

## WORLDWIDE HOTSPOTS

April 2023



Concentric identified several hotspots prone to travel risks in April 2023, including continued geopolitical tensions affecting China and ongoing protests in Israel. Marburg virus disease in parts of Africa and flooding in Indonesia present potential health and safety risks to travelers. We also urge travelers to remain wary of crime in popular Mexican vacation destinations and planned strikes in London and Paris.

# CHINA

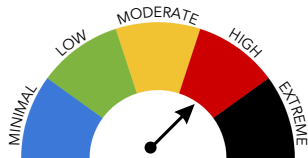


China and Russia [held](#) talks in March as “great neighboring powers” building an alliance to counteract Western powers. Russia’s attack on Ukraine parallels forecasting China could attempt to seize control of Taiwan, which Beijing views as its territory. Russia’s dependence on China [increased](#) during the Ukraine crisis, particularly economically as countries imposed sanctions on Russia. Tensions between China and the U.S. also remain high. Chinese authorities reportedly [raided](#) a U.S. corporate due diligence firm and detained local staff in late March, prompting concern for foreign companies in China. Weather officials also issued a sandstorm warning for several provinces through late March.

## OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *Travelers should stay clear of political demonstrations. China’s surveillance system can easily track whereabouts.*
- *Concentric recommends travelers only bring burner devices and limit their amount of sensitive information. Pervasive and intrusive technical surveillance and monitoring is likely.*
- *Travelers should not post anything on social media platforms seen as critical of the government.*
- *A yellow sandstorm warning affected southern Xinjiang, northeastern Qinghai, most of Gansu, Ningxia, most of Inner Mongolia, central and northern Shaanxi, Shanxi, Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, southwestern Heilongjiang, western Jilin and western Liaoning due to cold and strong winds. These areas are susceptible to additional natural hazards affecting travel.*
- *Travelers should bring masks and monitor COVID-19 restrictions. Most governments removed entry restrictions from China as COVID-19 concerns ease*

# ISRAEL

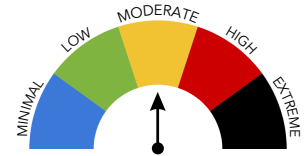


In late March, officials [delayed](#) Israel’s controversial judicial overhaul plan until the parliament’s next legislative session. This plan instigated large-scale protests leading to tens of thousands of people blocking major highways leading into cities. Israel Defence Forces participated in a shootout with Palestinians in the West Bank on March 28, and right-wing demonstrators clashed with Palestinians in Jerusalem on March 27. We anticipate continued conflict, as activists planned multiple rallies across Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem, and other cities.

## OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *Travelers should monitor local news for updates on road closures, demonstrations, and other travel disruptions. Protestors are likely to obstruct major roads and cause overcrowding on public transportation.*
- *Israel’s main international airport, Ben Gurion Airport, halted departures on March 27 following protests against the planned reforms. Sources [estimated](#) travel disruptions for 35,000 people.*
- *Travelers should allow extra time while traveling and seek updated security information before visiting the West Bank or East Jerusalem. Travelers should ensure travel documents are in order and heed directions from law enforcement.*
- *The risk of mass violence is high. Counter-protestors may prompt clashes between demonstrators, and terrorism is a persistent threat. Travelers should avoid large gatherings and political sites. Strike activity extended to shopping centers, hospitals, and other entities.*
- *Petty theft and car break-ins are common in urban areas, such as Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The police often confiscate unattended belongings.*

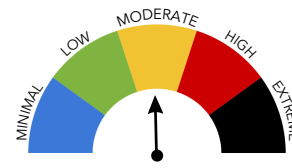
# INDONESIA



We anticipate heightened security measures nationwide for the holy month of Ramadan from 22 March until 21 April. Clashes between security forces and the West Papua Liberation Army on March 23 led to fatalities in the Highland Papua province amidst a security operation to release an abducted New Zealand pilot. Reports of recent landslides and floods in Bogor and Cianjur, West Java province, and Agam Regency, West Sumatra, indicate natural hazard risks. Landslides on March 21 and March 25 resulted in deaths following heavy rainfall, according to local sources. Floods [triggered](#) evacuations in various districts.

## OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *Travelers should expect enhanced security measures and related disruptions near religious sites and crowded public spaces across the country during Ramadan. Ramadan gatherings are a prime target for militants operating in Indonesia, according to our sources, although we found no direct threats.*
- *Travelers should prepare for the possibility of severe weather events and consider evacuation plans, especially during heavy rainfall. Road conditions can vary from good to extremely poor.*
- *Crime patterns vary across regions, including crowded urban environments and remote areas. Petty theft and break-ins are common.*
- *Reports of human rights issues include torture by police, arbitrary arrest or detention, and interference with privacy, according the Overseas Security Advisory Council. Travelers should note reported crimes involving violence or threats of violence against LGBTQIA+ individuals and minority groups and insufficient investigation of gender-based violence.*



# EQUATORIAL GUINEA & TANZANIA

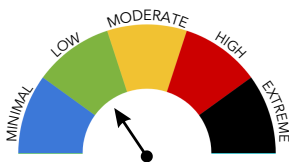
Regions of Africa are facing outbreaks of Marburg virus disease (MVD), a severe, often fatal illness in humans. African countries such as Tanzania, Equatorial Guinea, and Ghana, [recently reported](#) cases. The World Health Organization (WHO) characterized the risk for spread to be very high at the national level, high at the sub-regional level, moderate at the regional level, and low at the global level, although assessments are ongoing.

- On March 22, the WHO released updated information regarding the MVD outbreak in Equatorial Guinea. Confirmed cases detected span over 100 miles.
- On March 21, Tanzania's government declared an outbreak of MVD with confirmed cases in northwest Tanzania's Kagera Region.

The wide geographic distribution of cases and uncertain epidemiological links [suggest](#) the potential for undetected community spread of the virus, [according](#) to the WHO and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC's website [includes](#) updates and travel advisories on the MVD outbreak.

## OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *We advise deferring non-essential travel to the affected and surrounding regions until the WHO declares an end to the health crisis.*
- *Travelers should monitor their symptoms and immediately report to a qualified medical professional if they experience fever, weakness, muscle soreness, abdominal pain, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, or hemorrhaging.*
- *We recommend practicing exceptional hygiene, including regular hand washing, and avoiding large gatherings. We suggest those considering travel to the region monitor news programs and websites to stay abreast of government health announcements.*
- *Bushmeat, especially monkeys and other primates, pose risks, and travelers should avoid caves and other areas where fruit bat populations reside.*



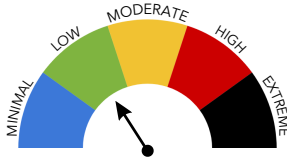
# FINLAND

Finland's right-wing National Coalition Party [maintained](#) a slight lead among voters for the parliamentary election on April 2, according to an opinion poll from Helsingin Sanomat on March 21. Prime Minister Sanna Marin and the left-wing Social Democratic Party tied for second place in the poll amidst challenges of inflation and the recession. Foreign Policy [highlighted](#) Finland in "Elections to Watch in 2023" and underscored Marin would likely lose her mandate to form a government if this trend continues through to the election, as 200 Finnish parliament seats will become "up for grabs" through open-list proportional representation.

## OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *Travelers should monitor local media for updates regarding planned or spontaneous demonstrations and modify travel routes to stay away from these areas.*
- *The Railway Union Finland reported train operators [began](#) a strike on March 20 amid collective agreement negotiations. Travelers should expect disrupted transportation services and prepare contingency plans.*

## SOUTH KOREA



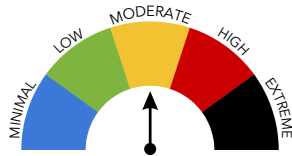
South Korea and the U.S. held the biggest military drills in years in March, [according](#) to NBC News, increasing tensions in the region. North Korea [responded](#) with a mock nuclear counterattack on the U.S. and South Korea. This response [served](#) as a warning to the allies scaling up their joint military exercises, according to the Korean Central News Agency, who accused the United States and South Korea of an “explicit attempt to unleash a war.” Travelers should also prepare for possible traffic congestion due to anti- and pro-government rallies in Seoul. We recommend [monitoring](#) yellow dust updates and bringing respiratory protection.

### OPERATIONAL RISKS

- Chinese scientists asserted a North Korean missile could [reach](#) the United States in 33 minutes if tensions escalate. We assess this scenario is minimal likelihood, based on our review of available reporting, although the extreme nature of such an incident warrants mention.
- Groups [scheduled](#) rallies and marches on March 25, which [congested](#) traffic near Seoul City Hall, Daehak-ro, and other locations in Seoul, and additional rallies into April are possible.
- Authorities warned of yellow dust and air pollutants in Seoul and elsewhere in late March, with Incheon reporting the highest levels of pollutants. Suitable respiratory protection can help mitigate this risk.

## OTHER KEY AREAS TO WATCH

## MEXICO

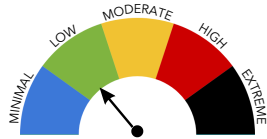


Current security conditions and pandemic-induced economic hardship continue to contribute to increased violence among cartels in popular Spring Break destinations, such as Cancun, Tulum, and Playa del Carmen. Clashes among groups inadvertently killed foreign tourists in the past. The U.S. consulate reported instances of local police threatening tourists with arrest as a means of extorting bribes. In March, the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City [reported](#) counterfeit pharmaceuticals available at pharmacies in Mexico, including those tainted with fentanyl and methamphetamine.

### OPERATIONAL RISKS

- Concentric recommends travelers remain in tourist zones, stay in well-lit pedestrian areas, and avoid downtown areas after dark. Popular travel destinations in Mexico experience moderate to high crime rates exacerbated by organized gang violence. Though visitors are most likely to encounter petty crime, kidnapping for ransom and virtual kidnappings also pose serious risks to foreign travelers.
- Travelers should purchase medication in consultation with a medical professional and only from reputable establishments. Counterfeit medication is common and may prove to be ineffective, the wrong strength, or contain dangerous ingredients.
- Travelers should request bottled drinks as tap water is not potable in many areas. Tourists should heed surf advisories as strong currents and rogue waves may be extremely dangerous, even to those on the beach. Air pollution is a severe problem in major cities, and earthquakes are routine.
- Protests against government policies are common in Mexico City and often cause road closures. Mexican law prohibits foreigners from participating in political activity, and violations may result in detention. Travelers should check local news for updates on planned or spontaneous demonstrations.

# LONDON

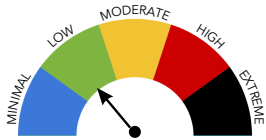


Sector-wide strikes took place throughout March, including amongst ambulance workers, transportations workers, and doctors. These strikes negatively impact emergency response and wait times. Activists are planning a protest outside the Chinese Embassy in London on April 5 to denounce China's alleged genocide against the Uyghurs, and demonstrators are scheduling International Workers' Day protests at Trafalgar Square and elsewhere on May 1. Travelers should anticipate heightened security measures and disruptions around these and other demonstrations throughout the city. Elsewhere in the United Kingdom, the terrorism threat level in Northern Ireland [rose](#) from substantial to severe, meaning an attack is highly likely.

## OPERATIONAL RISKS

- Demonstrations and strikes are common, but rarely result in violence. Most demonstrations occur around the city's bridges, Trafalgar Square, and the House of Parliament.
- Petty crimes, such as pickpocketing, purse-snatching, and vehicle break-ins, are on the rise. Credit card "skimming" is common and travelers are advised to exercise caution when using ATMs, looking for any signs of tampering, and withdraw money from bank tellers if possible.
- Though there are no indicators or warnings of an imminent attack, the British government [assesses](#) the terror threat to be substantial. Travelers are most vulnerable in crowded areas.
- Cybercrime attacks, especially data theft from high-profile targets such as large companies, continue to increase. Phishing is the most common form of cyber attack against travelers. We recommend travelers avoid public Wi-Fi and use VPNs in London.

# PARIS



Large-scale demonstrations over the minimum retirement age, pension reform, and police violence continued in Paris and throughout France with hundreds of reportedly violent protestors infiltrating demonstrations, damaging property, seeking clashes with police, deploying fireworks, and starting fires. Police in riot gear responded with tear gas, water cannons, and targeted police actions to deter further violence. Travelers should continue to avoid demonstrations and areas with significant police activity. Those finding themselves near violent protest activity should immediately depart the area and avoid interfering between demonstrators and police.

## OPERATIONAL RISKS

- Travelers should keep their belongings close to them in crowded areas and stay particularly vigilant around tourist attractions and cashpoints. Violent crime significantly increased in recent years, especially in the northern suburbs. Crimes targeting foreigners typically include pickpocketing, break-ins, and other forms of theft.
- Strikes and demonstrations often prompt road closures and flight cancellations.
- Demonstrations and strikes occur frequently and protests can be unpredictable and have a history of turning violent. Protesters may exhibit reckless disregard for public safety and cause property damage in populated tourist areas.
- Terrorism remains a threat and terrorists may attack with little to no warning, targeting tourist locations, transportation hubs, government facilities, and other public areas.
- Cybercrime is common in France, and hackers often compromise Wi-Fi hotspots to intercept communications or gain control of the connecting device. The U.S. government advises travelers to use secure Wi-Fi connections to access sensitive private information.

**Intelligence-led security** is essential for effectively managing risk in a complex threat environment. Concentric's background in national security enables us to leverage cutting edge intelligence methodologies to improve our clients' ability to detect threats and manage risk. Concentric's in-house research and analysis team has top-tier analytical capabilities and a robust technical toolkit.

Active Monitoring

Periodic Threat Reporting

Online Sentiment & Exposure Analysis

Deep and Dark Web Report

Red Team Analysis Report

Travel Risk Assessments

Security and Risk Audits

Event Risk Assessments

Risk Intelligence

For a more detailed travel risk assessment of these locations, or any other area of interest, please contact Concentric

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