and will almost certainly de-stabilise the country and escalate the risk of heightened violence as the March vote in afflicted areas will take place after a new president has taken office, disenfranchising 1.25 million potential voters, many of whom are opposition supporters.</p>
	<p><b>NIGERIA</b></p> <p>Resurgent violence in northern <b>Nigeria</b>, among other factors, makes conditions for general elections in February and March particularly combustible. While Boko Haram kept up a high tempo of attacks against civilians and military in the north east, criminal violence accelerated in Zamfara state in the north west, where bandit attacks left at least 97 dead.</p>
	<p><b>BURUNDI</b></p> <p><b>Burundi</b> marched ahead on its isolationist trajectory, with the national assembly rejecting the African Union's calls for political restraint and relations deteriorating with both Uganda and Rwanda.</p>
	<p><b>SUDAN</b></p> <p><b>Sudan's</b> prolonged economic crisis fuelled a new wave of protests, to which security forces responded with force, reportedly leaving dozens dead. The protests and their political fallout could amount to a serious challenge to President Bashir's rule – which in turn could stir further instability in South Sudan.</p>
	<p><b>TOGO</b></p> <p>In <b>Togo</b>, too, security forces clamped down on protests in the run-up to legislative polls, boycotted by the opposition. The death of at least four protesters could make resolving the standoff between the government and opposition even harder.</p>
	<p><b>BANGLADESH</b></p> <p>Violence between supporters of rival political parties ahead of and on the day of <b>Bangladesh's</b> general elections left hundreds injured and dozens killed. The opposition claimed the election commission was biased, and accused security forces of being complicit in attacks on their leaders and supporters – a charge denied by the ruling Awami League. With the opposition now rejecting the ruling coalition's landslide victory, claiming widespread fraud, it is likely more violence will be inevitable.</p>

	<p><b>INDONESIA</b></p> <p>Fighting spiked in <b>Indonesia</b>, where the West Papua National Liberation Army claimed responsibility for killing at least seventeen state contractor employees working on a major highway construction project in Nduga district, Papua province, on 2 December. More people were killed and hundreds of civilians reportedly fled as the military launched a hunt for the suspects. The attack came a day after police arrested hundreds of people taking part in demonstrations marking the 57th anniversary of West Papua’s declaration of independence.</p>
	<p><b>NICARAGUA</b></p> <p>The political situation remains tense in <b>Nicaragua</b>, where President Ortega’s government displayed increasingly repressive tendencies, targeting human rights NGOs, journalists and members of the opposition. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights concluded the government had installed a “regime of terror”.</p>
	<p><b>YEMEN</b></p> <p>After multiple false starts, UN-led negotiations between <b>Yemen’s</b> warring parties concluded with a ceasefire in Hodeida governorate, which could open the way to wider de-escalation in January and a negotiated end to the conflict in 2019. But if the talks fail or implementation falters, rival forces could resume the battle for Hodeida port and city with catastrophic humanitarian implications.</p>
	<p><b>SYRIA</b></p> <p>U.S. President Trump’s decision to pull his forces from <b>Syria</b> put that conflict firmly on our list of conflicts to watch in 2019. The announcement upset the delicate balance of forces and power in the region and, further down the line, raises the odds of a bloody conflict involving Turkey, its Syrian allies, Syrian Kurds, and the Assad regime; and potentially gives the Islamic State a new lease on life by fuelling the chaos on which it thrives.</p>
	<p><b>LYBIA</b></p> <p>Meanwhile, in <b>Libya</b>, Islamic State’s attack on the foreign ministry in Tripoli underscored the hazardous security environment hampering reunification of rival state institutions.</p>
	<p><b>SRI LANKA</b></p> <p><b>Sri Lanka’s</b> constitutional and political crisis ended as President Sirisena reappointed deposed Prime Minister Wickremesinghe to office, bowing to two Supreme Court rulings blocking his attempt to install former President Rajapaksa as prime minister and call early general elections. While fearing the political blockages that led to the attempted constitutional coup remain in place, observers hailed Wickremesinghe’s re-appointment as a victory for the rule of law and parliamentary democracy.</p>



### **FRANCE**

With an escalation in rioting in Paris in December and a recent history of terrorist attack on civilian soft-targets by jihadists; France and in particular Paris is not as safe as it once was. Recent riots have been described as the worst in over a decade, and in an unprecedented move, many tourist attractions were closed during the rioting. It is likely that civil unrest and further rioting is likely to continue until the underlying issues have been addressed



### **BRUSSELS**

France's "yellow vest" movement spread to Belgium, during December and police turned water cannon on stone-throwing protesters who torched two police vehicles in central Brussels. While Belgium is a relatively safe country, riots and protests are likely to escalate.

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