



# KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

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Whether you plan to travel as a congregation, with an organization or as an individual, here are some basic safety principles to keep in mind as you prepare.

- 1 Brief your teams, including every volunteer, on contingency plans for various types of emergencies in order to minimize shock and panic.
- 2 Establish private relationships in advance that can be used to quietly arrange shelter or evacuation in a crisis.
- 3 Educate your teams, especially every volunteer, on wise social media usage.
- 4 Ensure that teams traveling to certain areas have a comprehensive travel insurance plan that includes both medical and geopolitical evacuation coverage.\*
- 5 If you or your congregation has a trip planned to an area that has a heightened security level, consider the following when deciding if you should postpone:

**Overland Travel Safety:** Are protesters blocking the roads and restricting travel between cities or to the airport? Are the roads reported as clear or blocked? If they are reported as clear, how long has that been the case? Days? Weeks?

**Urban Travel Safety:** Are protesters blocking city streets? Is the government using physical response (tear gas, pepper spray, rubber bullets, live ammunition) against protesters or those manning roadblocks? Are protests in the immediate area deteriorating into looting, vandalism, or acts of arson? If protests and unrest are reported as finished, how long has that been the case? Days? Weeks?

**Telephonic Communication:** Will you need to use land lines while you are in the country? If so, are they operating? Are mobile phone providers operating? Is normal access to voice and SMS text available? Are international phone calls possible using mobile or land lines? Is telephonic communication being intentionally limited or shuttered?

**Data:** Is the internet operating? Has the internet been intentionally shut down? Is data available on mobile devices? Is the government or other hostile forces intentionally blocking VOIP calls, data messaging, or other communication apps that allow for in-country or international communication?

**Foodstuffs:** Are the markets open and are basic necessities stocked and available? Is food being rationed? Is there significant price gouging going on, making key food stocks prohibitive?

\* The LCMS Office of International Mission (OIM) strongly recommends purchasing insurance that will assist with medical evacuations AND evacuations due to geopolitical unrest. The OIM purchases insurance from Mission Trip Insurance at [missiontripinsurance.com](http://missiontripinsurance.com). If you have a trip planned, you should research mission trip insurance as well as check your own health and life insurance policies to see if there are restrictions connected with certain types of travel.

# RESOURCES

## U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT

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**GENERAL PLANNING:** [travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html)

**TRAVEL ADVISORY AWARENESS:** [travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html)

- **Read** the safety and security section on the **country information page**.
- **Visit** the website for **Travel to High-Risk Areas**.
- **Enroll** in the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** to receive alerts and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- **Follow** the U.S. Department of State on Facebook, [facebook.com/travelgov](https://facebook.com/travelgov) and Twitter, [twitter.com/travelgov](https://twitter.com/travelgov).

You may inform the U.S. Department of State of U.S. citizens in areas where security levels have been raised:

- **Visit** **Task Force Alert** to see active events.
- **Email** via the active event area and provide as much information as possible (at a minimum, please provide full name, gender and last known location within country).
- **Call** 1-888-407-4747 (from the U.S. and Canada), +1-202-501-4444 (from overseas).

## U.S. EMBASSIES

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[usembassy.gov](http://usembassy.gov)

## CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL

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**GENERAL PLANNING**, including what vaccines are needed for your trip: [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel)

- **Review** the country page for information about the location you will be visiting, including what vaccines are required and/or recommended.
- **Check** to see if there are any current Travel Notices for the country you will be visiting: [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices)

*The information above has been compiled from a variety of public and private sources, including Concilium, a Christian security training, analysis and consulting organization.*