



Malawi 2012 OSAC Crime and Safety Report

Crime; Travel Health and Safety

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Visitors are urged to maintain situational awareness while traveling in Malawi. Whether the trip is for business or pleasure, personal security measures should be adhered to at all times. Pickpockets and purse-snatchers often loiter near bus stations, marketplaces, shopping centers, and restaurants. Fewer problems have been reported at Malawian airports, but heightened awareness is still recommended in those locations as well. Most hotels are safe, but less reputable accommodations can be precarious. Valuables should not be left in hotel rooms, and visitors should be cautious when utilizing room safes as many are not bolted to the walls or closets.

Visitors should also be mindful of vehicle robberies, car-jackings, residential burglaries, and home invasions. Criminals perpetrating these crimes are most commonly armed with panga knives (machetes) and usually with at least one firearm. Criminals are quick to use violence if their demands are not met, and some expatriates have been victims of violent crime in the past year. Alertness while driving and good residential security practices can be of great help in deterring these types of crimes. Criminal activity is more common in urban areas than in outlying settlements. Neighborhood policing efforts have aided in crime prevention and reporting but have not substantially decreased criminal activity. If faced with an armed assailant, compliance is usually the best course of action in order to avoid personal injury. Walking alone at night should always be avoided.

Organized crime is not prevalent in Malawi. However, Malawi's porous borders have facilitated human trafficking rings, illegal migration and other cross border criminal activities. Due to its geographical location, Malawi is used as an illegal transit route for passage from other African countries en route to South Africa.

There is currently no information available on specific terrorist threats to Americans in Malawi. Americans are welcome in Malawi and do not face any hostility or aggression on the basis of their citizenship. Americans are encouraged to register with the Consular Section and check the most up-to-date consular information sheet on Malawi located at <http://travel.state.gov/>

Political Violence

Political violence and civil unrest in Malawi increased significantly in 2011. In July, 20 people were killed in conjunction with nationwide protests, which took place in the major cities of



Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu, Zomba, and Karonga. Poor crowd control techniques, excessive use of force, and indiscriminate use of tear gas and live ammunition were all factors contributing to a situation that spiraled out of control. Public discontent with economic problems (e.g., power cuts, fuel shortages, inflation) and perceived poor governance persists. Public protests as well as the threat of demonstrations that do not materialize have impacted both residents and visitors in the past year. However, these actions were not directed at American citizens or U.S. Government facilities or interests. The consequences of these incidents of civil unrest underscore how political demonstrations can quickly become violent and result in fatalities. Political gatherings and large crowds should be avoided at all costs.

Post-specific Concerns

One of the greatest threats to personal safety in Malawi is road travel after dark. The lack of highway and residential street lighting combined with narrow roads, lack of shoulders, and numerous road hazards (e.g., animals, pedestrians, bicyclists, ox-carts, slow moving vehicles, vehicles without lights, broken down vehicles, etc.) create dangerous road conditions. If a road accident occurs away from an urban area, there is little chance of a timely response by emergency medical personnel. Vehicle travel at night should be strictly limited to major urban areas, and even then caution must be exercised. Plan all in-country travel so as to arrive at your destination before dark.

Police Response

The capabilities of the Malawi Police Service are growing, but their abilities to deter and investigate crimes, assist victims and apprehend criminals are extremely limited. The police lack basic equipment (particularly transportation), are poorly funded and do not receive sufficient training. Public support for the police has continued to drop due in part to alleged corruption and ineffectiveness in deterring criminal activity. Americans traveling to Malawi should register with the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Lilongwe. Should you become the victim or suspect of a crime, you should contact the local police and U.S. Embassy Lilongwe or inform the police of your American citizenship and ask them to contact the embassy on your behalf.

The police emergency phone number throughout Malawi is 990, and is the easiest means of obtaining police assistance throughout the country. The 24-hour phone number for the national police headquarters located in Lilongwe is 01-796-333. The phone number for the Lilongwe Central Police Station is 01-753-333, and the Blantyre Central Police Station can be reached at 01-623-333.

Medical Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency, the following hospitals and clinics can be contacted for assistance. However, it should be noted that medical facilities in Malawi lack resources and are not comparable with those of the United States. All visitors to Malawi are strongly encouraged to carry international medical evacuation insurance, and they should keep the contact information for the evacuation service on them at all times. In the event a medical



evacuation is necessary, those without insurance may pay \$35,000 to \$55,000 just to initiate the process.

Lilongwe Health Facilities:

Lilongwe Central Hospital — 01 753 555/ 01 751 109

Likuni Mission Hospital – 01 766 602

Adventist Health Center – 01 775 680

African Bible College Community Clinic – 01 761 670/743

Medical Aid Society of Malawi (MASM) Clinic – 01 750 404

Partners in Hope – 01 727 155

Blantyre Health Facilities:

Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital – 01 874 333

Mwaiwathu Hospital – 01 834 989

Travel Precautions

Robberies are common in Malawi. Victims are often targeted when a vehicle is stopped at an intersection or in a residential driveway. The Old Town section of Lilongwe should be avoided, especially at night. The following information may be helpful in avoiding crime:

Always be aware of your surroundings and maintain vigilance, especially when pulling up to a residential compound gate or stopping at an intersection. Keep your car doors locked, and try to keep your windows rolled up. Watch for would-be thieves lurking near your driveway (either on foot or in vehicles.) When stopped at an intersection leave at least one car's length distance between you and the car in front of you. Be alert for vehicles that may be following you. Drive away from suspicious situations. If you are unable to avoid a suspicious situation and you find yourself confronted by carjackers or a robber, it is usually best to fully and promptly comply with their demands; they are often armed and will likely turn violent when meeting resistance. Residential Burglaries

If staying in a single family home or cottage, you could be targeted for a burglary or home invasion. The following procedures should be adhered to whenever feasible:

Keep perimeter gates closed and locked. Use exterior lighting throughout the night. Keep all doors and windows locked, particularly when retiring for the evening. Establish and use a residential safehaven/secure room. Hire residential guards/install an alarm system with emergency response teams. Consider a dog as a deterrent. **Further Information**

From within Malawi, U.S. Embassy Lilongwe can be contacted by calling 01-773-166 or 01-773-342; international callers should use +265 1-773-166, +265 1-773-342, or these VOIP numbers 202-904-2132 and 202-465-4641. Please note Malawi's country code is 265 and the initial "0" should be omitted from all telephone numbers when calling from outside of Malawi.

These phone numbers can be utilized 24-hours, 7 days a week, for routine assistance or emergencies. During regular business hours these numbers will reach the embassy switchboard; after-hours, on weekends and on holidays, these numbers will reach a guard in



the security office on extension 3443, who can contact an appropriate Embassy officer to assist you. The website of U.S. Embassy Lilongwe is <http://lilongwe.usembassy.gov>

OSAC Country Council

There is currently no Country Council in Malawi; however efforts are underway to establish one. The Lusaka Country Council in Zambia is the nearest OSAC affiliate.