



Navigating Conflict:

What ACLED's 2025 Index and 2026 Watchlist Mean for Humanitarian Action

Conflict Index & 2026 Watchlist. (2025). ACLED Conflict Index. Retrieved December 18, 2025, from <https://acleddata.com/conflict-index-2026-watchlist>

“High-intensity violence is no longer episodic - it’s systemic.”

On 11th December 2025, ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data) released its Conflict Index & Watchlist, providing an insightful summary of the key conflicts observed in 2025, and forecast for the year to come.

The ACLED Conflict Index reveals a sobering reality: over **204,000** conflict events and **240,000** fatalities occurred globally in 2025.

What are the hotspots?

Top-ranked crises include Ukraine, Sudan, Israel-Palestine, Myanmar, Nigeria, Syria, Mexico, Brazil, Haiti, and Pakistan.

These contexts are not only the most deadly, but also operationally complex:

- Myanmar hosts over 1,200 armed groups, complicating negotiations.
- In Gaza and the West Bank, violent incidents were reported to affect 70% of its territory in 2025.

What does this mean for Security Risk Management (SRM) in the NGO and humanitarian space?

Policy-level takeaways:

- **Risk Governance:** Boards must integrate conflict analytics into duty-of-care and insurance frameworks.
- **Strategic Positioning:** ACLED's metrics can be a useful tool to shape multi-year strategies, help prioritise flexible funding and facilitate contingency planning.
- **Advocacy:** Evidence of civilian targeting and drone warfare strengthens calls for humanitarian corridors and compliance with international law.

Field-practical guidance:

- **Security Protocols:** Staff in ‘extreme’ zones need advanced security training, digital safety measures, and pre-prepared evacuation plans.
- **Access Planning:** Pre-position supplies and diversify logistics routes in Watchlist regions—especially the Sahel, Red Sea, and Latin America.
- **Community Engagement:** Prioritise local partnerships for early warning and protection strategies.

Field-practical guidance (*cont.*):



Drone Warfare Preparedness: Increasing use of drones for surveillance and strikes - seen in Ukraine and the Middle East - poses unique risks. NGOs should:

- Train staff on visual and acoustic detection of drones.
- Establish safe shelter protocols for aerial threats.
- Use low-profile movement strategies and digital hygiene to avoid targeting.
- Coordinate with local partners for real-time alerts on drone activity.

Looking ahead:

For NGOs and humanitarian actors, the watchlist is not just predictive - *it's prescriptive*. It indicates where to focus resilience-building before the next shock hits.

Here's what it means in practice:

-  **Anticipatory Action:** Watchlist data should be used to trigger pre-crisis planning - *from surge staffing to pre-positioning supplies in high-risk corridors.*
-  **Flexible Programming:** Design interventions that can scale up or pivot quickly as conditions change. This includes modular budgets and adaptable delivery models.

Looking ahead (*cont.*):

- **Donor Engagement:** Align funding proposals with Watchlist insights to secure contingency resources and advocate for risk-tolerant financing.
- **Local Partnerships:** Strengthen ties with community-based organisations for real-time intelligence and rapid response capacity.
- **Technology Integration:** Invest in, or source shared access to, remote monitoring tools, drone threat detection systems, and secure communications platforms to maintain situational awareness in volatile environments.
- **Scenario Planning:** Develop best-case, worst-case, and most-likely scenarios for each Watchlist region to guide operational decisions and staff safety protocols.

At **ILS**, we support our clients by enabling the development of holistic security risk management structures, from context analysis to policy development and embedded security advice, to capacity building and training.

👉 **Let's talk.** If you or your organisation are looking for support in any aspect of security risk management in 2026, we'd love to hear from you.