

# Security Risk Management (SRM) Suspension Guide



GISF Update #2 – 20 February 2025

This follows [\*GISF's Suspension Guide\*](#) published on 6 February 2025

## Context Updates

- **Uncertainty:** Most senior security staff remain in a 'watch and wait' position with regards to whether anticipated threats from the US funding suspension become reality.
- **NGO security staff layoffs:** Minor increases in reports of NGOs laying-off security staff, both at HQ/regional and country levels. However senior security staff remain pessimistic, and believe job losses will increase.
  - NGO security staff and resources are rarely fully funded by one donor, with costs split across multiple grants for programmatic and cost efficiency. Senior security staff, who oversee responses and manage the most challenging risks, are often core-funded, but these funds are now being redirected to keep NGOs solvent.
  - USAID grants offer high levels of indirect cost recovery compared to European donors. It is likely that US funding will move more in line with European donors in the future, which will have an impact on NGOs' ability to fund HQ/Regional security resources.
- **Private security layoffs:** Mass layoffs from private security companies are reported, increasing vulnerabilities and introducing new threats. These security staff were often on contracts with limited notice periods. These organisations were working on US-funded projects, or directly funded by the US Government. There is concern that those affected could join organised crime or armed groups, challenging stability.
  - NGOs report thefts going unchallenged as remaining security guards fail to intervene.
- **Office closures and staff tension:** Rapid office shutdowns create challenges managing assets and ensuring the safe transition of staff. Some NGOs are reporting threats from laid-off workers toward remaining personnel, heightening internal security risks.
- **Bureaucratic interference:** Unconfirmed reports from South Asia of former staff – disgruntled due to layoffs linked to the funding suspension – leveraging personal connections to interfere with NGO registrations.

## Support Services

- **Insurance:** GISF engaged with a well-known insurance broker who serves the NGO sector. They reported that underwriters are following the situation closely, particularly tracking heightened kidnap threat and political / security evacuation risks due to disgruntled workforce and issues paying local suppliers.
  - NGOs are declaring lower staff numbers and also reducing their coverage, some moving to self-insurance.
- **UNHAS:** Reports indicate that UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) can only sustain operations in CAR, Yemen, DRC, Syria, Cameroon, Mauritania, Madagascar and Haiti until March 2025 under current funding arrangements.

## Mis/Disinformation

- **Escalating social media hostility:** Monitoring by [Insecurity Insight](#) indicates a sharp rise in hate speech justifying violence against aid workers. There are increased narratives depicting NGOs as agents for foreign interference.
- Past incidents demonstrate that [online hate speech can incite real-world violence](#), increase harassment of aid workers, and impact NGO operations.

## Recommendations

- **Office Closures:** Organisations may find themselves managing multiple, concurrent office closures. Failing to manage a closure process appropriately can leave the organisation vulnerable to abuse of or violence against staff, theft of resources, reputational damage, and ill-feeling, which may extend to the humanitarian community in general, putting other organisations' programmes and staff at risk.
  - **Provisions should be made for extra support to monitor and implement office closures.** GISF's guide from 2013 remains broadly relevant.
- **Threat tracking:**
  - Use your organisation's 'community accountability' mechanisms. These go by many different names, but they are usually feedback channels made available to communities/beneficiaries to report on program quality, safeguarding, etc. These may offer extra insights into how communities are interpreting your NGO's messaging.
  - Work with HR and Finance teams to identify concentrations of unpaid vendors who may create issues for your NGO's local operations.
  - Use your stakeholder mapping to identify potentially influential individuals (staff, vendors) affected by your funding suspension, who may have the capability to create legal/registration issues.