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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 more than 110 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 50 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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August 2005 Trends



Deteriorated Situations

Bangladesh (p.5) North Caucasus (Russia) (p.8)
Côte d'Ivoire (p.3) Serbia & Montenegro (p.7)
Ecuador (p.9) Haiti (p.9) Sierra Leone (p.4)
Iran (p.11) Iraq (p.11) Sri Lanka (p.6)
Maldives (p.5)



Improved Situations

Chad (p.2)
Indonesia (p.6)
Israel/Occupied Territories (p.10)
Liberia (p.4)
Western Sahara (p.12)



Unchanged Situations

Afghanistan (p.5), Albania (p.7), Algeria (p.11), Angola (p.3), Armenia (p.8), Azerbaijan (p.8), Bahrain (p.10), Basque Country (Spain) (p.9), Belarus (p.8), Bolivia (p.9), Bosnia & Herzegovina (p.7), Burundi (p.2), Central African Republic (p.2), Chechnya (Russia) (p.8), China (internal) (p.6), Colombia (p.9), Cyprus (p.9), Democratic Republic of Congo (p.2), Egypt (p.11), Ethiopia/Eritrea (p.2), Georgia (p.8), Guinea (p.4), Guinea-Bissau (p.4), India (non-Kashmir) (p.5), Kashmir (p.5), Kazakhstan (p.4), Kosovo (p.7), Kyrgyzstan (p.4), Lebanon (p.10), Macedonia (p.7), Mauritania (p.12), Moldova (p.8), Myanmar/Burma (p.6), Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) (p.8), Nepal (p.5), Nigeria (p.4), North Korea (p.6), Northern Ireland (UK) (p.9), Pakistan (p.6), Papua New Guinea (p.7), Philippines (p.7), Rwanda (p.2), Saudi Arabia (p.11), Somalia (p.3), Sudan (p.3), Syria (p.10), Taiwan Strait (p.6), Tajikistan (p.4), Tanzania (p.2), Thailand (p.7), Togo (p.4), Turkey (p.9), Turkmenistan (p.4), Uganda (p.2), Uzbekistan (p.5), Venezuela (p.10), Yemen (p.11), Zimbabwe (p.3)

September 2005 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alert

Afghanistan
Iraq



Conflict Resolution Opportunity

None

Crisis Group

Crisis Group is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with over 110 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict. Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, Crisis Group produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers, and backed up with high level advocacy. Crisis Group is chaired by former European Commissioner for External Relations Lord Patten of Barnes, and its President and Chief Executive is former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.




Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

➤ Burundi Important milestone in peace process as parliament elected as president Pierre Nkurunziza, head of former Hutu rebel group CNDD-FDD; inaugurated 26 August, formed government 31 August with 60/40 Hutu-Tutsi ratio in accordance with constitution. Local elections to be held 19 and 23 September. National Liberation Forces (FNL) intensified attacks, putting pressure on new government: Bujumbura shelled with mortars 18 August, while military positions in west and north attacked, killing 3 soldiers and 10 rebels. Former FDD rebels handed in weapons to UN 12 August, symbolically renouncing war. Rwanda, Burundi and UNHCR signed repatriation agreement for Burundian refugees.

- "New Burundi president promises peace", CNN, 26 Aug. 2005.
- "FNL shells capital on eve of presidential poll", IRIN, 19 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°20, *Elections in Burundi: The Peace Wager*, 9 Dec. 2004.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°31, *Elections in Burundi: A Radical Shake-Up of the Political Landscape*, 15 August 2005. Burundi's general elections are a welcome step towards lasting peace, but also bring significant risks. Some of the dangers now facing Burundi appeared during the election period itself. The polls have left key political figures with uncertain futures, and for the first time since independence, Hutu-Tutsi interethnic conflict has been eclipsed by a violent power struggle between two traditionally Hutu parties, the CNDD-FDD, the poll's victors, and FRODEBU, the former governing party, which was a major loser. Most Tutsis in power now belong to traditionally Hutu parties, but it is crucial that the CNDD-FDD preserve the spirit of the Arusha Agreement by involving the main Tutsi parties in the administration. All parties must also focus on resolving the ongoing war with PALIPEHUTU-FNL.



➤ Central African Republic 4,000 CAR refugees fled to Chad after unidentified armed groups attacked villages in northern Paoua region 7 and 9 August.

- "Another 4,000 Central Africans flee to Chad, recount village raids", IRIN, 17 Aug. 2005.

➤ Chad Northern Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (MDJT) and government agreed end to 7-year hostilities. Accord open to other rebel groups for 3 months; rebels to be integrated into national army. Private media went on strike, accusing President Déby of "creeping dictatorship".

- "Habré henchmen ousted", Human Rights Watch news, 12 Aug. 2005.

➤ Democratic Republic of Congo Voter registration moved forward with massive turnout in Kivus; ended in Orientale and Bas-Congo provinces after extension due to transport and security difficulties; 2.9 million voters registered in Kinshasa. UN sent 700 troops to Ituri region after militia attacked registration centres 22 August, killing 1. Médecins Sans Frontières closed all but 1 base in Ituri for

staff safety. During 25 August tripartite meeting, DR Congo, Uganda and Rwanda gave Rwandan Hutu rebels (FDLR) until 30 September to disarm or face consequences. Rebel leader Gen. Laurent Nkunda threatened to overthrow President Kabila 29 August. FDLR and Mai Mai militias killed 4 Congolese soldiers in North Kivu 12 August. In southern Katanga province, displaced slowly began returning home, despite continued fear of militia attacks; 4,000 gunmen disarmed in Katanga through local program to trade weapons for bicycles. DR Congo and Tanzania agreed to repatriate 152,000 Congolese refugees to South Kivu despite UNHCR security concerns.

- "UN cleared to help prepare for Congo elections", AlertNet, 29 Aug. 2005.
- Comment by Jason Stearns (Crisis Group), "Rwanda's genocide still echoes in Congo", *The Globe and Mail*, 24 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°25, *The Congo: Solving the FDLR Problem Once and for All*, 12 May 2005.

➤ Rwanda Rwandan Hutu rebels (FDLR) in DR Congo given until 30 September to disarm or face consequences during U.S.-sponsored tripartite meeting in Kigali between DR Congo, Uganda and Rwanda; FDLR free to return to Rwanda if denounce rebellion. Survivors complained to government over July release of thousands of genocide suspects. Kigali and Bujumbura signed refugee framework agreement with UNHCR on repatriation of Burundian refugees.

- "Officials: Rwanda rebels given ultimatum", CNN, 25 Aug. 2005.
- "Release of suspects in the 1994 genocide angers survivors", IRIN, 9 Aug. 2005.

➤ Tanzania Campaign for 30 October elections officially began 21 August. Fears of further politically motivated violence after rioting on Zanzibar and Pemba injured 10. President Mkapa called for international donors not to interfere in polls.

- "Violence rocks Zanzibar", *East African Standard*, 21 Aug. 2005.

➤ Uganda Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) responded poorly to new radio initiative inviting rebels to re-establish contact with mediators. Ugandan troops killed 26 rebels in clashes on both sides of Sudan border, including senior LRA officer Lt.-Col. Lobul. After critics questioned flight safety conditions following death of Sudanese rebel leader John Garang in crash of Ugandan helicopter, President Museveni said maybe not accident, promised full investigation. Journalist charged with sedition and radio station closed for week after hosting discussion about Garang's death; government said debate could have sparked genocide.

- "Government lifts ban on private radio station", IRIN, 19 Aug. 2005.
- "Ugandan leader raises doubts on Garang death", *International Herald Tribune*, 6 Aug. 2005.
- For background see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°23, *Shock Therapy for Northern Uganda's Peace Process*, 11 Apr. 2005.

HORN OF AFRICA

➤ Ethiopia/Eritrea UN Special Humanitarian Envoy Martti Ahtisaari began trip to region 23 August; called for more

flexible delivery of aid. Eritrean Foreign Minister Ali Said died of heart attack 28 August.

- [“UN envoy calls for greater flexibility in providing aid”](#), IRIN, 29 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°68, [Ethiopia and Eritrea: War or Peace?](#), 24 Sept. 2003.

◁ Somalia President Abdillahi Yusuf visited Ethiopia, prompting treason accusations by Mogadishu-based MPs claiming he sought military assistance. UN envoy François Fall presented leaders of both factions with “agenda for dialogue” following meetings with parties early August. PM Ghedi said 29 August that national disarmament operation would begin; declared would take control of Mogadishu within 3 months.

- [“Somalia’s president returns to Kenya”](#), *East African Standard*, 22 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°95, [Counter-Terrorism in Somalia: Losing Hearts and Minds?](#), 11 July 2005.

◁ Sudan Despite untimely death of John Garang - leader of southern Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement and new Sudanese first vice-president - country’s fragile peace held. At least 130 killed in 3 days of violence in Khartoum and Juba beginning of month; thousands arrested. In relatively smooth succession, Salva Kiir, Garang’s long-time deputy, sworn in as new vice-president 11 August; pledged national unity and full implementation of North-South Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Riek Machar, member of Nuer ethnic group, made vice-president of southern administration, raising hopes for agreement with government-aligned South Sudan Defence Force militia. Full new government to be announced early September. In Darfur, Sudan Liberation Movement rebel group called off AU-backed peace talks planned for late August; rescheduled for mid-September. AU warned of \$173m funding shortfall for Darfur mission; UN Sec. Gen. urged mission be rapidly brought to full strength.

- Comment by John Prendergast and Colin Thomas-Jensen (Crisis Group), [“Off camera, Darfur deteriorates”](#), *The Boston Globe*, 30 Aug. 2005.
- Comment by Wesley Clark (Crisis Group Board), [“NATO Forces needed in Darfur”](#), NPR “Morning Edition”, 22 Aug. 2005.
- [“Darfur’s peacekeeping challenge”](#), BBC, 21 Aug. 2005.
- Comment by John Prendergast and David Mozersky (Crisis Group), [“A warrior and peacemaker”](#), *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, 3 Aug. 2005
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°96, [The Khartoum-SPLM Agreement: Sudan’s Uncertain Peace](#), 25 July 2005, and Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°28, [The AU’s Mission in Darfur: Bridging the Gaps](#), 6 July 2005.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°30, [Garang’s Death: Implications for Peace in Sudan](#), 9 August 2005. Sudan’s leaders and the international community must not let John Garang’s death create openings for peace spoilers. The leadership of his Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) has quickly reorganised but much more is needed to preserve the peace agreement. The government and the SPLM must prevent recurrence of inter-communal violence that erupted after Garang’s death. The new SPLM leaders must remain united. Their movement is less likely to play a significant role in resolving the Darfur conflict. The odds of southern *cont’d*...

...*cont’d* secession have grown. Key players like the U.S. must increase public and diplomatic support for the peace agreement and particularly the SPLM. The UN Security Council should react quickly to violations of the peace timetable to keep the parties on course.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

◁ Angola National Electoral Commission took office 19 August; initial task to register voters for first post-war elections in 2006. Opposition party UNITA accused government of using position to campaign unfairly ahead of time. First repatriation in 2 years of Angolan refugees to northern Cabinda enclave began.

- [“War-damaged infrastructure the biggest challenge to elections”](#), IRIN, 19 Aug. 2005.

◁ Zimbabwe Parliament passed constitutional amendments 30 August strengthening President Mugabe’s hold on power; included clause removing right of appeal for victims of government land seizures. Mugabe rejected attempt by AU envoy, former Mozambique President Joaquim Chissano, to foster dialogue between government and opposition MDC. UN and Mugabe government unable to reach agreement on aid delivery to displaced victims of government’s Operation Murambatsvina. IMF held week-long meetings in Harare over state’s \$300m debt.

- [“Zimbabwe tightens Mugabe’s grip”](#), BBC, 30 Aug. 2005.
- [“Govt won’t agree on appeal for victims of cleanup”](#), IRIN, 29 Aug. 2005.
- Comment by Gareth Evans (Crisis Group), [“A poor excuse for inaction”](#), *Business Day*, 18 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°93, [Post-Election Zimbabwe: What Next?](#), 7 June 2005.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°97, [Zimbabwe’s Operation Murambatsvina: The Tipping Point?](#), 17 August 2005. With its brutal slum and street clearance campaign “Murambatsvina” Zimbabwe’s governance has reached a low point almost impossible for its neighbours to ignore, despite their reluctance until now to be openly critical. The recent UN report has exposed the regime’s brutality and confronted the international community, not least elsewhere in Africa, with its responsibility to protect the people of Zimbabwe. International action is essential, not only urgent measures to deal with the humanitarian consequences of mass evictions and forced displacement, but also longer range ones to deal with the fundamental governance problem. Real reform requires efforts on three parallel tracks: maintenance of overt international pressure, support for building internal political capacity and, above all, active regional diplomacy to facilitate political transition.

WEST AFRICA

◁ Côte d’Ivoire Forces Nouvelles withdrew from peace process 25 August, saying would not take part in 30 October elections. Ex-rebels said reforms passed last month in accordance with Pretoria agreement inadequate; SA President Thabo Mbeki met with ex-rebel leaders, warned of UN sanctions if peace obstructed. At month-end South Africa denied earlier reports it was ending mediation role. Continued hindrance to UN peacekeeping efforts as angry mobs impeded UN troop movement in Gagnoa and Agboville; in separate incident, Moroccan peacekeeper killed in Bouake. Former

army head Mathias Doue threatened to overthrow President Gbagbo.

- [“South Africa says continuing mediation, cautious on sanctions”](#), IRIN, 31 Aug. 2005
- [“Coups threat elicits varying responses”](#), Inter Press Service, 22 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°90, *Côte d'Ivoire: The Worst May Be Yet to Come*, 24 Mar. 2005.

Guinea Former PM Lamine Sidime named president of Supreme Court. President Conte finally signed law opening radio and television to private stations.

- [“Guinea ends 47-year state monopoly on radio, TV”](#), Reuters, 21 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°94, *Stopping Guinea's Slide*, 14 June 2005.

Guinea-Bissau National Electoral Commission confirmed “Nino” Vieira won July presidential elections, defeating Malam Sanha, candidate of ruling PAIGC party. Supreme Court rejected last-ditch PAIGC attempt to have results invalidated on basis of alleged irregularities; UN Security Council and Sec. Gen. Kofi Annan urged acceptance of ruling. PM Gomes Junior, president of PAIGC party, refused to recognise Vieira as president or give up his position as vice-president; Gomes travelled with defeated candidate Sanha to meet Nigerian President Obasanjo.

- [“Prime minister says doesn't recognise new president but won't resign”](#), IRIN, 23 Aug. 2005.

Liberia Campaign for 11 October elections launched 15 August after National Electoral Commission cleared several candidates to stand. Authorities banned public demonstrations and UNMIL reinforced security measures. Alan Doss installed as UN Sec.-Gen.'s Special Representative in Monrovia.

- [“Ex-footballer Weah cleared to stand as election campaign kicks off”](#), IRIN, 15 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 Dec. 2004.

Nigeria President Obasanjo acknowledged widespread extrajudicial killings and torture by police in unprecedented statement 18 August, promising action. 32 people killed by detention in poorly ventilated cell by vigilante group, sparking riot in southern town of Aba. 700 Nigerian soldiers airlifted to Sudan's Darfur region to strengthen African Union force.

- [“Obasanjo admits extrajudicial killings by police, pledges action”](#), IRIN, 19 Aug. 2005.
- [“A troubled but lingering president”](#), *The Economist*, 4 Aug. 2005.

Sierra Leone Ruling SLPP party leadership convention, scheduled 19-20 August, postponed by Supreme Court after detained war crimes indictee and aspiring candidate Chief Sam Hinga Norman filed injunction against party members for illegally holding political office while running for leadership; convention contentious as victor perceived likely 2007 SLPP presidential candidate and next SL president. Opposition All Peoples Congress convention to be held 1-4 September.

- [“APC calls for contestants”](#), *Concord Times*, 18 Aug. 2005.

- [“SLPP convention postponement is a setback, says Sama Banya”](#), *Concord Times*, 17 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 Dec. 2004.

Togo Faure Gnassingbé's government marked first 100 days in office. President urged up to 40,000 refugees in neighbouring Benin and Ghana to return.

- [“Togo refugees fear reprisals if they return home”](#), Reuters, 22 Aug. 2005.

Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

Kazakhstan In surprise move, Constitutional Council announced 4 December 2005 date for presidential election; President Nazarbaev expected to stand. Opposition umbrella group ‘For a Just Kazakhstan’ registered 3 August.

- [“Can opposition compete in presidential elections?”](#), RFE/RL, 22 Aug. 2005.

Kyrgyzstan President Bakiyev sworn in 14 August; appointed erstwhile political rival Feliks Kulov as PM and consolidated power by installing ally Jumadyl Isakov as mayor of Osh despite challenge from powerful local businessman. Bakiyev decision to reject Uzbekistan threats and allow UNHCR to transport Andijon refugees to safe haven in Romania applauded; estimated 1,000 unofficial Uzbek refugees still believed hiding in southern Kyrgyzstan. Corruption probes against former political leaders continued with ex-PM Tanayev denying allegations; Prosecutor-General Beknazarov warned investigations could be compromised by August amnesty law.

- [“Bakiev presidential inauguration raises hopes”](#), IWPR, 16 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°97, *Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution*, 4 May 2005.

Tajikistan Trial of Democratic Party leader Mahmadrzi Iskandarov on embezzlement and terrorism charges began. He retracted earlier confession, said made under duress; defence witnesses claimed having incriminated him only after torture. Police arrested alleged planners of January and June Dushanbe bombings. 9 Hizb ut-Tahrir members sentenced Dushanbe; Sughd province religious institutions purged. Mukhtor Boqizoda, editor of outspoken *Nerui sukhan* newspaper, sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment for stealing electricity.

- [“Tajik industrial giant may go on sale”](#), IWPR, 23 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, *Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?*, 19 May 2004.

Turkmenistan Major reshuffle in oil and gas sector with dismissals of state oil company head Saparmamed Valiev on corruption charges and Orazmuhammet Atageliyew, chairman of Turkmen Geology State Corporation, resulting in postponement of Trans-Afghan gas pipeline talks. Former bodyguard of President Niyazov appointed deputy PM. Turkmenistan downgraded its involvement in CIS to “associate membership”.

- ["Is Washington exploring a base deal with Turkmenistan"](#), Eurasianet, 31 Aug. 2005.
- ["Ex-bodyguard named deputy premier in Turkmenistan"](#), RFE/RL, 22 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°85, ["Repression and Regression in Turkmenistan: A New International Strategy"](#), 4 Nov. 2004.

➤ Uzbekistan Government deported Igor Rotar, Russian journalist for Forum 18 rights organisation, amid continuing crackdown on independent media. Human rights activist Yelena Uralyeva arrested at month-end. Demonstration in Samarkand against house demolitions first since May Andijon events. Government accused UNHCR of protecting criminals following airlift of Uzbek refugees from Kyrgyzstan to Romania; estimated 1,000 unofficial Uzbek refugees remain in Kyrgyzstan. Uzbek senate officially passed measure calling for U.S. to close Karshi-Khanabad airbase.

- ["Uzbek military personnel set to receive big pay rise"](#), Eurasianet, 30 Aug. 2005.
- ["Fear grips Andijan three months after killings"](#), IRIN, 18 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°38, ["Uzbekistan: The Andijon Uprising"](#), 25 May 2005.

SOUTH ASIA

➤ ➤ Afghanistan Security fears as month-long campaign got underway for 18 September National Assembly and Provincial Council elections. At least 4 candidates and 4 election workers killed. Anti-government forces warned against participation although purported Taliban spokesperson said polling centres will not be targeted. UN complained of \$19m election funding shortfall. U.S. and Afghan forces launched large-scale military operations in south and east: announced had killed over 100 suspected militants in Kunar and Zabul provinces. 7 U.S. soldiers killed in separate incidents in Zabul and Kandahar provinces. 17 Spanish soldiers died in helicopter crash 16 August; cause unknown. UN drugs agency reported 20% drop in area under opium cultivation but virtually no change in production - totalling 87% of world opium. Continuing concern over influence of drug revenues on upcoming elections.

- ["The opium situation in Afghanistan as of 29 August 2005"](#), UNODC, 29 Aug. 2005.
- ["Violence spiraling as elections near"](#), RFE/RL, 22 Aug. 2005.
- ["Afghan raids 'kill 100 militants'"](#), BBC, 22 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°101, ["Afghanistan Elections: Endgame or New Beginning?"](#), 21 July 2005.

➤ Bangladesh Coordinated detonation of over 400 small bombs caused widespread turmoil 17 August, killing 2 and wounding 100: banned Islamic group, Jamatul Mujahideen Bangladesh, claimed responsibility. Main opposition party, Awami League, called general strike in protest, blaming coalition government of Bangladesh Nationalist Party for not preventing blasts. Dozens of suspects arrested by police. Border skirmishes with India continued, killing 4.

- ["All over the place"](#), *The Economist*, 25 Aug. 2005.
- ["Human rights defenders under attack"](#), Human Rights Watch, 23 Aug. 2005.
- ["Bangladesh-India stop border fire"](#), BBC, 20 Aug. 2005.

➤ India (non-Kashmir) Government of Andhra Pradesh state re-imposed ban on Communist Party of India (Maoist) amid continuing violence: 10 killed, including Congress party legislator, by suspected Maoist rebels 15 August. Several prominent writers with alleged ties to rebels arrested. Separatist Naga tribesmen lifted month-long blockade of national highway in north-eastern state of Manipur. United Liberation Front of Assam admitted attacking Assam state oil infrastructure but denied responsibility for 7 August bombing of market near state capital Guwahati, which killed 4.

- ["India state in key Maoist arrests"](#), BBC, 19 Aug. 2005.
- ["Assam separatists admit oil raid"](#), BBC, 8 Aug. 2005.

➤ Kashmir India and Pakistan agreed to swap hundreds of prisoners after 2-day talks as part of ongoing peace process. Indian PM Singh and Pakistani President Musharraf to meet 14 September on sidelines of UN summit in New York in first face-to-face talks since April. Singh announced would meet with moderate faction of All Parties Hurriyat Conference for first time 5 September in Delhi. Pakistan tested cruise missile with 500 km range 11 August; did not notify Indian officials, claiming test notification agreement with India signed days earlier did not cover cruise missiles. Series of grenade attacks on Indian security forces in Sopor, north of Srinagar, wounded 14.

- ["Singh to hold Kashmir talks"](#), BBC, 31 Aug. 2005.
- ["Pakistan and India to swap prisoners"](#), *International Herald Tribune* (AP/AFP), 31 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°79 ["India/Pakistan Relations and Kashmir: Steps toward Peace"](#), 24 June 2004.

➤ Maldives Riot police arrested dozens of protesters in heated anti-government demonstration calling for President Gayoom's resignation; 7 injured. Opposition party leader Mohammed Nasheed charged with terrorism for alleged threats of "violent overthrow" if president does not step down or hold elections.

- ["Maldives opposition terror charge"](#), BBC, 23 Aug. 2005.

➤ Nepal Large-scale Maoist attack on Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) base in western Kalikot district 7 August killed over 50 soldiers; 60 being held as POWs. RNA alleged Maoists tortured, mutilated and executed soldiers in cold blood. Maoist attacks, including bombing and assassination, also carried out inside Kathmandu valley. 7-party opposition alliance agreed to formalise dialogue with Maoists so long as rebels adhere to promises not to attack civilians, NGO staff or political party workers in areas they control. Maoists accused by newspaper of raping 25 women at gunpoint in Saptari district 18 August. King Gyanendra visited eastern and western districts in first trip out of capital since February 2005 coup. Central committee of CPN-UML, largest mainstream leftist party, decided to drop constitutional monarchy platform in favour of democratic republicanism; similar debate intensifying within Nepali Congress in run-up to its general convention.

- ["Confidence building ahead of talks with rebels"](#), AlertNet, 23 Aug. 2005.
- ["Protests continue in Nepal"](#), *International Herald Tribune* (AFP), 3 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°99, ["Towards a Lasting Peace in Nepal: The Constitutional Issues"](#), 15 June 2005, and Briefing N°36, ["Nepal: Responding to the Royal Coup"](#), 24 Feb. 2005.

➤ Pakistan Facing concerted opposition from religious allies, General Musharraf backtracked on promises to clamp down on home-grown extremists and reform madrasas. Musharraf watered down pledge to introduce new law to regulate seminaries that would include mandatory registration, financial oversight, and curriculum reform. Meanwhile, many extremists arrested under Maintenance of Public Order Act released. More than 40 killed and hundreds wounded in clashes during first 2 phases of local body elections. Opposition complained of widespread rigging and intimidation - echoed by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Ruling party and allies led in Balochistan, Punjab and Sindh; opposition parties made limited gains in North West Frontier Province.

- ["Musharraf gains in local elections"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 1 Sept. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°95, *The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan*, 18 April 2005.

➤ Sri Lanka In major setback to peace process, Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, outspoken critic of Tamil Tiger rebels (LTTE), assassinated 12 August. Government declared state of emergency and launched massive manhunt for assassin. LTTE denied government accusations of involvement; agreed to hold first high-level talks with government since 2003 on implementation of stalled 2002 ceasefire agreement; sides yet to decide venue. Supreme Court declared second and final term of President Kumaratunga ends December, setting stage for new elections: PM Anura Bandaranaike to be candidate for ruling party - will face United National Party leader Ranil Wickramasinghe.

- ["Court says Sri Lanka election due"](#), BBC, 26 Aug. 2005.
- ["Sri Lanka president blames rebels"](#), CNN, 15 Aug. 2005.

NORTH EAST ASIA

➤ China (internal) Special riot police units planned for 36 cities in response to various incidents of civil unrest, including "illegal mining" riots in Guangxi province and burning of factories and police cars in protests against toxic waste in Zhejiang province. Germany-based World Uighur Congress said authorities in Xinjiang province arrested 38 for studying Koran.

- ["China plans anti-terrorism centre"](#), BBC, 31 Aug. 2005.

➤ North Korea Pyongyang delayed scheduled 29 August resumption of nuclear talks by 2 weeks, citing U.S.-South Korean military exercises. Earlier talks ended 7 August without agreement, despite reported increased civility and bilateral contact between U.S. and North Korean negotiators. North's insistence on retaining peaceful nuclear capability - supported by South Korea, China and Russia - key sticking point with U.S. North launched 4-day goodwill tour of South in effort to win further support.

- ["North Korea delays return to nuke talks"](#), *The Washington Post*, 29 Aug. 2005.
- ["North Korea attempts a charm offensive"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Aug. 2005.
- ["Now what?"](#), *The Economist*, 11 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Report N°100, *Japan and North Korea: Bones of Contention*, 27 June 2005.

➤ Taiwan Strait Taipei mayor Ma Ying-jeou sworn in as chairman of opposition Kuomintang party 19 August. Chinese President Hu Jintao offered unprecedented congratulatory


message. Ma pledged to continue efforts to build cross-Strait ties. President Chen Shui-bian said Taiwan to cut \$4 billion off proposed \$15 billion purchase of U.S. arms to increase parliamentary support for deal.

- ["Taiwan to trim arms budget to woo parliament - papers"](#), AlertNet, 23 Aug. 2005.
- ["Taiwan opposition leader sworn in"](#), BBC, 19 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°75, *Taiwan Strait IV: How an Ultimate Political Settlement Might Look*, 26 Feb. 2004.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

➤ Indonesia Historic peace agreement signed between Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and government in Helsinki 15 August. GAM and Indonesian military met 22 August to decide on new security arrangements: meeting described as positive by EU and ASEAN monitors. All military movements of more than platoon size to require prior notification of head of monitoring mission. Government released over 1,400 prisoners 31 August as part of agreement. Elsewhere, 2 Muslim men shot dead in Poso suburb 3-4 August in suspected reprisal attacks for giving information to police about other recent incidents in area. Papua saw one of its largest demonstrations ever over slow implementation of Special Autonomy: 10,000 marched to provincial parliament in Jayapura 12 August demanding law be reviewed. Supreme Court rejected radical cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's final appeal 6 August but sentence reduced by 4.5 months under annual Independence Day remission. Australian Embassy bomber Achmad Hassan received life sentence 23 August. 9 injured by small bomb 25 August at market in Ambon in first incident there since May.

- ["Indonesia releases Acehese rebels"](#), *The Washington Post* (AP), 31 Aug. 2005.
- ["Abiding by peace deal, Indonesia begins Aceh pullout"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Aug. 2005.
- ["Ten thousand Papuans criticize special autonomy implementation"](#), *The Jakarta Post*, 13 Aug. 2005.
- For further details on Aceh peace agreement see Crisis Management Initiative's ["Aceh Peace Process Negotiations"](#).

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°40, [Aceh: A New Chance for Peace](#), 15 August 

2005. The 15 August agreement between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) offers the best hope yet of ending a conflict costing 6,000 lives since 1976. Although the political context for the agreement is considerably more promising than in the failed 2002 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, a number of measures need to be taken quickly if this new accord is to succeed. The most urgent tasks include disseminating information about the agreement in Indonesian and Acehese; coordinating the different agencies working on amnesty, disarmament, reintegration, monitoring and funding; ensuring government promises to various groups are quickly kept; preparing communities to receive returning GAM members; and protecting vulnerable groups.

➤ Myanmar/Burma UN-led Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria said would withdraw from Myanmar, citing obstruction of activities. UN special envoy, former Indonesian FM Ali Alatas, visited Yangon 18-20 August; met with Foreign Minister U Nyan Win and Myanmar top leader Senior-General Than Shwe, reportedly to discuss reform of

UN. Minister of information denied rumours of military coup 28 August, saying Than Shwe in good health and in control of government.

- [“Myanmar’s withdrawal: what the junta wanted?”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 30 Aug. 2005.
- [“UN envoy makes inroads in Myanmar”](#), Asia Times Online, 23 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°34, [Myanmar: Update on HIV/AIDS Policy](#), 16 Dec. 2004.

- Papua New Guinea Australian police to return to PNG as part of revived aid package, but will not have frontline duties, avoiding immunity issue that stalled program in May. Opposition leader Peter O’Neill arrested on charges of conspiracy and misappropriation connected to alleged involvement in defrauding investment fund.
 - [“Australia, PNG agree on package to revive aid program”](#), ABC Radio, 24 Aug. 2005.
 - [“PNG opposition leader arrested”](#), ABC News, 18 Aug. 2005.

- Philippines Violence continued in south: 26 wounded in 2 bomb attacks in Zamboanga City 10 August; 30 wounded in ferry bombing 28 August. Jemaah Islamiyah and Abu Sayyaf suspected. Peace negotiations between government and National Democratic Front (NDF - political arm of Communist Party) broke down 4 August as government withdrew immunity from rebel delegation and security forces threatened arrest. Allegations of corruption and fraud continued to hound President Gloria Arroyo; House of Representatives considered impeachment motion. Arroyo ally Zaldy Ampatuan elected governor of Mindanao region in 8 August poll.
 - [“Congress debates Arroyo’s fate”](#), BBC, 23 Aug. 2005.
 - [“4 suspects arrested in Philippine attacks”](#) *International Herald Tribune*, 12 Aug. 2005.
 - [“In for a long haul”](#) *The Economist*, 4 Aug. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°80, [Southern Philippines Background: Terrorism and the Peace Process](#), 13 July 2004.

- Thailand Daily attacks continued in 3 southern provinces as government reverted to hardline approach. Emergency decree approved by ruling party-dominated parliament, despite protest from opposition and government-appointed National Reconciliation Commission. 7 killed in 2 days by suspected separatist militants 20-21 August: surge of violence followed visit of PM Thaksin Shinawatra to south to encourage locals to defy extremists’ threats. At least 3 killed in further bombings 31 August. Only 4 months into new term, PM reshuffled cabinet, appointing former air force commander Kongsak Wantana as new interior minister, fourth appointment to post in 2 years.
 - [“Deadly weekend in Thailand’s south”](#), CNN, 21 Aug. 2005.
 - Comment by Francesca Lawe-Davies (Crisis Group), [“Dangers of ruling with an iron fist”](#), *South China Morning Post*, 3 Aug. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°98, [Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad](#), 18 May 2005.



BALKANS

- Albania Former President Sali Berisha’s Democratic Party won all 3 constituencies where elections re-run due to

irregularities in 3 July parliamentary elections. Coalition led by Berisha to hold 81 seats in 140-seat legislature (Socialist-dominated coalition led by outgoing PM Fatos Nano to hold remaining 59). OSCE said election procedures improved, but still not up to international standards.

- [“An election completed”](#), Transitions Online, 29 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°153, [Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?](#), 25 Feb. 2004.

- Bosnia & Herzegovina Senior BiH officials failed to reach agreement on police reform in 23 August meeting in Mostar. Issue remains last outstanding obstacle before negotiations with EU on Stabilisation and Association Agreement can commence.
 - [“NATO aims to merge rival armies into single Bosnian force”](#), RFE/RL, 18 Aug. 2005.

- Kosovo UN special envoy Kai Eide visited Pristina and Belgrade in third visit to region since appointment - expected to submit recommendations in September on whether to start final status talks. Kosovo Serb politicians rejected provisional government’s so-called “Plan B” for decentralisation pilot projects, although endorsed by UNMIK: plan’s enlargement of pilot project territories reduced local Serb majorities over Albanians to bare minimum. Serbs preparing “Plan C”. Albanian politicians displeased by UNMIK chief Jessen-Petersen’s call for “compromise” over final status; meanwhile, their efforts to agree format of final status working groups bogged down. KFOR launched TV advert campaign warning that in case of new riots it would use lethal force to defend sensitive sites. 2 Serbs killed and 2 wounded in 27 August car shooting. President Rugova seriously ill; flown to U.S. military hospital in Germany.
 - [“Local government offer fails to enthuse Kosovo Serbs”](#), IWPR, 18 Aug. 2005.
 - For background see Crisis Group Europe Report N°163, [Kosovo after Haradinaj](#), 26 May 2005.

- Macedonia Relations with Serbia continued to deteriorate after Macedonian bishop who aligned himself with Serbian Orthodox Church sentenced to prison term late July (see Serbia & Montenegro below). Court dropped arrest warrant for Agim Krasniqi, leader of paramilitary formations in Kndovo village near Skopje, who appeared voluntarily before court 18 August.
 - [“Have arrest warrant, won’t arrest”](#), Transitions Online, 29 Aug. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°37, [Macedonia: Not out of the Woods Yet](#), 25 Feb. 2005.

- Serbia & Montenegro Provocations by Serbian Orthodox Church led to sharp deterioration in relations with Macedonia and Montenegro. Belgrade seized aircraft from Macedonian Airlines and shut border crossing to prevent Macedonians celebrating national day at Prohor Pcinjski monastery. Army airlifted aluminium Serbian Orthodox church to site at top of Mt. Rumija holy to Orthodox, Catholics and Muslims, causing sharp Montenegrin government response. Belgrade accused of planning Serbian Autonomous Region in northern Montenegro reminiscent of similar regions created as precursors to war in Croatia and Bosnia. Hague Tribunal fugitives Milan Lukic and Dragan Zelenovic arrested in Argentina and Russia respectively. U.S. presented draft agreement to move troops across Serbia-Montenegro in case

of emergency in Kosovo; signed but unlikely to be ratified by parliament. Government dropped criminal charges against son and wife of Slobodan Milosevic. Bomb thrown at home of Hungarian minority politician in Vojvodina.

- [“US seeks military base in Serbia”](#), B92, 12 Aug. 2005.
- [“Church rivalry threatens to brim over”](#), IWPR, 10 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°39, [Serbia: Spinning its Wheels](#), 23 May 2005.

CAUCASUS

➤ Armenia Opposition rejected draft constitutional amendments proposed by ruling coalition and backed by Council of Europe, U.S. and EU; demanded more limits on presidential power, and elected provincial governors. President Kocharian vowed to mobilise all political and administrative resources to ensure positive referendum outcome on amendments in November.

- [“Armenian opposition says final ‘No’ to constitutional changes”](#), Armenialiberty, 31 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°158, [Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead](#), 18 Oct. 2004.

➤ Azerbaijan Registration of candidates for November parliamentary elections ended 28 August with over 2,000 applications submitted for 124 parliamentary seats. Rasul Guliev - exiled former parliamentary speaker and head of Azerbaijan Democratic Party - registered. Opposition bloc Azadlig submitted united candidate list in 115 districts. Ruslan Bashirli, leader of opposition Yeni Fikir youth group associated with Azerbaijan Popular Front Party, arrested 4 August on charges of Armenian-sponsored destabilisation. 15 youths detained ahead of large Azadlig rally 27 August in Baku. 30 arrested in crackdown on radical Islamists.

- [“Muslim radicals rounded up”](#), IWPR, 18 Aug. 2005.
- [“Spy scandal continues to raise more questions than answers”](#), RFE/RL, 10 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°156, [Azerbaijan: Turning Over a New Leaf?](#), 13 May 2004.

➤ Chechnya (Russia) Local pro-Russian security forces continued to be primary target of attacks by separatist rebels and criminal gangs: 19 soldiers, 3 police killed in various incidents. Explosion at Chechen government official's home injured 6, while car bomb outside Grozny government compound killed 2. Abdul-Khalim Sadulaev appointed radical Chechen terrorist Shamil Basaev, purported mastermind of Beslan siege, as deputy PM in Chechen rebel leadership.

- [“Chechen separatist government radicalized”](#), ISN Security Watch, 26 Aug. 2005.
- [“Chechen official puts death toll for 2 wars at up to 160,000”](#), *International Herald Tribune* (Reuters/AFP), 16 Aug. 2005.

➤ Georgia Tensions in South Ossetia conflict zone remained high as reciprocal kidnappings and random shootings continued; main roads closed. UN-mediated talks in Tbilisi with Abkhazia deemed “constructive” by all parties, but no significant progress. De facto Abkhaz President Sergey Bagapsh reiterated aspiration for associate membership of Russian Federation; stated all Abkhaz will hold Russian citizenship within year. Abkhazia held major military exercises 15 August. Russia began withdrawing military hardware from remaining Batumi and Akhalkalaki bases.

- [“Can moves toward Abkhaz-Georgian rapprochement continue?”](#), RFE/RL, 14 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°38, [Georgia-South Ossetia: Refugee Return the Path to Peace](#), 19 April 2005.

➤ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents met at Kazan CIS summit 27 August; encouraged foreign ministers to continue dialogue within OSCE-mediated Prague Process. OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs reportedly presented peace proposals; earlier, U.S. Sec. State Rice telephoned both leaders. Foreign Minister Oskanian and Azerbaijani counterpart Elmar Mamedvarov met 24 August in Moscow. Same day, Azeri serviceman previously detained in Armenia repatriated by ICRC.

- Comment by Sabine Freizer (Crisis Group), [“Don't allow a new arms race in the Southern Caucasus”](#), *The Daily Star*, 31 Aug. 2005.
- [“Expectations muted on eve of Karabakh talks”](#), RFE/RL, 19 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Reports N°158, [Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead](#), 18 Oct. 2004, and N°156, [Azerbaijan: Turning Over a New Leaf?](#), 13 May 2004.

➤ North Caucasus (Russia) Increasing attacks targeting police and government officials in Ingushetia and Dagestan. Ingush PM Maltasov severely wounded after motorcade bombed 25 August. Ingush police chief target of similar attack; 3 officers killed. In Makhachkala, Dagestan, bus carrying policemen blown up injuring 4; while bomb 20 August killed 3 police on patrol. Separate bombing derailed train 27 August; police arriving on scene reported coming under fire from unknown gunmen.

- [“Ingush premier wounded in apparent assassination bid”](#), RFE/RL, 25 Aug. 2005.
- [“Bomb in Russia kills 3 policemen”](#), CNN, 20 Aug. 2005.

EASTERN EUROPE

➤ Belarus Minsk banned foreign assistance to local political parties and organisations, cutting funding of many opposition groups. Despite U.S. and EU statements - backed by Ukraine - condemning Belarus' actions against its Polish community, crackdown continued: minority leader jailed for arranging meeting with Polish MP; Polish-language newspaper editor jailed 10 days for unlicensed demonstration; 2 journalists arrested. New Union of Poles leader chosen under pressure from President Lukashenko, month after police removed previous administration; Poland refused to recognise leader. Police dispersed opposition rally outside Polish embassy; rival anti-Polish demonstration organised by Lukashenko supporters. European Parliament delegation denied entry to investigate human rights standards. EU agreed 24 August to fund pro-democracy radio broadcasts to Belarus.

- [“Poles in Belarus elect new leader, but split looms”](#), AlertNet, 27 Aug. 2005.
- [“Belarus imposes foreign funds ban”](#), BBC, 18 Aug. 2005.

➤ Moldova EU sent fact-finding mission to Moldova-Ukraine border 23-29 August to prepare further EU assistance in monitoring Transdnestrian sector of border. Transdnestrian authorities announced December parliamentary elections.

- [“EU mission to tour Moldova-Ukraine border”](#), RFE/RL, 23 Aug. 2005.

- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°157, *Moldova: Regional Tensions over Transnistria*, 17 June 2004.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

- Basque Country (Spain) Basque separatists clashed with riot police in San Sebastian 14 August during banned rally by nationalist party Batasuna.
 - ["Banned Basque demo ends in chaos"](#), BBC, 14 Aug. 2005.
- Cyprus France said Turkish recognition of Greek Cyprus should be prerequisite for EU accession talks; German opposition leader Angela Merkel called for partnership short of membership. Turkey rejected any attempt to push back 3 October start date. EU said talks would begin on time.
 - ["Turkey rebuffs EU pressure on Cyprus"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 1 Sept. 2005.
- Northern Ireland (UK) Series of sectarian attacks on Catholic buildings in County Antrim: 40 police officers injured in clashes with loyalists Belfast after police raided homes linked to loyalist feud. Sinn Fein listed 85 loyalist attacks since June. UK army to disband Royal Irish Regiment in response to IRA ending armed campaign July.
 - ["Officer 'says attacks sectarian'"](#), BBC, 20 Aug. 2005.
 - ["Fourth man shot dead in loyalist turf war"](#), *The Guardian*, 16 Aug. 2005.
- Turkey Kurdish separatist group PKK declared ceasefire until 20 September following Turkish PM Erdogan's pledge for democratic reforms in Kurdish southeast. Day later PKK-Turkish army clash left 2 PKK dead. Turkish security forces launched operation in Batman province 25 August killing 7 PKK. 6 separate bombings, including in Istanbul, killed 2; 5 soldiers killed in attack Hakkari province by suspected Kurdish rebels. Police arrested 5 in connection with Mersin resort bomb plot. Syrian with alleged links to al Qaeda charged with plotting attack on Israeli cruise ships off Turkish coast.
 - ["PKK declares ceasefire after Erdogan offers olive branch"](#), *The Guardian*, 20 Aug. 2005.
 - ["Syrian admits Israeli cruise ship plot in Turkey"](#), *International Herald Tribune* (AP/AFP), 12 Aug. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°35, *Iraq: Allaying Turkey's Fears Over Kurdish Ambitions*, 26 Jan. 2005.

Latin America / Caribbean

- Bolivia Finance Minister Luis Carlos Jemio resigned over comments he made in Washington linking top opposition figure Evo Morales to Cuban and Venezuelan leaders. U.S. Sec. Defense Donald Rumsfeld made similar comments, saying Castro and Chavez involved in Bolivia in "unhelpful ways". Morales candidate in 4 December presidential election and played key role in indigenous protests that led to July resignation of President Carlos Mesa. Yungas coca farmers opposing establishment of police post controlling coca trade announced new round of road blockades.
 - ["Bolivia election recalls Cold War divide"](#), *The Guardian*, 31 Aug. 2005.

- ["U.S. revives old warnings on Latin American leftists"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 20 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°12, *Coca, Drugs and Social Protest in Bolivia and Peru*, 3 Mar. 2005.

- Colombia Conflict between government and insurgent groups continued: FARC killed 12 coca farmers in effort to assert control in northwest, while 11 police killed in roadside bomb near town of Patillal. Government accepted church mediation after FARC rejected offer to negotiate hostage swap. Demobilisation of 2,000 AUC militia began near Medellin; AUC leaders formally handed back control of 368-sq km safe haven around town of Santa Fe de Ralito to government forces as part of demobilisation process. Constitutional Court likely to rule by end September 2005 whether president can stand for re-election.
 - ["Colombia safe havens returned"](#), CNN, 28 Aug. 2005.
 - ["Law seen as soft on militias in Colombia"](#), *The Washington Post*, 21 Aug. 2005.
 - ["Farc rejects prisoner talks offer"](#), BBC, 16 Aug. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°14, *Colombia: Presidential Politics and Peace Prospects*, 16 June 2005.
- Ecuador Mass protests in Amazon provinces of Sucumbios and Orellana over distribution of oil revenues brought production to halt and led government to impose state of emergency. Protesters demanding greater spending of oil revenue on job creation and infrastructure took control of oil installations, sabotaged equipment and blocked highways; government troops used tear gas to retake control. Sides reached truce after government and oil companies offered concessions, but fears over stability of government remained as protesters threatened further demonstrations. Venezuela agreed to loan oil until local industry stabilises. Defence Minister Solon Espinosa resigned 19 August; replaced by retired general Oswaldo Jarrin.
 - ["Deal ends Ecuadorian oil crisis"](#), BBC, 26 Aug. 2005.
 - ["Ecuador defence minister quits as oil protests mount"](#), *Globe and Mail*, 20 Aug. 2005.
- Haiti At least 15 alleged criminals killed by machete-wielding residents in Bel-Air and Solino slums; police allegedly did nothing to prevent. In separate incident, police and individuals with machetes attacked so-called "bandits" during USAID-funded soccer match 28 August, killing at least 20. U.S. ambassador criticised Haiti's justice system following release of former death squad leader and continued detention of former PM Neptune; new justice minister called for release or trial without delay of hundreds of prisoners held without charge. Local government elections due to be held 9 October postponed; legislative and presidential elections still slated for November, despite ongoing insecurity and resulting registration problems: 2 million of 4.2 million eligible voters reported registered, but none received digitised ID card. In positive step, moderate faction of Aristide's Lavalas party registered for election and expected to participate. First "core group" meeting of donors, regional organisations, and IFIs held; no clear plan to overcome electoral council stalling tactics, security obstacles or political polarisation.
 - ["Play for Peace' soccer match turns into massacre"](#), *Newsday.com*, 28 Aug. 2005.
 - ["U.N. condemns 'lynching' in Haiti"](#), *AlertNet*, 18 Aug. 2005.

- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°13, *Spoiling Security in Haiti*, 31 May 2005.

Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°8, *Can Haiti Hold Elections in 2005?*, 3 August 2005. Without extraordinary efforts by Haitians and the international community, upcoming elections will have to be postponed. Massive technical, political and security obstacles must be quickly overcome in order to hold a municipal and local vote in October, and parliamentary and presidential polls in November. Adequate security, public understanding, and broad participation by those who want to register and vote are essential if there are to be fair and free elections. All parties concerned, including the Organisation of American States, the UN, the U.S., Canada, donors and the key Latin American and European countries involved with Haiti, should work to consolidate a long-term commitment to support development, democracy and security together with a new, legitimate government chosen in a credible election.



➤ Venezuela Tense relations with U.S. continued as Washington revoked visas of 6 Venezuelan officials; Caracas retaliated by withdrawing diplomatic immunity of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration officials 12 August. President Chavez accused DEA of spying, suspended cooperation, opened investigation into its activities and threatened to seek extradition of far right religious maverick Pat Robertson, who had publicly called for his assassination on radio show.

- [“Chavez revokes US agent immunity”](#), BBC, 12 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°5, *Venezuela: Headed Toward Civil War?*, 10 May 2004.



Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

➤ Israel/Occupied Territories Unilateral Israeli pull-out from 21 settlements in Gaza Strip and 4 in West Bank completed ahead of schedule 23 August; marked by less than expected resistance from settlers, and restraint from Palestinian militant groups. Negotiations concluded with Egypt over disposition of Egyptian forces along Gaza-Egyptian border. Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu - political rival to PM Ariel Sharon - resigned ahead of pull-out, widening split in ruling Likud party, and later announced leadership bid. Half of 8,500 Gaza settlers left before 15 August deadline; remainder, supported by 5,000 Israeli nationalists, evicted by Israeli security forces. 4 Palestinians shot dead by settler in West Bank; Sharon and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas appealed for calm. Following pull-out, Israel began construction on E1 settlement east of Jerusalem, threatening to bisect West Bank. Israeli troops killed 5 Palestinian militants Tulkarm 25 August; 48 wounded in bomb attack on Beersheba bus, southern Israel, 28 August.

- Comment by Robert Malley (Crisis Group) and Aaron D. Miller, [“The Road After Gaza”](#), *The Washington Post*, 24 Aug. 2005.
- [“Out of Gaza and into the West Bank”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Aug. 2005.
- [“The last of Gaza’s settlers leave”](#), *The Economist*, 23 Aug. 2005.

- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°43, *Disengagement and Its Discontents: What Will the Israeli Settlers Do?*, 7 July 2005.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°44, *The Jerusalem Powder Keg*, 2 August 2005. While the world focuses on Gaza, the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations may be determined in Jerusalem. Israel is solidifying its hold over a wide area in and around the city, creating a much enlarged “Jerusalem envelope” within the separation barrier that risks undermining moderate Palestinians, providing Israel with a new security headache, disconnecting some Palestinians from their livelihoods and separating those within the barrier from the West Bank. All this will complicate - perhaps doom - attempts to resolve the conflict by preventing establishment of a Palestinian capital in Arab East Jerusalem and obstructing Palestinian territorial contiguity. Israel has a duty to protect its citizens but the international community - specifically the U.S. - must insist it do so without ignoring Roadmap commitments and undercutting the long-term basis for a two-state solution.



➤ Lebanon 3 former pro-Syrian security chiefs and head of Republican Guard detained for questioning at request of UN officials investigating murder of former PM Rafik Hariri. At least 5 wounded in Beirut shopping centre explosion 22 August; motivation unknown. PM Fuad Siniora held talks with Syrian officials in Damascus; both sides declared future relationship to be built on “mutual respect”. Despite Syrian agreement to lift roadblocks at border, flow of Lebanese goods still delayed. UN envoy Geir Pedersen urged Foreign Minister Fawzi Salloukh to deploy forces in south, where Hizbollah guerrillas and Israeli forces exchanged fire.

- [“Lebanese hold pro-Syria officials”](#), BBC, 30 Aug. 2005.
- [“Bombing terror returns to Lebanon”](#), *The Daily Star*, 23 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°39, *Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria*, 12 Apr. 2005.

➤ Syria Police made several arrests after violent clashes with Syrian Kurd supporters of banned Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). Hold-up of Lebanese goods continued at border checkpoints. President Assad reinforced bilateral ties and cooperation with Iran during state visit. Ahead of release of UN investigation findings, he also denied Syrian role in assassination of former Lebanese PM Rafiq Hariri earlier in year. 4 police killed in shootout with Islamist militant group Tanzim Jund ash-Sham outside Damascus.

- [“Four police killed in Syria militant clashes”](#), Middle East Online, 23 Aug. 2005.
- [“‘Shared threats’ bring Syria and Iran together: Ahmadinejad”](#), *The Daily Star*, 8 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N° 24, *Syria Under Bashar (II): Domestic Policy Challenges*, 11 Feb. 2004.

GULF

➤ Bahrain Opposition groups weighed response to new law regulating political societies; main Shiite organisation al-Wifaq reportedly considered closing. Unemployed activists reduced anti-government criticism, but promised more public protests should regime not address social issues.

- “Jobless to continue protests in Bahrain”, Khaleej Times Online, 30 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°40, *Bahrain’s Sectarian Challenge*, 6 May 2005.

Iran Tehran resumed uranium conversion activities, rejecting EU proposals for halt to program in exchange for economic incentives. U.S. responded with warning of impending consequences, not ruling out use of force, while IAEA called for immediate stop to conversion activities. Iran to present new plan for talks with EU in September. Meanwhile, new president Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad appointed hardliners to key cabinet positions. UN Sec.-Gen. Annan called for release of dissident Akbar Ganji, whose imprisonment sparked July clashes between protesters and police. Bomb exploded in Western office building Tehran; no claims of responsibility.

- “New Iran nuclear plan ‘in a month’”, CNN (Reuters), 26 Aug. 2005.
- “Iranian leader picks hardliners”, BBC, 14 Aug. 2005.
- “Iran resuming uranium conversion”, *International Herald Tribune*, 9 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°15, *Iran: Where Next on the Nuclear Standoff?*, 24 Nov. 2004.

Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°18, *Iran: What Does Ahmadi-Nejad’s Victory Mean?*, 4 August 2005. Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad’s presidency may aggravate tensions between Iran and the West, and the U.S. in particular. But it would be unwise to act upon hasty conclusions about the new leader. The new president won with populist economic appeals and conservative establishment support and is indifferent at best to improved U.S. relations, but major foreign policy decisions are not made by the president. Iran is governed by complex institutions and competing power centres that favour continuity over change. Bottom line positions on the nuclear program, Iraq policy and other regional interests likely will not vary. Ahmadi-Nejad may diminish Washington’s slim appetite for engagement, but with the Iraq situation bad and the Baghdad government reaching out to Tehran, need for direct or indirect coordination will only become greater. If nuclear talks with Europe break down, absence of U.S. engagement would make chances for real nuclear resolution - remote as they may be - nil.



Iraq Kurdish and Shiite leaders agreed draft constitution and submitted it to parliament 28 August over objections of Sunni Arab leaders, who said could provoke civil war. Contentious issues include provisions for federal system of government and exclusion of former Baath party officials from public office. Sunni Arabs fear possible creation of Shiite super-region in oil-rich south. Referendum on constitution scheduled 15 October. 100,000 supporters of radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr marched in 8 cities protesting constitution, while Sunnis protested in Baquba. Violent infighting between Sadr’s followers and rival Shiites 24 August killed 8. 3 Sunni political party members shot dead while putting up posters urging Sunnis to vote in October referendum. Intense violence continued across much of Iraq, targeting Iraqi police in particular. 965 Shiite pilgrims died 31 August after rumours of suicide bomber sparked stampede. U.S. launched anti-insurgent operations near Syrian border, including reported air strikes 30 August. Deadly month for U.S. military, with over 70 soldiers killed. 1,471 Coalition soldiers,

including 1,359 Americans, and thousands of Iraqis killed by hostile fire since declared end of combat 1 May 2003.

- “An Iraqi tragedy raises sectarian tension”, *The Economist*, 31 Aug. 2005.
- “Sunnis condemn final Iraqi charter”, *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°42, *Iraq: Don’t Rush the Constitution*, 8 June 2005.

Saudi Arabia Security forces killed al Qaeda leader in Saudi Arabia, Saleh Awfi, in Medina clash. Saudi police killed 3 others, arrested 41 in series of raids in Riyadh and Medina. U.S. briefly closed embassy and consulates in response to terror threat: UK, Australia warned of possible attacks. New King Abdullah assumed crown following 1 August death of King Fahd; pardoned 5 political activists jailed for demanding democratic reforms and agreed to free 1,200 Yemenis imprisoned on various charges.

- “Al-Qaeda chief in Saudi killed in shootout”, Middle East Online, 18 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°31, *Saudi Arabia Backgrounder: Who are the Islamists?*, 21 Sept. 2004.

Yemen Editor-in-chief of independent newspaper kidnapped and beaten by assailants for slandering government officials. Trial began of 36 suspected Zaidi rebels accused of attacks against security forces. In separate trial, 6 al Qaeda suspects jailed for plotting attacks on Western targets.

- “Yemen reporter says kidnapped, beaten by gunmen”, AlertNet, 23 Aug. 2005.
- “Stormy hearing in Yemen trial of Zaidi rebels”, Middle East Online, 22 Aug. 2005.

NORTH AFRICA

Algeria President Bouteflika announced 29 September referendum on Draft Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation. Human rights groups expressed fears endorsement of plan would prevent investigations into human rights abuses committed by armed groups and state authorities since 1992; plan would compensate families of 6,146 disappeared individuals. 6 civilians killed by Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat in Batna province 19 August; 3 government guards killed near Skikda 10 August. Security forces said 11 militants killed in Medea province operations.

- “President calls referendum to obliterate crimes of the past”, Amnesty International statement, 22 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°29, *Islamism, Violence and Reform in Algeria: Turning the Page*, 30 July 2004.

Egypt 10 candidates - including President Mubarak, al Ghad party leader Ayman Nour and Wafd party candidate Nomaan Gomaa - officially launched campaigns ahead of 7 September presidential elections amidst claims of media bias for incumbent. Muslim Brotherhood opposition organisation called for participation but did not endorse any candidate. Ongoing security sweeps across Bedouin areas of Sinai in connection with July Sharm el-Sheik bombings; 2 policemen killed in spate of Sinai landmine bombings at month-end.

- “Egyptians press hunt for Sinai terrorists”, *International Herald Tribune*, 30 Aug. 2005
- “Play by the rules”, *Al Ahram*, 18 Aug. 2005.

- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Briefings N°s 12 and 13, *Islamism in North Africa: Legacies of History and Egypt's Opportunity*, 20 April 2004.

➡ Mauritania Dramatically changed but, on balance, not deteriorated situation as unpopular President Taya overthrown in 3 August coup by 17-member Council for Justice and Democracy led by Colonel Vall, director of national security since 1987. U.S., UN and AU initially condemned coup, but subsequent criticism muted. AU referred to Vall as "president" during mission to Nouakchott; suspension from AU maintained. U.S. reassured by appointment as foreign minister of Ahmed Ould Sid'Ahmed, responsible for Mauritania's 1999 diplomatic recognition of Israel. Vall said multi-party elections would be held following 2-year transition period; no junta members to stand. Several Islamist leaders, accused of links to Salafi terrorism by Taya, released from detention.

- "Envoys snub ex-Mauritania leader", BBC, 10 Aug. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°41, *Islamism in North Africa IV: The Islamist Challenge in Mauritania: Threat or Scapegoat?*, 11 May 2005.

➡ Western Sahara In potential peace move following U.S. mediation, Polisario Front fulfilled July pledge to release 404 remaining Moroccan POWs held near Tindouf, Algeria. U.S. Senator Richard Lugar, overseeing release, called for UN-sponsored peace talks.

- "Freed Moroccan POWs begin returning home", *The Washington Post*, 19 Aug. 2005.

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