

Security Briefs 058 – Risk Assessment Part 3

Script

Threats Are Not All the Same

Welcome back to Security Briefs and our series on Risk Assessment.

Today we focus on threats. When most people hear that word, their mind goes immediately to violence — crime, terrorism, kidnapping. Those are real. But they are a narrow slice of what global workers actually face.

The Threat Landscape

Let me walk through several categories. These are not all the areas of the threat landscape, but they will help us broaden our understanding of threats.

Political and governmental threats include civil unrest, regime instability, surveillance, visa revocations, and the criminalization of ministry activity. These often develop slowly and are easy to miss until they become urgent.

Legal and administrative threats are closely related — arrest, deportation, asset seizure, or loss of legal status due to changing regulations, especially in restrictive-access contexts.

Crime includes theft, robbery, carjacking, assault, kidnapping, and extortion. But note that some contexts have high corruption and little violent crime, while others are the reverse. Those are different environments requiring different responses.

Health threats — disease, poor emergency care, unreliable medication, pollution — are consistently underestimated. Sometimes the greatest danger is not a hostile person, but the absence of medical care after an accident.

Natural disasters, social and cultural hostility, digital threats, and travel and transit dangers round out the picture. Travel deserves special mention: road accidents are statistically among the leading causes of injury and death for global workers. We often think of travel as the safe part. It frequently is not.

And finally — family and personal stress, and ministry-related threats. In some contexts, the act of sharing faith or discipling believers creates legal or social exposure. The ministry itself is the threat vector. That requires clear-eyed assessment, not denial.

Why This Matters

Research on why missionaries leave the field before their time consistently shows the most common causes are not violence or kidnapping. They are health crises, family breakdown, burnout, and interpersonal conflict — threats a thoughtful assessment could have identified early.

Good risk assessment begins with seeing what is actually there. Not what we fear. Not what someone told us ten years ago. What is present now. This takes humility — and it takes local input. A national believer often sees what a foreign worker does not.

To sum up: threats are not all the same. They may be political, criminal, health-related, environmental, legal, social, digital, or ministry-related. Seeing the full landscape helps us avoid both panic and denial.

Now you know.

Next time, we will talk about vulnerability and why the same threat affects different people in different ways.

Episode Summary

This episode broadens the listener's understanding of threats beyond crime and terrorism. It identifies multiple categories of threat that may affect global workers and encourages honest observation without fear or suspicion.