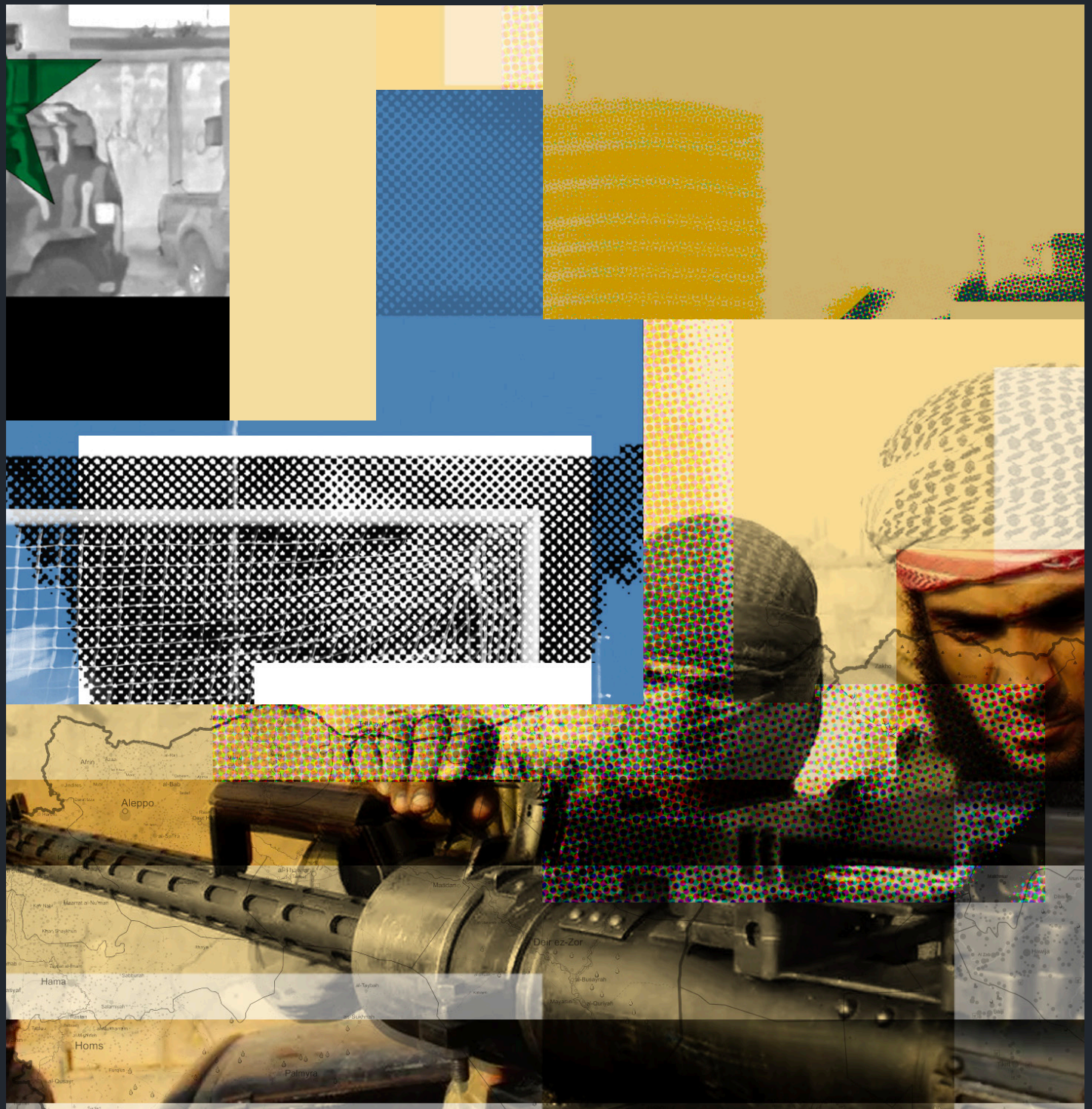




Ecuador, Bangladesh, Syria
May 2025

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The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Ecuador

10 Kidnap-For-Ransom

10 official kidnap-for-ransom cases
recorded between January and March 2025

1,728 Cases of Disappearances

1,728 cases of disappearances
recorded between January and March
2025

Footballer Kidnapped

In April, four armed assailants kidnapped
a first division footballer's family and
demanded a \$500,000 ransom



Analysis

Criminal gangs continue to drive violent crime across Ecuador, epicentred in Guayaquil. President Noboa has responded with aggressive countermeasures, including military partnerships and constitutional reforms, to intensify pressure on gangs despite rising risks to civilians.

The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Ecuador

Following a crime spike at the start of 2024, incumbent President Daniel Noboa implemented a series of states of emergency designed to counter the spread of gang violence. These included the suspension of select civil liberties and the deployment of soldiers onto Ecuador's streets which contributed to a 13% reduction in the national homicide figures relative to 2023. National security forces also captured many high-profile gang leaders, including the leader of the prominent Los Lobos group.



The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



Ecuador

However, these achievements have not substantially curbed Ecuador's high violent crime rates in 2025. According to local officials, 780 homicides occurred in January, making it one of the country's bloodiest months on record, while there were over 1,728 cases of disappearances between January and March. Criminal gangs remain a serious threat to civilian safety, particularly in coastal and jungle areas. The city of Guayaquil and its surroundings have been the epicentre of this activity; out of the 10 official cases of kidnap-or-ransom recorded in the first three months of 2025, seven were conducted in Guayaquil.



The Americas

Mexico and Latin America



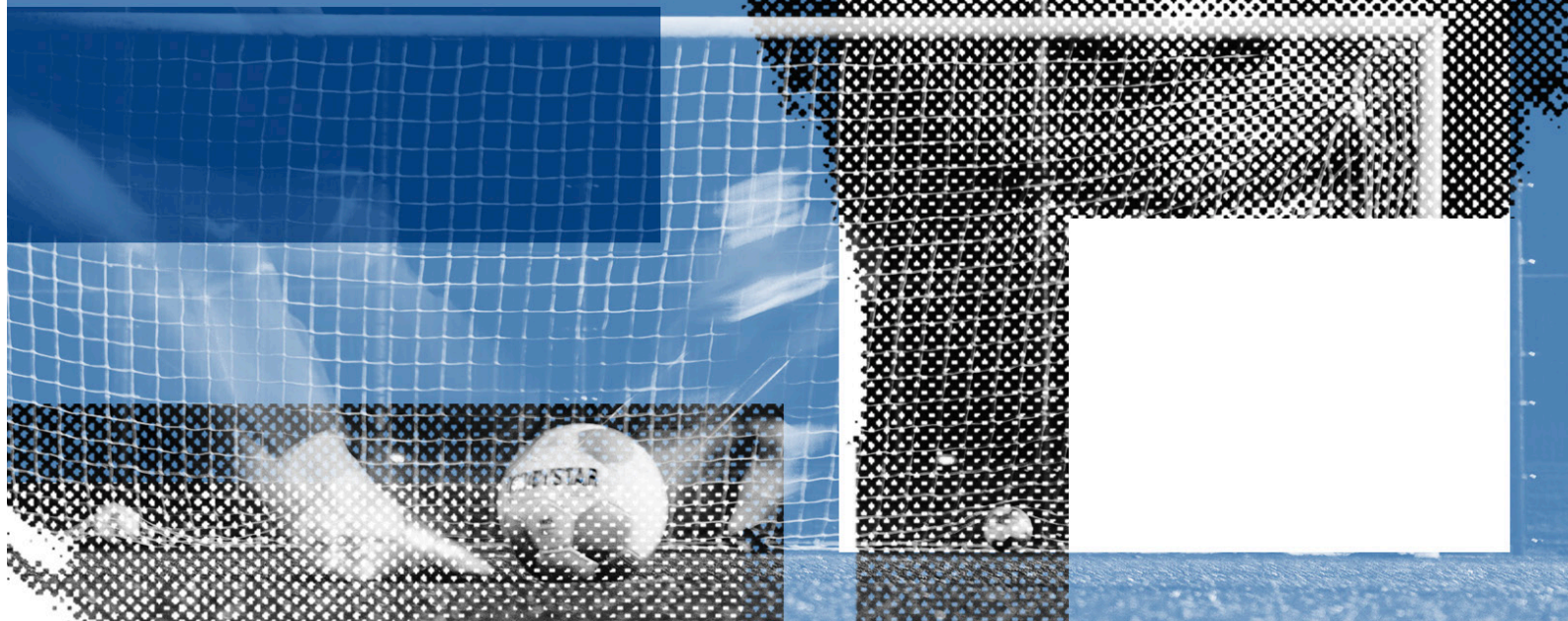
Ecuador

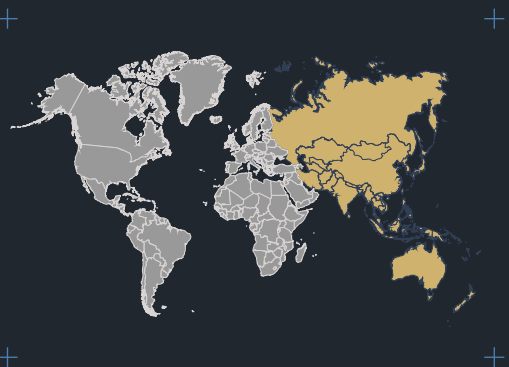
A high-profile KRE incident occurred in April in Guayaquil involving the family of first division footballer Jackson Rodríguez. Four armed criminals stormed his house at night, kidnapping his wife and son, who were held by the criminals for several days as they demanded a \$500,000 ransom. While the family refused to pay, police located and rescued the victims in the “El Fortín” neighbourhood of Guayaquil, one of the most notorious in the city. In March, 22 people were massacred there during a gang-related incident and

it is known to play host to a number of other violent criminal activities.

This persistent violence in Guayaquil prompted President Noboa to issue a new state of emergency in Guayas Province just days before the second round of voting for the presidential elections. Noboa’s successful reelection provided his government with a mandate to continue an aggressive strategy in countering gang violence, one which he has promised to escalate. In March, the Ecuadorian president signed a strategic partnership with American

private military contractors Blackwater, and he also has designs on altering the constitution to allow for the introduction of foreign national military forces on the ground in Ecuador, which may include the United States. This strategy could allow for more concerted pressure to be applied against gangs in central areas, such as Quito, although incursions into gang heartlands both in Guayaquil and more rural areas are expected to be met with renewed violence targeting both security forces and local civilians alike.





Bangladesh

266 Kidnappings

Official Bangladesh police data reported there have been 266 kidnappings through Q1 between January and March, 2025. This represented an 83% increase compared to the same time period in 2024.

Rohingya Targeted

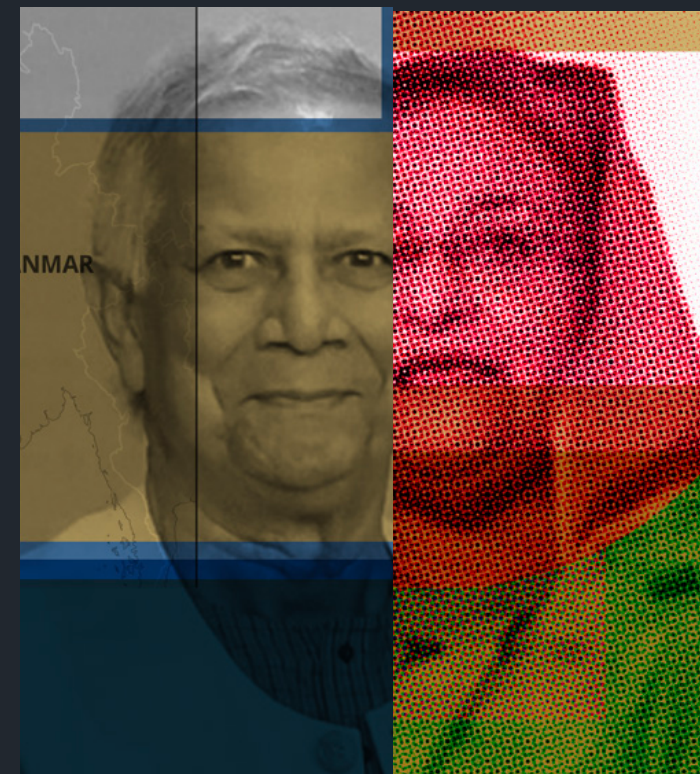
In August 2024, 200 Rohingya crossing the Naf river into Bangladesh were deliberately targeted by explosive drones and artillery fire.

Arakan Army

In June, 2024, ten Bangladeshi fishermen were kidnapped by Burmese Arakan Army militants. The incident occurred in the Ukhiya area along the Naf River.

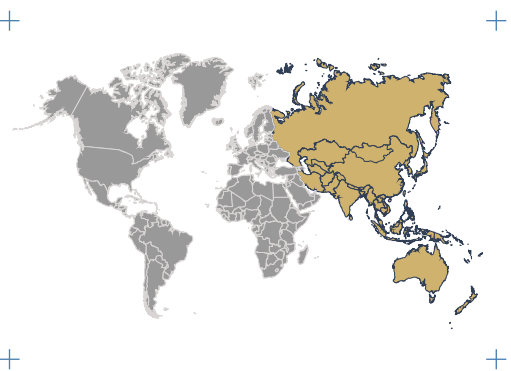
1,400 Fatalities

In August 2024, former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was removed from office amidst nationwide violent protests, resulting in an estimated 1400 fatalities and over 11,000 arrests.



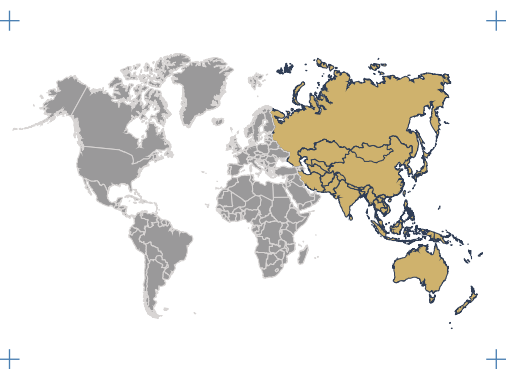
Analysis

Bangladesh has seen a sharp rise in kidnappings as ongoing political instability, civil unrest, and cross-border militant activity create conditions that enable opportunistic and organised kidnappings, despite government crackdowns.



Bangladesh

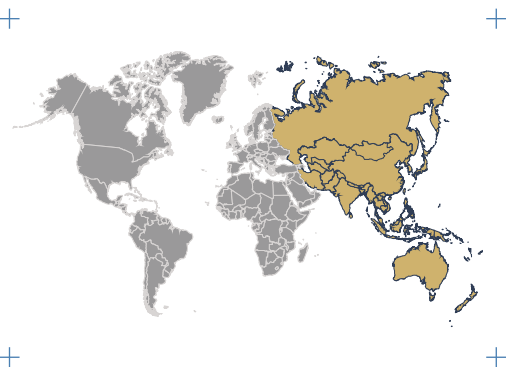
Bangladesh continues to experience significant instability following violent student protests in July 2024 which led to the removal of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, an estimated 1400 fatalities, thousands of casualties, and over 10,000 arrests. Domestic instability is fueling fears of an uptick in criminality including kidnapping for ransom. Political instability caused by the regime change, civil unrest, persistent economic issues, and the neighbouring conflict in Myanmar have compounded domestic challenges, resulting in an 83% increase in police-recorded kidnappings between Q1 o 2024 and Q1 o 2025. Kidnappings in Bangladesh are usually financially motivated, targeting local business owners, professionals, or the children of wealthy families. Although expatriates are infrequently targeted, they remain at risk, particularly if working with NGOs or in other high-visibility sectors. In many cases, kidnappings are carried out by organised criminal groups, Burmese militants, or corrupt law enforcement. Ransoms are typically demanded in cash and settled discreetly, with minimal involvement from authorities due to distrust in police effectiveness or fear of reprisal.



Bangladesh
NEPAL
BHUTAN
BANGLADESH
MYANMAR
Bay of Bengal

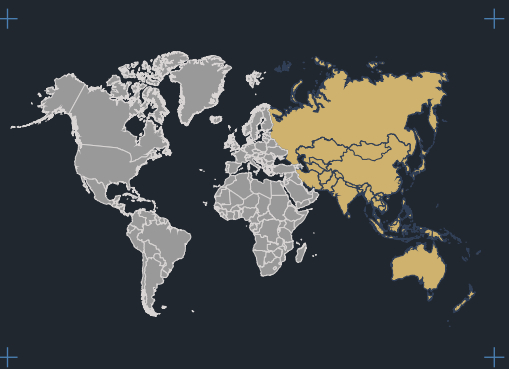
In response to escalating crime rates, the interim government, led by Professor Muhammad Yunus, has implemented several measures aimed at restoring law and order. One of the most notable initiatives is "Operation Devil Hunt", launched in February 2025. This nationwide crackdown targeted criminal gangs and individuals allegedly linked to the

previous regime, resulting in the arrest of over 8,600 suspects within two weeks. The operation aimed to dismantle organised crime networks and reassert governmental control over security matters. Despite these efforts, law enforcement officials continue to record high levels of criminality; 266 kidnappings were reported in Q1 of 2025, and in April 2025 88 incidents were detailed.



Bangladesh

So far in 2025, Urban centres such as Dhaka have hosted over 20% of the nation's kidnappings and we assess foreign nationals throughout Bangladesh remain at risk. Although incidents of foreign national kidnappings are uncommon, incidents of theft and robbery highlight opportunistic targeting due to a perceived or visible affluence. The U.S. State Department's level three travel advisory currently advises travellers to reconsider travel to Bangladesh due to high risks of crime. It is best to avoid displays of affluence or posting about high-profile visits to the country as they may attract criminal attention. Furthermore, in remote and border regions, criminal and political actors may possess a greater capacity for kidnapping for ransom operations leading to revised travel plans.



Syria

72% Perpetrated by SDF

72% of OSINT reported kidnapping incidents this year were perpetrated by the Syrian Democratic Forces.

87 Civilians

As of February 17th, a local human rights organisation in Afrin, reported the Syrian National Army abducted 87 civilians since the start of 2025, many during home raids that were also accompanied by looting.

1,093 Killed

An estimated 1093 civilians were killed during four days of sectarian violence from March 6 to 10.

Level 4 Do Not Travel

The U.S. State Department advises against all travel to Syria, citing risks of terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping, hostage taking, armed conflict, and unjust detention.



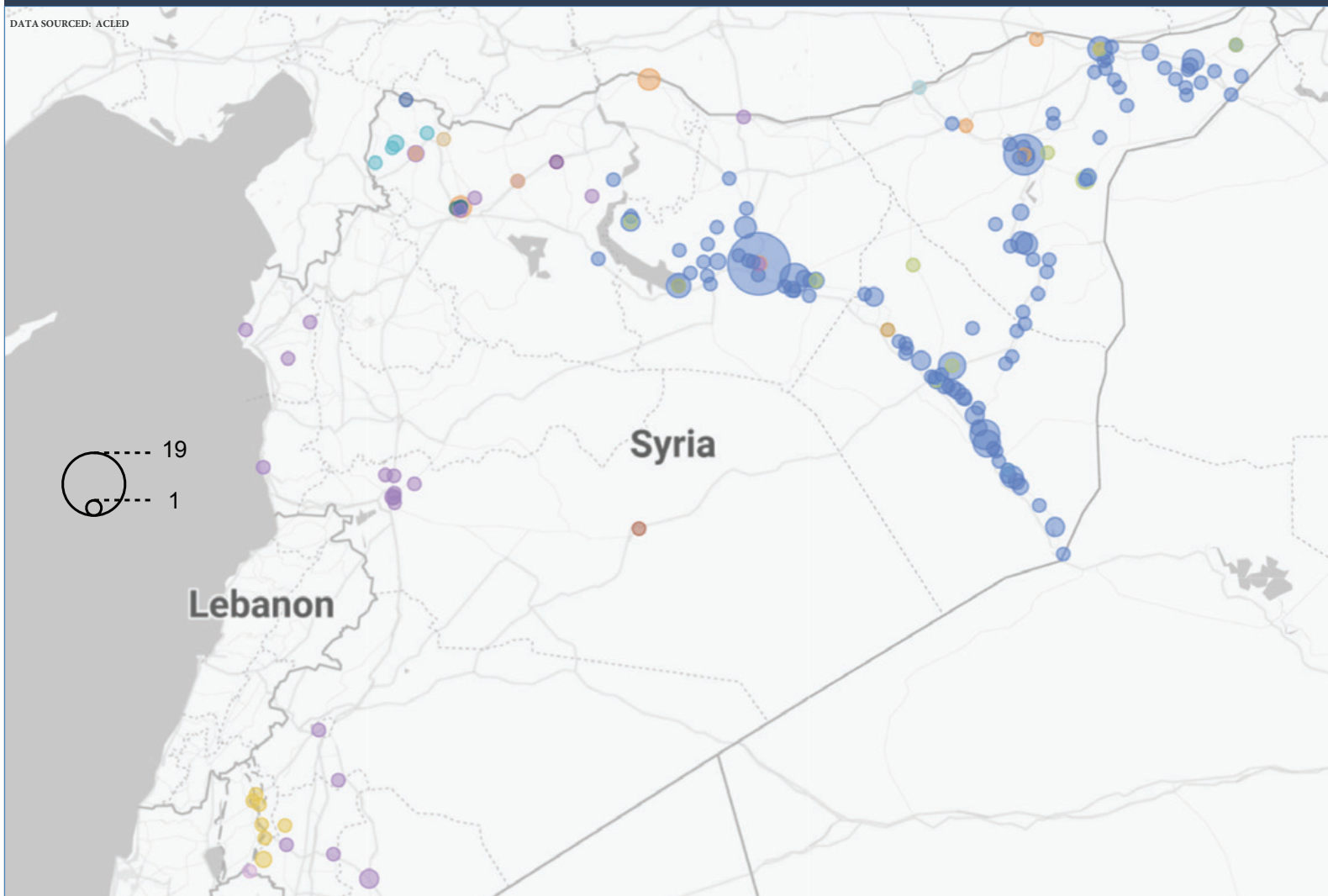
Analysis

An array of Armed groups across Syria continue to exploit the country's fragmented post-war landscape. The collapse of state institutions, entrenched sectarian tensions, and unchecked militia activity fuel a persistent risk of kidnapping for both political and financial gain.



Syria Kidnap Incidents January- April 2025

DATA SOURCED: ACLED



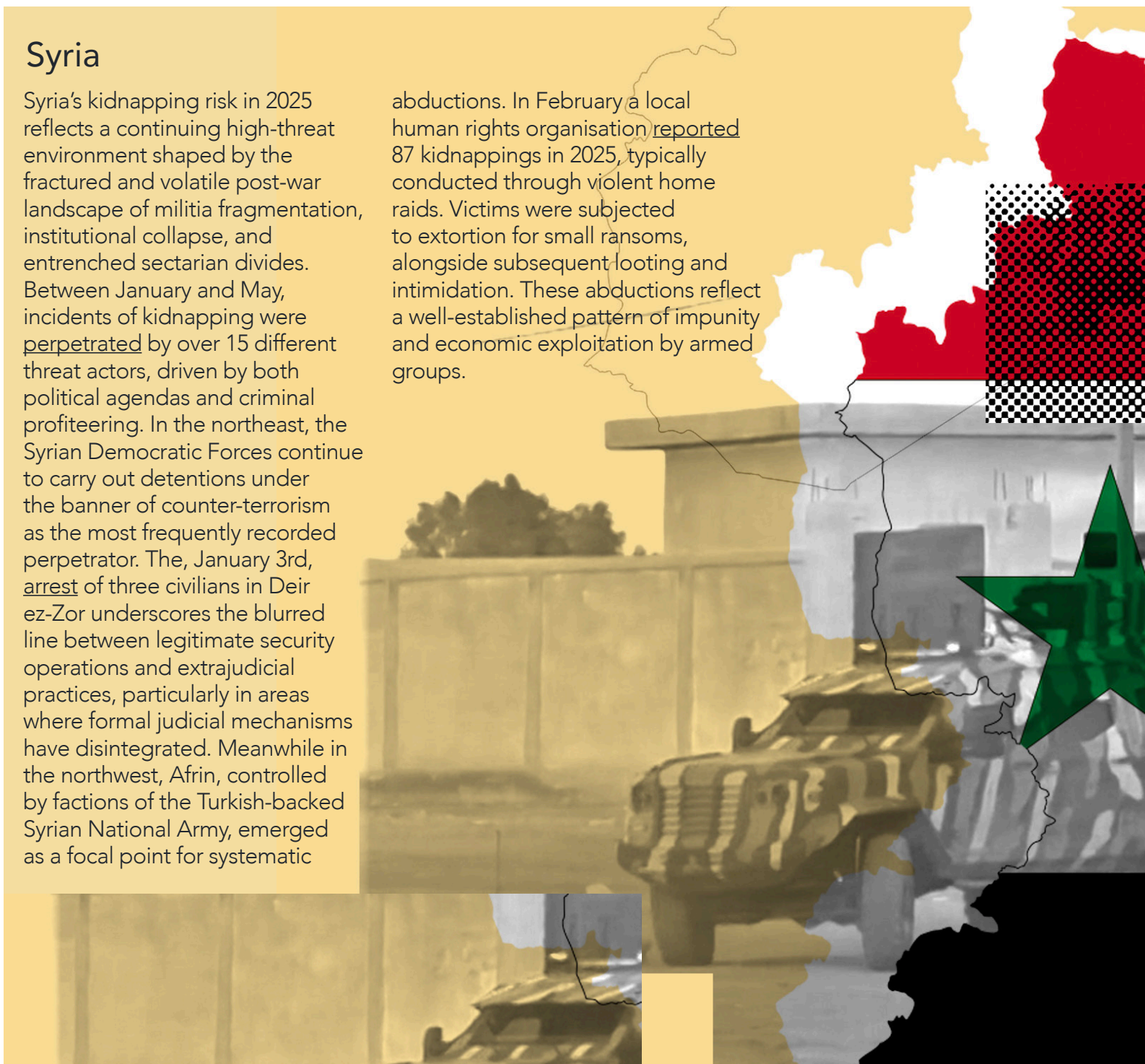
Middle East



Syria

Syria's kidnapping risk in 2025 reflects a continuing high-threat environment shaped by the fractured and volatile post-war landscape of militia fragmentation, institutional collapse, and entrenched sectarian divides. Between January and May, incidents of kidnapping were perpetrated by over 15 different threat actors, driven by both political agendas and criminal profiteering. In the northeast, the Syrian Democratic Forces continue to carry out detentions under the banner of counter-terrorism as the most frequently recorded perpetrator. The, January 3rd, arrest of three civilians in Deir ez-Zor underscores the blurred line between legitimate security operations and extrajudicial practices, particularly in areas where formal judicial mechanisms have disintegrated. Meanwhile in the northwest, Afrin, controlled by factions of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army, emerged as a focal point for systematic

abductions. In February a local human rights organisation reported 87 kidnappings in 2025, typically conducted through violent home raids. Victims were subjected to extortion for small ransoms, alongside subsequent looting and intimidation. These abductions reflect a well-established pattern of impunity and economic exploitation by armed groups.



Middle East



Syria

Compounding this volatility is the persistence of sectarian targeting. Tensions escalated after pro-Assad forces conducted coordinated attacks on March 6, resulting in four subsequent days of reprisal killings and violence. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights assessed the civilian death toll as high as 1,093, which is comparable with the offensive of the Assad regime on rural Damascus in February and March of 2018. These attacks raised fears of a renewed cycle of communal violence. In April, in Tartus and Latakia continued abductions and executions of Alawite and Shiite women, acts widely blamed on jihadist factions or sectarian militias, were reported by local NGOs. The fragmentation of armed actors blurs the lines between state and militia forces, promoting a lack of accountability and lawlessness, fuelling a permissive environment for kidnapping. Local media reports a sharp rise in civilian and aid worker disappearances, illustrating the continuing high risk of political violence and kidnapping.

Middle East



Syria

The enduring presence of Islamic State (ISIS) actors also presents significant risks. Though territorially dismantled, the group maintains sleeper cells and operations, especially in the Badia desert and along the Iraq border. On February 26, suspected ISIS members conducted a raid and kidnapping in the Homs countryside. Recent assessments by Kurdish officials

warn the collapse of detention facilities following the toppling of the Assad regime could prompt a renewed wave of terrorist insurgency.

The convergence of sectarian violence and militant opportunism has entrenched kidnapping as both a governance tactic and an economic benefit. With the continuing fluid political environment

and fragmented territorial control, the risk of kidnapping incidents remains widespread and especially acute for minorities, journalists, and individuals perceived as collaborators. Absent sustained governance stability, Syria's post-war environment continues to retain significant risks, leaving anyone present exposed to incidents of kidnapping and political violence.





Propriety Information

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For more information on our Kidnap, Ransom, Extortion and Piracy capabilities please contact our Crisis Management Team at cmt@sps-global.com