

International Tourism Law: Freedom Of Movement of People Between Tourism and Terrorism

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Abstract: Considering the humanization of international law, international tourism continues to challenge the right to freedom of movement. The opportunity to meet other people, visit different places, and experience diverse cultures is a unique and individual experience that can reduce the likelihood of international conflicts. As such, international tourism is an important vehicle through which individuals can contribute to global peace. Ensuring the free movement of international tourists is not only essential for the proper functioning of the tourism industry but also reflects the global rights of individuals. In recent years, the global tourism industry has faced significant challenges beyond terrorism, including the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine war, and the ongoing tensions in regions like the Middle East. These events have underscored the vulnerability of international tourism to external shocks and the resulting impact on global stability and peace. The reinstatement of visa requirements by countries like Brazil in 2024 further illustrates the delicate balance between national security and the right to freedom of movement. This paper discusses the complex relationship between the right to freedom of movement under international law and the various factors that impact international tourism, including terrorism, pandemics, and geopolitical conflicts. It highlights the critical importance of maintaining open and secure borders for the continuation of international tourism and its role in fostering global understanding and peace.

Keywords: freedom; international movement; international tourism and terrorism; peace; conflicts

1. Personal Freedom

Freedom, within its scope of application, encompasses virtually unlimited contents, because, as denoted by Alexy “almost everything that, from a certain point of view, is regarded as good or desirable is associated to the concept of freedom”. That concept is based on a triadic relationship between the holder of a freedom, an obstacle to such freedom and the purpose of such freedom (Alexy 2008).

Regarding the right to personal freedom, which expression is employed in the same sense as physical freedom or freedom of movement (Silva 2005), that triad is understood as follows: the holder of the freedom is the citizen, the obstacle to the freedom is the subjective right of the State to regulate migration flows; and the purpose of the freedom is the alternative to migrate or not to migrate.

The importance of such privilege has been originally recognized by Immanuel Kant (2024), who, by defending the cosmopolitan right (*ius cosmopoliticum*) as a third type of right limited to the universal hospitality conditions, would have, as pointed out by Norberto Bobbio (1994), “foreshadowed the right of every individual to be a citizen not only of his or her own State, but of the whole world”.

Historically, the first document granting the freedom to enter or leave a country, and freedom of movement within its borders, was the Magna Carta Libertatum of 1215, as set forth in its articles 41 and 42 (Silva 2005). Ever since, as the protection of individual freedom has been formalized, several other documents have been issued with similar provisions, such as, for instance, the French Constitution of 1791, which under Title I granted individuals the right to go, stay or leave without being prevented or arrested.

The international right to movement, however, has been initially provided by the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man of 1948, which in its Article VIII provided for that right as follows:

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Article VIII - Every person has the right to fix his residence within the territory of the state of which he is a national, to move about freely within such territory, and not to leave it except by his own will.

Also in the year of 1948, the freedom of movement of individuals was afforded the status of a human right principle and has so consolidated upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Following the enactment of the International Law on Human Rights, the following have been issued: Protocol No. 4 of the European Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1963, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, the American Convention on Human Rights of 1969, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights of 1981, the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, in addition to internal legislation and various bilateral treaties agreed upon by and between the countries.

2. Freedom of Movement of People as a General Principle of The Law

While the right to personal freedom is a fundamental right, it is also a human right, to the extent it is provided both by domestic and international legal systems². That freedom, understood as a rule of fundamental right in its structure as a principle, contains not only the subjective nature of defense against the State, but also an objective nature that fully and extensively influences the legal system (Alexy 2008).

To obtain the objective contents of a principle, one has to abstract its subjective nature. In that sense, if the citizen has the right to movement against the State, the latter has the duty of refraining from interfering with that freedom (Cavarzere 2001). That duty of the State is the contents of the objective principle, which, because it is "very special to exert effects on all areas of the legal system" requires two additional abstractions, so that the abstraction relating to the holder of the right must be added to an abstraction that relates to the recipient of the right (the one that has a duty – the obligor) and an abstraction relating to the particular aspects of its purpose (in this case, the State refraining from interfering) (Alexy 2008), for which reason one concludes that the freedom of movement of individuals is a first-line principle of abstraction, or further, a threefold abstracted principle.

According to Albuquerque Mello, two principles must be highlighted regarding the movement of individuals: a) admission of the "jus communications"; and the b) right of the State to regulate the immigration in its territory. While under the former, the right to migrate is observed from an international viewpoint, based on the very need of international trade and freedom of individuals; under the former, there is the State sovereignty and settled international practices.

Albuquerque Mello (2000) also understands that: "some have affirmed that the limitations imposed on immigration must be generic, that is, with no discretion of race, religion and national origin". Thus, immigration limitations must observe the principles of tolerance and otherness by setting forth their conditions to ensure the freedom of movement of individuals (Cavarzere 2001).

The advantage of adopting the principle of freedom of movement³ of individuals as the top level of abstraction is the irradiating characteristic of those principles, "applicable as a starting point for dogmatic grounds of various different types of substantial structural requirements under the fundamental rights, in all fields of the legal system" (Alexy 2008). Thus, such provisions have a type of power of paralyzing adverse standards that have a decisive influence on the interpretation of the legal system.

One of the results of that irradiating characteristic is the arising of the principle recognized by the domestic law regarding the international system, which will be part of the list of sources from the Public International Law (Mazzuoli 2010), exerting effects in that respect.

3. International Instruments Relating to The Right to Freedom of Movement

The right to freedom of movement is incorporated into the human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 was the first universal instrument to express the right to freedom of movement, according to its Article 13.

Article 13

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.

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1. Article V of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1966 provides: ARTICLE V - In compliance with the fundamental obligations laid down in article 2 of this Convention, States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, color, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of the following rights: (...) d) other civil rights, in particular, i) the right to freedom of movement and residence within the border of the State; ii) the right to leave any country, including one's own, and to return to one's country.
 2. In Brazil, the right to freedom of movement is provided by the Federal Constitution, Article 5, subparagraph XV, according to which "movement is free within the national territory in times of peace, and any person may, as set forth in the applicable law, enter, remain or leave the country with its property".
 3. "Il est des cas dans lesquels un citoyen est absolument en droit, par des raisons prises du pacte même de la société politique, de renoncer à sa patrie et de l'abandonner: 1er – Si le citoyen ne peut trouver sa subsistance dans sa patrie, il lui est permis sans doute de la chercher ailleurs; car la société politique, ou civile, n'étant contractée que dans la vue de faciliter à un chacun les moyens de vivre et de se faire un sort heureux et assuré, il serait absurde de prétendre qu'un membre, à qui elle ne pourra procurer les choses les plus nécessaires, ne sera pas en droit de la quitter; 2 – Si le corps de la société, ou celui qui le représente, manque absolument à ses obligations envers un citoyen celui-ci peut se retirer. Cas si l'un des contractans n'observe point ses engagements, l'autre n'est plus tenu à remplir les siens, et le contrat est réciproque entre la société et ses membres. C'est sur ce fondement que l'on peut aussi chasser de la société un membre qui en viole les lois. 3- Si la majeure partie de la Nation, ou le souverain qui la représente, veut établir des lois sur des choses à l'égard desquelles le pacte de société ne peut obliger tout citoyen à se soumettre, ceux à qui ces lois déplaisent sont en droit de quitter la société pour s'établir ailleurs." (Vattel 1863).

Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Despite being non-binding, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the most authoritative international instrument in the field of human rights, both domestically and internationally (Hannum 1987). Ever since the UDHR expressed the right to freedom of movement, most countries also decided to expressly state that right in their constitutions and international treaties, thus characterizing it as one of the fundamental human rights.

However, the UDHR provisions are known to be declaratory, and, as such, require application provisions. Two international pacts adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 16, 1966 were such two application provisions (Jo 2014). In this sense, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (PIDCP) is the most important binding international instrument to expressly provide for the right to freedom of movement. Article 12 of the PIDCP (Hannum 1987) provides as follows:

Article 12

Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence.

Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own.

The above-mentioned rights shall not be subject to any restrictions, except those which are provided by the law, are necessary to protect national security, public order, public health or morals or the rights or and freedoms of others and are consistent with the other rights recognized in the present Covenant.

No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his own country.

Thus, the other binding international instruments moved towards including the right to freedom of movement under more specific situations. For instance, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1966, under its Article V, provides as follows:

Article V

In compliance with the fundamental obligations laid down in article 2 of this Convention, States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, color, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of the following right:

(...)

d) Other civil rights, in particular,

i) the right to freedom of movement and residence within the border of the State;

ii) the right to leave any country, including one's own, and to return to one's country;

The Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 provides another example of the application of such right to freedom of movement to protect children, according to its Article 10:

Article 10

1. In accordance with the obligation of States Parties under article 9, paragraph 1, applications by a child or his or her parents to enter or leave a State Party for the purpose of family reunification shall be dealt with by States Parties in a positive, humane and expeditious manner. States Parties shall further ensure that the submission of such a request shall entail no adverse consequences for the applicants and for the members of their family.

2. A child whose parents reside in different States shall have the right to maintain on a regular basis, save in exceptional circumstances personal relations and direct contacts with both parents. Towards that end and in accordance with the obligation of States Parties under article 9, paragraph 1, States Parties shall respect the right of the child and his or her parents to leave any country, including their 4 own, and to enter their own country. The right to leave any country shall be subject only to such restrictions as are prescribed by law and which are necessary to protect the national security, public order (ordre public), public health or morals or the rights and freedoms of others and are consistent with the other rights recognized in the present Convention.

The American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man of 1948 generically provides for that right under its Article VIII:

Article VIII

Every person has the right to fix his residence within the territory of the state of which he is a national, to move about freely within such territory, and not to leave it except by his own will.

Finally, Article 22 of the American Convention on Human Rights is more specific regarding the right to freedom of movement:

Article 22. Freedom of Movement and Residence

1. Every person lawfully in the territory of a State Party has the right to move about in it, and to reside in it subject to the provisions of the law.

2. Every person has the right to leave any country freely, including his own.

3. *The exercise of the foregoing rights may be restricted only pursuant to a law to the extent necessary in a democratic society to prevent crime or to protect national security, public safety, public order, public morals, public health, or the rights or freedoms of others.*
4. *The exercise of the rights recognized in paragraph 1 may also be restricted by law in designated zones for reasons of public interest.*
5. *No one can be expelled from the territory of the state of which he is a national or be deprived of the right to enter it.*
6. *An alien lawfully in the territory of a State Party to this Convention may be expelled from it only pursuant to a decision reached in accordance with law.*
7. *Every person has the right to seek and be granted asylum in a foreign territory, in accordance with the legislation of the state and international conventions, in the event he is being pursued for political offenses or related common crimes.*
8. *In no case may an alien be deported or returned to a country, regardless of whether or not it is his country of origin, if in that country his right to life or personal freedom is in danger of being violated because of his race, nationality, religion, social status, or political opinions.*
9. *The collective expulsion of aliens is prohibited.*

4. Three Types of Freedom of Movement

The international instruments show that, until today, three types of freedoms of movement are recognized internationally, that is to say: the right to freedom of movement within the borders of one's country, the right to freely leave any country, and the right to enter his or her own country.

4.1 Right to Freedom of Movement Within One's Country

The right to freedom of movement within a country is the basic right to freedom of movement. That right implies the freedom of movement in any place within a territory without specific permission of authorities or any impediment. That freedom automatically includes the freedom to choose one's own residence.

What are the restrictions on that freedom of movement? In addition to the limitations imposed by domestic laws, each international instrument providing for the right to freedom of movement sets forth due and usually common restrictions.

For instance, Article 12 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) sets out that the rights to freedom of movement "may be subject to any restrictions, except those which are provided by the law, are necessary to protect national security, public order, public health or morals or the rights or and freedoms of others, and are consistent with the other rights recognized in the present Covenant". In the same sense, Protocol No.4 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), of 1963, under Article 2(3), provides that that right may be limited, under the applicable law, to the interests of the State, such as national security, public security, public order, crime prevention, protection of health and morals and protection of rights and freedoms of others.

Article 2 – Freedom of movement

1. *Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence.*
2. *Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own.*
3. *No restrictions shall be placed on the exercise of these rights other than such as are in accordance with law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the maintenance of ordre public, for the prevention of crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.*
4. *The rights set forth in paragraph 1 may also be subject, in particular areas, to restrictions imposed in accordance with law and justified by the public interest in a democratic society.*

Article 3 – Prohibition of expulsion of nationals

No one shall be expelled, by means either of an individual or of a collective measure, from the territory of the State of which he is a national.

No one shall be deprived of the right to enter the territory of the state of which he is a national.

Article 4 – Prohibition of collective expulsion of aliens

Thus, the power of the State to restrict the right to freedom of movement within the State is not an arbitrary authority (Hannum, 1987). On the contrary, the State must act within the limitations set forth by the law (ICCPR) and justified by the public interest of a democratic society (ECHR). The limitations contained in international instruments must be carefully construed, in accordance with the foundations of human rights, because that freedom is being treated as one of the fundamental principles of human rights. That means that the restrictions must satisfy the public need and the means used therefor, as well as the results expected from that restriction. Therefore, in our opinion, domestic laws must be provided with legitimacy from the Legislative, not a discretionary decision of the Executive. According to such rationale, the interpretation must be restrictive, because the individual right will be exceptionally restricted, according to the philosophy of the related national law and the related international instruments.

4.2 Right to freely leave any country

The second type of freedom of movement of individuals relates to their right to freely leave any country, including their own. That right is based on the philosophy of freedom that no country may take over individuals. In fact, the freedom of migration is an

individual right of human beings. The UDHR provides that “everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to that country”, thus treating the freedom of leaving and entering under the same provision. However, more specific international instruments have been separating those freedoms, because, while the freedom of entering one’s own country is unlimited, the freedom of leaving his own country may be limited, such as, for instance, in the event of legal detention of a criminal. The leaving of minors is also limited to protect them.

In general, national security is the alleged grounds to restrict that freedom, and it is frequently applied by countries. However, as mentioned above, any restriction must have a legitimate purpose, means and expected result.

A common practice of countries to attain that restriction purpose is bureaucratic impediments involving the granting of passports (Hannum 1987). Without a passport or similar document, an individual cannot even leave or enter his or her own country. Therefore, to protect that right to movement, the passport granting laws of each country must be clear and objective. In this sense, international harmonization of basic rules to regulate passports may be a proper option not only to ensure the right of international movement, but also an action against international terrorism, which takes advantage of the current facilities to falsify passports.

4.3 Right to return to one’s own country

The third type of freedom of movement relates to the right to return to one’s own country. It is one of the best international efforts to eliminate the figure of the stateless person under international law (Jo 2014). Under the current international legal system, the individual needs protection from the sovereign State. When the individual acquires a nationality, the State of nationality has the obligation to receive him or her in its territory, when he or she is abroad. That is the obligation of protecting its national abroad. If the national fails to enter a foreign country for any reason, his or her country of nationality must, as a rule, receive him or her back, although there are some exceptions, such as the case of refugees. That obligation to protect is based on the foundations of human rights, and cannot be confused with diplomatic protection, which is the right of the State that has the so-called “closer bond” with the individual.

However, the entry in a foreign country for tourism is not bound to that freedom of movement. This occurs because the international law does not recognize the freedom to enter any country. In an international society, where the international legal order is constituted based on the figure of the sovereign State, the State has the sovereign authority to deny the entry of foreigners to its territory. Until today, the right to return to one’s own country has limitations only under the laws of that very country.

Obviously, the international exchange of individuals of different nationalities promotes international peace. The international law, and, more specifically, the international tourism law and the human rights have been developing their regulations based on that foundation. However, there is no international instrument that ensures the general right of free access to any sovereign country. International instruments only ensure the right to return to one’s own country. This is the role of international tourism, that is say, developing that right to freedom of movement to promote international peace. We understand that international law is moving toward that direction, and the international tourism law is the driving force of that process.

We need to recognize the importance of the right to return of foreigners with a permanent visa. In a globalized world, there are several individuals with one or two citizenships, but who have permanent residence in another country. That is the question of protecting immigrants’ rights. Those permanent foreigners have a closer social/economic bond with the country of residence than with the country of nationality (Seidl-Hohenveldern 1989). They have their family, children born and raised in the country of residence, their property located there, etc. For them, the most important right would be the right to return to the country of residence, not the country of nationality. If the country of residence fails to renew their visa, the impact on their rights would be enormous, and would render it difficult to live a normal life. In this sense, “return to one’s country” must be construed in a broad sense to ensure the actual interest of individuals.⁴ The modern trend of private international law, which has been adopting various connection elements, such as domicile, habitual residence, most significant place of relationships, place with a closer bond, etc., would be a proper reference to answer that question.

5. Liberty of Tourist Movements Under the Soft Tourism Law

Principle eight of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (Badaró 2006) provides for a new interpretation of the universal right to freedom of movement when it provides on “Liberty of tourist movements”. Tourists and visitors will benefit from, in agreement with the International Law and national legislations, the freedom of movement, both within their own countries and also from one State to another, in compliance with Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and may be granted access to transit zones and accommodation, as well as sightseeing and cultural sites, with no exaggerated formalities and without discrimination (Treves 2005).

Thus, tourist law (Badaró 2008) will thrive and eventually support continuing projects that have been already developed, such as the Manila Declaration on World Tourism of 1980 and the Manila Declaration on Social Impact of Tourism of 1997, as well as the Tourism Bill of Rights and Tourist Code, adopted in Sofia, in 1985, under the UNWTO, all of which aimed at smoothing the movement of tourists.

Tourists and visitors must have acknowledged their right to use all means of communication available, both interior and exterior, and benefit from easy, prompt access to legal, public administrative and health services, as well as free contact with consular authorities of the country of origin, in accordance with the diplomatic treaties in force.

Tourists and visitors will benefit from the same rights as the citizens of the visited country regarding secrecy of data and their personal information, in particular electronic information and data.

The administrative border crossing procedures enforced by the States or resulting from international agreements, such as visas or sanitary or customs formalities must be adapted to facilitate as much as possible the freedom of travel, and also grant as many people as possible access to international tourism.

Finally, agreements between groups of countries aimed at harmonizing and simplifying sanitary and customs procedures and formalities must be encouraged. Specific taxes and charges penalizing tourism and decreasing its competitiveness must be progressively eliminated or reduced (Py 2002).

⁴ Hannum, *The Right to Leave and Return in International Law and Practice*, 56-60.

6. International Terrorism and Tourism

In our opinion, international terrorism has a significant negative impact on international tourism, increasing constraints to the freedom of movement of peoples and further threatening international peace (Drakos 2001).

On November 13, 2015, France sustained a series of terrorist attacks that caused the death of 137 people. Such attacks were the deadliest since World War II, and the attacks of March 11, 2004, in Madrid, Spain. Additionally, the attacks occurred one day after another terrorist attack that took place in Beirut, Lebanon, which resulted in 43 fatal victims.

Worldwide terrorism started upon the fateful September 11, 2001, where airplanes crashed into the World Trade Center, disposing of the lives of civilians as a means and target. International humanitarian rules and human rights have been disregarded by the international terrorist in a sad comeback of past-century events according to which individuals would not be protected by international regulations. The impact of the terrorist attacks in Paris was a significant one, taking advantage of all means of communication developed by the globalization phenomenon. Tourism, in turn, was also seriously affected. Tourism income and airline share prices fell sharply in the French territory. Consequently, many people in the tourism industry lost their jobs.

Tourism is one of the most open markets, creating significant jobs and income. However, as all industries rely on security and comfort, a mere security threat is sufficient to adversely affect international tourism. Thus, tourist security assurance is a critical element to attract these people. Many times, the country where the terrorist attack took place decides to inform tourists of dangerous areas, to protect the image of the rest of the country.

For instance, in the Philippines, the government provides a list of the “dangerous” islands amongst its more than seven thousand islands most likely to experience a terrorist attack, to affirm that the rest of the country is safe. In the same sense, the country of origin of tourists tries to direct their nationals on the most dangerous places for international tourism, instructing them on the necessary security actions of their security.

Brazilian tourism is estimated to be worth approximately US\$50 billion per year, with around 500,000 American tourists visiting the country annually. However, recent changes in visa requirements have once again impacted this vital sector. In 2024, Brazil reinstated visa requirements for travelers from the United States, Australia, Canada, and Japan, reversing a previous policy of visa exemptions aimed at boosting tourism. This move has led to concerns about a potential decline in tourist numbers from these key markets.

The decision to reintroduce visas is seen as part of broader diplomatic and security considerations, much like the earlier period when Brazil imposed reciprocal measures in response to U.S. visa policies. The reintroduction of visa requirements has sparked debate over its potential economic impact, particularly on a tourism industry that relies heavily on foreign visitors. As with past instances of increased travel restrictions, the effects on tourism are expected to include a reduction in visitor numbers and a corresponding loss in revenue, with broader implications for the economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic, while not an act of terrorism, has had an analogous impact on global tourism, creating widespread insecurity and severely disrupting international travel. Border closures, lockdowns, and health concerns led to an unprecedented decline in global tourism, with millions of jobs lost and economies deeply affected. Much like terrorism, the pandemic’s psychological impact on travelers, coupled with constantly changing travel restrictions, mirrored the uncertainty caused by terrorist threats. The slow recovery of the tourism industry from COVID-19 highlights the importance of health security and crisis management in this sector, similar to the responses required following terrorist attacks.

The importance of tourism for developing countries cannot be overstated. According to the UNWTO (World Tourism Organization), international tourism generated approximately US\$1.5 trillion in export revenues in 2023, illustrating its significant contribution to the global economy.

For many developing countries, international tourism remains a vital source of income, supporting job creation, economic growth, and foreign exchange earnings. These countries often rely on their unique natural and cultural heritage to attract visitors, making the tourism industry a critical component of their international competitiveness. However, this industry is highly susceptible to external shocks such as terrorism, pandemics, and geopolitical conflicts.

The impact of such events can be profound, leading to sharp declines in tourist arrivals, significant revenue losses, and broader economic consequences including unemployment, economic downturns, and increased crime rates. Ensuring the resilience of the tourism sector is therefore essential for maintaining economic stability and fostering sustainable growth in these nations.

The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which escalated into a full-scale war in February 2022, has also had significant repercussions for tourism. For Ukraine, the war has devastated its tourism infrastructure, rendering once-popular destinations inaccessible and unsafe.

The country’s tourism industry, which was beginning to grow prior to the conflict, has been brought to a standstill, with massive economic losses and displacement of people. For Russia, the war has led to international sanctions and a sharp decline in foreign tourism. The perception of Russia as a hostile environment, combined with travel bans and the severing of many international air routes, has significantly reduced its appeal as a tourist destination. The war has also led to increased travel risks in neighboring countries, further destabilizing the regional tourism industry (Jo 2014).

Adam Blake and M. Thea Sinclair, who studied the impact of November 13, 2015, on the French tourism industry, narrated that the impact was not only limited to tourism: “The contribution of tourism and travel to both industrialized and developing countries is now so great that any downturns in the level of activity in the industry are a cause of concern. The repercussions extend beyond activities directly associated with tourism, notably airlines, hotels and catering, to sectors that supply intermediate or final goods that are purchased by firms and employees in the industry, so that all sectors of the economy are affected to a greater or lesser extent (Aly and Strazicich 2000)

The recent escalation of the conflict between HAMAS and Israel, particularly since 2023, continues to pose severe challenges for tourism in the region. Israel, heavily reliant on tourism, especially in its historical and religious sites, has faced a sharp decline in tourist arrivals due to the ongoing violence.

The repeated cycles of conflict have long-term implications for Israel’s tourism industry, with negative impacts on the economy and employment in the sector. This instability also affects the broader Middle East, where the perception of danger can extend beyond Israel’s borders, discouraging tourism to neighboring countries.

The negative impact of terrorism is even more serious in developing countries. This occurs because the level of economic dependency of the country on international tourism is higher in developing countries than in industrialized countries. The observations of Hassan Y. Aly and Mark C. Strazicich are convincing in this respect: “The international tourism industry has come to play an increasingly important role in many developing countries. In the late 1960s and 1970s, tourism was often promoted to reduce persistent balance of payments deficits and as a major source of foreign exchange. In the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, tourism was recognized for its direct and indirect positive impact on government revenue, national income and employment. In addition, tourism is recognized to diversify the economy and reduce reliance on traditional agriculture and industry. In general, tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the developing world and can be characterized as having ‘multidimensional’ effects.”

Then, why terrorists attack themselves, considering that developing countries suffer much more with the attacks than industrialized countries? First, it is easier to attack such countries. Tourists are relatively easy targets. As their times and routes are predetermined, it is easier for terrorists to plan their attacks. Secondly, it is easy to involve various nationalities in one single attack. International tourists gathering in the same place are usually from different countries. Finally, an attack could involve various nationalities, thus conveying the same message to different countries.

That is a convincing reason, considering the flexibility involved in tourism. International tourism is an option available in many places, for many tourists from different nationalities. So, the place of the attack may be replaced by several other places, in different countries, provided that such place is visited by international tourists. If the international terrorist aims at a devastating effect on the local tourism industry, they (international tourists) would be a perfect target.

In response to the growing threat of terrorism to global tourism, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has implemented several key programs aimed at enhancing the safety and security of tourists worldwide. The Crisis Management and Tourism Security Program was designed to help countries prepare for and respond effectively to crises, including terrorist attacks.

This program emphasizes the importance of preparing tourist destinations to handle potential crises through the creation of early warning systems, security protocols, and training for industry professionals. In the event of a crisis, the program assists governments and the tourism industry in responding swiftly to minimize economic and social impacts, including implementing communication campaigns to restore tourist confidence.

Additionally, the Safe and Sustainable Tourism Initiative was developed to promote a secure environment for tourists and workers, ensuring that tourism can continue to thrive even in the face of threats. This initiative integrates security with sustainability practices, advocating for the development of secure infrastructure that adheres to environmental standards and the empowerment of local communities in protecting tourist areas.

The resilience of the tourism sector, especially in developing countries, is crucial for maintaining economic stability and fostering sustainable growth in the face of ongoing challenges. The UNWTO's commitment to safeguarding and promoting tourism through focused efforts on crisis management, security, and sustainability reflects the importance of ensuring that this vital industry can withstand and recover from external shocks. In a world where the threats of terrorism, pandemics, and geopolitical conflicts persist, these initiatives are essential for preserving the positive impact of tourism on global development and international cooperation. Through continued vigilance and proactive strategies, the tourism sector can remain a cornerstone of economic growth and cultural exchange, benefiting nations and communities worldwide.

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