***As part of your application for YLS-supported international research travel to a country deemed “high-risk” by the US State Department and/or the CDC, or “extreme-risk” by ISOS, you must complete a detailed plan and risk assessment, known as a “security protocol.” You can fill this information in the appropriate sections on the application form, or attach it separately as a word or pdf file.***

Recognizing that risk is highly contextual and can evolve, this document presents general guidance and resources on risk assessment and mitigation, so that you can tailor your security protocol to the particularities of your proposed project. Should certain matters discuss below not be applicable to your research project, please provide an explanatory note in your security protocol.

1. **Research Purpose and Methodology**

On the application form you are directed to identify the research purpose and methodology of your proposed project. Be as precise as possible:

* What will you be doing? How? Why?
* What is the value of your proposed project?
* Who is involved?
  + Consider risks to all participants (local partners, interviewees, translators/interpreters).
  + If you are interviewing individuals (human subjects), you may have to get prior approval from [Yale’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).](https://your.yale.edu/research-support/human-research/yale-irbs-yale-university-institutional-review-boards)  Not all human subject research requires an IRB. For more information, consult this [decision tree](https://environment.yale.edu/content/documents/00010689/IRB-Decision-Tree.pdf?1516808669); you may also consult with YLS’s [Empirical Research and Assessments Librarian](http://michelle.hudson@yale.edu).

1. **Risk Assessment**

Background research

To begin your background research, you should review reliable resources for the current security situation and the likely risks you may encounter on the ground. Risk will vary depending on the nature of your research**,** especially if your research topic is politically or socially sensitive (in the destination country or elsewhere). Be sure to consider the particularities of your project. Some resources are:

* [US State Department Country Reports](https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/)
* [Human Rights Watch County Reports](https://www.hrw.org/publications)
* [International Crisis Group’s Crisis Watch](https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch)
* [Freedom House](https://freedomhouse.org/reports)
* [Amnesty International Country Reports](https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/)
* [Transparency International Country Reports](https://www.transparency.org/country)
* ISOS travel security https://ogc.yale.edu/travel (You must sign in with your Yale Net ID via the online member center link)

Some of elements that you will want to review are:

* General observance of the rule of law, particularly by the police and other authorities, and towards groups (e.g. ethnic/religious minorities, immigrants, women, LGBTI, disabled).
* Laws/regulations concerning civil society, NGO registration and foreign funding, media.
* Violence directed towards human rights defenders, civil protesters, etc.
* Corruption (esp. in the administration of criminal justice)
* Martial law/state of emergency
* General/sporadic strikes
* National/sectarian/religious holidays
* Sport/political events and demonstrations
* US relations with destination country
* Overall security risks for travelers/US students

This list is non-exhaustive. You should keep your focus on your research project and the way it in which the topic and/or methodology might raise sensitivities, given the overall country situation.

Field Experts

Scholars and practitioners with current first-hand experience in and about you proposed destination—as well as those with expertise on your topic—can provide specific information on risk. Speak with at least three field experts who have done similar research on the ground, within the last few years and/or since a significant political change (which is most recent). Discuss your project with them.

* Some ways to identify field experts are:
  + Through faculty and other students at Yale Law School and University.
  + Human rights researchers
  + Investigative journalists
  + Local in-country NGOs

1. **Safety and Security Measures**

Situation Awareness and General Safety and Health

Yale University, in its [International Toolkit](https://world-toolkit.yale.edu/resources-topic/travel/orientations/grad-prof/safety) highlights issues and areas of concern that you should pay attention to in advance of going to, and while in, the destination county.

Your security protocol should reflect and respond to each of these areas, referring to Yale’s, and any other source of reliable guidance. Issues to cover include:

* [Emergency Preparation](https://world-toolkit.yale.edu/what-do-emergency) **[REVIEW THE INFORMATION IN THIS LINK]**
* Consider planned check-ins with faculty advisor/YLS
* Cash and credit safety management
* Traffic safety (road, local transport)
* Local laws/customs (particularly regarding substance use)
* Observing, documenting, participating in demonstrations
* [Detention](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/emergencies/arrest-detention.html) (e.g. arrests)
* [Crime](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/emergencies/crime.html)  **Make sure to have accessible critical phone numbers and contact information of the appropriate US Embassy,** [ISOS](https://ogc.yale.edu/erm/ISOS), and [Yale University](https://world-toolkit.yale.edu/what-do-emergency)
* Personal/logistical safety

Yale University, in its [International Toolkit](https://world-toolkit.yale.edu/resources-topic/travel/orientations/grad-prof/health) covers general matters related to health and medical care. It also provides [pre-departure precautionary measures](https://world-toolkit.yale.edu/resources-topic/travel/orientations/grad-prof/planning). The [Government of Canada](https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/publications/her-own-way#overseas) provides logistical information tailored for solo female travelers but useful across the gender continuum. Do review information provided in all of these links, and make sure to include your responses to these matters in your security protocol. For additional resources related to logistical safety see:

Information Security

Review your mobile and computing devises and outline the measures you will take to scrub them of any sensitive information. Removing unnecessary confidential data from any device reduces the risk of exposure to anyone gaining access to the information. Examples of data that should be purged (or exceptionally protected) include information that might be considered sensitive by the destination’s government, and information defined as confidential. Likewise, review and audit your social media posts for the same. In addition, outline the steps you will take to ensure that your research is not lost or stolen (e.g. store it in a Yale Box) as well as maintain the privacy and confidentiality of any individual you have interviewed and/or employed. should also consider auditing your social media presence with due regard to the specific context of your research in the destination country.

Some resources include:

* [US Computer Emergency Readiness Team](https://www.us-cert.gov/ncas/tips/ST11-001)
* [Educause’s Security Tips for Traveling Abroad](https://www.educause.edu/focus-areas-and-initiatives/policy-and-security/cybersecurity-program/resources/information-security-guide)

Should you encrypt your data, verify that encryption is lawful in your destination; as laws frequently change consult the US State Department for up-to-date information.

Some resources are:

* [The Wassenaar Arrangement](https://www.wassenaar.org/)
* [Global Partners Digital](https://www.gp-digital.org/world-map-of-encryption/)

Third Party Security

While already mentioned, your research/work may draw attention to individuals with whom you work or otherwise rely upon. In your security protocol identify these third parties and address how you would mitigate any increased risk to them.

* Partner/Host organizations
  + Who will you be working with in-country? Are they nationals of that country or international?
  + What is their respective experience with your research topic, and in this given context?
  + If this research project involves additional people (colleagues from YLS or other schools), what is the “chain of command” in terms of decision making (especially in crisis situations)?
    - What is your logistical plan if separated (meeting points, routine check-ins)?
  + If you are (or considered to be) part of the partner/host organization, what is their security and evacuation protocol?
  + Have you discussed possible risks with your partner organization (or vice versa)?
  + Do you and your partners (however defined) have a shared sense of purpose for the travel and risk tolerance? How do you know?
* Interpreters/translators
  + Will you need such services?
  + How will you find them?
  + How will you ensure their competence?
  + How will you assure their confidentiality?
* Human subjects/Interviewees (see previous IRB discussion)
  + Will you be interviewing anyone?
  + What risks or consequences might they face?
    - How have you come to this determination?
  + How will you mitigate those risks?
  + How will you inform interviewees of the possible risks?
  + How will you obtain and document informed consent?
  + How will you assure the privacy and confidentiality of the interviewees?