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CrisisWatch:

- summarises briefly developments during the previous month in some 70 situations of current or potential conflict, listed alphabetically by region, providing references and links to more detailed information sources (all references mentioned are hyperlinked in the electronic version of this bulletin);
- assesses whether the overall situation in each case has, during the previous month, significantly deteriorated, significantly improved, or on balance remained more or less unchanged;
- alerts readers to situations where, in the coming month, there is a particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict, or a particular conflict resolution opportunity (noting that in some instances there may in fact be both); and
- summarises Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers that have been published in the last month.

CrisisWatch is compiled by Crisis Group's Brussels Research Unit, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of our some 130 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 60 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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April 2010 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alerts

Guinea-Bissau
Sudan



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CENTRAL AFRICA

➡ **Burundi** Tensions within army and police increased over pay demands. Minister of Defence Germain Niyoyankana 23 March warned standoff threatened national stability. 12 presidential candidates confirmed by end March ahead of June polls. CNDD-FDD (govt) candidate uncertain. UNDP 4 March confirmed \$32m multi-donor fund for electoral process; electoral commission (CENI) earlier estimated required budget at \$46m. UNSG 25 March announced appointment of Charles Petrie as BINUB head, filling post after 2-month gap.

- [“Burundi ex-rebel chief named presidential candidate”](#), AFP, 14 March 2010.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa report N°155, [Burundi: Ensuring Credible Elections](#), 12 Feb. 2010.

➡ **Central African Republic** President Bozizé 27 March accepted postponement of elections planned for 25 Apr, asked electoral commission (IEC) to set new date and 30 March decreed elections would take place 16 May. Followed increased international pressure for delay: UN, U.S., EU, French representatives in Bangui 17 March said Apr elections could not meet international standards, called for postponement and greater transparency in IEC. President Bozizé confirmed candidacy 15 March; IEC opened voter registration next day. Security minister 13 March said govt had averted plot to overthrow Bozizé, hinted at ex-president Patassé’s involvement; Patassé strongly denied. After Feb hiatus, DDR campaign resumed following negotiations between govt and APRD armed group. 20 killed in 19 March clashes between Chadian herdsman and local farmers in Batangafo. Suspected LRA attacks continued in south east: reports at least 25 killed and 40 abducted in 3 attacks from 20 March.

- [“President gives nod to C. Africa polls delay”](#), AFP, 27 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°69, [Central African Republic: Keeping the Dialogue Alive](#), 12 Jan. 2010.

➡ **Chad** PM Youssouf Saleh Abbas resigned 5 March; reasons unclear but followed embezzlement allegations and growing divergences with President Déby. Déby immediately appointed former defence minister Emmanuel Nadingar (ruling party MPS) PM; Nadingar formed new govt 9 March, retaining several ministers. Move thought designed to strengthen Déby’s position ahead of late 2010 polls. Govt 1 March accepted 2-month extension of MINURCAT’s mandate, approved by UNSC 12 March. UN USG Youssef Mahmoud and govt 30 March held talks on pace of withdrawal, with parties agreeing to retain civilian component but disagreeing on number of staff to stay.

- [“U.N. force in Chad gets 2-month extension, plans exit”](#), Reuters, 12 March 2010.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°71, [Libya/Chad: Beyond Political Influence](#), 23 March 2010. Libya’s peace diplomacy in Chad has met with some success, but lack of follow-up to implement the deals suggests Muammar Gaddafi is less interested in the country’s long-term stabilisation than in asserting his regional influence.



➡ **Democratic Republic of Congo** DPKO head Alain Le Roy and President Kabila 4 March discussed timetable for MONUC pull-out; govt 11 March reiterated call for withdrawal before 2011 elections. DRC ambassador to UN Ileka Atoki 19 March demanded SRSG Alan Doss be replaced, calling him “corrupt”. Govt 11 March announced 271 FDLR rebels “neutralised” during Amani Leo operation. Col. Noboka Rashidi of FDLR splinter wing RUD 22 March surrendered to MONUC, announced hopes 400 FDLR/RUD men he commanded in Lubero would follow suit. FARDC 11 March abducted 3 wounded FDLR fighters from MSF-run hospital. Parliament 15 March opened new session: ruling PPRD/AMP advocated extension of president’s term, strongly rejected by opposition. Govt 2 March announced possible trial of FARDC commander Innocent Zimurinda, accused of mass atrocities in N Kivu. ICC trial of Jean-Pierre Bemba delayed to 5 July after defence lawyers challenged admissibility of case. LRA attacks continued in north east. Human Rights Watch 28 March reported 321 killed, 250 abducted by LRA in Makombo area, Orientale province, 14-17 Dec 2009; DRC justice minister rejected massacres occurred, said “no more than 25” died.

- [“Rebel leader turns to UN for repatriation from DRC”](#), *Times*, 22 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°151, [Congo: A Comprehensive Strategy to Disarm the FDLR](#), 9 July 2009.

➡ **Rwanda** Leader of opposition UDF Victore Ingabire 23 March prevented from leaving country, 24 March charged with inciting “divisionism”. Opposition PDP Deo Mushayidi appeared in court 18 March after 4-5 March arrest in Tanzania on divisionism and terrorism charges. Bernard Ntaganda removed from post as PS Imberakuri party head 17 March over alleged links to Mushayidi; Ntaganda alleged rumours fabricated by govt to undermine party. 2 grenade explosions in Kigali 4 March; govt alleged 2 former RPF officers responsible. Agathe Habyarimana, widow of former president, 2 March arrested and briefly detained by French authorities on Rwandan international arrest warrant. Govt 23 March issued arrest warrants for 2 genocide suspects in South Africa.

- [“Police stop opposition leader from leaving Rwanda”](#), AFP, 23 March 2010.

HORN OF AFRICA

➡ **Eritrea** UN Somalia Monitoring Group 16 March reported Eritrea continuing to support Somali Islamist rebels in violation of 2008 arms embargo, noted support had recently “diminished or become less visible”. Foreign Ministry 17 March called report “baseless and unfounded”.

- [“Eritrea recalibrates Somalia policy”](#), ISN, 17 March 2010.

➡ **Ethiopia** Candidate for opposition Arena-Tigray party in 23 May elections stabbed to death in Tigray 2 March. Ruling EPEDF rejected opposition suggestion attack “politically motivated”. Another Arena-Tigray candidate badly beaten by Ethiopian army members 1 March. PM Zenawi 19 March admitted govt jamming Voice of America broadcasts, accused station of “destabilising propaganda”. Late month reports detained opposition leader Birtukan Mideksa’s health had deteriorated. Zenawi 19 March denied Ethiopia blocking Eritrean participation in AU, said willing to meet with Eritrean president.

- [“Forget about democracy”](#), *Economist*, 25 March 2010.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°153, *Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and Its Discontents*, 4 Sept. 2009.

➡ **Kenya** Chief mediator Kofi Annan held separate talks with President Kibaki and PM Odinga 25 March, urged parties to resolve differences, press forward with reforms, address corruption. Kibaki 9 March suspended 13 govt officials over fraudulent land purchases. ICC 31 March approved formal investigation into 2007-8 post-election violence. Prosecutor Ocampo 3 March gave court list of 20 Kenyan politicians, businessmen suspected of involvement. Odinga 13 March called for arrest of police officers involved in 10 March killing of 7 taxi drivers in Kawangware; police had earlier claimed men were members of criminal Mungiki sect. MPs end month debated amendments to draft constitution. National Commission on Human Rights 5 March said threats from govt security forces were undermining their work.

- [“Hague court prosecutor to investigate Kenya violence”](#), Reuters, 31 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°137, *Kenya in Crisis*, 21 Feb. 2008.

➡ **Somalia** In Mogadishu, at least 60 reported killed in 10-12 March clashes between govt forces and Islamist militia al-Shabaab. Govt 15 March signed agreement with Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a (ASWJ) militia, trading govt posts for support in long-planned Mogadishu offensive. Asst Sec State Carson 12 March denied early month reports U.S. coordinating govt offensive. Hundreds participated in ASWJ-led Mogadishu protest against al-Shabaab 29 March. Infighting amongst Islamist rebels continued: senior al-Shabaab commander Sheikh Daud Ali Hasan shot dead near Kismayo 21 March. Around 30 killed early-mid month in central Somalia clashes between rival clans over land and water rights. Monitoring Group on Somalia, created by UNSC to monitor sanctions, 9 March reported up to half of international food aid diverted to contractors, militants and local UN staff; President Sheikh Sharif 16 March rejected report; UN Somalia aid chief Mark Bowden 25 March criticised findings as “sensational”. EU Naval Force disrupted 18 pirate attacks off coast during month.

- [“Somali backlash may be militants' worst foe”](#), *New York Times*, 23 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°64, *Somalia: The Trouble with Puntland*, 12 Aug. 2009 and Africa Report N°147, *Somalia: To Move Beyond the Failed State*, 23 Dec. 2008.

➡ **Sudan** Political situation tense ahead of 11-13 April polls amid fears of rigging, heightened instability. SPLM candidate for national presidency Yassir Arman 31 March withdrew from race, saying free and fair elections in Darfur “impossible”, overall process “rigged”; SPLM also withdrew from parliamentary poll in Darfur. Main opposition parties boycotted presidential poll 1 April; considering boycotts of parliamentary, local polls. President Bashir cancelled 30 March meeting with South Sudan President Kiir, threatened to delay 2011 southern referendum if elections postponed. Carter Center election monitors 18 March suggested postponing elections for up to 10 days as preparations “at risk on multiple fronts”; National Election Commission (NEC) said elections would proceed as planned. Opposition, civil society groups called for NEC to lift campaign restrictions, 18 March claimed increased risk of fraud after govt company won contract to print ballots. Lam Akol, sole challenger to Kiir for South Sudan presidency,

launched campaign 13 March. Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) 9 March urged parties to establish official referendum commission. At least 13 killed in clashes between South Sudan army, northern nomads 19 March. Govt 8 March said army had taken control of Jebel Marra plateau in Darfur after fresh clashes with Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) rebels. Govt 18 March signed peace deal with Darfur rebel group Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM). JEM Darfur rebels earlier threatened to withdraw from Feb peace agreement if Khartoum pursued parallel deals.

- [“SPLM quits Sudan presidential poll”](#), Al Jazeera, 1 April 2010.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°72, [Rigged Elections in Darfur and the Consequences of a Probable NCP Victory in Sudan](#), 30 March 2010. The Khartoum government is rigging the 11-13 April elections in Darfur to return an indicted president and his party to power. It has done this everywhere in Sudan, but most dramatically in Darfur where it has greater means to carry out its strategy because of the ongoing conflict.



➡ **Uganda** At least 2 killed in 17 March clashes between Baganda community members and police after 16 March fire destroyed royal Buganda mausoleum in Kasubi. Demonstrators accused govt of arson intended to weaken Buganda kingdom, denied by President Museveni. Washington-based Enough Project 10 March reported LRA leader Kony in Darfur with Khartoum's support; Museveni 13 March echoed allegations; Khartoum refuted. Museveni expressed opposition to ICC trial of Kony, saying “here we shall hang him but...[in] The Hague they will just put him in a hotel”. LRA attacks continued in CAR, DRC over month.

- [“Ugandan rebel leader may be in Sudan, Uganda says”](#), Reuters, 13 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°146, *Northern Uganda: The Road to Peace, with or without Kony*, 10 Dec. 2008.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

➡ **Madagascar** AU Peace and Security Council imposed sanctions on de facto leader Rajoelina and 108 of his supporters after its 17 March deadline expired without progress on formation of unity govt. Opposition supporters held rallies mid month demanding implementation of 2009 power-sharing agreements; police fired tear gas, arrested several protestors. Following AU sanctions announcement, High Authority of the Transition (HAT) recommended travel bans, asset freezes for opposition members, refused to authorise future demonstrations. Govt roadmap for planned May elections confirmed during 2-day conference held early month; 3 main opposition parties, though invited, refused to participate.

- Comment by Crisis Group President Louise Arbour, [“Un Schéma Gagnant-Gagnant”](#), *L'Express de Madagascar*, 23 March 2010.
- Comment by Daniela Krosiak and Charlotte Larbuisson (Crisis Group), [“Madagascar's Crisis, One Year On”](#), Mail & Guardian Online, 31 March 2010.
- [“Is time up for Madagascar's leader, Andry Rajoelina?”](#), BBC, 18 March 2010.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°156, *Madagascar: Ending the Crisis*, 18 March 2010. To end Madagascar's crisis the mediation should cease trying to implement a transitional power-sharing deal and instead aim for consensual writing of a constitution and early, internationally-supervised elections.



Zimbabwe Political impasse continued as President Mugabe early month stripped responsibilities from several MDC ministers and transferred administration of controversial Interceptions and Communication Act to Central Intelligence Agency, based within president's office; MDC said actions went against spirit of 2008 Global Political Agreement. During 17-18 March Harare visit, South African President Zuma announced parties had agreed to compromise deal aimed at resolving impasse; deal allows for Gideon Gono to retain post as Reserve Bank Governor and for several senior MDC-T officials to be sworn in; Mugabe 31 March swore in human rights and electoral commissioners agreed to by parties in Feb. Zuma early month lobbied EU to lift "suffocating" sanctions. Mugabe 4 March said he would stand in 2011 presidential elections if nominated; PM Tsvangirai 7 March announced he would also run. Homes, churches belonging to MDC supporters in Muzarabani reportedly burned 29 March in alleged political attack. Attorney general's office 31 March said MDC-T treasurer Roy Bennett to face new charges of hoarding maize in 2001. High Court 31 March adjourned Bennett's terrorism trial until 10 May. ICRC 11 March launched urgent appeal for worsening food crisis.

- "Mugabe swears in Zimbabwe rights and electoral bodies", BBC, 1 April 2010.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°70, *Zimbabwe: Political and Security Challenges to the Transition*, 3 March 2010. Despite initial scepticism, Zimbabwe's year-old unity government has achievements to its credit. But the democratic transition remains at risk, especially from hardline security officials – President Robert Mugabe's last reliable supporters.



WEST AFRICA

Cameroon Govt 18 March announced 19 soldiers of elite Rapid Battalion Force for Delta had been convicted for "acts of brutality against civilians" following 23 Feb clashes in Bakassi Peninsula in which 24 civilians injured. Insecurity continued off Bakassi coast, with 7 Chinese sailors captured 15 March by previously unknown gang Africa Marine Commando and released 3 days later; Nigerian boat and 2 crew also briefly captured 27 March, with same group suspected. UNHCR High Commissioner António Guterres 18 March reported rise in refugees from CAR in eastern Cameroon, with 80,000 arriving since 2003; called for increased international assistance.

- "UNHCR says more CAR refugees entering Cameroon", VOA, 18 March 2010.

Côte d'Ivoire New govt announced 5 March and newly appointed electoral commission (CEI) formally began work 5 March, but electoral timetable still frozen. Ruling FPI party early month called for complete revision of voters list, rejected by opposition RHDP, which stressed registration process complete and 3 March demanded CEI fix poll date for May.

President Gbagbo's allies demanded revamp of local electoral commissions; RHDP denounced as stalling tactic, vowed to use "all means" to counter ruling parties' "coup attempt". Tensions between Gbagbo and PM Soro's ex-rebel Forces Nouvelles (FN) on rise, with FPI pressing for complete disarmament prior to polls; FN leadership 22 March rejected linking DDR to polls. UNSC 17 March expressed concern over continuing election delays, called for polls as soon as possible.

- "I.Coast president's camp says peace process in danger", AFP, 23 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°62, *Côte d'Ivoire: What's Needed to End the Crisis*, 2 July 2009.

Guinea Accepting electoral commission (CENI) proposal, transitional govt 7 March announced presidential elections would be held 27 June, with potential 2nd round 18 July. Interim President Konaté 14 March barred transitional govt members from standing, as with junta. CENI 10 March also confirmed census of Guineans abroad would resume 22 March after process suspended 28 Sept. Reports Konaté early month threatened military that moves to sabotage transition would be punished. 5 former ministers jailed by junta for embezzlement under President Conte released 4 March. Lawyers launched week-long strike 11 March to protest govt interference in narco-trafficking cases. Evidence emerged 23 aides of Lt. Aboubacar "Toumba" Diakité, arrested after Dec shooting, tortured in detention. ICTJ 3 March condemned junta's investigation into 28 Sept massacre for under-representing violence, Human Rights Watch 4 March called for govt redress for victims. Mining company Rio Tinto announced new deal with Chinese state-backed metals group to develop the large Simandou iron ore project.

- "Guinea sets date for first democratic vote", AFP, 7 March 2010.
- For background, see Africa Briefing N°66, *Guinea: Military Rule Must End*, 16 Oct. 2009.

Guinea-Bissau As *CrisisWatch* went to press, group of soldiers 1 Apr detained PM Gomes and territories minister Sanca, freed navy chief Bubo Na Tchuto – suspected leader of 2008 failed coup attempt – from refuge in UN compound, and arrested current army chief Zamora Induta and 40 military officers. Gomes reportedly released hours later following protests calling for his reinstatement outside his Bissau office. Subsequent reports Gomes remained under house arrest. Army chief deputy Antonio Ndjai in 1 Apr press conference threatened to kill Gomes if people launched further rallies to support him. President Sanha unaffected. UNSG Ban 5 March issued report on UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office for G-B UNIOGBIS, urging rapid SSR, internal political cooperation to facilitate reforms and sustained donor support.

- "Soldiers detain head of Guinea-Bissau's army", AP, 1 Apr. 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°61, *Beyond Rule of the Gun*, 25 June 2009.

Liberia Local media 1 March reported 26 Feb violence in Voinjama, northern Lofa County, had left 4 dead; police rejected clashes religious, claimed ethnic. Lofa senator 2 March said violence was premeditated. UN Special Representative Løj rejected accusations UNMIL biased in its response.

- "Lofa Explodes", *New Democrat*, 1 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°148, *Liberia: Uneven Progress in Security Sector Reform*, 13 Jan. 2009.

➤ **Mali** Tensions between Mali and Mauritania still high following Mali's Feb release of 4 AQIM militants. Nouakchott 19 March rejected proposal to hold upcoming regional security summit in Bamako. Presidents met at sidelines of regional water summit in N'Djamena 26 March, reporting "good" relations. 1 of 3 Spanish aid workers held in north following Nov capture in Mauritania released 10 March.

- "Sahara states to hold talks on tackling al Qaeda", Reuters, 14 March 2010.

➤ **Niger** Head of CSRD junta Major Salou Djibo 1 March appointed 20-strong transitional authority composed of civilians and 5 military officers; several ministers retained posts; Mahamodou Danda appointed PM. Djibo pledged neutrality in organisation of polls, 9-month transition process and review of constitution. Police arrested some dozen aides to ousted President Tandja, including 4 ministers, from 30 March for "subversive activities" and undermining transition. 618 arrested late month in police crackdown on crime in capital. Tuareg leader Rhissa Ag Boula also arrested 30 March. Reversing previous administration's denial, PM Danda 2 March announced recognition of food insecurity and famine risk. International community, including AU and ECOWAS maintained pressure for swift transition and exclusion of junta members from polls.

- "Niger junta arrests ex-ministers for alleged plot", AFP, 29 March 2010.

➤ **Nigeria** Several major incidents of violence again erupted in north and south, while political situation remained fragile. Further attacks in Jos, Plateau State, in apparent retaliation for Jan violence: 500 mostly Christian women and children killed in 7 March attacks on 3 villages by Muslim Fulani gangs and 20 more killed in nearby village 16 March. Christian majority in region condemned military response as partisan. In Niger Delta, 3 militant attacks on oil installations over month, including 16 March bombing by dominant group MEND; no progress in regional peace process. Acting President Jonathan continued to consolidate position in power, 4 March inaugurating 26-man Presidential Advisory Council, dismissing National Security Adviser General Sarki Muktar, and 17 March dissolving cabinet. Appointments raised concerns among Muslim northerners Jonathan favouring Christians. Chair of electoral commission Maurice Iwu 16 March announced possible dates for 2011 elections of 22 Jan or 23 Apr; confirmation contingent on passage of electoral bills still before parliament. Opposition, civil society groups continued to demand Iwu's replacement, citing inability to see through needed comprehensive reforms. Pirates attacked Turkish ship off Nigerian coast 25 March.

- "500 feared killed in fresh Jos mayhem", *Daily Independent*, 7 March 2010.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°60, *Nigeria: Seizing the Moment in the Niger Delta*, 30 April 2009.



Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

➤ **Kazakhstan** During 17 March visit to Tashkent, President Nazarbayev secured endorsement for holding OSCE summit

in exchange for support of Uzbekistan's opposition to Kyrgyz and Tajik hydropower projects. Tussle between govt and former oligarchs intensified. Prosecutor general 4 March levelled fresh charges of money laundering against ex-Kazatomprom chief Mukhtar Dzhakishev, sentenced to 14 years for embezzlement and corruption 12 March.

- "Nazarbayev makes diplomatic trade-off with Karimov", EurasiaNet, 18 March 2010.

- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°97, *Islamists in Prison*, 15 Dec. 2009.

➤ **Kyrgyzstan** Growing unrest as thousands took to streets in North (Naryn), South and Bishkek. Initial protests 10 March against sharp increases in utility charges, govt privatisation policies and calling for resignation of president's son and heir apparent Maxim Bakiyev, in charge of economic policy. Culminated 17 March in opposition National Assembly (Kurultai) demanding halt to president's constitutional reforms, removal of Bakiyev relatives from power, release of political prisoners, media freedom. Opposition threatened to "restore people's power" if demands not met. Discontent compounded by 9 March news of Italian arrest warrant for head of major Kyrgyz company and reported Maxim Bakiyev associate accused of major embezzlement. Independent news websites, RFE/RL broadcasts blocked 10 March, 2 opposition newspapers banned 18 March. Official Kurultai convened 23 March in response, President Bakiyev questioned suitability of electoral and human rights democratic models for Kyrgyzstan. U.S. Gen Petraeus 10 March travelled to Bishkek after U.S. announced financing of \$5.5 million anti-terrorist training centre in Batken, on Tajikistan border. Parliament 25 March extended security services' mandate to eavesdrop on all private communication as crime prevention measure.

- "Thousands air grievances at Kyrgyz rallies", RFE/RL, 17 March 2010.

- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°176, *Women and Radicalisation in Kyrgyzstan*, 3 Sept. 2009.

➤ **Tajikistan** President Rakhmon's People's Democratic Party won 55 of 63 parliament seats in 28 Feb elections denounced by western observers for failing to meet basic democratic standards. Coming second with 2 seats, largest opposition party Islamic Renaissance Party threatened to challenge result in court. 56 Tablighi Jamaat members sentenced to jail in Dushanbe and given large fines 10 March.

- "Change you can't believe in", *Economist*, 4 March 2010.

➤ **Turkmenistan** Growing foreign interest in energy cooperation: visits for energy talks made 2 March by EU Special Rep for Central Asia Morel, 3-4 March by U.S. Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy Morningstar and 15-16 March by Russian FM Lavrov.

- "Nabucco talks 'jogging in place'", EurasiaNet, 25 March 2010.

➤ **Uzbekistan** Reported string of arrests targeting major businessmen early month stoked speculation of intensifying govt crackdown on political, business rivals. 15 suspects of July-Aug attempted murder of Tashkent chief imam and murder of anti-terrorism officer sentenced 4 March to 15-18 years in prison. 26 soldiers put on military tribunal in Tashkent 10 March for membership in Islamic organization Nur. In sign of continuing Uzbek-Tajik tension, Tajikistan 23 March filed note of protest against Tashkent's continuing blocking of over 1000 Tajikistan-bound freight trains, allegedly for technical reasons.

Along Uzbek-Kyrgyz border: 2 civilians killed 4 and 28 March in incidents of reportedly illegal border crossing from Uzbekistan.

- [“Big business in Uzbekistan targeted in wave of arrests”](#), RFE/RL, 12 March 2010.
- For latest report, see Group Asia Report N°183, [Migrants and the Economic Crisis](#), 5 Jan. 2010.

NORTH EAST ASIA

➡ **North Korea** South Korean naval ship exploded off maritime border with N Korea 26 March; 46 of 104 crew still missing. Cause unconfirmed, but S Korean Defense Minister Kim Tae Young 29 March announced they had not ruled out NK involvement; S Korean President Lee Myung-bak 30 March ordered military on alert for any “moves” by NK. Following Feb bilateral talks with Pyongyang, newly appointed Chinese representative for Koreans Wu Dawei 4 March announced 6 Party Talks expected to resume before July. Unnamed NK official 13 March said Pyongyang intends to submit proposal for denuclearisation at next 6 Party Talks session, citing early April; no confirmation from Pyongyang. UN Human Rights Council in 15 March report condemned NK’s human rights record, calling it “one big prison”. Pak Nam-gi, senior NK official blamed for controversial Dec 2009 currency reform, reportedly executed 18 March. Fears of imminent famine continue. NK 22 March announced U.S. citizen Aijalon Mahli Gomes would face trial for entering country illegally; 4th U.S. citizen charged of illegal entry in past year.

- [“North Koreans fear the country is on the verge of a new famine”](#), *Times*, 20 March 2010.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°101, [North Korea under Tightening Sanctions](#), 15 March 2010. The recent tightening of economic sanctions, compounded with domestic problems, could trigger North Korean instability as the country’s human security tragedy continues to deteriorate.



➡ **Taiwan Strait** Russian PM Putin, during 23 March meeting with Chinese Vice-President Xi Jinping in Moscow, affirmed Russian support for Chinese policy on Taiwan. Taiwan air force reportedly subject to strong criticism 23 March from govt legislators for not intercepting Russian bomber that entered Taiwan airspace 28 Jan; air force command stated aircraft detected, but deemed harmless.

- [“China adding missiles near Taiwan: navy official”](#), Reuters, 27 March 2010.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°100, [The Iran Nuclear Issue: The View from Beijing](#), 17 Feb. 2010.

SOUTH ASIA

➡ **Afghanistan** Head of NATO, ISAF forces Gen. Stanley McChrystal 17 March confirmed start of gradual military campaign to retake control of Kandahar province from Taliban, full-scale offensive expected June. President Karzai 22 March confirmed direct talks with Hezb-i-Islami militant group; Taliban still says will not engage in talks until all Western troops removed from Afghanistan. Ex-UNAMA head Kai Eide 18 March said Feb arrests of Taliban top commanders in Pakistan thwarted ongoing talks with Taliban; Pakistan rejected. At least 30 killed in 13 March string of Taliban suicide blasts in Kandahar. UN 15 March said it will allow staff evacuated for security reasons in Nov 2009 to return. Govt 16 March confirmed new law

pardoning all war crimes, human rights abuses committed before fall of Taliban 2001; rights groups highly critical, UN 25 March called on govt to repeal law. Parliament 31 March overturned Karzai’s Feb decree allowing president to appoint members of independent Electoral Complaints Commission. President Karzai 1 April said UN, “foreigners” responsible for fraud during Aug 2009 presidential election; ex-UN Deputy Special Envoy Peter Galbraith, singled out by Karzai, said accusation “absurd”.

- Comment by Nick Grono and Candace Rondeaux (Crisis Group), [“Prosecuting Taliban War Criminals”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 23 March 2010.
- [“Kandahar, a battlefield even before U.S. offensive”](#), *New York Times*, 26 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°96, [Afghanistan: Elections and the Crisis of Governance](#), 25 Nov. 2009.

➡ **Bangladesh** Human Rights Watch 17 March said hundreds of BDR border patrol force members still detained without charge following Feb 2009 mutiny, expressed concern over alleged torture and death of some 60 detainees.

- [“Hundreds held one year after massacre”](#), HRW, 17 March 2010.

➡ **Kashmir** 2 police, 1 civilian killed by suspected militants in 16 March separate Sopore, Srinagar clashes; Indian army 24 March killed 3 militants in infiltration attempt across LoC. Thousands called for “holy war” to liberate Kashmir during 23 March demonstration in Kotli inside Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. Trial against surviving gunman from Nov 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack ended 31 March, verdict expected 3 May.

- [“Pakistani hardliners vow holy war to liberate Kashmir”](#), AFP, 23 March 2010.

➡ **India (non-Kashmir)** Maoists 24 March killed at least 3 police in Orissa; 23 March derailed train in Orissa, injuring dozens. Police 3 March arrested senior Maoist leader Venkateswar Reddy in Kolkata, accused of planning Feb attack killing 25 paramilitary troops. Govt 11 March said intensifying “Operation Green Hunt” against Maoists; thousands of new paramilitary troops deployed to Orissa, Jharkhand, West Bengal.

- [“Govt says Maoist rebels weakening for the first time”](#), Reuters, 26 March 2010.

➡ **Nepal** Ex-PM Koirala, widely seen as key leader in negotiations between parties, died 20 March; Maoist leader Prachanda said death an “irreparable loss” to peace process. Govt 9 March again amended constitutional timetable; highly unlikely final draft will be ready by 28 May deadline. Army chief Gen. Gurung 11 March said will not admit Maoist soldiers into national army “en masse”; Maoists criticised as breach of peace agreement. UN 11 March said “disappointed and concerned” with slow progress of peace process. Unidentified gunmen 2 March killed independent newspaper publisher in Janakpur; in Kathmandu, hundreds of journalists protested deteriorating security for media workers 3 March. Ex-King Gyanendra 25 March said he still believes monarchy can be restored.

- [“Koirala death deals new blow to fragile Nepal government”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 March 2010.

➡ **Pakistan** Suicide attacks killed at least 45, including 9 soldiers, in Lahore 12 March, at least 14 in Saidu Sharif 13 March. Army 16 March said will end military operation in South Waziristan Agency (SWA) end month after major targets achieved; no planned North Waziristan Agency (NWA)

offensive; military to focus on “holding” SWA. Heavy fighting in Orakzai Agency continued; army claimed hundreds of militants killed over month. U.S. claimed senior al-Qaeda commander Hussein al-Yemeni killed in 8 March drone strike in Miram Shah. NWA militants 10 March killed 6 Pakistani employees of U.S. NGO in Mansehra district. U.S.-Pakistan bilateral meeting in Washington late month; U.S. Defense Sec Gates praised Pakistan’s offensives against Taliban, said U.S. will speed up military aid payments; Pakistan reportedly pressed for civilian nuclear deal. Parliamentary committee 31 March finalised proposed constitutional reforms to significantly curtail presidential powers imposed during military rule of Gens. Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf; final vote expected May.

- “Suicide blasts kill 45 in Pakistan’s Lahore”, Reuters, 12 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°185, *Reforming Pakistan’s Civil Service*, 16 Feb. 2010.

➡ **Sri Lanka** UNSG Ban 5 March announced plans to create panel of experts to advise him on options for investigating possible human rights abuses by govt and LTTE during civil war; President Rajapaksa criticised plans as “unwarranted”. UNHCHR Pillay 4 March said continued govt human rights abuses hurting prospects for post-war reconciliation. 1st of 2 court martials of ex-army chief Sarath Fonseka adjourned until April after Fonseka’s lawyers challenged their legality. Parliament 9 March reconvened for vote to extend emergency laws, in nearly continuous effect for the past 30 years. Largest Tamil TNA party 8 March dropped demand for independent Tamil state, said will accept substantial regional autonomy; Rajapaksa reiterated opposition to federalism as govt ministers promised to enact new constitution after 8 April legislative elections.

- “Sri Lankan Tamils drop demand for separate independent homeland”, *Guardian*, 14 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°186, *The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora after the LTTE*, 23 Feb. 2010.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

➡ **Indonesia** Police continued to hunt Islamic militants following Feb Aceh raid. 3 militants killed in 9 March shoot out in Tangerang, including explosives expert suspected of involvement in 2002 Bali bombings. 8 militants, 3 police, 2 civilians reported killed in clashes in Aceh during month; at least 27 arrested. In Papua, trial of KNPB pro-independence group leader Victor Yiemo for subversion began 11 March. KNPB demonstrators in Jayapura 18, 22 March called for provincial legislators to meet with U.S. President Obama during planned visit to discuss Papuan grievances; at least 15 protesters arrested. Other demonstrations held across province 22 March. Free Papua Movement (OPM) commander 15 March expressed willingness to participate in internationally-mediated dialogue with govt; army commander 24 March said Jakarta-Papua dialogue undermined national unity.

- Comment by Jim Della-Giacoma (Crisis Group), “Indonesia’s Papua: Of Roads and Road Maps”, *Lowy Interpreter*, 23 March 2010.
- Comment by Sidney Jones (Crisis Group), “Terrorism: What Have We Learned from Aceh?”, *Tempo*, 11 March 2010.
- “U.S. should justify training counter-terrorism unit”, *Human Rights Watch*, 12 March 2010.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°188, *Radicalisation and Dialogue in Papua*, 11



March 2010. A substantive dialogue between the Indonesian government and Papuan leaders could help stem political radicalisation in the country’s easternmost province.

➡ **Myanmar/Burma** Opposition NLD 29 March voted to boycott elections planned for late 2010 after junta 8 March passed new electoral laws; laws formally annulled NLD’s 1990 election win, banned anyone with criminal convictions from belonging to political party (barring opposition NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners from politics), gave NLD 7 May deadline to register or face dissolution. Suu Kyi 23 March said she was personally against participation in polls. U.S. Asst Sec State Campbell called laws “a setback”. UNSG Ban 10 March said laws fail to meet “expectations” for inclusive poll. Democracy activist Nyi Nyi Aung, imprisoned Feb, released and deported 18 March. UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar Tomas Ojea Quintana 5 March reported on “systematic” human rights violations. Continued reports of army build up in ethnic border regions increased fears of election-related violence. 20 soldiers reportedly killed 19 March by ethnic rebels in Shan state.

- “Burmese opposition sacrifices a place in the poll to stand by leader”, *Times*, 30 March 2010.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°177, *China’s Myanmar Dilemma*, 14 Sept. 2009.

➡ **Philippines** Govt 23 March confirmed proposal for new interim peace deal for Mindanao. Details unclear, but talks on deal expected to start next month. MILF negotiator Lanang Ali 26 March expressed scepticism proposal would break impasse. Clashes between govt forces and New Peoples Army (NPA) continued: 11 soldiers killed 6 March in Mindoro Oriental Province. Court of Appeals 10 March rejected habeas corpus petition from relatives of 43 health workers detained in Feb as NPA cadres. 10 NPA guerrillas surrendered 12 March. In South Sulu province: 7 Abu Sayaf militants killed in clash with military 7 March. Former Maguindanao police chief Piang M. Adam, implicated in Nov 2009 massacre, recaptured 24 March after escaping Kudarat jail 16 Feb; arrest warrants issued 25 March for 197 others suspected of involvement in massacre. Police 23 March warned al-Qaeda linked militants and communist guerrillas planning attacks to disrupt May elections. Indonesia and Philippines 22 March agreed to intensify joint sea patrols to deal with arms smuggling and terrorism; followed Indonesian request for assistance in capturing suspected Indonesian militant believed to be in Philippines.

- “Philippine troops kill seven ‘militants’”, *BBC*, 7 March 2010.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°98, *The Philippines: After the Maguindanao Massacre*, 21 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Thailand** Protests by opposition “red shirt” supporters of former PM Thaksin began 14 March with reported 100,000 marching in Bangkok demanding resignation of PM Abhisit’s govt and new polls. Smaller protests continued mid-late month. 28, 29 March televised talks between Abhisit and protest representatives ended in stalemate; protestors 30 March said not interested in further talks. Several small bomb explosions outside banks, govt ministries. Ahead of protests, govt 9 March imposed Internal Security Act (ISA), 11 March began deploying 50,000 troops in Bangkok. Govt extended ISA 23 March; opposition lawmakers 24 March boycotted

parliament in protest. Violence continued in restive South: 3 people shot dead by suspected insurgents 11 March.

- [“As father fades, his children fight”](#), *Economist*, 18 March 2010.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°181, [Southern Thailand: Moving towards Political Solutions?](#), 8 Dec. 2009.

➤ **Timor-Leste** Dili court 3 March convicted 23 rebels of involvement in 2008 attacks on President Ramos-Horta, PM Gusmao; 4 others acquitted. Ramos-Horta 11 March repeated opposition to establishment of international tribunal to examine human rights abuses during Indonesian occupation, 16 March said Indonesia still needs to apologise for “suffering” it caused during occupation.

- [“Court jails East Timor plot rebels”](#), Al Jazeera, 3 March 2010.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°180, [Handing Back Responsibility to Timor-Leste’s Police](#), 3 Dec. 2009.



BALKANS

➤ **Bosnia** Continuing provocative rhetoric by Republika Srpska (RS) leadership: RS PM Dodik 22 March talked of “peaceful divorce” of BiH entities. EU High Rep Ashton 17 March criticised RS leadership for undermining authority of High Representative Inzko and obstructing peace process. Former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic 1-2 March delivered opening statement at Hague war crimes trial, denying charges, describing war waged by Bosnian Serbs during 1992-1995 as “just and holy”. Veselin Vlahovic “Batko”, wanted for alleged war crimes committed under Karadzic, arrested in Spain 2 March. BiH, Serbia and Montenegro early month filed competing requests for his extradition.

- [“Karadzic trial, Ganic extradition request awaken ghosts of Bosnian war”](#), RFE/RL, 5 March 2010.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°57, [Bosnia’s Dual Crisis](#), 12 Nov. 2009.

➤ **Kosovo** EULEX mission 26 March opened office in north Kosovo, so-called EU house, to support rule of law, governance goals in north. EU Enlargement Commissioner Fuele 19 March confirmed Kosovo’s membership perspective in discussions with President Sejdiu, PM Thaci. EULEX car shot at 15 March at border crossing with Serbia; EU condemned attack as undermining Kosovo’s accession efforts. Macedonia 15 March opened first embassy in Kosovo during visit to Pristina by FM Milososki.

- [“Is Former Yugoslavia stuck on the sand dune of history?”](#), RFE/RL, 26 March 2010.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°56, [Kosovo: Štrpce, a Model Serb Enclave?](#), 15 Oct. 2009.

➤ **Macedonia** Continued stalemate over resolving long standing Athens-Skopje name dispute. Greek Alternate FM Droutsas early month suggested adopting geographic qualifier to distinguish Greek province of Macedonia from neighbouring state. Meeting between PMs Gruevski and Papandreou on sidelines of EU summit in Brussels 25 March failed to produce results.

- [“No progress in Greece-Macedonia talks”](#), Balkan Insight, 26 March 2010.

➤ **Serbia** Parliament 31 March adopted resolution condemning 1995 Srebrenica massacre, apologising to victims’ families. UK

authorities 1 March arrested Ejup Ganic, member of Bosnia’s wartime presidency, on Serbian warrant relating to alleged role in 1992 attack on Yugoslav People’s Army convoy leaving Sarajevo under negotiated safe passage. Serbian Ministry of Justice 10 March requested extradition of Ganic; Bosnia 3 March filed rival request. Thousands protested outside British, Serbian embassies in Sarajevo demanding Ganic’s release. 20 March EU-Balkans cooperation summit in Slovenia highlighted political, ethnic divisions: President Tadic refused to attend over Kosovo’s state-level participation; Bosnian PM Spiric (Bosnian Serb) walked out during Kosovo PM Thaci speech.

- [“Adoption of Srebrenica declaration draws mixed reactions”](#), Balkan Insight, 31 March 2010.

CAUCASUS

➤ **Armenia/Turkey** U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee 4 March, Swedish Parliament 11 March narrowly passed non-binding resolutions recognising 1915 Ottoman killings of Armenians as genocide. Turkey responded by recalling ambassadors for consultations; Turkish PM Erdogan 16 March threatened to expel illegal Armenian workers from Turkey. Armenian President Sarkisian 23 March warned Turkish procrastination over ratification of Oct 2009 rapprochement protocols would lead to other states adopting similar resolutions. Both sides toughened positions on rapprochement over month. Armenian deputy FM 12 March maintained historical sub-commission envisioned by protocols would discuss only “aftermath” of genocide, demand perceived by Turkey as undermining original mandate of commission. Erdogan 24 March stated Turkey will open border with Armenia only once it withdraws from Nagorno-Karabakh.

- [“US genocide recognition resolution fosters hopes for peace with Turkey”](#), EurasiaNet, 11 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N° 199, [Turkey and Armenia: Opening Minds, Opening Borders](#), 14 Apr. 2009.

➤ **Armenia** Council of Europe Committee for Prevention of Torture 19 March called for public inquiry into March 2008 post-election violence, expressing concern about ill-treatment of opposition members in detention. Appellate court 10 March rejected acquittal of opposition leader Nikol Pashinian sentenced for alleged role in 2008 unrest, but halved original 7-year prison term.

- [“Armenian politicians divided over Council of Europe criticism”](#), RFE/RL, 23 March 2010.

➤ **Azerbaijan** Appeal court 11 March upheld verdict of 2 youth activists arrested Aug 2009 and sentenced 11 Nov to 2/2.5 years in prison on hooliganism charges, condemned domestically, internationally as politically motivated. Amid strong domestic, international criticism of decision, President Aliyev 17 March pardoned editor of opposition daily *Azadliq* Qanimat Zahidov convicted for hooliganism 2007. Ministry of National Security (MNS) 17-19 March interrogated 5 editors-in-chief of major opposition newspapers for alleging MNS involvement in 2005 murder of journalist Elmar Huseynov. 5 men to face criminal charges for hooliganism in 13 Feb police clash with procession marking death of prophet Muhammad.

- [“U.S. Helsinki Group slams Baku court’s refusal of bloggers’ appeal”](#), RFE/RL, 15 March 2010.

➤ **Chechnya (Russia)** In 29 March video statement, “emir of North Caucasus” Doku Umarov claimed responsibility for 29 March twin suicide bombings on Moscow metro (see North Caucasus). Chechen President Kadyrov 18 March reported 6 militants, including close aide to Umarov, killed in 17 March operation in Vedeno district. 3 policemen reportedly killed in operation. 2 policemen shot 14 March by militants in operation near village of Bamut. 1 Russian serviceman killed early month by improvised explosive device in Urus-Martan district.

- “[Top Arab militants and police reportedly killed in Vedeno battle](#)”, EDM, 19 March 2010.

➤ **North Caucasus (non-Chechnya)** Twin suicide bombings on metro 29 March killed 39, injured over 70, in deadliest attack in Moscow in 6 years. President Medvedev, PM Putin 29 March vowed to “destroy” perpetrators. FSB 30 March said North Caucasus (NC) Islamists believed responsible. In video publicised 31 March “emir of North Caucasus” Doku Umarov claimed responsibility, said retaliation for FSB killings of civilians in 11-12 Feb special operation in Ingushetia near border with Chechnya, threatened more attacks, repeated Jan 2010 pledge to take war to Russian cities. Second set of twin suicide bombings in town of Kizlyar, Dagestan, 31 March killed at least 12, including local police chief and 8 policemen; injured 23. 2 killed in Dagestan 31 March after car packed with explosives blew up. Killings of prominent Islamic ideologues by Russian military over month. Islamist guerrilla leader Alexander Tikhomirov, aka Said Buryatsky, responsible for 2009 string of high-profile suicide attacks in Ingushetia, killed 2 March in key security operation south east of Nazran. 7 other militants reportedly killed in operation; 16 suspected militants, of which 5 were policemen, taken into custody; 10 later arrested as suspects in connection with 27 Nov bombing of Moscow-St Petersburg Nevsky Express train killing 26. Leader of rebels in Kabardino-Balkaria, Anzor Astemirov, aka Amir Seyfullakh, third-most-senior NC emirate operative killed 24 March in capital Nalchik. Salambek Akhmadov, so-called “emir of Grozny”, killed 22 March in operation in Makhachkala, Dagestan. 7 other militants killed in operations in Ingushetia, Dagestan over month. Commander of Russian interior ministry troops Gen. Rogozhkin 26 March said up to 500 militants currently operating in NC.

- “[Chechen rebel says he planned attacks](#)”, *New York Times*, 30 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°192, [Russia’s Dagestan: Conflict Causes](#), 3 June 2008.

➤ **Georgia** Fictitious report on pro-govt IMEDI TV simulating new Russian invasion of Georgia 13 March caused widespread panic; triggered international rebuke of perceived Georgian provocation. Opposition figures denounced their depiction in report, accused govt of setting up TV report ahead of May local elections to discredit opposition as supportive of Russian belligerence. Following Feb cooperation agreement between opposition leader and former PM Noghaideli and United Russia party leader Gryzlov, former parliament speaker Burjanadze 4 March met with Russian PM Putin and FM Lavrov in Moscow. 6 Ossetians, reportedly only remaining detainees since Aug 2008 war, released 29-31 March. After more than 3-year shutdown, Russia, Georgia 1 March reopened Verkhny Lars border crossing, only land crossing between countries not located in separatist regions; visa restrictions and Russian embargo on Georgian products remain. EU Special Rep for

South Caucasus Semneby 12 March visited Abkhaz capital Sukhumi to discuss engagement with de facto authorities.

- “[“Wag the dog”-style TV report has mixed political impact](#)”, EurasiaNet, 22 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°202, [Abkhazia: Deepening Dependence](#), 26 February 2010.

➤ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Azerbaijani FM reiterated over month 15 Feb endorsement “with some exceptions” of updated version of reconciliation framework; 13 March accused Yerevan of obstructing process by evading response. Armenia 18 March retorted Azerbaijan’s “exceptions” outweighed acceptable provisions. Azerbaijani FM 18 March stated Baku will accept referendum on status of N-K only if held on entire Azerbaijani territory. Armenian President Sarkisian 23 March restated commitment to withdraw from 7 Azerbaijani districts around N-K in exchange for N-K security, self-determination. Armenian defence ministry claimed 1 sergeant killed in Azerbaijani cease-fire violation 1 March; 12 March reported killing 3 members of alleged Azerbaijani subversive grouping 3 March. Azerbaijani media 28 March reported 1 soldier killed in clash with Armenian forces in village bordering N-K.

- “[Azerbaijani foreign minister discloses details of ‘Madrid Principles’](#)”, RFE/RL, 15 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°55, [Nagorno-Karabakh: Getting to a Breakthrough](#), 7 Oct. 2009.

EASTERN EUROPE

➤ **Belarus** During 15-17 March visit to Caracas, President Lukashenka signed series of agreements with counterpart Chavez, including deal to import 80,000 barrels of oil per day starting 1 May 2010. In 24 March visit to Minsk, Chinese VP Xi Jinping promised \$1bn in loan to Belarus. European Parliament 10 March adopted resolution condemning Feb clampdown on Union of Poles in Belarus, organisation representing large ethnic Polish minority; called for release of prisoners of conscience.

- “[U.S. says behind veneer, Belarus President holds all power](#)”, RFE/RL, 12 March 2010.

➤ **Moldova** In show of support for PM Filat’s reform agenda, international donors conference 24 March promised \$2.6bn aid-package to country.

- “[EU enlargement chief tackles Balkans, Moldova, Eastern neighbors, and ‘elephant in the room’](#)”, RFE/RL, 9 March 2010.

➤ **Ukraine** After 3 March no-confidence vote in PM Tymoshenko’s govt, newly elect President Yanukovych 11 March formed new governing coalition; appointed Russian-born former Finance Minister Mykola Azarov to PM post. Yanukovych 1 March made first foreign trip to Brussels; 3 March visited Moscow.

- “[Ukraine appoints new prime minister, forms governing coalition](#)”, RFE/RL, 11 March 2010.

WESTERNEUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➤ **Basque Country (Spain)** French President Sarkozy 24 March pledged to “eradicate” ETA bases in France after Paris policeman shot dead by alleged ETA member 17 March. Spain raised terrorism alert following shooting. 2 suspected ETA members arrested in Lisbon and London, 12, 14 March. Spanish judge 1 March accused Venezuelan ex-govt official of

facilitating contacts between ETA and Colombian FARC rebel group (see Venezuela).

- ["Sarkozy says France to 'eradicate' Eta bases"](#), BBC, 23 March 2010.

- ➡ **Cyprus** Intensified reunification talks continued: Greek Cypriot leader Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Talat discussed economy and EU affairs, 4, 16 March. Following last meeting before 18 April elections in Turkish Cypriot north, leaders 30 March issued joint statement stressing progress on governance, power sharing, EU and economy chapters. Rumours about Spanish proposal for multilateral conference dispelled by Spanish FM Moratinos during 10 March visit. Greek Cypriots 2 March expressed dissatisfaction with recent efforts by Turkey to engage them in dialogue. European Court of Human Rights 5 March ruled Immovable Property Commission in north an effective domestic remedy for property disputes; ruling, welcomed by Talat and criticised by Christofias, effectively recognised that restitution not possible in all cases. Talat 6 March launched re-election campaign for 18 April poll in north. Christofias 18 March said he will not seek re-election in 2013 if Cyprus problem not solved.
- Comment by Hugh Pope (Crisis Group), ["Waiting for Miracles on Cyprus"](#), *Current History*, 15 March 2010.
 - ["A fillip for Talat?"](#), *Economist*, 11 March 2010.
 - For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°201, [Cyprus: Reunification or Partition?](#), 30 Sept. 2009.

- ➡ **Northern Ireland** Northern Ireland Assembly 9 March approved bill on devolution of policing and justice powers from London to Belfast. Sinn Fein, DUP voted in favour; Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) voted against. Powers to be devolved 12 April. Suspected dissidents 21 March shot at police officers inspecting suspect device on Belfast-Dublin rail line after a series bomb scares disrupted rail service; no injuries.
- ["Gordon Brown hails Stormont vote to devolve policing and justice powers"](#), *Times*, 9 March 2010.

- ➡ **Turkey** AKP government presented constitutional reform proposals to parliament late month. Draft reform package, including restricting Constitutional Court's ability to ban parties, greater govt oversight of judicial appointments, granting civilian courts jurisdiction over military personnel, criticised by senior judges as erosion of judicial independence. Govt promised referendum if opposition parties prevent two-thirds majority necessary to pass measures. Indictment of 33 officers for alleged "Cage" plot to destabilise AKP govt by attacking minorities reported 16 March. Arrests continued in "Ergenekon" coup plot case, including 20 military officers 18 March; 10 arrests 22 March. Soldier killed in 14 March clash with PKK, 3 more died in 30 March bomb explosion, Hakkari province. 22 suspected al-Qaeda militants arrested in central Anatolia, 29 March.
- ["Turkish constitutional reform plans anger judges"](#), *Guardian*, 22 March 2010.



Latin America / Caribbean

- ➡ **Bolivia** 3 ex-presidents 18 March criticised govt's attempt to pass new law that would reopen criminal cases against them.

U.S. State Dept report 1 March criticised Bolivia for alleged 50% rise in coca growing 2007-2009; govt rejected.

- ["Bolivia: ex presidentes acusan a Morales"](#), BBC, 21 March 2010.

- ➡ **Colombia** President Uribe's ruling coalition made gains in 14 March legislative elections, retained majority in Congress, Senate. Pro-Uribe U Party 8 March confirmed ex-Defence Minister Juan Manuel Santos as its candidate for 30 May presidential elections; ex-FM Noemí Sanín elected Conservative Party candidate. In significant blow to FARC, army 30 March effectively dismantled rebels' 50th Front after killing commander "Enrique", capturing 7 other leaders. FARC unilaterally released 2 military hostages 29, 30 March in ICRC-led operations. 9 killed, 50 injured in 25 March car bomb in front of Buenaventura attorney general's office, unclear if FARC or drug traffickers responsible.
- Comment by Markus Schultze-Kraft (Crisis Group), ["Where is Colombia's Presidential Race Headed With Uribe Out?"](#), *Inter-American Dialogue*, 5 March 2010.
 - ["All uribistas now"](#), *Economist*, 18 March 2010.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°30, [Ending Colombia's FARC Conflict: Dealing the Right Card](#), 26 March 2009.

- ➡ **Ecuador** FM Patiño 18 March said normalisation of diplomatic ties with Colombia still "difficult", cited Colombia's refusal to share evidence seized after March 2008 airstrike on FARC camp inside Ecuador. Govt early month deployed 1,300 police to Cuenca after influential indigenous organisation Conaie threatened anti-govt "uprising"; protests eventually conducted peacefully.
- ["Aún sin fecha de intercambio para restablecer las relaciones"](#), *Infolatam*, 18 March 2010.

- ➡ **Haiti** Donors pledged US\$5.3bn in short-term aid over next 2 years at 31 March UN-led donors conference, additional US\$3.7bn in long-term aid; UNSG Ban said donations "far exceeded expectations". U.S. State Sec Clinton 9 March urged Haiti to hold delayed legislative elections "as soon as possible"; President Preval yet to set new election date. Préval mid-month confirmed he will not stand for presidential re-election after end of his term Feb 2011. U.S. troops started withdrawal 7 March, 10,000-strong MINUSTAH to take over security.
- Comment by Kimberly Abbott (Crisis Group), ["Telling Haiti's Stories"](#), *Huffington Post*, 29 March 2010.
 - ["Haiti receives \\$5 billion in aid pledges"](#), *Miami Herald*, 31 March 2010.

Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Report N°32, [Haiti: Stabilisation and Reconstruction after the Quake](#), 31 March 2010. A Haitian-owned and led process, based on broad consensus among Haitians and with resolute international support, is needed to build the country back better after the devastating earthquake.



- ➡ **Venezuela** Spanish judge 1 March accused ex-ministry of agriculture official Arturo Cubillas of facilitating contacts between FARC and ETA rebels, unclear if with govt knowledge; President Chávez rejected. Govt 23 Feb arrested influential opposition figure Oswaldo Álvarez Paz for "spreading false information" after he accused govt of ties to FARC, ETA; 26 March arrested head of anti-govt TV station Globovision for "contempt", insulting Chávez in public. 1 March U.S. State Dept report said cocaine trafficking from Venezuela increased sharply during 2009.
- ["Venezuela, el gran 'balneario' de ETA"](#), *El País*, 21 March 2010.



Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

➡ **Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories** Tension in U.S.-Israel relations emerged after plan to build 1600 homes in E Jerusalem announced during 9-10 March visit by U.S. VP Biden. Biden, Sec State Clinton, senior Obama aide strongly condemned announcement; Palestinian Authority said no longer willing to participate in U.S.-brokered indirect talks previously approved by PLO, Arab League. Talks between Israeli PM Netanyahu and President Obama in Washington 23-24 March failed to resolve disagreement. Middle East Quartet at 19 March Moscow meeting called for Israel to freeze settlement activity, negotiations to achieve two-state solution within two years. Palestinians clashed with Israeli forces in E Jerusalem and W Bank, including widespread riots in Jerusalem 16 March; 4 youths killed by Israeli soldiers in 2 incidents near Nablus 20, 21 March. Israel imposed closure on W Bank 12-17 March. Rockets fired into Israel from Gaza 18 March killed migrant worker; several Israeli airstrikes hit strip 19-24 March. 2 Israeli soldiers, at least 1 militant killed in 26 March clash between troops, gunmen inside Gaza border near Khan Yunis; Israeli tanks subsequently entered strip. Israeli troops fired on Palestinian Land Day demonstrators near southern Gaza border fence 30 March. EU foreign policy chief Ashton, UNSG Ban visited Gaza 18, 21 March; Ban called for Israel to end blockade of strip.

- Comment by Robert Malley and Peter Harling (Crisis Group), “[Shifting Allegiances in the Middle East Mean Opportunities for President Obama](#)”, *Washington Post*, 6 March 2010.
- “[A wall of suspicion](#)”, *Economist*, 25 March 2010.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°91, [Palestine: Salvaging Fatah](#), 12 Nov. 2009.

➡ **Lebanon** President Suleiman 9 March convened national defence strategy dialogue attended by representatives of different factions; Hizbollah’s right to retain arms central issue in talks, subsequently adjourned until 15 April. Druze leader Jumblatt 31 March met with Syrian President Assad in Damascus after expressing regret for past harsh attacks on Assad in 13 March interview. Tension in Palestinian camps as Palestinian Authority President Abbas 10 March announced reorganisation of Palestinian leadership in Lebanon including replacements of Fatah head Abu al-Aynayn, PLO armed forces chief Maqdash; Maqdash refused to step down.

- “[Lebanon resumes defense talks on Hezbollah’s military wing](#)”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 March 2010.

➡ **Syria** Turkish PM Erdogan 9 March said Syria willing to resume Turkish-mediated indirect talks with Israel, “positive signals” coming from Israel. EU foreign policy chief Ashton met President Assad, FM Muallim during 15-16 March Damascus visit; reportedly discussed resumption of stalled negotiations on EU association agreement. Security forces 21 March clashed with Kurds celebrating New Year in Raqqa, killing at least 1.

- “[Turkey sees positive signs for Israel-Syria talks](#)”, Reuters, 9 March 2010.
- For latest reports, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°92, [Reshuffling the Cards? \(I\): Syria’s Evolving Strategy](#), 14 Dec.

2009, and Crisis Group Middle East Report N°93, [Reshuffling the Cards? \(II\): Syria’s New Hand](#), 16 Dec. 2009.

GULF

➡ **Bahrain** Main Shiite parliamentary bloc al-Wefaq criticised by Sunni groups over 4 March call for cabinet to be appointed by parliament instead of king. Youth arrested for 16 March attempted bomb attack on UK embassy; attack followed public campaign against UK ambassador for meeting al-Wefaq leaders.

- “[Bahrain Shia demand cabinet change](#)”, Al Jazeera, 5 March 2010.

➡ **Iran** U.S. circulated draft resolution for sanctions on Iran over nuclear program in UNSC early month; Russia reportedly willing to back limited sanctions, but China, Brazil, Turkey expressed reservations. Discussions among major powers continued late month; P5+1 states including China 31 March agreed to begin talks on UNSC sanctions resolution. Several detained opposition leaders released on bail in run-up to 21 March Iranian New Year. Judiciary 15 March said 6 sentenced to death for protests in Dec. Traditional New Year fire ritual celebrated across country 16 March despite Supreme Leader’s ruling that practice un-Islamic; police said 50 arrested in Tehran during festival. Parliament 8 March passed watered-down version of President Ahmadinejad’s controversial bill to cut state subsidies. Revolutionary Guards 18 March reported killing several members of Jundallah armed group near Pakistan border.

- Comment by Stephanie T. Kleine-Ahlbrandt (Crisis Group), “[Why China Drags its Feet on UN Sanctions Against Iran](#)”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 March 2010.
- “[The opposition marks time](#)”, *Economist*, 18 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°100, [The Iran Nuclear Issue: The View from Beijing](#), 17 Feb. 2010.

➡ **Iraq** Potentially lengthy negotiations to form new govt underway following 7 March parliamentary election. Preliminary results 26 March gave former PM Allawi’s secularist/Sunni-backed Iraqiya alliance 91 seats, marginally ahead of PM Maliki’s largely Shiite State of Law bloc with 89; with 163 seats needed to secure majority, both leading alliances began talks with potential coalition partners. Both blocs alleged fraud as results gradually emerged during month. Election commission rejected calls for recount by Maliki, President Talabani 20, 21 March; Maliki 31 March said formally appealing against preliminary results. Accountability and Justice Commission 29 March said 6 elected candidates to be disqualified for alleged Baathist ties. At least 38 killed in attacks on polling day, mainly in Baghdad. In run-up to election 33 killed by bombings in Baaquba 3 March; 17 died in attacks on early voting, Baghdad, 4 March; at least 3 killed in 6 March bombing, Najaf. Attacks continued across country following polls: 15 killed by bombs in Falluja 15 March, Musayyab 16 March; 5 soldiers shot dead at checkpoint near Baghdad 24 March; bombs in Khalis 26 March killed 59; 6 killed in Qaim 28 March; 5 killed in Kerbala 29 March.

- Comment by Joost Hiltermann (Crisis Group), “[Kurds No Closer to Taking Kurkuk after Iraqi Elections](#)”, *Foreign Policy*, 8 March 2010.
- “[Maliki contests the result of Iraq vote](#)”, *New York Times*, 27 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°94, [Iraq’s Uncertain Future: Elections and Beyond](#), 25 Feb. 2010.

➡ **Saudi Arabia** Authorities 24 March revealed arrests of 113 members of 3 al-Qaeda cells allegedly planning attacks on security forces, oil facilities; suspects mainly Saudi, Yemeni, most arrested in southern Jizan province.

- [“Riyadh says arrests militants planning oil attacks”](#), Reuters, 24 March 2010.

➡ **Yemen** As Feb ceasefire between govt, Houthi-led rebels in north held, rebels released over 170 prisoners 17 March; President Saleh declared end to war in north 19 March. Violence continued in south between govt forces, supporters of separatist Southern Movement, leaving dead on both sides. At least 6 killed in 1 March gun battle, Zinjibar; 3 killed as police clashed with protesters in Habilain 4 March. Govt arrest sweep across southern provinces 6 March led to armed clashes in Dhali; further clashes in Dhali reported 11, 16-18, 27 March. Several explosions in Aden 15 March. 11 al-Qaeda suspects arrested in Sanaa 3 March. Govt said 3 al-Qaeda members killed in 14-15 March airstrikes, Abyan province; opposition sources reported civilian deaths.

- [“Yemen to free rebel prisoners, clashes hit south”](#), Reuters, 18 March 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°86, [Yemen: Defusing the Saada Time Bomb](#), 27 May 2009.

NORTH AFRICA

➡ **Algeria** Algeria and Sahel states including Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania agreed cooperation against al-Qaeda presence in region at 16 March Algiers meeting. Authorities 16 March reported arrest of 6 suspected terrorist cell members, Bordj Menaiel. Roadside bombs killed 2 soldiers near Bouira 25 March. Army killed 3 militants in 24-26 March

operation near Tizi Ouzou.

- [“Sahara states say agree joint action against Qaeda”](#), Reuters, 17 March 2010.

➡ **Egypt** President Mubarak’s absence from country 6-27 March for surgery in Germany renewed speculation over health, succession. Former IAEA head Mohamed ElBaradei returned to Egypt late month, continued public campaign for political reform following Feb launch of National Association for Change. Over 40 members of Muslim Brotherhood arrested across country 12 March; at least 45 more arrested 23 March. Muslims and Christians clashed in Marsa Matruh 12 March.

- [“Political levers lock into gear in election year”](#), *New York Times*, 14 March 2010.

➡ **Mauritania** Court 15 March charged 7 for Nov kidnapping of Spanish aid workers held by al-Qaeda in Mali. Court 29 March charged 20 alleged drug traffickers arrested late Feb near Mali border with links to al-Qaeda. Foreign Minister 20 March announced severing of relations with Israel complete.

- [“Mauritania kidnapping: 7 charged”](#), AFP, 15 March 2010.

➡ **Morocco** At least 20 Christian aid workers expelled from country 9 March for alleged missionary activity. Govt reported 6 members of terrorist cell arrested 2 March; escape attempt by 10 convicted Salafia Jihadia militants thwarted in Kenitra 9 March.

- [“Morocco steps up expulsions of Christian aid workers”](#), Reuters, 12 March 2010.

➡ **Western Sahara** UN envoy Ross met regional leaders in 17-25 March tour of Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Sahrawi refugee camps, in push to revive negotiations over territory.

- [“Western Sahara impasse continues despite UN diplomacy”](#), Magharebia, 30 March 2010.

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