

Risk Assessment report for VIP visit
to Damascus, Syria.

This report is part of the Global
Security Management System

(TEST REPORT – UNRESTRICTED)

RISK ASSESSMENT

VIP travel to Damascus
April 2018

Grey International

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The risks associated with travel to Syria have been dramatically heightened by the continuing civil conflict, which entails widespread attacks by armed opposition elements on government and military targets, mass-casualty bombings and large-scale military operations by government forces. Staff face both direct and indirect risks as a consequence of the conflict, incidental as a result of military operations by both sides, and targeted due to increases in crime, kidnapping and attacks on foreign diplomatic interests.

The potential exists for the status of international border crossings to change with little notice. The authorities periodically restrict the availability of communications options, including mobile phone and the internet, and essential services with no notice.

Note: Due to the requested 3-page format, this report is a summarized version of the standard Risk Assessment. Only cursory information from the 'Context Assessment', 'Detailed Threat Assessment' and 'Risk Mitigation Plan' is included. CLIENT Damascus office and accommodation Facility Risk Assessment should be considered supplementary to the decision-making process.

BLUFF (Bottom Line Up Front)

All travel to Damascus is currently risky. Significant mitigating and control measures should be implemented in order to manage the risk. *All non-essential travel to Damascus is discouraged.*

RISK RATING

The risk has been evaluated using a five-level risk matrix (indicated below).

The current overall risk level for traveling to Damascus is **CRITICAL (LVL. 4)**

Green	Yellow	Amber	Red	Black
Low	Medium	High	Critical	Extreme

This Risk Level is based on current security, health, and safety risks in Syria, specifically the areas covering Damascus and route to the Lebanese border (Masnaa. DMS [33° 42' 10.32"N, 35° 55' 26.57"E](#)).

Given the fluidity of the environment, the threat level can change at any time.

The threats are categorized in seven groups: **Armed Conflict, Terrorism, Crime, Civil Unrest, Hazards, Health, Other.**

ARMED CONFLICT **EXTREME**

Although the Syrian military possesses considerable superiority in terms of numbers and equipment, rebel coalitions such as the Free Syrian Army and the Islamic Front, as well as JAN and IS, continue to evolve.

The threat of missile and air strikes by external actors has increased as of late.

Israel:

Israel regularly carries out air strikes on Syrian army depots, as well as shipments allegedly destined for the Lebanon-based Hezbollah organization.

Other:

France, UK and USA are considering a military response to the recent use (allegedly) of chemical weapons in Douma, a suburb of Damascus on April 7, 2018 by the Syrian regime.

Political situation:

Armed conflict is set to continue as international negotiations do not represent fighters on the ground and regional and international backers of Assad are unlikely to withdraw their support.

TERRORISM **CRITICAL**

Terrorism risk in Syria has significantly increased with the advent of domestic conflict in the country.

A series of mass-casualty bombings have targeted security force and government interests in Damascus and Aleppo.

The use of chemical agents by several actors is well documented and constitutes a significant threat.

CRIME **HIGH**

The preoccupation of the security forces with suppressing rebellion, rising socio-economic difficulties, and the open civil conflict makes crime, including violent crime, a very serious risk for any foreign visitors.

Kidnapping:

The protracted civil conflict has exacerbated the risk of kidnapping in the country, a trend that is likely to continue. Numerous foreign journalists and aid workers have been seized.

Women:

Prior to the unrest, Syria was identified as a cosmopolitan society by regional standards, with a history of secular government. Gender based crime amongst foreigners is rare, but women have reported being harassed in markets and on public transport

Rule of law:

Death penalty is imposed for drug trafficking, terrorism or membership of Muslim Brotherhood.

Corruption:

Bribery is common across various levels of the bureaucracy, including street-level security forces and senior members of the army and government.

CIVIL UNREST **HIGH**

As the situation has escalated in civil warfare, demonstrations have waned and have been replaced by outright armed conflict between the military, rebels and various hardline extremist groups.

HAZARDS **HIGH**

Syria lies in a seismically active zone and hence is prone earthquakes. Further, sand and dust storms are not uncommon.

Traffic:

Driving in Syria, especially on highways is hazardous and can be outright dangerous.

Infrastructure:

The conflict – and underinvestment beforehand – have left infrastructure in a poor state. Power, water and fuel shortages are common. A heavy security-force presence throughout the country, roadblocks set up by the military or by armed

groups, and attacks on routes leading to border crossings cause significant travel disruption. The country's security situation has made overland border crossings insecure, and most are subject to periodic short-notice closures.

Emergency Services:

Since the outbreak of hostilities, the emergency services have been overwhelmed. They are underfunded and as a result have very limited response capacity. Ambulance and fire services are not dependable.

HEALTH **MEDIUM**

Due to the current situation, hospitals and emergency rooms are not functioning at full capacity. City-wide sanitation infrastructure has been compromised resulting in disease outbreaks, especially in the summer, that is otherwise routinely avoided.

OTHER **HIGH**

Telephone calls from both mobile (cellular) telephones and landlines are routinely monitored by the authorities. Emails are also frequently monitored, raising questions about the security of sensitive business information e.g. travel plans.

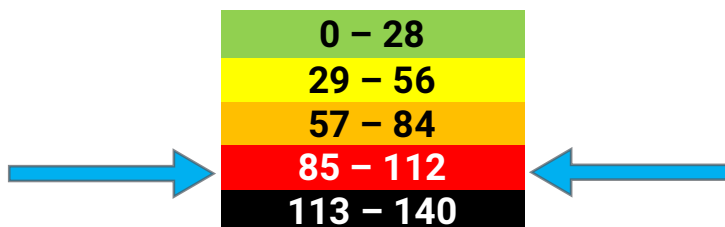
LEBANON

The situation in Beirut and the relevant area leading to the Syrian border (Highway to Damascus) on the Lebanese side is currently permissive. Exercise caution and utilize local drivers. Poor road conditions and less than safe traffic patterns in general is currently the most significant risk.

RISK MATRIX

LIKELIHOOD	IMPACT					
		Death. Loss of programs and projects. Complete destruction, total loss of assets	Serious Injury. Severe disruption to programs. Major destruction of assets	Non-life-threatening injury. High Stress. Some program disruptions. Loss or damage to assets	Minor Injuries. Minimal delays to Programs. Some loss or damage to assets	No injuries. No delays. Simple First Aid
	Imminent	Extreme	Critical	High	Medium	Low
	Very Likely	Critical	High	High	Medium	Low
	Likely	High	High	Medium	Negligible	Negligible
	Moderately Likely	Medium	Medium	Low	Negligible	Negligible
	Unlikely	Low	Low	Negligible	Negligible	No Risk

Assessment Score: **87**



METHODOLOGY

Each threat identified in any of the seven categories: 'Armed Conflict', 'Terrorism', 'Crime', 'Civil Unrest', 'Hazards', 'Health' and 'Other' is assessed through the Risk Matrix (see above). For a more nuanced and quantitatively result we assign a numerical value to the result.

Example: A simple papercut is an expected incident in an office setting, it is usually easily treated with a Band-Aid. A scissor-cut sometimes needs surgical stitches. Both are in the same category but assigned a different value.

Armed Conflict																				Considerations for selecting score. <ul style="list-style-type: none">History of the conflictCurrent status of conflictWeapons systemsSusceptibility to chemical weaponsEvacuation optionsHibernation options
Low				Medium				High				Critical				Extreme				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Note: Armed conflict is currently the greatest risk in Damascus. Several sides in the conflict retain capability and intent on continuing hostilities. The use of chemical weapons is a major concern. External forces are likely to engage in the conflict in the near future, most likely with targeted missile strikes.																				
Terrorism																				Considerations for selecting score. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Terrorism in DamascusOrganization's public visibility and INGO statusCapability of terrorist organizations in SyriaClient activityHost government ability to protect the organization
Low				Medium				High				Critical				Extreme				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Note: There is overlapping aspects between terrorism, crime and civil unrest. Regardless of definition, there is a clear and present danger of terrorist activities including the use of chemical agents. Damascus is a target-rich environment, it is not likely that CLIENT is specifically targeted, however, it is considered likely that all foreign interests are considered a valid target by terrorist organizations.																				
Crime																				Considerations for selecting score. <ul style="list-style-type: none">General uptake in crimeCapacity of law enforcementValue of assetsStaff exposureAbility of local security providerEmergency services
Low				Medium				High				Critical				Extreme				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Note: As mentioned, there is some overlap with other categories. As the conflict carries on, the stress on law enforcement resources has greatly demised the ability to prevent or investigate crimes. The ongoing situation is leading some to desperation and willingness to engage in criminal behavior.																				
Civil Unrest																				Considerations for selecting score. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Government control outside DamascusGovernment ability to secure the route to LebanonCapability of various factions
Low				Medium				High				Critical				Extreme				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Note: The government ongoing efforts to control Damascus has led to contested areas in the suburbs and along the main route to Lebanon																				
Hazards																				Considerations for selecting score. <ul style="list-style-type: none">TrafficInfrastructureAmbulance ServicesFire ServicesFire caused by indirect fire
Low				Medium				High				Critical				Extreme				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Note: The lack of organized response to an incident, or fire, increases the risk significantly. Otherwise avoidable injuries and casualties due to accidents, fire, water supply and waste management issues is a significant issue.																				
Health																				Considerations for selecting score. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Lack of healthcare facilitiesHistory of disease outbreaksPrevalence of fake medicationStatus of functional hospitals
Low				Medium				High				Critical				Extreme				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Note: Health and available healthcare is not optimal. Doctors and hospital staff are often not available of lack necessary training. Pharmacies often "unknowingly" sell counterfeit pharmaceuticals that may not work or in worst case are dangerous.																				
Other																				Considerations for selecting score. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Government technical abilityHistory of surveillanceCapability of various other actors
Low				Medium				High				Critical				Extreme				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Note: The government ongoing efforts to monitor the international community is largely successful. The government's ability to safeguard collected date is doubtful. It is considered likely that other actors can gain access to the same data, including movement plans.																				