

Welcome to February,

Ares Risk Management is here to help and support the travelling business community. We are here to provide you with the intelligence and threat trends which will 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.

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 varying types and levels of crime. Be aware of the types of crime you might encounter.

We would also like to remind you that the weather may disrupt your travel plans. We also advise that you consider health issues and ensure that you are immunised (if need be) before travelling.

It is also worth noting that some over the counter and prescription medications which a legal and freely accessible in the UK and Europe might be considered contraband in other countries so please **be sure that you check what medications are allowed and which are considered contraband.**

If you are travelling at any time this year and would like a more detailed country and regional risk assessment, focused on **your travel plans** and itinerary before deciding whether you need the services of an International Executive Close Protection Team or not, please do not hesitate to contact us at **Ares Risk Management.**

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~ SETTING THE SCENE FOR FEBRUARY ~

Coronavirus (aka Covid-19, SARS-COV-2) has continued to keep the world in varying levels of disarray, "lockdown" and economic shrinkage. While some business sectors were slowly opening up, recent localised spikes in infection rates have led to the third national "lockdown" in the UK, which is not likely to end until March/April 2021. This presents unique challenges for those that have to travel as the current advice is to "stay home" and work from home wherever possible, with only essential travel being allowed.

Roll-out of the Covid Vaccine is progressing across the UK with almost 12 million people having received the first treatment of the Covid Vaccine. It's important to be aware that this treatment requires two doses and that it can take up to 7 – 10 days for the vaccine to start offering protection against the virus.

Talks amongst the international carriers suggest that in the short term, testing prior to boarding a flight will continue and only those with a negative test will be allowed to travel, while in the longer term there may be a need to produce a vaccination passport, or proof of vaccination as is the case with Yellow Fever. Your Travel Management Consultant will be able to advise you on vaccination requirements before you travel.

The UK government continues to advise UK travellers **essential journey's only** are allowed

The latest news on the Coronavirus can be found here:

1. Government Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>
2. UK Government – Coronavirus Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
3. NHS Coronavirus Advice: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>



EARTHQUAKES

In the first 8-days of February 2021, there have been seven earthquakes to date. The earthquakes ranged in magnitude from 5.6 to 6.7 and were located Vanuatu, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea.

The Philippines – 7th and 8th February

The Philippines experienced three earthquakes in the space of 48 hours with magnitudes ranging from 5.8 to 6.3 on the Richter scale, the area affected was the southern province of Davao del Sur. To date there have been no reports of casualties.

West Chile Rise – 3rd February

An oceanic quake with a magnitude of 6.7 occurred some 200 miles off the Chilean coast of the 3rd February, there have been no reports of damage and a tsunami alert was not issued.

Vanuatu 2nd, 3rd and 4th February.

The three daily quakes in this region ranged between 5.6 and 6.7 magnitude while the shaking in Isangel, Tafea Province, was described as moderate, there have been no reports to date of fatalities or damage to homes and infrastructure.

CYCLONES, HURRICANES & TYPHOONS

The Hurricane Season across the Caribbean/ Bahamas/Florida and Carolina's/Mexico and Northern South American countries spans from the 1st June through to the end of November annually.

The Typhoon Season in Japan and Western Pacific spans from July to October.

Cyclone Season – South Pacific runs annually from November to April.

With the South Pacific's annual Cyclone Season in full swing,

30th January - 1st February 2021 – Fiji

Fiji found itself battered by two cyclones concurrently Cyclone Bina which was downgraded to a tropical storm on the 31st January and Cyclone Ana. One person has died, and five, including a three-year-old boy, are still missing after Cyclone Ana pummelled Fiji on Sunday, just over a month after category 5 Cyclone Yasa tore through the country's northern islands.

Two more cyclones are already forming off Fiji's coastline, and cyclone season still has three months left to run.

More than 10,000 people remain in emergency evacuation centres after torrential rain and strong winds caused severe flooding and widespread damage to buildings, crops and public infrastructure.

Most of the country has been without electricity since Sunday and there were also reports of widespread water disruptions.

31st January – 3rd February 2021 - New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands

New Caledonia braced itself for the onslaught of Category Two Cyclone Lusas, which made landfall on the 2nd February - The storm carried destructive storm force winds of 110km/hr gusting to 160km/hr, in addition to the destructive winds, heavy rains and storm surge, there were reports of flash-flooding and rough seas.

31st January – 5th February – North West Western Australia

Cyclone 18, a category one cyclone struck the coast of north west western Australia, bringing with it strong winds of 65km/ph, heavy rains and 0.8m storm surges and flash-flooding in the affected area.

5th – 9th February 2021 – Indian Ocean

A Category 5, cyclone has developed in the mid-Indian Ocean and has been tracking west-ward towards Mauritius. Rough seas and heavy rains along with powerful winds of 256Km/ph, however as this is currently an oceanic cyclone no human life is at risk.

FLOODING, LANDSLIDES, MUDSLIDES

Greece – 26th January – 2nd February 2020

Heavy rain from 1st Feb triggered flash-flooding in Alexandroupolis and Soufli in the Evros region. A firefighter died carrying out rescues and people had to be evacuated.

FOREST FIRE DANGERS

Chile – Devastating forest fires which are thought to have been started deliberately are wrecking havoc in Chile. The Valparaíso region was engulfed by flames for hours. According to authorities, the fires have blazed through 400 hectares of forest. At least ten houses have been caught by the flames, and some 25 000 residents and hundreds of firefighters were deployed to battle the flames.

Western Australia - A fast-moving wildfire destroyed at least 71 homes on the outskirts of the city of Perth, Western Australia, on February 2 and 3, 2021, forcing thousands to evacuate their homes as hot and windy conditions continue hindering efforts to contain it. The fire is spreading toward Shady Hills View and Bullsbrook. This is one of Western Australia's worst fires in recent years.

Spain – In recent days several forest fires have occurred in the Granada and Almería areas which is considered unusual for this time of year. The fires have raged in several areas and consumed many resources in an effort to try and control them and protect the environment and people in the area. The fires are currently being investigated as this occurrence is unusual to determine whether arson is the root cause.

VOLCANOES

There has been no recorded volcanic activity so far this month.

DROUGHTS

There are no recorded droughts so far this month



CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

The Corona Virus (aka Covid-19, and SARS-Cov-2) continues to plague the world affecting not only health but national and global economies ... whereas in the early summer of 2020, it seemed like the world was making some headway in reducing the rates of infection and subsequent deaths – November saw the beginning of spikes in infection and death rates. Since the beginning of 2021, two new variant strains of Covid-19 have been identified. Both strains are considered to be more contagious than the original Covid virus, and there is speculation that these strains might be marginally more deadly than the original virus. Meanwhile the vaccine roll-out in the UK and other

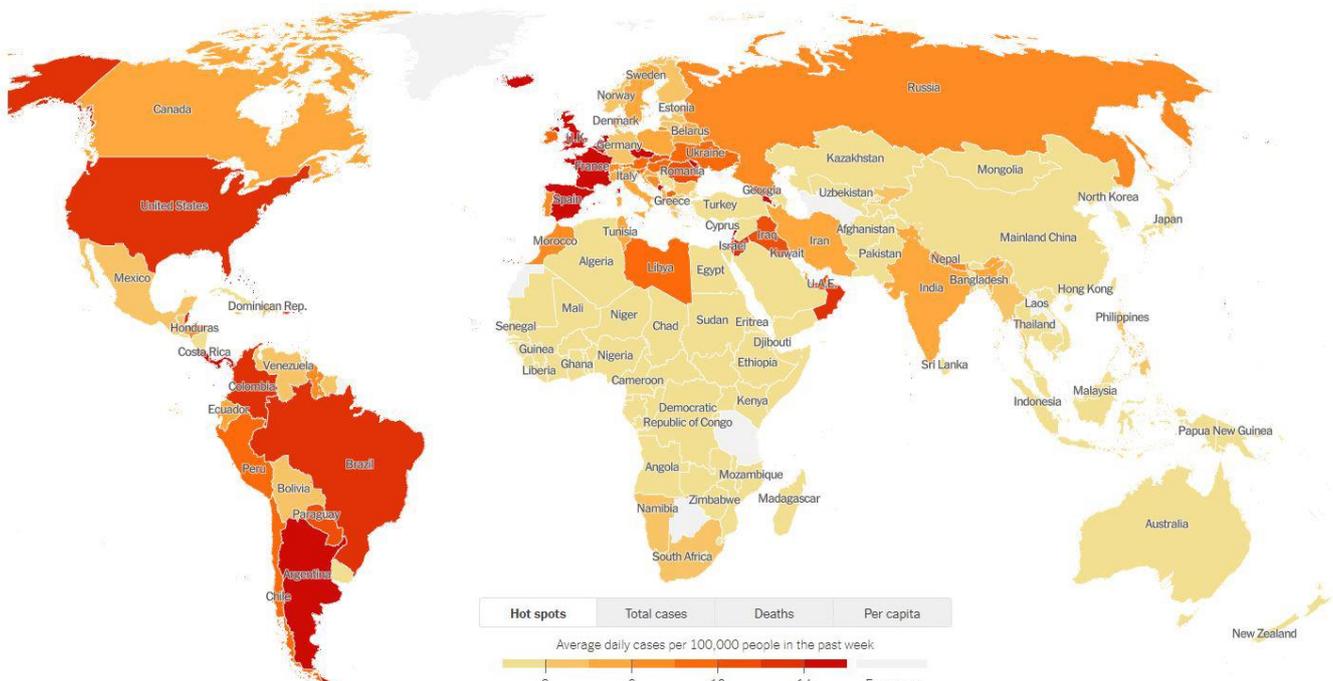


Figure 1 – Worldwide Sars-COV-2 Mapping

parts of the world is progressing well and the pharmaceutical companies which make the vaccines believe that the current Covid vaccines will help to protect against the new strains.

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| CHOLERA OUTBREAK: | Nigeria Cameroon Ethiopia Kenya Tanzania Zambia Mozambique India Yemen Burundi |
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| DENGUE FEVER OUTBREAK: | Honduras Maldives Thailand Cambodia Laos Malaysia Nepal Vietnam Sri Lanka Bangladesh Philippines |
| EBOLA HEMORRHAGIC FEVER OUTBREAK: | Rwanda South Sudan Burundi Uganda South Africa |
| LASSA FEVER OUTBREAK: | Nigeria Liberia Sierra Leone Guinea Honduras |
| MALARIA EPIDEMIC: | Burundi Togo |
| MEASLES OUTBREAK: | Democratic Republic of Congo South Sudan Madagascar Nigeria South America Ukraine Philippines UK |
| POLIO OUTBREAK: | Afghanistan Cameroon Democratic Republic of Congo Ethiopia Islamic Republic of Iran Mozambique Niger Nigeria Pakistan Papua New Guinea Somalia Philippines |
| BUBONIC/PNEUMONIC PLAGUE At this time the disease is not making a resurgence. Rather, it never left circulation, instead sticking to areas where contact with animals and humans is commonplace. | China, Mongolia, USA, Africa, South America Bubonic plague cases have seemingly made a resurgence amidst the calamitous backdrop of 2020, with several people now dead after contracting the ancient disease. The shutdown of Suji Xincun is the latest measure taken by authorities in the vicinity of Mongolia, which has seen the bulk of cases spread from contact with animals. The district of Damao Banner, in which the village resides, is on a level three alert for plague prevention in hopes to stem the potential tide of infections, caused by bites from bacteria-carrying fleas. |

CIVIL UNREST

Between the latter part of January and early February, there has been a marginal up-tick in Civil Unrest around the world - the causes of the up-tick have included the:

- Rising pressure of the pandemic particularly economic hardship, increased unemployment, social and democratic restrictions,
- Alleged, perceived and real police brutality,
- Pre- and post-election unrest in a hand-full of African countries.

New analysis suggests 75 countries worldwide will be particularly vulnerable to increased incidents of social unrest including some 34 European Countries.

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| Europe | <p>Hundreds of protesters in Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands were detained by police after the economic and social toll of living with coronavirus restrictions prompted thousands of people to defy bans on public gatherings.</p> <p>In Austria – one protestor said, “I am here to demonstrate for democracy in this country.” "The cancellation of political rallies and of demonstrations reminds the events in February 1934.”</p> |
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| | <p>Belgium - In Brussels, police arrested scores of protesters at two banned demonstrations.</p> <p>In the Netherlands was rocked by anti-curfew riots. On Sunday in Amsterdam, a heavy police presence thwarted a mainly peaceful but unauthorised demonstration at Museum Square.</p> <p>In Slovenia - The closure of schools in Zasavje and Obalno-kraška after only they had only opened for a week following a ten-week closure brought out protesters. Parents say they are outraged as they say rises in COVID-19 cases are in the nursing homes and not in the common population.</p> |
| RUSSIA | <p>For the second weekend in a row, Russian police forcibly and at times brutally dispersed peaceful protests, arbitrarily detaining more than 5000 people across Russia, Human Rights Watch said today. That topped the previous record for the largest number of people detained on a single day, set on January 23, 2021. The protesters expressed outrage over the arrest of political opposition figure Alexei Navalny and state corruption, among other grievances.</p> |
| USA | <p>Civil unrest, protests and demonstrations in the USA have generally diminished since Inauguration week between the 20th – 27th January 2021, however with Texas beginning a Brexit style campaign to be recognised as their own independent Country and breaking away from the Union and rumours that Idaho and others having the same consideration – the civil and political problems in the USA are far from over.</p> |
| ASIA/MIDDLE EAST | <p>MYANMAR has been shaken by the biggest protests since the Saffron Revolution, of 2007, when tens of thousands took to the street to demonstrate against the military coup. An internet shutdown by Myanmar’s authorities failed to deter demonstrators from gathering to demand the release of elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi.</p> <p>TURKEY For weeks, students and faculty members of Bogazici University have been protesting President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Jan. 1 appointment of Melih Bulu, an academic who once ran for parliament as a candidate for Erdogan’s party. They are calling for Bulu’s resignation as the university’s rector and for the university to be allowed to elect its own president. Some of the protests have erupted into clashes between police and demonstrators and hundreds of people have been detained, some taken away following raids of their homes.</p> |

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| | <p>INDIA Thousands of farmers across India blocked roads on Saturday with makeshift tents, tractors, trucks and boulders to pressure the government to roll back agricultural reforms that have triggered months-long protests. While the initial protests were started by rice and wheat growers from northern India who camped out on the outskirts of New Delhi, demonstrations have spread across the country, especially in states not ruled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party. Farmers fear the reforms will leave them at the mercy of big corporate buyers, gradually ending the current practice of assured government purchases.</p> |
| <p>AFRICA</p> | <p>TUNISIA Police locked down a large area of central Tunis on Saturday, blocking roads as thousands of protesters, backed by the country's powerful labour union, gathered in Tunisia's biggest demonstration for years. The rally was held to mark the anniversary of the 2013 killing of a prominent activist and to protest against police abuses that demonstrators say have imperilled the freedoms won in the 2011 revolution that triggered the "Arab spring." Riot police deployed cordons around the city center, stopping both cars and many people from entering the streets around Avenue Habib Bourguiba as thousands of people gathered, a Reuters witness said. Unlike previous marches in the wave of street protests that have rippled across Tunisia in recent weeks.</p> <p>ANGLOA On the 5th February Angola marked the 60th anniversary of the beginning of the armed struggle with official acts and demonstrations. At the same time, elsewhere in the city, the National Police dispersed a demonstration with a hundred participants, in protest against the economic crisis and for political change.</p> |
| | <p>In another report by Verisk Maplecroft, it has been predicted that up to 40% of countries around the world will experience civil unrest in 2021, with 75 countries being vulnerable to flashpoints.</p> |



The COVID-19 pandemic has not dampened the appetite for conflict risks in some of the most vulnerable of volatile countries in the world - UN calls for a unilateral cease-fire in regions which are at risk or in the grip of armed conflict was short-lived and has generally failed. Many regions who were at risk or in the grip of political, economic, social and civil unrest over many months and in some cases years, have reverted to “business as usual” leading to escalations in conflict, violence, deaths and displacements.

If you are travelling to any of the countries listed below – take extreme care and exercise maximum caution as these countries at very high risk of descending into conflict and or experiencing a deepening of pre-existing conflict. If travelling to the countries listed below specialist **Hostile Environment Close Protection** and **armoured transport** should be considered a must!

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| <p>SOMALIA</p> | <p>Somalia is once again on a knife’s edge as the incumbent President’s term came to an end on Monday 8th February, with many of the country’s stakeholders saying they do not recognise Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo’s as the country’ legitimate leader and called for his resignation. The President is accused of renegeing on the September 2020 electoral deal. Efforts to hold election have been stalled and any move by the President to extend his term risks undermining security. Meanwhile al-Shabab have once again been active in the country with an attack on a hotel which left 5 dead and 8 wounded – In the attack a vehicle carrying explosives hit the entrance of the Afrik Hotel, following which armed gunmen went inside the hotel and opened fire on customers.</p> <p>With the current political instability and ongoing terrorist activity Somalia finds itself in a precarious state.</p> |
| <p>MYANMAR</p> | <p>Myanmar has been in the grip of one of the longest civil wars in the region, with over 20 ethnic minority groups living in extreme fear violence and ethnic cleansing. Protests in Myanmar are domestic</p> |

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| | civil resistance efforts in opposition to the 2021 coup d'état which was staged by Min Aung Hlain, the Commander in Chief of the Myanmar Air-Force. As of 8 th February 2021, 170 people have been detained in relation to the coup. Rising violence, military abuses and poverty are pushing women into the Arakan Army Insurgency. |
| HATI | Political unrest in Haiti has worsened as opposition leaders and supporters say the President, Jovenel Moise's 5-year term has expired. The President should have stepped down on the 7 th February but has so far refused to do so, and announced that 23 people had been arrested, accused with plotting an alleged coup. The refusal of President Moise to step down has led to protests and demonstrations and heightened risk violent clashes between protesters and the countries security forces. |
| YEMEN | Ten-years after the Arab-spring, Yemen is racked by war, cholera, covid and the worst famine in decades, and has been declared as the largest humanitarian catastrophe in the world. US President Biden has revoked Terrorist status of the Houthi rebels on humanitarian grounds and has withdrawn support of the Suadi led coalitions offensive efforts in Yemen. |



Deteriorating Situations

Covid-19 has had a massive effect on countries in Africa and South America. Over the past 12-months, global data has revealed that poor people are at greater risk of Covid-19 than those from more affluent neighbourhoods /countries. This has been a particularly hard-blow to many impoverished 3rd-world countries. Covid-19 has served to underscore inequality at all levels within the Maslow Hierarchy globally. This has led to violent demonstration and the death of protests in some regions, which only served to inflame the already volatile situation.

While travel restrictions are in place – it is unlikely that you will be able to travel to the world's conflict zones, which in turn will cause problems in these countries as humanitarian aid dries up.

When the ability to travel to countries on the cusp or grip of war, we seriously recommend that you request a **detailed country and regional risk assessment**, as well as engaging the services of professional and experienced Hostile Close Protection Operators and where necessary the use of armoured vehicles.

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| <p>NIGER</p> | <p>Insecurity overshadowed the campaigning, in the Presidential run-off this month added to which, Niger continues to be battered by armed groups on its southwestern border with Mali as well as its south-eastern frontier with Nigeria.</p> <p>Five years of violence in the former French colony have cost hundreds of lives with many more displaced. Earlier this month, 27 people died in an attack claimed by Boko Haram.</p> <p>But security is not the only concern for the people in Niger, a country of 23 million people.</p> <p>The country’s economy has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic with a fall in the price of its top export uranium.</p> <p>It has also suffered due to the closure of the border with Nigeria, a key gateway for the import of essential goods.</p> |
| <p>CAMEROON</p> | <p>Cameroon’s ethno-political tensions and social media – Facebook in particular, is creating a deadly mix.</p> <p>When 53 people died in late January the worst traffic collision in the country’s history, the public reaction to the tragedy was unprecedented as many took to social media primarily Facebook, to attack the Bamileke community, from which most of the victims originated. These attacked included ethnic slurs and incitement to violence. Cameroon has long prided itself on the relative harmony between the 250 ethnic groups that live within the country, – none of which dominate the country was seen as a protection against the types of divisions drawn along ethnic lines which have plagued other African countries. However, the elections of 2018 unleashed a new layer of political tensions that have taken an ethnic turn which has been amplified on social media. If allowed to deepen, this increasing ethnic acrimony could lead further violence and threaten the stability of the country, which is already facing a separatist insurgency in the Anglophone region. Cameroons’ social fabric is on the brink of tearing itself apart.</p> <p>While initially Facebook was seen as a good thing and an opportunity to increase free speech in a country where the authorities controlled media outlets, over the past few months, it has had a destabilising effect in a country where 4 million people use the platform and is now being used to spread ethnic stereotypes and slurs, ethnic insults, misinformation, and incitement to violence, which is deepening the divide between the two main sides.</p> |
| <p>CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC</p> | <p>Amid post-election violence in the Central African Republic more than 200,00 people have fled their homes for their safety. Conflict and violence have been all too frequent and common within the country. The crisis and civil war which started in 2013 in the Central African Republic has often been referred to as the “neglected one”. Security within the country</p> |

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| | <p>remains volatile, armed groups maintain a presence throughout the country, and acts of criminality are widespread.</p> <p>For weeks now the country has been experiencing a new period of violence between a coalition of six-armed groups who have launched an offensive to disrupt the presidential elections and take the capital Bangui, and security forces.</p> |
| DJIBOUTI | <p>Armed opposition groups clashed with state forces for the first time in recent years – clashes in late January resulted in deaths, as opposition groups attacked civilians and the military. The attacks have followed an increase in social and political repression in the country. It is likely that tensions will rise in the run up to the April 2021 elections.</p> |
| KENYA-SOMALIA | <p>Tensions between Kenya and Somalia have risen sharply in recent months with Somalia cutting diplomatic ties with Kenya in mid-December 2020. Fighting in the Kenya-Somalia border regions has been high for some time, with al-Shabab conducting bombings and terror attacks on the Kenyan side of the border. In one of the most recent and horrific attacks, 48 people were butchered by the terrorist group.</p> <p>Meanwhile some 9000+ Somalian refugees have been expelled from Kenya and returned to Somalia. The boarder challenges in this area have been ongoing for a decade and as the relationship between the two countries sour, it would seem like there is no-peace in sight.</p> |
| SUDAN | <p>Age-old territorial claims are threatening to embroil Ethiopia and Sudan into armed conflict, as bickering over disputed strips of farmland in recent weeks has boiled over into the most serious escalation of border tensions in years.</p> <p>The uptick in skirmishes initially involving militias from the two countries saw the neighbours’ national armies intervene – and by mid-December, both countries had massed soldiers along the frontier in the al-Fashaga region. Skirmishes continue to escalate and there is a very real risk that this border crisis may escalate into war between the two neighbouring countries</p> |
| AFGHANISTAN | <p>Afghan officials have reported that a string of attacks in Kabul in the past day have left five government employees and four police officers dead. Meanwhile in separate attacks the Taliban have claimed responsibility for an attack in Baghlan province, claiming the lives six security force members and wounding twelve; and in a further attack in Nimroz province, three security force members were killed and six injured however no-one has taken responsibility for this attack which took place on Sunday 7th February.</p> |
| BANLADESH | <p>Amid accusations of corruption and collusion between the security forces and a criminal gang that link back to the President of Bangladesh. The investigation has uncovered “political and financial corruption at the heart of the Bangladeshi state involving the chief of army staff and his family. Included in the report were revelations of “egregious human rights abuses,” accusations of arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions. In response to the report some government officials cited the fact that new laws had been passed to</p> |

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| | <p>out-law torture, however it is believed that law-enforcement and security forces continue with this practice.</p> |
| EL SALVADOR | <p>As political tensions mount, survivors of the country's deadly civil war fear that El Salvador is ushering in a new era of political violence and intolerance. Weeks of escalating political tensions in El Salvador culminated in a deadly attack at an election campaign event in the capital, San Salvador, in the lead-up to a legislative vote later this month.</p> <p>The killings of two members of the left-wing FMLN party on January 31 came after weeks of comments by Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele that human rights groups say promoted "hate and confrontation".</p> |
| GUYANA | <p>A new focus of tensions is emerging in South America. Since the discovery of oil in Guyana, this country has been increasingly approaching Washington both as an economic partner and as a political ally. The Americans see the partnership with the Guyanese as an opportunity to fill the void left in the global oil market with the economic sanctions imposed on Venezuela. But, in addition to a mere economic alliance, the ties between both countries are also rising to the military sphere, which is generating concerns in Caracas.</p> |
| LEBANON | <p>Dozens of people were injured in anti-lockdown protests in Tripoli. The Lebanese Red Cross said that 45 people were injured in protests against the lockdown which have worsened the country's economic crisis. In the second protest in as many days, protesters pelted government offices with stones and blocked a main square. The army was deployed to contain the rioters, who torched a vehicle parked in the area, according to Lebanon's National News Agency. At least 30 people were injured in similar clashes in Tripoli on Monday night as frustration with tight coronavirus restrictions boiled over.</p> <p>Meanwhile on the 4th February, a prominent critic of the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah was found dead in his car after he was reported missing the night before.</p> <p><i>Hezbollah is a powerful military and political force in Lebanon and is a proxy for Iran in its conflict with Israel. Hezbollah fighters, funded and trained by Iran, have also propped up Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and have been engaged in the war in Yemen. Those activities and more hurt Hezbollah's popularity in Lebanon and elsewhere in the region.</i></p> |
| IRAQ | <p>On February 5, ISIS terrorists attacked positions of the Iraqi Federal Police in the Daquq area, while on the same day a new round of protests erupted in the city of Naseriyah against the government, where 3 people were injured, and the PMU repelled an ISIS attack to Jurf al-Nasr area.</p> <p>The country itself has endured a sustained period of domestic turmoil that has altered the dynamics of power, deepened domestic fissures, and eroded the sovereignty of the state. Popular protests have rocked the political system and called into question the legitimacy of the political elite; armed groups, many of which came to the fore in the fight against the Islamic State, have become quasi-state actors that have sought to strengthen their independent political and economic power at the expense of government authority; and the Iraqi economy stands on the brink of financial collapse, with a massive budget deficit and insufficient oil revenues.</p> |

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 or not, please do not hesitate to contact us at

Ares Risk Management.

Finally, we'd like to wish you a safe and COVID-19 free January