



791
How many pounds
are in 1
Toni



GKB

GLOBAL KIDNAP BULLETIN

QUARTER 3 | 2023

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

1 South Korea Active assailant

On 21 July, an armed assailant stabbed and killed one person, and injured three others, at the Sillim subway station in Seoul. In a separate incident on 3 August, 14 people were injured in a vehicle ramming attack near Seohyeon subway station in Seongnam, Gyeonggi Province. Such indiscriminate attacks are on the rise in South Korea, prompting police to officially designate random attacks under a separate category – abnormal motive crimes – in 2022, with its own definitions and special task force. Since creating the category, police have recorded 18 indiscriminate attacks in the first half of 2023 alone.

2 Asia Pacific Organised crime/extortion

On 29 August, the UN released a report revealing that criminal networks have lured or coerced hundreds of thousands of people to work in cybercrime in Southeast Asia. Criminal actors typically target educated people throughout South and Southeast Asia, as well as in East Africa and the Middle East. Victims are usually computer-literate, multi-lingual professionals, lured by promises of employment opportunities. They are then forced to work for online scamming centres on threats of violence and torture. The largest scam centres are located in Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and the Philippines, and likely generate billions of US dollars in revenues per annum.

3 Yemen Kidnapping

On 11 August, a senior UN spokesperson announced that five UN staff kidnapped by unidentified perpetrators in February 2022 in Abyan Governorate have been released, and that they are in good health. The circumstances of their

release, such as whether a ransom was paid, has not been made public. However, the threat of kidnapping remains high in Yemen. On 28 August, for example, two foreign employees of the Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) aid group were reported missing in Ma'rib Governorate. Local authorities later confirmed that armed militants had abducted the two foreign nationals from Germany and Myanmar. The civil war in Yemen, ongoing since September 2014, has created a permissive environment in which various armed groups commonly use kidnapping as a means of generating revenues or political leverage.

4 Saudi Arabia Wrongful detention

On 26 July, several human rights organisations claimed that Saudi Arabian authorities had detained five Saudi-based relatives of a US national, with four detained since 11 May, and another since 9 April. The individuals were allegedly detained in retaliation for a failed lawsuit that the US-based family had filed against the Saudi government in 2020, relating to a commercial dispute over an oil refinery on the Caribbean island of Saint Lucia. Both Saudi and US authorities have declined to comment on the allegations of wrongful detention.

5 Iran Wrongful detention

In mid-September, five US-Iranian dual nationals who were imprisoned in Iran were released in a prisoner swap facilitated by Qatar. In exchange for the prisoners' release, the US waived sanctions to allow the transfer of USD 6 billion in Iranian funds from South Korea to Qatar, and grant clemency to five Iranians imprisoned in the US on charges of violating US sanctions. The US claimed the Americans were

imprisoned on baseless charges for political leverage. Some Republican politicians in the US criticised the deal as a ransom payment and sanctions relief. Other dual nationals remain imprisoned in Iran over what the US and other Western governments describe as politically motivated charges.

6 Mexico Active assailant

On 22 July, an assailant set fire to a crowded bar in San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora State, using an incendiary device. The perpetrator was highly intoxicated at the time and had been forced to leave the bar prior to the attack, after harassing female patrons in the pub. 11 people were killed, including one US national, and four others were injured in the fire. Police arrested the perpetrator later in the day.

7 Europe Organised crime

In the first half of 2023, Belgian authorities recorded a 21 percent rise in cocaine seizures compared to the same period in 2021. Additionally, the port of Antwerp has consistently seen an increase in confiscated cocaine over the past three years. Interpol released a report in April 2023 outlining the infiltration of European ports, particularly Antwerp, Hamburg, and Rotterdam, by organised crime groups aided by corrupt officials. These groups have reportedly gained access to unique container reference codes, enabling them to monitor their shipments, impeding security officials' efforts to counter drug trafficking through these ports.

8 Nigeria Kidnapping

On 7 August, unidentified assailants kidnapped a Tanzanian and Burkinabe national from Saint Luke's Gyedna Parish in Minna Province. Both were released, unharmed, on 24 August. The two had travelled to the region as part of the African Missionary Society. The perpetrators initially demanded a ransom of USD 70,000; however, it is unclear if a ransom was paid. Further details regarding the identity of the assailants or if security forces have made any arrests remain unknown. Kidnap for ransom poses a major threat to travellers in northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt region, where armed bandits and Islamist militants frequently kidnapping locals and foreign nationals to generate revenues.

9 South Africa Kidnapping

In August, authorities in the Western Cape Province announced that there had been 430 reported kidnappings in the province in the first half of 2023, with a 7 percent year-on-year increase between the months of April and June. National statistics also paint an alarming picture, with a 10.2 percent increase in recorded cases across the country in the first quarter of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022. The cities of Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban continue to be kidnapping hotspots. However, there have also been notable increases in reported incidents in less populated provinces such as the Eastern Cape and Limpopo. With organised crime groups becoming increasingly entrenched within the country and the limited capabilities of law enforcement authorities, the upward trend in kidnapping is likely to continue over the coming year.

10 US Active assailant

On 15 July, a 67-year-old assailant opened fire in a residential area in Hampton, Georgia, killing four people. The assailant then fled the scene in a vehicle that belonged to one of the victims. Police subsequently tracked the shooter down and opened fire when he drew his firearm; two police officers were injured and the assailant was killed in the ensuing gunfight. In a similar incident on 3 July, four people were killed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, when a 40-year-old assailant opened fire in the Kingsessing neighbourhood of the city. Police subsequently detained the suspect. In both cases, the shooters' motives remain unknown. As of 18 September, 501 mass shootings have been recorded in the US in 2023, which is in line with 2021 and 2022 statistics.

11 Netherlands Active assailant

On 28 September, an armed assailant entered a private residence in Rotterdam, and shot and killed two people before setting the house on fire. The assailant then travelled to the Erasmus Medical Centre university hospital, where he opened fire in a classroom, killing one person. Police detained the assailant near the hospital. Mass shootings are rare in the Netherlands, with violence more commonly linked to disputes within the narcotics trade. GKR



ACTIVE

ASSAULTANTS

AN OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL ATTACKS

Profiling school attackers is complex and wrought with challenges, but mapping the conditions under which attacks happen can shed some light on what prompts them, and how to prevent them, **writes Markus Korhonen.**

Attacks at educational institutions are often depicted as an issue most prominently affecting the US. While the US is in a league of its own in terms of the numbers of both attacks and fatalities, to date in 2023, there have been at least 14 attacks (three involving firearms) across all levels of educational institutions in countries outside of the US. Four have taken place in Brazil, two in Canada and Finland, and one in each of Bosnia, Germany, Pakistan, Sweden, Serbia and South Korea. This is broadly similar to numbers from previous years, with 14 attacks in 2022 and 10 in 2021. In the US, by contrast, the Education Week news organisation’s 2023 School Shooting Tracker lists 30 shootings at primary and secondary schools that have resulted in injuries or deaths this year so far, compared to 51 for the whole of 2022.

Between 1966-2022, there have additionally been at least 12 mass shootings - defined as those in which three or more people were killed - at US tertiary institutions. Most recently, a mass shooting at Michigan State University in February 2023 resulted in three deaths and five injuries. During this time there have also been 300 shooting incidents at tertiary institutions not defined as mass shootings, in which 94 people were killed and 215 injured. Educational institutions globally continue to seek solutions to limit both the occurrence and impacts of school attacks, but few easy answers are available.

Patterns and motivations in school attacks are seldom clear. While perpetrators are often affiliated with the institutions they target, this is not always the case. Similarly, accurate characterisations of attackers’ or would-be attackers’ traits remain elusive. But perhaps it is the target, schools – which we perceive as safe places of learning for children and youths – that makes any attacks against them so jarring. And as such, parents, police, and school and government officials are equally interested in understanding the phenomenon and identifying ways to prevent attacks and casualties.

The next school attacker: A profile?

There is no clear demographical, psychological, societal, or circumstance-informed profile of a school attacker. This presents a limitation for carrying out methodical threat assessments. Experts have warned against profiling individuals along certain traits to identify prospective school shooters. For example, the National Association of School Psychologists in the US points out that attempts to develop profiles runs the risk of both including parties who would never carry out an act of violence, as well as

excluding many who may. In a report on school shooters the US Federal Bureau of Investigation has separately noted that a profile of a school shooter does “not exist”. Similarly, a 2013 journal article on school violence around the world described it as a “multidimensional phenomena” that needs to consider a complex mix of social, political and cultural drivers. That said, examining some of the commonalities in shooter characteristics could allow for appropriate mitigation and prevention measures to be taken at the institutional level.

As with other active assailant or mass shooter incidents, the specific circumstances under which a given perpetrator chooses to carry out an attack are murky. But past incidents shed some light on factors that can point to ‘typical’ cases of school attacks. Globally, most attackers are male – in the US, for instance, women have carried out or been involved in only two percent of mass shootings historically, of which just five have taken place at educational institutions. Audrey Hale’s March

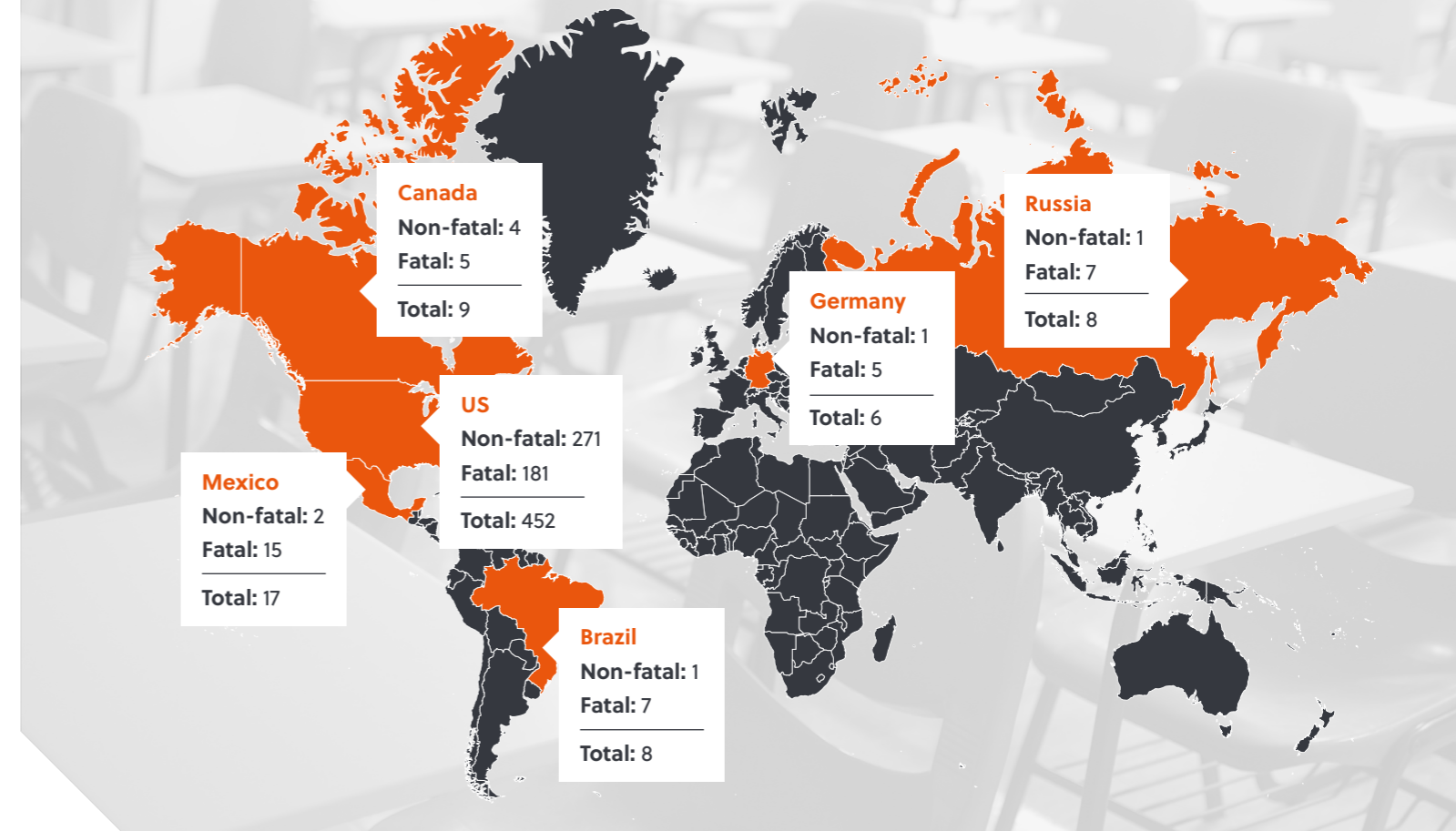


Educational institutions are by their nature soft targets, and particularly if an attack is carried out by a student or staff member with legitimate access, access restrictions will only do so much to prevent attacks.”

2023 shooting attack at an elementary school in Nashville, Tennessee, can therefore be considered an anomaly. Globally, only a handful of these incidents have been perpetrated by females.

Still, common characteristics to both male and female perpetrators of violence at education institutions are present. They tend to feel marginalised, rejected or have been subject to bullying. More than half of school shooters in the US, for example, have a history of psychological problems including depression and suicidal ideation. However, these figures are not easy to pin down globally, namely because many legal systems do not allow for personal health records to be made public. Many have displayed a fascination with weapons or violence, or have some ties to the military,

Countries with highest numbers of school shootings 2000-2022



including through family connections. The personality of the individual, for example how well they deal with disappointment or anger, as well as prevailing family dynamics can play a role too.

Preventing attacks

The presence of certain “risk” factors alone does not of course mean that a person will carry out an attack against a school or otherwise. But educational institutions are by their nature soft targets, and particularly if an attack is carried out by a student or staff member with legitimate access – as is most often the case – access restrictions will only do so much to prevent attacks. In the US, for instance, 97 percent of schools control access to their premises, yet school attacks occur more frequently there than anywhere in the world. Research has also shown that many efforts to prevent or prepare for school attacks are misplaced. Excessive security measures can cause distress to learners, and detailed repeated drills demonstrate the nature of security measures to would-be attackers.

Finally, in the US in particular, but increasingly in

other countries such as Canada, the ease of access to firearms plays a key role. Most school attackers are underage, and so are limited in their ability to purchase firearms, but legally bought guns taken from parents or older relatives are arguably far easier to obtain where civilian gun ownership is more common. While this is not the only factor in explaining the high numbers of school shootings in the US, it does account for far higher casualty figures when attacks do happen – axe or knife attacks can be countered more readily by bystanders, and they are simply not as deadly.

Because school attacks as a phenomena and the characterisation of school attackers as individuals are so complex, effective interventions require coordinated resolve. But precedent shows that policy divergence and competing priorities across all relevant sectors – healthcare, policing, social services, and civil society among others – are likely to hamper most national level initiatives to effectively curb these incidents. As a result, the next school attack is more a question of ‘when’ than ‘if’ and the phenomena will remain a topic of persistent concern for education institutions the world over. GKB



PRESS UNDER PRESSURE

AFRICAN JOURNALISM AMID COUPS, CRACKDOWNS AND CONFLICT

The reduced press freedom in several Sub-Saharan Africa countries, as outlined in the 2023 World Press Freedom Rankings, highlights the growing dangers for journalists operating in countries such as Mali, Senegal and Ethiopia, among others. **Richard Gardiner investigates** the drivers of the growing threats to journalist safety and discusses some of the emerging hotspots in the region.

Amid escalating political instability and growing governmental suppression in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, the operating environment for journalists has become increasingly challenging. The spread of coups in the Sahel, diminished press freedom in historically vibrant democracies, and the difficulty in accurately reporting domestic conflicts are key drivers of these evolving dynamics within the continent. New hotspots for violence towards journalists have also emerged, while in historically challenging jurisdictions, such as Cameroon and Zimbabwe, the operating conditions have further deteriorated. With the intensifying governmental constraints in these countries, journalists now face a myriad of threats, including physical attacks by armed groups and government forces, intimidation, and arbitrary detention by authorities.

1 Coups
Coups in the Sahel, including Mali and Burkina Faso, have intensified the already hostile environment for journalists. Islamist insurgencies throughout the region had previously heightened the risk of physical attacks or kidnappings of journalists in militancy-affected areas. However, the recent coups have introduced further complications. The juntas, having seized control of state institutions, including media regulators, exhibit growing hostility towards independent media organisations. Foreign journalists, particularly those associated with French publications, face increasing difficulties in accessing these jurisdictions. And those who do manage to enter risk arbitrary detention and deportation. For instance, in February 2022, a French journalist working for Jeune Afrique was arrested and subsequently deported from the country for allegedly having incorrect documentation. Local journalists working for foreign publications also face growing intimidation and threats from the military regimes if they deviate from the government narrative. Six years on from Zimbabwe's 2017 palace coup, there has been little improvement in the operating environment for journalists.

2 Crackdowns
The escalating threat to journalists is not confined to countries with newly established military regimes. Democracies previously synonymous with press freedom, like Senegal, have also seen crackdowns on journalism. The country, once considered a beacon of press freedom in the region, fell 31 places in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index from 73rd out of 180 countries in 2022 to 104th in 2023. This trend, driven by increased attacks and arrests of journalists, is likely to continue, particularly amid increasing instability ahead of the 2024 presidential elections. The persistent popularity of the now-dissolved opposition party of Ousmane Sonko, the Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la

fraternité (PASTEF), the violent crackdown on opposition demonstrations, and the related press coverage of the actions of security forces have significantly contributed to increased government hostility towards journalists throughout the country.

And, despite some improvement in the past year and a better ranking on the index, similar barriers to press freedoms persist in Lesotho. Here, self-censorship is pervasive and many political commentators have relocated to South Africa amid fears of attack in their home country. That said, South Africa too could face growing pressures on press freedom in the lead up the country's 2024 elections as political tensions give rise to smear campaigns targeting publications critical of the ruling African National Congress and other political parties.

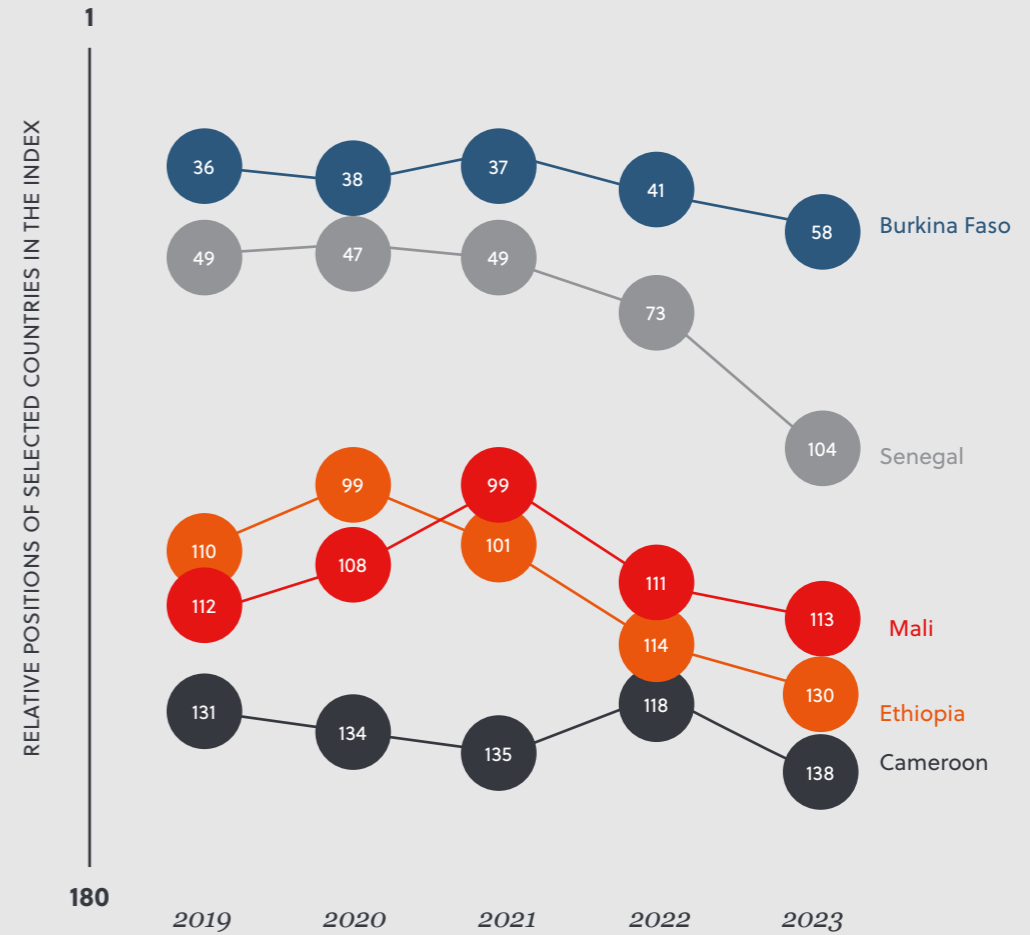
3 Conflict
Active conflict zones inherently pose dangers for journalists. However, in countries like Cameroon and Ethiopia, the governments' increasingly hardline response to critical reporting of internal conflicts have created additional obstacles for the press. These dynamics have contributed to the continued decline in their World Press Freedom Index rankings between 2022 and 2023, with Ethiopia falling 16 places from 114th to 130th, while Cameroon dropped 20 places from 118th to 138th.

After initial optimism that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed would open up the media landscape in Ethiopia, such hopes faded with the onset of the Tigray Civil War. In 2022, 29 local journalists were detained on charges of "collaborating with the enemy" and allegedly disclosing military secrets. Foreign journalists have also been targeted, with British journalist Tom Gardner expelled from the country in 2022 for his coverage of the Tigray conflict. While hostilities associated with the Tigray war have subsided since the signing of a peace deal in November 2022, media coverage of the growing unrest in the Amhara region over the government's decision to dissolve a regional special forces unit in April 2023 has led to further arrests and the intimidation of journalists.

Similarly, in Cameroon, five journalists are currently serving prison sentences on anti-state charges for their reporting on the conflict involving Anglophone separatists in the country's North-West and South-West Regions. In addition to the threat of being killed by separatists - there has already been one such death of a journalist in 2023 - media workers face the threat of arbitrary detention and intimidation by Cameroonian armed forces and authorities for covering stories that are perceived as negatively reflecting the government's actions.

World Press Freedom Index Rankings

The World Press Freedom Index ranks the press freedom of 180 countries.



Source: Reporters Without Borders

Looking ahead

Amid sustained and growing political instability in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, violence towards journalists is likely to continue into 2024. The potential for further coups in West and Central Africa, elections in countries such as Senegal, and persistent conflicts and unrest that draw critical coverage of governments show no signs of dissipating. These dynamics in hostile operating environments underscore the challenges of delivering accurate, independent reporting, while remaining within the ever-shrinking confines of the law. **GKB**



CRIME IN PERU

KEY DRIVERS AND CHALLENGES

RISING

BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 2022 AND FEBRUARY 2023

23.2% of the population aged 15 and over experienced at least one criminal act

19.9% increase from the same time last year

Saif Islam discusses the complex drivers behind increased criminality in Peru and the difficulty of tackling this issue amid the country’s political instability.

“This is the last time I warn you. The next time I will not just break your fingernail. There will be other measures.” This is the chilling message the councillor of Lima’s Comas District received in May – from a gang member demanding USD 135 a week for ‘protection’ – amid a considerable rise in criminality over the past year. As of 31 August, more than 1,800 extortion cases have been reported this year, although the actual number is probably much higher. The rise in extortion has coincided with an increase in contract killings, as the failure to pay extortion fees can result in deadly consequences. Of the 700 homicides registered in Lima in 2022, more than half of them were contract killings – a trend that appears to be continuing this year. Other crimes against property and persons, such as kidnapping and armed robbery, have not only surged in recent months but also returned to, and in some cases exceeded, pre-COVID-19 levels.

Complex drivers behind the surge

There are complex political, socio-economic and security dynamics driving this crime wave, in addition to longstanding challenges relating to corruption, inefficiency and lack of police resources. The Peruvian economy is also yet to fully recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The related rise in poverty and unemployment has affected many local residents and economic migrants, making criminal activities an increasingly tempting alternative for income. Furthermore, the removal of left-wing President Pedro Castillo in December 2022 has fuelled political turmoil in the country, leading to protests against his right-wing successor, President Dina Boluarte. This instability has not only harmed public safety but also economic performance and investor confidence. Peru's GDP has seen three monthly contractions this year – compared to only one monthly contraction between 2008 and 2022 – and investment in

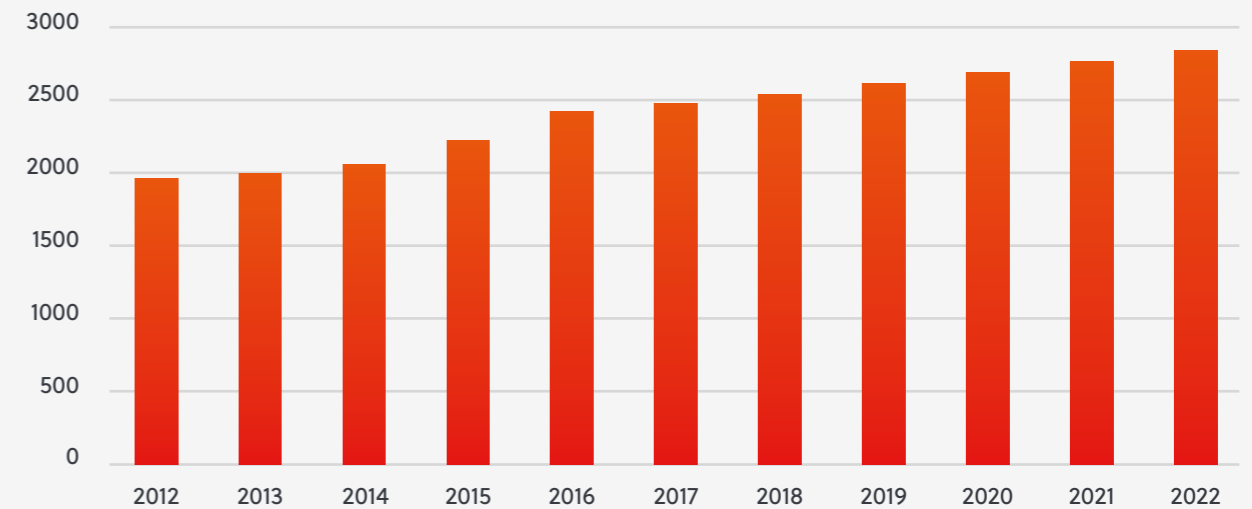
the vital mining sector may plummet by over 15 percent.

These political and socio-economic challenges are being exploited by several Peruvian and transnational criminal entities, notably the Tren de Aragua, which is involved in extortion, human and narcotics trafficking, contract assassinations and other crimes. With its operational presence extending to ten out of 24 departments in Peru, including Lima, Tren de Aragua remains intent on further consolidating its foothold in the country.



Security measures are insufficient if they are not underpinned by a comprehensive, long-term strategy that addresses the underlying socio-economic and other factors contributing to rising criminality."

Number of homicides in Peru from 2012 to 2022



Victims of extortion now come from a diverse range of backgrounds including ordinary workers, street vendors, bus drivers, motorcycle taxi drivers, pharmacy owners, local leaders, and small business operators.

whether Peru should implement a sweeping anti-gang operation, akin to the one he has spearheaded in his own country. Boluarte and her allies, however, promptly dismissed the notion.

Government's tough balancing act

Boluarte's reluctance to initiate a sweeping anti-crime operation like El Salvador's is both practical and political. Unlike El Salvador, Peru lacks the resources and infrastructure for such a campaign. And political calculations are evident; Bukele's operation arrested over 70,000 individuals suspected of gang affiliations since March 2022, reducing crime but also sparking human rights concerns as many innocent people were also arrested or harmed. Boluarte, who has already faced criticism for her strong-handed approach toward anti-government protesters, wishes to steer clear of more allegations of human rights violations.

For the foreseeable future, the Peruvian government's primary focus will be power consolidation and opposition containment. Despite surviving initial mass protests following Castillo's removal – events that led to dozens of fatalities – the administration continues to grapple with significant anti-government sentiment and sporadic demonstrations. Boluarte's approval rating sits below 25 percent as of June 2023, but she remains steadfast, refusing to bow to opposition calls for her resignation, new parliamentary elections, or thorough inquiries into protester deaths.

In this climate of partisanship and resource constraints, the persistent challenge of criminality is poised to endure, casting a long shadow over the government's capacity to mount an effective response. GKB

Demand for stricter anti-crime measures

In the midst of escalating crime and popular demand for greater government action, the authorities have increased police patrols in the streets, deploying an additional 3,500 police personnel across Lima in April, for example. The policing budget has been increased by 14 percent for the 2023-24 fiscal year. Efforts are also underway to intensify police raids against drug trafficking operations. Boluarte has primarily blamed economic migrants from neighbouring countries (such as Venezuela) for the uptick in crime, and in April, her administration temporarily declared a state of emergency in seven border regions and ordered the deployment of the military to reinforce border controls. However, local observers reject the notion that migrants are to blame for the surge in crime, which, despite recent government measures, continues unabated.

Many local government leaders, politicians and members of the public are increasingly demanding a more comprehensive anti-crime strategy, like the one currently in place in El Salvador. In fact, President Nayib Bukele of El Salvador recently took to social media to ask

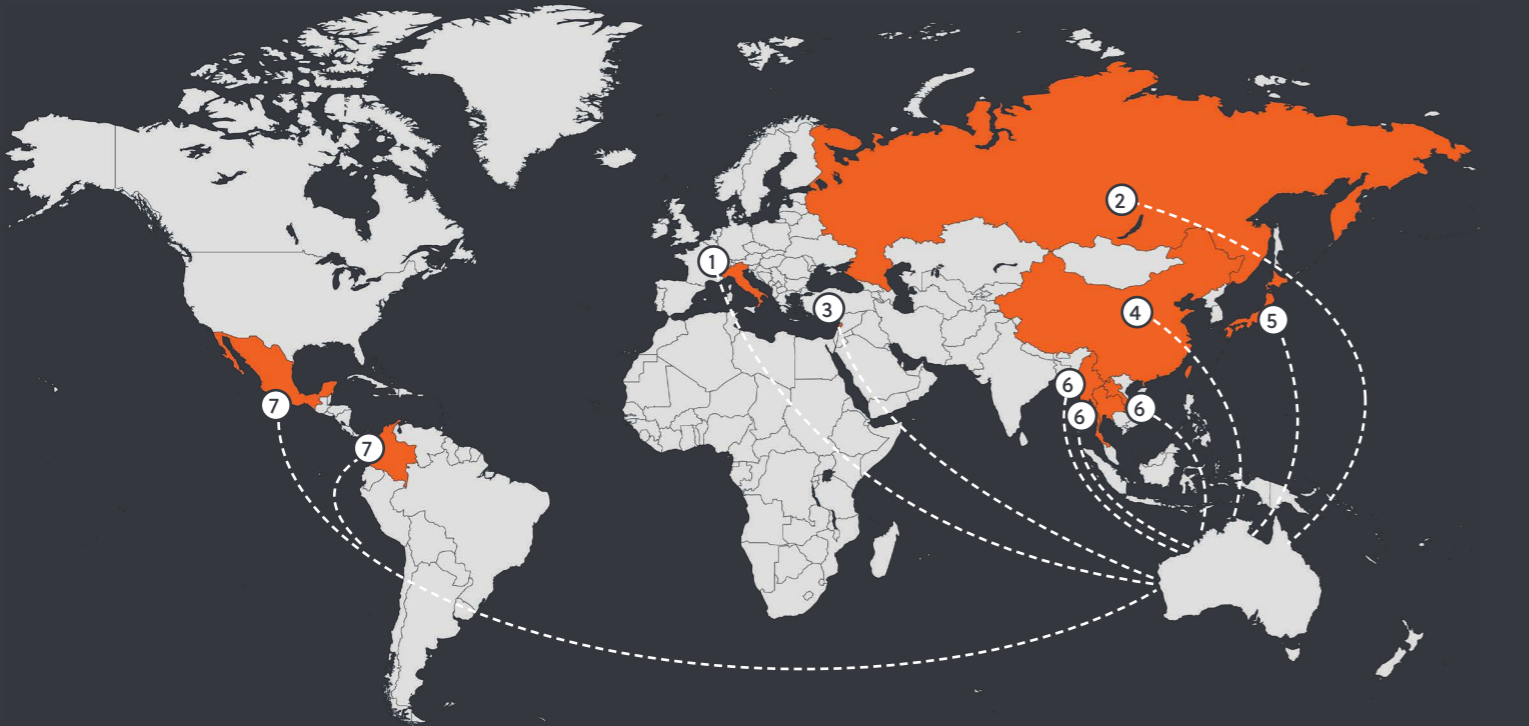


SERIOUSLY ORGANISED

AUSTRALIA'S CRIMINAL UNDERBELLY

Despite extensive government crackdown efforts, organised crime groups in Australia have proven resilient. **Asees Bajaj explores** the roots of organised crime in Australia and its notable impacts on the economy.

The global origins of Australian organised crime



In 2021, Operation Trojan Shield, Australia's largest law enforcement drive to counter organised crime, revealed the industrial scale of organised crime groups (OCGs). Estimates put the number of OCGs operating in Australia anywhere between 100 to 300, with over 30,000 members. With most groups retaining chapters or representation around the country, the scale and organisation of Australia's OCGs are comparable to large corporations. They operate complex international supply chains that allow for illicit products to penetrate the borders of Australia and other jurisdictions, generating billions of dollars that are laundered through front-companies, casinos and cryptocurrency. While Operation Trojan Shield led to the identification and eventual arrest of 200 organised crime group members, the effort merely created a temporary dent in the country's extensive and entrenched OCG activity. The Australian Taxation Office estimates that organised crime costs the Australian economy up to USD 60 billion annually when considering lost taxes, fraudulent practices, criminal activity and the social costs of OCGs.

Illicit affairs

The primary activities of most major OCGs in Australia involve some form of drug trafficking, illicit firearm sales or human trafficking. The market for synthetic drugs in Australia is significant and growing considerably. In 2022, Australians were estimated to have spent around USD 10 billion on illegal drugs, up from USD 9 billion in 2021. The Port of Newcastle, Australia's largest coal port, has long served as a gateway into Australia for international drug and

illicit firearm importers. Additionally, over the past decade Australia has remained a destination country for various forms of human trafficking, primarily sexual exploitation and forced labour.

Manifestations on the ground

Organised crime poses a national security and public safety challenge for Australia. The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission reported that firearm trafficking by OCGs has resulted in over 260,000 illegal firearms circulating across Australia, increasing the risk and severity of violent crimes. In 2020, of the 453 kidnapping cases recorded in Australia, 210 took place in New South Wales where OCG activity is concentrated. Kidnap victims are often subjected to high levels of violence and brutality by contractors hired by OCGs. Virtual kidnappings perpetrated by Chinese and Taiwanese organised crime groups based outside Australia are also on the rise, targeting wealthy individuals and foreign university students.

As well as kidnappings, murders are also symptomatic of heightened organised crime activity. Turf wars, attempts to expand operational territory, and long-standing rivalries are commonly solved through gun fights. While uncommon, there have been reported incidents of civilian bystanders getting caught in the crossfire of these stand-offs. The drug and firearms trade is fuelling increased violence, particularly as the operating landscape is becoming more concentrated. There are other important socio-economic costs of OCG activity to consider. In 2021, nearly 1,800 drug-induced deaths were recorded across Australia – equivalent

Tracing the global origins of organised crime in Australia

While some OCGs – such as outlaw motorcycle gangs – have domestic roots, research by the Australian Institute of Criminology estimates that 70 percent of organised crime activity in Australia has international links.

1 Italy

Some of the oldest and most established organised crime groups in the country have their roots in the 'Ndrangheta – a prominent Italian mafia-type organised crime group originating from the region of Calabria. Despite the 'Ndrangheta's foreign origins, its representation in Australia is presumed to now be independent of the group's international activities and a considerable proportion of its members are naturalised Australian citizens.

2 Russia

Russian organised crime infiltrated Australia following the fall of the Soviet Union.

3 Lebanon

The emergence of Middle Eastern crime groups, primarily with links to Lebanon, can be traced back to the 1990s.

4 China/Taiwan

Gambling tourism and the drug trade have seen organised crime with Northeast Asian links proliferate across the country.

5 Japan

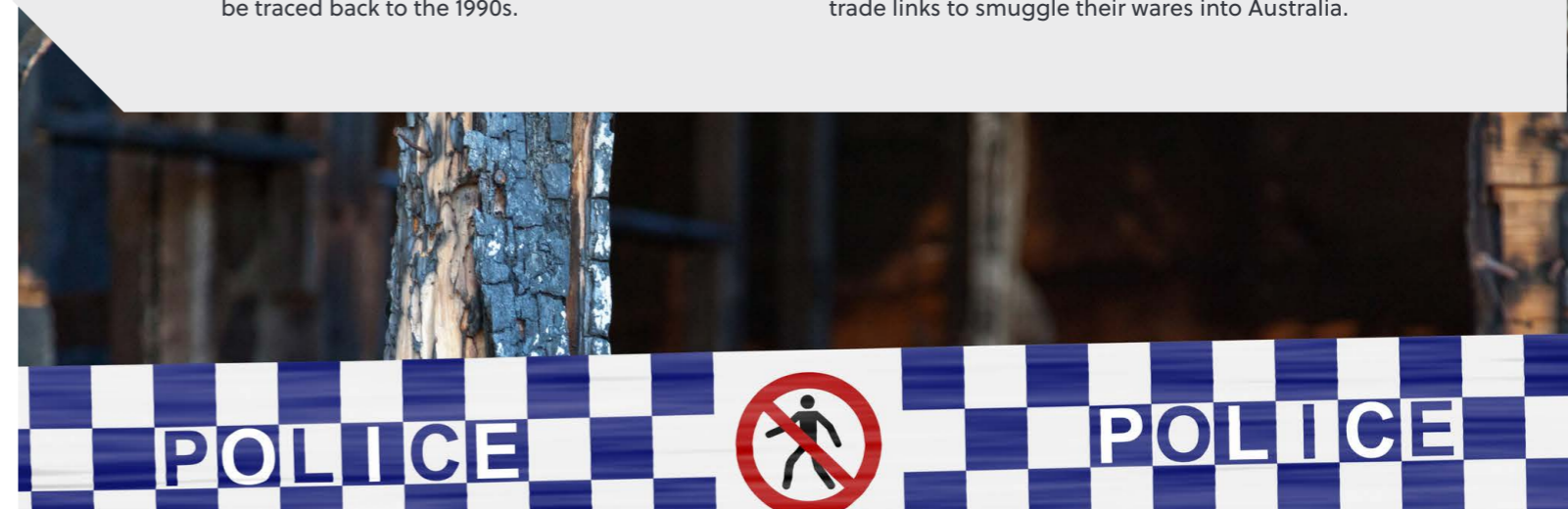
The Japanese Yakuza's operations in Australia date back to the 1980s.

6 Thailand, Laos, Myanmar

A considerable portion of Australia's drugs originate from Southeast Asia's 'Golden Triangle', providing an opportunistic gateway for the region's gangs to gain a foothold in Australia.

7 Mexico and Colombia

South American organised crime groups are increasingly penetrating Australia's neighbouring countries such as Papua New Guinea and using trade links to smuggle their wares into Australia.



“

Organised crime costs the Australian economy up to USD 60 billion annually”

to five deaths per day. The country's financial markets are further disadvantaging from extensive money laundering

operations to conceal money from illicit activities. And, OCGs in Australia have been increasingly linked to the growing rate of cyber theft and online investment scams across the country.

While organised crime in Australia primarily affects the local population, the prevalence of OCGs and the expansion of illicit markets in Australia have the ability to undermine institutions, businesses, public services and public safety, preserving companies' and travellers' exposure to a myriad of risks.



DOWNHILL FROM HERE?

SAFETY CONCERNS AND EVACUATION CHALLENGES GROW IN HAITI

As violence and insecurity escalate in Haiti, aid workers and foreign nationals face mounting threats and challenges to operating in – or attempting to leave – the country, **writes Erin Drake.**

On 30 August, the US urged its citizens to exit Haiti as soon as possible amid an ongoing deterioration in the security situation. The following day, a small group of people from the US diplomatic mission were reportedly transported to Toussaint Louverture International Airport in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and flown home by a US charter airline. Since former president Jovenel Moïse’s assassination in July 2021, rising lawlessness, and a deepening economic

and political crisis, has enabled street gangs to seize control of most of Port-au-Prince, and other cities like Cap-Haitien, Port-De-Paix and Gonaïves, resulting in an increasingly hostile operating environment for aid workers, foreign nationals and locals alike.

Haiti is facing a complex series of persistent operational challenges for those on the ground. Below we draw out some of the manifold threats in the country to showcase why a comprehensive resolution is likely to remain a distant prospect.



Aid workers under attack

Ensuing skirmishes and abductions between rival gangs, community militias, and security forces continue to place aid workers and hospitals in particular under frequent and direct threats of violence. Due to their necessary presence in high-risk areas, NGOs like the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) remain severely exposed to attacks. In July 2023, MSF suspended operations at its Tabarre hospital in Port-au-

Prince after gunmen stormed the facility to kidnap a suspected gang member in one of the clinic’s operating rooms. In January, the organisation suspended assistance to a hospital in Carrefour, while in June 2021, its emergency clinic in the Martissant neighbourhood permanently closed as fighting between gangs intensified. In August, pop-up clinics and local aid groups backed by the IRC also closed operations due to hostile conditions.



Foreign intervention to restore order?

Some local non-profits like the Centre d'analyse et de recherche en droits de l'homme (CARDH) claim that lynchings and burnings of suspected gang members by growing vigilante militias has impacted gang numbers and gang-controlled territory. But, considering the precedent for self-defence militias to perpetuate the violence they seek to counter, as in Mexico and Brazil, there is the potential for growing vigilante justice to stoke conflict with gangs, exacerbating existing violence and social tensions.

In this context, the international community, led by the US and most recently Kenya, have deliberated on sending a multinational force

to aid the government in addressing insecurity. However, considering the unrest that occurred when the idea of a US-led military support force was first floated in 2022, there is significant potential that a misstep in the course of such a move will stoke further anti-US sentiment, rendering the operating environment even more hostile to aid workers in the longer term. Past peacekeeping and humanitarian missions to Haiti, for example in the aftermath of the deadly earthquake in 2010, have been subject to some scrutiny, with both aid workers and peacekeepers accused of abuses during deployments.



Insecurity drives kidnap threat for foreign nationals

Opportunities for obtaining high ransoms have encouraged kidnapers to target foreign nationals. For example, in July 2023, armed men kidnapped a US nurse and her daughter from her aid organisation’s Port-au-Prince compound and demanded a USD one million ransom. The nurse and her daughter were released under unspecified circumstances. In another incident in March 2023, gunmen targeted a bus to kidnap a US couple after spotting their luggage on board. The couple was released in April following the payment of a USD 400,000 ransom.

72%

INCREASE IN TOTAL KIDNAP CASES BETWEEN JANUARY AND JUNE 2023, COMPARED TO 2022

HAITI IS AMONG THE **top 10**

COUNTRIES FOR VIOLENT ATTACKS AGAINST AID WORKERS



As the political, socio-economic, and security situation in Haiti worsens, self-evacuation could become more difficult, but also increasingly necessary.”



Evacuation challenges

For those not part of diplomatic missions, governmental assistance is not guaranteed, and sheltering in place for prolonged periods can become unfeasible as supplies dwindle, or if there is an urgent need for medical attention.

But evacuating independently can be equally challenging; US authorities have cautioned that violence is exacerbating existing infrastructural weaknesses, including damage from the 2021 earthquake. Fighting has hampered movement within the capital, and with commercial flights quickly filling up, significant delays to air travel are expected in the coming weeks and months. Unrest and violence also regularly disrupts airport access.

In more remote areas of the country, transportation is limited due to poor infrastructure, while road travel to the capital remains unsafe. In the unrest following the 2021 earthquake, for example, gangs and desperate communities attacked and looted aid convoys transporting supplies. GKB





S-RM is a global intelligence and cyber security consultancy

Founded in **2005**, we have **400+** practitioners spanning **nine international offices**, serving world class organisations across all regions and major sectors.

The information provided to you in this document is confidential and prepared for your sole use. It must not be copied (in whole or in part) or used for any purpose other than to evaluate its contents. No representation or warranty, express or implied, is or will be made and no responsibility or liability is or will be accepted by S-RM, or by any of its respective officers, employees or agents in relation to the accuracy or completeness of this document and any such liability is expressly disclaimed. In particular, but without limitation, no representation or warranty is given as to the reasonableness of suggestions as to future conduct contained in this document. Information herein is provided by S-RM Intelligence and Risk Consulting Ltd on our standard terms of business as disclosed to you or as otherwise made available on request. This information is provided to you in good faith to assist you in mitigating risks which could arise. No implied or express warranty against risk, changes in circumstances or other unforeseen events is or can be provided. S-RM Intelligence and Risk Consulting Ltd accepts no liability for any loss from relying on information contained in the report. S-RM Intelligence and Risk Consulting Ltd is not authorised to provide regulatory advice. S-RM Intelligence and Risk Consulting Ltd is registered in England with Number 05408866 with its registered office at: Beaufort House, 15 St Botolph Street, London, EC3A 7DT, UK.

hello@s-rminform.com | www.s-rminform.com