

105 1 May 2012

April 2012 Trends

 Deteriorated Situations	 Improved Situations
Bahrain (p.10)	Macedonia (p.7)
Democratic Republic of Congo (p.2)	Mali (p.4)
Egypt (p.11)	North Korea (p.5)
Eritrea (p.2)	Pakistan (p.6)
Guinea-Bissau (p.4)	South Sudan (p.3)
	Sudan (p.3)

Unchanged Situations

Afghanistan (p.5), Algeria (p.11), Armenia (p.8), Azerbaijan (p.8), Bangladesh (p.5), Belarus (p.8), Bolivia (p.9), Bosnia (p.7), Burma/Myanmar (p.6), Burundi (p.2), Cameroon (p.2), Central African Republic (p.2), Chad (p.2), Colombia (p.9), Côte d'Ivoire (p.4), Cyprus (p.8), Ecuador (p.9), Ethiopia (p.2), Georgia (p.8), Guatemala (p.9), Guinea (p.4), Haiti (p.9), India (non-Kashmir) (p.5), Indonesia (p.6), Iran (p.10), Iraq (p.10), Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories (p.10), Jordan (p.11), Kashmir (p.6), Kazakhstan (p.5), Kenya (p.2), Kosovo (p.7), Kyrgyzstan (p.5), Lebanon (p.10), Liberia (p.4), Libya (p.11), Madagascar (p.3), Malawi (p.3), Mauritania (p.12), Mexico (p.9), Moldova (p.8), Morocco (p.12), Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) (p.8), Niger (p.4), Nigeria (p.4), North Caucasus (Russia) (p.8), Philippines (p.7), Rwanda (p.2), Saudi Arabia (p.11), Senegal (p.4), Serbia (p.7), Somalia (p.2), Somaliland (p.3), Sri Lanka (p.6), Syria (p.10), Tajikistan (p.5), Thailand (p.7), Timor Leste (p.7), Tunisia (p.12), Turkey (p.9), Uganda (p.3), Ukraine (p.8), Uzbekistan (p.5), Venezuela (p.9), Western Sahara (p.12)

May 2012 Watchlist

Conflict Risk Alerts

Guinea-Bissau (p.4)
Mali (p.4)
Syria (p.10)

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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 140 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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Africa

Central Africa

➡ **Burundi** Trade union leaders early April denounced census of public administration put in place by Senate to reveal ethnic, regional or gender-based inequality. Chairman of UPRONA 13 April expressed concern at national land commission's handling of land conflicts, alleged chairman favoured repatriated Hutus, demanded replacement. Rumours circulated mid-month that Colonel Kabirigi, leader of rebel Forces for the Restoration of Democracy (FRD) tortured, killed by security forces. 3 soldiers reportedly killed mid-April in Congolese part of Rukoko forest in clash between FNL and FARDC, supported by Burundi army; govt denies army present in South Kivu.

- "Les FARDC et les FDN: à la traque des FNL au Congo", IWACU, 21 April 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°185, *Burundi: A Deepening Corruption Crisis*, 21 March 2012.

➡ **Cameroon** National Assembly 2 April postponed legislative elections scheduled for July 2012. Police 16 April arrested former PM Inoni Ephraim and ex-Minister for Territorial Administration Hamidou Yaya on charges of corruption sparking fears of unrest as Yaya seen as potential successor to President Biya. Govt 13 April adopted new electoral code in vote boycotted by opposition, criticised by civil society groups. Fears regional insecurity spilling into north Cameroon as 10 April attack by Boko Haram in border town Banki left 11 dead, including 3 Cameroonians; govt deployed additional forces on border.

- "Boko Haram frappe à la frontière du Nigeria avec le Cameroun", *Cameroon Tribune*, 11 April 2012.

➡ **Central African Republic** Jean-Jacques Demafouth, rebel People's Army for the Restoration of Democracy (APRD) leader and DDR steering committee VP, and 2 Union for Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) opposition leaders freed 11 April following 3-month detention. 11 CAR soldiers, part of CAR-Chad-Sudan border guard, killed 17 April in border region raid by S Sudan.

- "CAR blames Sudan rebels for cross-border ambush", Reuters, 20 April 2012.

➡ **Chad** President Deby 10 April met Niger counterpart, announced combined efforts to fight insecurity in Sahel, threat from Boko Haram, 24 April met SRSG Abou Moussa and AU Special Envoy on LRA Francisco Madeira to discuss LRA threat. Deby 30 April called for creation of regional force to fight Boko Haram.

- "Insécurité au Sahel: le Tchad et le Niger mutualisent leurs efforts", RFI, 11 April 2012.

➡ **Democratic Republic of Congo** April saw further deterioration in security situation in Eastern DRC. Attempted mutiny by former CNDP leader Bosco Ntaganda, wanted by ICC, failed early April; President Kabila 11 April reportedly called for his arrest, domestic trial; clashes throughout month between army and rebels in Kivus displaced thousands. Doctors early April began strike protesting low pay, collapsing infrastructure. CENI 20 April announced provincial elections for Jan 2013, released report blaming international assistance for problems in presidential elections. SRSG

Abou Moussa and AU Special Envoy on LRA Francisco Madeira 10-15 April visited DRC, discussed LRA threat with authorities, regional and international partners. PM late April appointed new govt, no opposition politicians included.

- "Congolese flee rebel attacks", *New Times*, 30 April 2012.

➡ **Rwanda** Opposition leader Victoire Ingabire 18 April withdrew from trial for genocide denial, terrorism citing lack of judicial independence, intimidation of defence witnesses. Court 27 April rejected appeal by Bernard Ntaganda, former leader of opposition PS-Imberakuri, upheld 4-year jail sentence. Supreme Court 5 April reduced sentences of 2 journalists amid continuing media reforms, clearing one of divisionism, genocide denial.

- "Journalists' sentences reduced ahead of media law reform", RFI, 6 April 2012.

Horn of Africa

➡ **Eritrea** President Afewerki 28 April appeared on TV dispelling rumours of death, amid reports of fatal illness; govt claimed rumours originate with CIA; rumours raised tensions and prospect of internal instability. Tensions with Ethiopia continued: govt 18 April denied abducting over 100 Ethiopian miners (see Ethiopia). Small Arms Survey report released 17 April said Eritrea supplying S Sudan rebels with weapons.

- "Eritrean TV shows president after health rumours", Reuters, 29 April 2012.

➡ **Ethiopia** PM Meles 17 April accused Eritrea of abducting over 100 Ethiopian gold miners from NW Tigray region; Eritrean govt denied accusations. Terrorism trial of Abdirahman Hassan, UN security officer stationed in Ogaden region and arrested July 2011 for alleged links to rebel Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), began 9 April. PM Meles 17 April announced imminent withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from Somalia.

- "Ethiopian UN security official on trial for terrorism", VOA, 9 April 2012.

➡ **Kenya** U.S. embassy 23 April warned of planned terrorist attack on Nairobi hotels, govt buildings. 1 killed, 15 wounded 29 April in grenade attack on Nairobi church. Director of Public Prosecutions 9 April announced investigation into alleged plot to assassinate PM Odinga. 1 killed 24 April as police dispersed demonstration by banned secessionist Mombasa Republican Council; President Kibaki 24 April emphasised secession will not happen. Muslim Human Rights forum late-month accused police of abducting, illegally executing terror suspect Samir Khan, abducting one other; police denied allegations, said investigation underway. 4 top judges declared unfit for office 24 April by committee investigating judicial impartiality.

- "Kenya launches inquiry into PM assassination plot", VOA, 9 April 2012.

➡ **Somalia** Suicide bomb attack targeting PM at National Theatre reopening ceremony 4 April killed 6, wounded dozens including govt minister, sparking suspicion of inside involvement, concern over security lapse. AMISOM 5 April deployed troops in Baidoa marking first time forces dispatched outside Mogadishu; at least 12 civilians killed 9 April in al-Shabaab bomb targeting troops. AU 20 April reportedly took control of al-Shabaab bases on outskirts of Mogadishu including Deynile airstrip. Journalist killed 5 April in Beletwein, Hiran region. Interim President Sharif 24

April announced intention to run for presidential office at end of transitional period in August 2012; TFG 25 April announced govt in final stages of adopting new constitution. Al-Shabaab 27 April threatened attack on 135 Somali traditional clan elders, gathered late April in Mogadishu to select Constituent Assembly delegates before formation of new parliament. Puntland President Farole 11 April said al-Shabaab militants have moved into semi-autonomous region. Representatives at Puntland's Constitutional Convention 18 April voted to adopt new draft constitution.

- "Somalia bombing kills at least 12", Reuters, 9 April 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°87, *Somalia: An Opportunity that Should Not Be Missed*, 22 Feb. 2012.

Somaliland At least 15 reportedly killed, dozens injured 1 April in clash between Somaliland forces and local militia in newly-declared breakaway Khatumo region; President Silanyo 2 April called for peace in region; FM Mohamed Abdullahi Omar 21 April said govt would not hold talks with Somalia's Transitional Federal Govt (TFG) following inclusion of 2 Puntland ministers on dialogue committee appointed by TFG President Sharif.

- "Puntland link compels Somaliland to abandon talks with TFG", Garowe Online, 21 April 2012.

South Sudan President Kiir 24 April said Sudan had "declared war" following continued airstrikes; AU 24 April gave Sudan and S Sudan 3 months to reach deal, end fighting, or face "appropriate measures" following continued deterioration in relations throughout April (see Sudan). S Sudan 4 April claimed forces shot down Sudanese jet over Unity State. Govt 25 April released 14 Sudanese soldiers in move hoped to ease tensions, soldier alleged beatings, mistreatment; govt same day accused Khartoum of bombing Unity State. Govt 28 April said attack by Khartoum-backed rebels in Upper Nile state repulsed, 21 killed; 29 April said committed to an "immediate cessation of all hostilities" with Sudan, would withdraw all police from Abyei, in letter to UN.

- "Sudan has 'declared war' on South Sudan", *Telegraph*, 24 April 2012.

New Crisis Group Africa Report N°186, *China's New Courtship in South Sudan*, 4 April 2012. Following its oil interests and other opportunities to Juba, China is building a new relationship with South Sudan but finds itself drawn into a dangerous dispute that risks bringing the Sudans back to conflict.

Sudan Tensions with S Sudan continued: in blow to economy, SPLA 10 April took over Helgig oil fields, 12 April shut down production, 20 April ordered pull-out; late April denied damaging Helgig oil infrastructure. Govt agencies ordered to cut petrol use, civil servants to donate 2 days pay to support army. Khartoum 30 April declared state of emergency in border regions. AU 24 April gave Sudan, S Sudan 3 months to reach deal, end fighting, or face "appropriate measures"; UNSC called for halt to airstrikes. Khartoum 2 April reopened negotiations with Juba in Addis Ababa, 3 April failed to sign security deal despite reaching understandings on cessation of hostilities and campaigns. Military operations in South Kordofan and Blue Nile escalated throughout month, prompting Khartoum to again accuse Juba of providing support to rebels; Small Arms Survey report published 17 April suggested close ties between Juba and SPLM-N. 4 UN peacekeepers injured in ambush 21 April, Darfur. SAF 22 April reported over 50 SPLM-N killed, 17 arrested in Blue Nile, refuted SPLM-N claims 79 SAF soldiers killed.

- "Sudan 'declares emergency' on border with South Sudan", BBC, 29 April 2012.

Uganda Govt 4 April banned opposition Activists for Change (A4C) pressure group, accused leaders of promoting political violence. Opposition Forum for Democratic Change leader Ingrid Turinawe sexually assaulted, arrested 19 April attending A4C rally in Kampala; police officer suspended 24 April. Army late-April reportedly accused Sudan's govt of supporting LRA.

- "Uganda bans protest group amid corruption, social unrest", *Washington Times*, 7 April 2012.

New Crisis Group Africa Report N°187, *Uganda: No Resolution to Growing Tensions*, 5 April 2012. Unless President Yoweri Museveni breaks with the ways of his predecessors and the trend of his own lengthy rule, popular protests and discontent will grow in Uganda.

Southern Africa

Madagascar Transitional parliament 13 April adopted 2 amnesty laws, provisions exclude former President Ravalomanana due to Aug 2010 conviction for deaths in Feb 2009 violence. Ravalomanana's supporters boycotted vote, sent letter of complaint to SADC Troika; 28 April protested law, demonstrations violently dispersed by police. Former president Zafy accused transitional President Rajoelina of involvement in "Rosewood" illegal logging scandal, called for his resignation following 13 April sacking of Environment and Forestry Minister Randriamiarisoa over reported "mishandling" of affair, no replacement yet named for ministry. Close confidante to President Zafy, Mamy Ravatomanga, sued Randriamiarisoa for alleging Ravatomanga's involvement in illegal logging.

- "Les deux projets de loi sont passés", *Madagascar Tribune*, 14 April 2012.


Malawi President Mutharika 5 April died from heart attack; VP Joyce Banda sworn in 7 April following constitutional process, despite alleged coup plot to install Peter Mutharika, brother of President Mutharika, as successor; Malawi Law Society 17 April called for prosecution of alleged coup conspirators. Banda 27 April announced new "reconciliation" cabinet, fired 10 senior ministers, including Peter Mutharika, 6 others reportedly involved in conspiracy. Banda 10 April announced desire to normalise relations with donor countries; UK 24 April announced resumption of diplomatic relations.

- "Malawi's Joyce Banda puts women's rights at centre of new presidency", *Guardian*, 29 April 2012.


Zimbabwe PM Tsvangirai 2 April demanded Mugabe stick to election roadmap, wait for completion of new constitution and reforms before elections; President Mugabe 18 April called for violence-free, open polls, expedition of constitution writing process prior to elections. Govt 10 April rejected rumours Mugabe gravely ill following visit to Singapore; signs of succession power struggle emerging. Political violence on rise since Feb, MDC-T rallies repeatedly shut down; 15 MDC activists, including 3 councillors arrested 23 April for meeting without authorisation, released 24 April without charge. New Zealand journalist arrested 20 April, reportedly on spying allegations.

- "Mugabe, 'Man of Peace'", *AllAfrica*, 20 April 2012.



West Africa

 **Côte d'Ivoire** President Ouattara 21-24 April visited towns in west for first time since 2010/2011 post-electoral conflict, called for national reconciliation, said will seek solution to conflicts over land tenure. Police early April arrested Rodrigue Dadjé, lawyer of ex-first lady Simone Gbagbo, charged him with threatening national security, intention to start rebellion. Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) Secretary General Laurent Akoun early April said FPI ready for dialogue with govt.


- ["Ouattara se pose en rassembleur dans l'ouest du pays"](#), RFI, 23 April 2012.

 **Guinea** Future ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda 5 April visited Conakry, said ICC will prosecute those responsible for Sept 2009 massacre if govt fails. Opposition leader Cellou Diallo 2-8 April visited Paris, said Guinea not ready for 8 July elections. Major civil society coalition 13 April called for removal of controversial CENI president. Govt repression of opposition protests at controversial preparations for legislative elections continued; police 19 April fired tear gas at women demonstrating outside CENI HQ, 20 injured. President Condé 27 April announced postponement of elections.



- ["Il n'y aura pas de législatives le 08 juillet"](#), AFP, 28 April 2012.

  **Guinea-Bissau** Soldiers 12 April staged military coup, detained for over 2 weeks interim President Pereira and PM Gomes Júnior, widely expected to win presidential run-off originally scheduled 29 April; said acted to avert "Angolan aggression" by MISSANG forces stationed in Bissau. ECOWAS 27 April gave junta 72-hour ultimatum to accept 600-strong force, 12-month transition to civilian rule. CPLP 14 April demanded international intervention; Brazil said willing to lead stabilisation force. Following failure of negotiations with Chief of Staff António Indjai, ECOWAS 30 April imposed sanctions, threatened use of force to restore civilian rule. Portugal 15 April sent 2 navy ships, military plane to Cape Verde in preparation to evacuate nationals. Junta 16 April announced creation of transitional institutions to carry out 2-year roadmap to elections, proposed Parliament Speaker Serifo Nhamadjo as president; Nhamadjo rejected offer.

- ["G. Bissau junta vows to fight if foreign troops intervene"](#), AFP, 20 April 2012.


 **Liberia** Special Court for Sierra Leone 26 April found former President Taylor guilty of war crimes, crimes against humanity, provoking mixed reactions in Monrovia as many still loyal to Taylor, others still awaiting justice for Liberia civil war crimes. Robert Sirleaf, son of President Sirleaf, 2 April filed \$11 mn libel suit against daily The Independent following accusations of nepotism over appointment as chairman of national oil company NOCAL by President Sirleaf late March.

- ["Taylor Sierra Leone war crimes trial verdict welcomed"](#), BBC, 27 April 2012.


  **Mali** Following widespread condemnation of March military coup, military junta 7 April transferred power to civilian govt headed by Parliament Speaker Traoré in exchange for amnesty for mutineers; confusion over who is in charge as junta mid-April arrested several high-level political figures, continued to exercise

control over state media. Soldiers loyal to deposed President Touré 30 April attempted counter-coup, foiled by junta soldiers; several dead. ECOWAS 27 April announced deployment of 3,000 troops, one-year transition instead of 40 days initially agreed with junta; Captain Sanogo 29 April said violation of agreement; fears of further unrest at Kati military garrison. National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) 5 April announced end of military operations, 6 April proclaimed liberation of Azawad state; AU rejected declaration of independence; Traoré 12 April threatened to launch "total war" on Tuareg rebels and Islamist militias in North, hundreds of northern youths gathered in Bamako 6 April to demand weapons to fight rebellion; UNSG Ban 16 April said urgent action needed to address "cascading crisis in Sahel". Following fall of Timbuktu to Islamist militia Ansar Dine and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) early April, newly-formed National Front for the Liberation of Azawad (FLNA) Arab militia 27 April said it took Timbuktu but 29 April exited city following threat of "bloodbath" by AQIM. Algerian army 29 April launched airstrike against AQIM splinter group Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) responsible for 5 April abduction of Algerian diplomats in Gao, 20 dead.

- Comment by Giles Yabi, ["Les deux pièges à éviter dans la recherche d'une sortie de crise au Nord-Mali"](#), Slate Afrique, 16 April 2012.
- ["Mali coup leader rejects Ecowas troop deployment"](#), BBC, 28 April 2012.

 **Niger** President Mahamadou Issoufou 10 April visited Chad to strengthen joint efforts against threats in the Sahel, Sahara and Boko Haram. Minister of Communication Salifou Bouché 19 April asked Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to assist Muslim populations in Sahel, invest in peace.

- ["Insécurité au Sahel: le Tchad et le Niger mutualisent leurs efforts"](#), RFI, 11 April 2012.

 **Nigeria** Boko Haram attacks continued: 7 killed in 4 April attack on market, Maiduguri; 38 killed 7 April in suicide car bomb attack, Kaduna; 7 killed 18 April in spate of attacks across north; suicide bomb attacks on This Day newspaper offices in Abuja, Kaduna 26 April left 9 dead; suspected Boko Haram attacks at Kano University, Maiduguri church 29 April left at least 21 dead. Boko Haram 12 April released video threatening to topple President Jonathan within 3 months. Intercommunal tensions in Plateau state continued; 2 attacks near Jos 24 April left 5 dead, 10 injured; 30 April attack by ethnic Fulani herdsmen on ethnic Christian Berom left 2 dead, several wounded. U.S. 18 April warned Boko Haram planning attacks on Abuja, including major hotels. Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) claimed responsibility for 13 April attack on Italian ENI oil installations in Bayelsa State, 14 April threatened to attack South African investments in Niger Delta, sparking fears of group's resurgence.

- ["Nigerian Easter bomb kills many in Kaduna"](#), BBC, 9 April 2012.

 **Senegal** President Macky Sall 5 April named new cabinet following 2 April swearing-in ceremony, 15 April visited Gambia to seek President Jammeh's assistance in finding peaceful solution to Casamance conflict; Sall 18 April signed new defence agreement reducing French troops in Dakar from 1,200 to 300, agreed €130 mn financial deal with France.

- ["Les cinq priorités de Macky Sall"](#), Jeune Afrique, 10 April 2012.

Asia

Central Asia

➤ **Kazakhstan** Court 9 April jailed 5 in Taraz in connection with Nov suicide blast; 42 jailed 19 April in Atyrau on terrorism charges. Following torture claims, Human Rights Watch 23 April called for suspension of trial of 37 accused of involvement in Dec 2011 violence in Janaozen; hundreds demonstrated 28 April in Almaty against govt, trial. 2 prominent reform activists 17 April barred from travelling abroad, attending meeting with European Parliament. Defence Ministry 16 April announced plans to launch first domestically produced navy vessel.

- [“Rights activists urge halt to Zhanaozen trial amid torture claims”](#), Eurasianet, 23 April 2012.

➤ **Kyrgyzstan** Estimated 5,000 opposition Ata-Jurt supporters 10 April rallied in southern city of Jalal-Abad demanding govt resignation. Russian FM Lavrov 4-5 April visited Bishkek to discuss bilateral ties; Russia, Kyrgyzstan 24 April announced agreement on Russian compensation for use of Kant airbase. Authorities early month reportedly requested U.S. supply drone aircraft following 2014 withdrawal from Afghanistan.

- [“Unpopular judiciary difficult to reform”](#), Eurasianet, 10 April 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia report N°222, [Kyrgyzstan: Widening Ethnic Divisions in the South](#), 29 March 2012.

➤ **Tajikistan** Court in northern city of Khujand 19 April jailed 34 suspected Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) members on terrorism-related charges. President Rahmon 17 April said country rejected foreign request to use military bases as Russia “only strategic partner”, but warned Moscow should respect Tajikistan; 20 April said NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan will affect regional security.

- [“Tajikistan rejects foreign base offers in deference to Russia”](#), Reuters, 17 April 2012.

➤ **Uzbekistan** Govt 4 April rejected Tajik accusations country imposing economic blockade; 16 April resumed gas supplies to Tajikistan. Human rights activist Alisher Karomatov released from prison after serving 6 years of 9-year sentence.

- [“Uzbekistan-Tajikistan: when is a blockade a blockade?”](#), Eurasianet, 5 April 2012.

North East Asia

➤ **North Korea** Amid signs of increasing belligerence, DPRK 13 April attempted but failed to launch Unha-3 rocket to coincide with 100th birthday of Kim Il-sung; UNSC condemned attempt, warned of further action if nuclear test carried out; U.S. cancelled planned food aid and 20 April revealed suspicions China sold missile launcher technology to DPRK; DPRK 17 April announced it is no longer bound by U.S. “leap day” agreement. Kim Jong-un 15 April gave first public speech, reaffirmed military priorities; KPA Supreme Command 23 April announced intentions to initiate

“special actions” to destroy ROK, president, mass media firms. KWP 21 April held talks with Chinese Communist Party international department chief, President Hu. China State Councillor Dai Bingguo praised Kim Jong-un, vowed to deepen ties with DPRK. Japan’s Yomiuri Shimbun 18 April reported that China had ceased deportations of DPRK defectors.

- [“Why North Korea’s rocket mattered”](#), *New York Times*, 13 April 2012.

South Asia

➤ **Afghanistan** Suicide bomber 3 April killed 12, including 2 ISAF soldiers, in Maymana, Faryab Province where oil and gas recently discovered. Govt 3 April announced opening of Qatari embassy in Kabul following tension surrounding Taliban’s opening of office in Qatar early 2012. Govt 8 April signed agreement with U.S. giving Kabul veto power and control over prisoners taken in controversial night raids; U.S.-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership deal agreed 22 April. 16 killed 10 April in near simultaneous suicide bomb attacks in Herat and Lashkar Gah; Taliban 15 April launched multi-city “spring offensive” in Kabul, Nangahar, Logar and Paktika provinces; 4 killed, 16 abducted 26 April in Taliban attack on police post, NE. Photos published 18 April, showing U.S. soldiers posing with Taliban fighter corpses, prompted U.S. condemnation, sparked fears of widespread Afghan reaction. Govt 26 April announced prisoner swap agreement with Iran. Pakistan, Afghanistan and U.S. representatives at meeting to discuss reviving peace talks said safe passage arrangements to allow Taliban to attend talks would be explored.

- Comment by Candace Rondeaux, [“There’s no ‘I’ in Afghan endgame”](#), *Foreign Policy*, 5 April 2012.
- Comment by Louise Arbour, [“New approach needed to end Afghanistan’s insurgency”](#), *GlobalPost*, 20 April 2012.
- [“Agreement, at last”](#), *Economist*, 28 April 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°221, [Talking About Talks: Toward a Political Settlement in Afghanistan](#), 26 March 2012.

➤ **Bangladesh** Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) called for series of strikes following 17 April disappearance of regional leader Ilyas Ali. 2 killed, at least 100 injured 23 April in clashes with police during protest in Sylhet over disappearance. Several bombs exploded 29 April in Dhaka following death of opposition supporter in riots, police charged 44 opposition officials including senior BNP leaders. Labour organiser Aminul Islam found murdered 5 April amid allegations of govt or police involvement.

- [“Bangladesh clashes over missing opposition leader”](#), AFP, 23 April 2012.

➤ **India (non-Kashmir)** Maoist rebels 21 April abducted senior Indian Administrative Service official, demanded release of top cadres from prison, withdrawal of security forces from Bastar region of Chhattisgarh; abducted legislator Jhina Hikaka released 26 April after promising to resign; Italian hostage freed 12 April after month of captivity. 2 leaders of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) killed 20 April in Bijapur landmine blast. 1 soldier, unconfirmed number of rebels killed 5 April in Latehar district. India 19 April successfully test-fired nuclear-capable long-range missile.

- [“Signs of an Asian arms buildup in India’s missile test”](#), *New York Times*, 19 April 2012.

➡ **Kashmir** 5 killed, 50 injured 4 April in grenade attack on Sunni rally in Gilgit Baltistan. 5 separatist guerillas killed 5 April in Kupwara district. Indian policeman killed 20 April in Srinagar. Indian police 21 April arrested alleged mastermind of Bijbehara car blast.

- "Top Hizbul commander arrested", *Hindu*, 21 April 2012.

➡ **Nepal** Special Committee for Supervision Integration and Rehabilitation of Maoist combatants 11 April handed command of cantonments holding 9,700 former Maoist combatants over to Nepalese Army; 14 April endorsed 7-point agreement outlining formation of integration selection committees, training period, bridge course and directorates. Second phase of combatant regrouping concluded 20 April: over 6,500 retired voluntarily, 3,100 to join Nepalese Army. Leaders from major parties continued negotiations on constitutional issues including forms of governance and state restructuring, increasing hopes for broad political agreement. Rift within Maoist party continued: anti-establishment faction led by Mohan Baidya 'Kiran' formed parallel structures, 24 April re-established People's Volunteer's Bureau, meant to replicate Young Communist League and accommodate former fighters. Both federalists and anti-federalists organised several rallies and strikes across country to pressure major parties during negotiations. 4 killed, 18 wounded 30 April in bomb blast in Janakpur. Bombs planted by disillusioned Maoist cadres found, defused 4 April in buses, bus parks around Kathmandu.

- "A journey that began in Delhi reaches its conclusion", *Hindu*, 16 April 2012.

➡ **Pakistan** Supreme Court 26 April convicted PM Gilani of contempt of court, PM refused to step down, govt said will file appeal. Lahore station bomb blast 24 April killed 4; 8 Hazara Shias killed 15 April in sectarian attacks, Quetta. Following spate of politically and ethnically motivated targeted killings in Karachi, that claimed over 25 lives early April, Interior Minister Rehman Malik 23 April alleged Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and Awami National Party (ANP) activists involved in corruption, extortion. Parliament early April unanimously approved non-binding resolution to end drone strikes, ban U.S. intelligence operations and unilateral U.S. military operations; first U.S. drone strike in a month killed 4 al-Qaeda linked fighters in N Waziristan 29 April, attack condemned by govt. High-level talks between U.S. and Pakistan 27 April failed to repair ties, reach agreement on re-opening NATO supply routes. Govt 25 April tested ballistic missile following 19 April long-range missile launch by India.

- "United States talks fail as Pakistanis seek apology", *New York Times*, 27 April 2012.

➡ **Sri Lanka** Govt 22 April ordered removal of mosque in Dambulla following 19 April firebombing, 20 April protest led by Buddhist monks alleging mosque illegally built in area sacred to Buddhists; umbrella Muslim group said attack attempt to damage peaceful co-existence. "White van" abductions continued: 2 lead JVP-splinter group activists kidnapped 6 April, 3 days before launch of their new Frontline Socialist Party, released after 4 days, one deported to Australia. Indian parliamentary delegation visited 16-21 April, met with broad range of govt, party, civil society members, toured N and E, called for rapid progress on political settlement with Tamil parties, improved conditions for resettled population and return to civilian rule in N; govt rejected call to withdraw troops from N. Govt early April rejected calls for implementation of March's

HRC resolution, LLRC recommendations. Reported UN discovery of cluster bombs in N appeared to confirm use during civil war.

- "Sri Lanka faces yet another rights abuse allegation", *Hindu*, 11 April 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°219, *Sri Lanka's North I: the Denial of Minority Rights*, 16 March 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°220, *Sri Lanka's North II: Rebuilding Under the Military*, 16 March 2012.

South East Asia

➡ **Indonesia** Bitterly contested local Aceh elections 9 April saw Zaini Abdullah, Partai Aceh (PA) candidate and former Free Aceh Movement (GAM) leader, elected governor, defeating incumbent Irwandi Yusuf by 56% to 29% following sporadic violence and intimidation by PA in lead-up to poll. PA member Ayah Banta arrested 14 April, accused of heading hit squad responsible for Dec, Jan election-related killings. Parliament 10 April passed controversial social conflict management bill allowing provincial, district level officials to impose limited emergency rule. 2012 legislative elections bill passed 12 April establishing 3.5% national vote threshold for parliamentary seats. Flights to Puncak Jaya, Papua, suspended after sniper 8 April fired on small aircraft killing 1 journalist, injuring 4 others. Mob 20 April attacked, vandalised minority Ahmadiyah Muslim sect mosque in West Java. 2 terror suspects 13 April arrested in Bima, 4 further arrests 17 April in West Java. Former Democrat Party treasurer Muhammad Nazaruddin convicted of corruption 20 April, jailed for 5 years.

- Comment by Sidney Jones, "How will Partai Aceh govern?", *Tempo*, 19 April 2012.
- "Hoping for peace to return", *Economist*, 14 April 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°135, *Indonesia: Averting Election Violence in Aceh*, 29 Feb. 2012.

➡ **Burma/Myanmar** Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD opposition party, won 43 of 45 available seats in 1 April by-elections; NLD temporarily boycotted resumption of parliament in dispute over language in swearing-in oath. During 3 day visit UNSG Ban 30 April addressed parliament, praised reforms. Diplomatic visits continued throughout month including by UK PM Cameron, Italian FM Terzi, EU High Representative Ashton. Western govts announced easing of sanctions, arms embargoes to remain; Karen National Union (KNU) 8 April cautioned against lifting sanctions too quickly. Japanese govt pledged to cancel \$3.72bn debt, resume aid, loans during President Thein Sein's 20-25 April Tokyo visit. KNU, govt 6 April signed 13-point agreement on peace process; KNU 7 April met with Thein Sein, 8 April with Suu Kyi; no progress on Kachin Independence Organisation talks, Thein Sein 30 April named new negotiating team; armed clashes continued.

- "As the EU gets set to ease Myanmar sanctions, activists plead for the West to move slowly", *AP*, 21 April 2012.

New Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°136, *Reform in Myanmar: One Year On*, 11 April 2012. With Myanmar embarked on a remarkable top-down transition from five decades of authoritarian rule and extensive reforms already in place, it is time for the international community to help it address the remaining complex and numerous challenges by ending sanctions and looking to cooperation rather than coercion to promote further change.

➡ **Philippines** MILF and govt signed document outlining 10 principles for negotiations at 23-24 April peace talks, includes provision for secular ministerial govt in new Muslim autonomous region. On Basilan, violence continued: Long Malat, commander with Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) ties, killed in clan conflict 1 April; ASG ambush at rubber plantation killed 3 govt militia, 1 ASG member 5 April; 22 soldiers injured in suspected IED attack near captured ASG camp 10 April. Clashes between govt forces and communist New People's Army (NPA) continued: NPA ambush 25 April killed 11 police, 2 civilians in Ifugao, northern Luzon. Standoff over disputed Scarborough Shoal began 10 April when Philippine military tried to detain Chinese fishermen; diplomats attempting to resolve crisis. Annual joint U.S.-Philippine military exercises conducted 16-27 April; foreign affairs and defence secretaries from both countries 30 April met in Washington, agreed to boost Philippines defences.

- "U.S.-Philippine war games start amid China standoff", *New York Times*, 16 April 2012.

New Crisis Group Asia Report N°223, *Stirring up the South China Sea (I)*, 23 April 2012. China is one of its own worst enemies in the South China Sea, as its local governments and agencies struggle for power and money, inflaming tensions with its neighbours, illustrated by Beijing's latest standoff with the Philippines.

➡ **Thailand** Month saw deadly series of attacks in southern provinces blamed on militant separatists. In response to 31 March Yala bombings, govt 3 April pledged new safety zones, checkpoints for Songkhla, Yala provinces; victims to receive compensation; 3 bombing suspects arrested 4-5 April, believed to be members of extremist separatist group Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) Coordinate. PM Yingluck Shinawatra reiterated policy of no negotiation with southern militants, announced new committee to handle southern security issues. Thailand, Cambodia pledged to remove land mines at disputed Preah Vihear temple during 3-5 April summit, but agreed troops would remain. Ruling party Pheu Thai 20 April announced public hearings for reconciliation, amnesty plans, contrary to previous unilateral approach; change may affect former PM Thaksin Shinawatra's plans to return to Thailand. Govt and opposition MPs, including opposition leader Abhisit Vejjajiva, 20 April cleared of constitutional violations, corruption relating to 2011 floods.

- "Thaksin eyes a third way home", *Bangkok Post*, 17 April 2012.

➡ **Timor Leste** In largely peaceful presidential run-off, former rebel and defence force chief Taur Matan Ruak 17 April defeated Fretilin party president Lu Olo, winning 61.2% of votes; inauguration set for 20 May. Parliamentary polls set for 7 July.

- Comment by Cillian Nolan, "Elections in Aceh and Timor-Leste: after the struggle", *Jakarta Post*, 19 April 2012.
- "Former guerrilla elected ETimor president", AAP, 17 April 201
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°134, *Timor-Leste's Elections: Leaving Behind a Violent Past?*, 21 Feb. 2012.

Europe

Balkans

➡ **Bosnia** Council of Ministers 18 April approved 2012 budget; EU delegation in Sarajevo welcomed move as "setting up new institutions required for EU-related commitments". FM Lagumdžija 16 April expressed hopes for NATO accession by 2014; Republika Srpska spokesman said Lagumdžija advocating own views in contravention of Dayton Peace Agreement; NATO 10 April said BiH on track for Membership Action Plan.

- "Bosnia's Bosniak parties feud over budget", *Balkan Insight*, 20 April 2012.

➡ **Kosovo** After weeks of wrangling, political hostilities, Kosovo, Serbia and EU 30 April agreed OSCE to organise Serbian parliamentary, presidential elections in N Kosovo for eligible voters; Serbian Interior Minister Ivica Dačić same day claimed to have intelligence Priština planning to attack, sabotage polling stations. EU High Representative Ashton 14 April called on Serbs and Kosovo Albanians to refrain from "selective use of the law" to justify inflammatory arrests following 31 March arrest of 2 Kosovo Police officers on Serbia-Kosovo border by Serbian paramilitary police; arrest allegedly took place inside Kosovo; Kosovo police 23 April arrested 2 Kosovo Serbs, including Serbia's district chief for Kosovo, for alleged intimidation of Kosovo Serbs regarding 6 May election. Ethnic Albanian 8 April killed in bomb blast outside Mitrovica home. Kosovo police 20 April probed allegations of armed ethnic Albanian militias on patrol in N Kosovo.

- "Germany says NATO set to deploy some 700 additional troops to Kosovo ahead of Serbia election", AP, 21 April 2012.

➡ **Macedonia** Tensions rose dangerously as 5 Macedonians found murdered 12 April outside Skopje; President Ivanov 15 April urged "restraint by all"; Kosovo PM Thaçi 18 April stressed need to avoid regional destabilisation; hundreds of nationalist Macedonian youths 16 April clashed with police in Skopje demonstration outside Parliament against murders.

- "Killings heighten ethnic tensions in Macedonia", *New York Times*, 16 April 2012.

➡ **Serbia** Minister for Kosovo Goran Bogdanović 15 April stated in U-turn that Serbia would not hold 6 May local elections in N Kosovo but appoint local officials instead (see Kosovo). Bogdanović 20 April claimed ethnic Albanian militias in N Kosovo a result of "Priština's aspirations, through violence and unilateral action" to control N Kosovo (see Kosovo). Serbian authorities 23 April released Kosovo trade union leader Hasan Abazi, detained last month in series of tit-for-tat arrests on both sides of Kosovo-Serbia border.

- "Ashton tells Kosovo, Serbia to show restraint", *Balkan Insight*, 14 April 2012.

Caucasus

➡ **Armenia** Registration for participation in 6 May parliamentary elections closed 1 April: 8 parties, 1 bloc registered including ruling Republican Party (HHK), leading opposition parties Armenian National Congress (HAK) and Zharangutyun (Heritage). Independent candidate Meruzhan announced withdrawal from polls following 6 April abduction, beating by unknown assailants; supporters blamed violence on HHK rival Aleksan Petrosyan. 3 HAK activists reportedly assaulted 15 April by govt loyalists while campaigning in Yerevan; authorities denied role in attack.

- [“Will Armenian parliamentary election lead to radical new political configuration?”](#), RFE/RL, 29 April 2012.

➡ **Azerbaijan** At least 1 officer, 1 militant killed 6 April in security forces operation against suspected Islamic militants in Ganja. Authorities 7 April began mass arrest of suspected radical Islamists. Ministry of National Security 18 April announced large scale special operations conducted in Baku, Sumgayit, northern border regions; Vugar Padarov, leader of al-Qaeda linked group, reportedly killed, 19 others arrested across country. Officials 25 April announced joint Azeri-Russian operations targeting suspected terrorists, organised crime. Several hundred opposition supporters 8, 22 April protested in Baku demanding reforms, freedom for political prisoners, resignation of President Aliyev. Prominent journalist Idrak Abbasov 18 April severely beaten by oil company workers while covering house demolition in long-running land dispute with residents in Sulutepe. Israeli Foreign Minister Lieberman 23-24 April visited Baku, discussed bilateral cooperation.

- [“Azerbaijani Jamaat cooperates with Caucasus Emirate”](#), Eurasia Daily Monitor, 12 April 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°67, [Tackling Azerbaijan's IDP Burden](#), 27 Feb. 2012.

➡ **North Caucasus (Russia)** Security situation in Dagestan remained tense with 27 suspected militants reportedly killed during month: high ranking FSB officer 16 April injured in car bombing, wife killed. In Makhachkala: assistant attorney of Leninsky district 12 April killed by unknown assailants; attack on house of Khasavyurt city court head 10 April wounded 2. 5 militants killed 23 April after attack on police station near Kakamakhi (Karabudakhkent district). In Khasavyurt region: Khasavyurt group leader 24 April killed; policeman wounded 20 April; 5 suspected militants killed, 1 injured. In Ingushetia: police 3 April killed 5, including 3 civilians; 2 policemen killed in 28 April bomb blast in Malgobek district. Ingushetia leader 17 April acknowledged involvement of security forces in abductions during meeting with President Medvedev.

- [“North Caucasus insurgency leader predicts 'results' from spring offensive”](#), RFE/RL, 23 April 2012.

➡ **Georgia** Ministry of Justice 4 April rejected request to reinstate citizenship of billionaire opposition leader Bidzina Ivanishvili through naturalisation, said only dual citizenship possible; opposition Christian-Democrats announced plans to initiate constitutional changes allowing Georgian-born EU citizens to run for office; ruling party voiced support for motion. President Saakashvili 10 April unveiled 1st domestically produced spy drone; 19 April announced plans for armed drones, 150,000 strong volunteer reserve force. NATO SG Rasmussen 3 April called Georgia “model partner”, reiterated NATO support for future Georgian membership. President Saakashvili 26 April said ready to resign if Russia withdraws from S

Ossetia, Abkhazia. In S Ossetia, former KGB head Leonid Tibilov 19 April sworn in as new President after winning 54% in 8 April polls. In Abkhazia, authorities 12 April arrested 4 in connection with Feb assassination of President Ankvab; former Interior Minister Kchach 16 April committed suicide in Sukhumi, reportedly to avoid arrest over assassination attempt; another suspect 17 April reportedly attempted suicide before police arrest; further suspect Timur Khutaba 18 April found hanged in prison cell.

- [“South Ossetian Election Marathon: All's Well That Ends Well?”](#), RFE/RL, 9 April 2012.

➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Azerbaijan 25 April fired on Armenian village of Dovegh, near Line of Contact (LoC) for 1st time since 1994. Gunmen 27 April reportedly killed 3 Armenian soldiers along Azerbaijan border. Russian FM Lavrov 2-3 April held talks in Armenia, Azerbaijan over region; Armenian FM Nalbandian said country had rejected 4 suggestions of OSCE Minsk Group, no further details.

- [“Lavrov said nothing new either in Yerevan or in Baku”](#), News.az, 6 April 2012.

Eastern Europe

➡ **Belarus** 2 jailed ex-opposition presidential candidates pardoned 17 April by authorities, prisoners credited EU sanctions for release; President Lukashenko 21 April said any increase in international “pressure” would result in renewed imprisonment. EU ambassadors 25 April began return to Minsk, after last month withdrawal in tit-for-tat over EU sanctions.

- [“Belarus strongman frees critics after EU pressure”](#), AFP, 15 April 2012.

➡ **Moldova** Talks between Moldova and breakaway Transdnister region ended 18 April with agreement on future negotiating principles, procedures; OSCE mediators same day welcomed outcome. Russian Deputy PM and Envoy to Transdnister 18 April denied rumours Russia deploying radar station; Transdnisterian news agency 17 April reported Moscow sending new weapons to Russian troops within country.

- [“OSCE welcomes new steps in Transdnister talks”](#), RFE/RL, 18 April 2012.

➡ **Ukraine** Jailed former PM Tymoshenko 24 April went on hunger strike to protest alleged beating by prison guards; Tymoshenko 19 April appeared in court on additional corruption charges, possible 12 year sentence. Deputy PM Khoroshkovskiy said Parliament could pass “extraordinary” legislation to free Tymoshenko if all other hurdles in Ukraine-EU relations resolved. European Court of Human Rights 17 April began hearings on whether former imprisonment of Interior Minister Lutsenko politically motivated.

- [“Ukraine at a crossroads”](#), *Washington Post*, 19 April 2012.

Western Europe/Mediterranean

➡ **Cyprus** UNSG Ban 22 April announced decision not to call international conference, citing “insufficient progress on core issues” in reunification talks; UNSG’s Special Adviser Downer 27 April said UN will host no more “unproductive” high-level meetings, “no more business as usual”. Turkish Cypriot leader Eroglu had called on UN to open 5-party conference with guarantor countries

(UK, Greece, Turkey); Greek Cypriot President Christofias said Eroğlu backtracking, called for continued negotiations. Turkish media 16 April quoted anonymous Turkish official saying if no solution reached by 1 July, Turkey will unilaterally call for international recognition of Turkish Cypriot state, or annex north if recognition not forthcoming. Turkish Deputy PM Arınç 16 April denied existence of 'Plan B', said eventual status would be decided by Turkish Cypriots.

- "Last chance for Cyprus reunification lost as UN calls off conference", Today's Zaman, 22 April 2012.

New Crisis Group Europe Report N°216, *Aphrodite's Gift: Can Cypriot Gas Power a New Dialogue?*, 2 April 2012. Though newly discovered gas reserves off Cyprus are currently driving the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities further apart, they could offer both newfound wealth if, together with Turkey, they would start a new dialogue.

➡ **Turkey** PM Erdoğan 20 April declared Turkish military would "completely halt" operations against PKK if group laid down arms; declaration made at meeting with Iraqi Kurdistan President Barzani, who also called on PKK to disarm, rejected group's presence in N Iraq. 3 soldiers killed, 3 wounded 4,12 April in clashes with PKK near Iraqi border; 2 Turkish soldiers, 1 guard, 4 PKK militants killed in clashes 24 April in SE. Security forces 18 April detained 22 villagers in Hakkâri province on suspicion of aiding PKK, further 7 detained 23 April for alleged PKK youth branch membership; 15 Kurds suspected of Kurdish Communities Union involvement released 10 April pending trial. Trial of 1980 military coup leaders Kenan Evren, Tahsin Şahinkaya started 4 April; 35 more officers detained 12, 19 April in separate probe into 1997 unarmed coup. Syrian regime forces 9 April fired across border at refugee camp, prompting Turkish outrage (see Syria).

- Comment by Hugh Pope, "L'heure de gloire turque au Moyen-Orient touche sa fin", *Le Monde*, 10 April 2012.
- "Turkey's game plan and the PKK", Today's Zaman, 22 April 2012.

Latin America/Caribbean

➡ **Bolivia** Tensions over construction of national highway through TIPNIS national park continued; President Morales 10 April cancelled contract with Brazilian company Constructora-OAS because company suspended road construction; march opposing construction resumed 27 April; UN called on authorities and indigenous leaders to maintain climate of tolerance and peace. Miners protesting over pay 24 April clashed with police; public health workers, medical students also clashed with police during separate rally opposing presidential decree extending working hours.

- "Se agravan conflictos y el diálogo se estanca", *Los Tiempos*, 25 April 2012.

➡ **Colombia** FARC 2 April released last 10 military/police hostages, held captive for over 12 years, fuelling hopes for peace; President Santos said release important but FARC needs to free all remaining civilian hostages. FARC leader "Timochenko" 19 April reiterated willingness to discuss peace but refused to surrender; FARC

Secretariat member Ivan Marquez warned group not weakened, remains "ready to fight". Some 1,500 social, political groups 21 April founded new left-wing National Patriotic Council (NPC), supported by prominent leaders including Piedad Córdoba, Iván Cepeda; NPC celebrated by some as opportunity for peace, stigmatised by others as infiltrated by FARC. FARC 27 April killed 8, including 5 soldiers, in 2 attacks in SW; 29 April killed 4 during raid on army patrol, "abducted" France24 journalist Romeo Langlois.

- "Por qué las FARC han dejado libres a los secuestrados", *La Silla Vacía*, 2 April 2012.
- Comment by Louise Arbour, "FARC hostage release signals possible end to Colombia's internal conflict", *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 April 2012.

➡ **Ecuador** President Correa 23 April appointed 6 new ministers, including new Defence Minister Miguel Carvajal, 24 April said organised crime top priority following report by military that it could soon "overwhelm country".

- "FF.AA. se equipan para combatir la violencia", *El Comercio*, 24 April 2012.

➡ **Guatemala** President Pérez Molina 14-15 April attended 6th Summit of the Americas, insisted on need to consider "innovative strategies" such as legalisation as alternative to war on drugs. Defence Ministry late March announced creation of U.S.-backed anti-drug task force to police trafficking corridors in W. Former national police chief Marlene Blanco Lapola arrested 23 March for alleged involvement in extra-judicial killing of at least 3 alleged extortionists. Forensic experts 18 April said remains of 99 people buried inside military post in Cobán during civil war unearthed.

- "Otto Pérez promueve nuevas rutas", *Prensa Libre*, 18 April 2012.

➡ **Haiti** Senate 10 April confirmed FM Laurent Lamothe new PM; Lower House vote awaited. Following 17 April occupation of Lower House by ad-hoc military groups, State Secretary for Public Security Reginald Delva 23 April announced solution to occupations imminent. Defence Minister Thierry Mayard-Paul 25 April announced military compensation plan; groups declared intention to continue occupation of public spaces until joint staff formed. Following killings of 3 police officers in 48 hours, including 1 killed following arrest of driver of MP Rodriguez Séjour, Haitian National Police threatened nationwide strike; 3 persons close to Séjour held by authorities. Haitian and Dominican Republic authorities launched investigations into alleged plot to destabilise Martelly govt.

- Comment by Mark Schneider, "Haiti's reckless political infighting must end", *Miami Herald*, 2 April 2012.
- "Haiti gov't begins back pay plan to veterans", AP, 25 April 2012.

➡ **Mexico** Gunmen 20 April killed 15 in Chihuahua, including 2 journalists; police 17 April found dismembered remains of 14 men in Nuevo Laredo, near U.S. border. At economic summit held 2 April in Washington DC, President Calderon asked U.S. govt to reinstate ban on assault weapons, arguing gun violence surged in Mexico when prohibition lifted in 2004, said 90% of assault weapons confiscated in Mexico come from U.S. . *Proceso* magazine journalist Regina Martinez found dead 28 April following article investigating arrests of police officers suspected of drug ties.

- "La violencia desplazó a más de 26,000 personas en México en 2011: estudio", *CNN México*, 20 April 2012.

➡ **Venezuela** President Chávez's 4 radiotherapy cycles in Cuba meant further absences, prevented his attendance at 6th Summit of the Americas; following week-long silence Chávez 24 April announcing return to Caracas in televised address. Former Supreme Court judge Eladio Aponte, dismissed because of alleged ties to drug kingpin Walid Makled, agreed to provide U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency with information on drug trade activities involving high-ranking members of govt.

- "Cancer hasn't dimmed Hugo Chavez's electoral hopes", AP, 12 April 2012.

Middle East/North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

➡ **Israel / Occupied Palestinian Territories** Israel 23 April decided to legalise 3 West Bank outposts, if implemented first new de-jure West Bank settlements in 15 years. Palestinian chief negotiator Erekat 17 April delivered letter from PA President Abbas to Israeli PM Netanyahu detailing Palestinian demands for return to negotiations. Former Shin Bet chief Diskin 27 April said current govt not interested in peace with Palestinians, misleading public on Iran. Mideast Quartet 11 April expressed concern over Israeli settler violence, pressed both sides for confidence-building measures. 1,500 Palestinian prisoners in Israel 17 April began hunger strike to protest conditions of imprisonment, 'administrative detention' policy. Gaza PM Ismail Haniyeh 24 April reportedly won secret April elections for leadership of Gaza Hamas political bureau. Fatah, Hamas 2 April reached deal allowing fuel transfers through Israel into Gaza Strip. Egypt 22 April cancelled gas delivery contract to Israel (see Egypt).

- "Former Palestinian prime minister: 2-state solution may be dropped", AP, 24 April 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°119, *Back to Basics: Israel's Arab Minority and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 14 March 2012.

➡ **Lebanon** Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea 4 April escaped assassination attempt, implicitly blamed Hizbollah. Cameraman killed 9 April on Syrian border, triggering accusations between pro-, anti-Syrian regime camps. Bomb attack on Tyre restaurant 23 April injured 7.

- "Loyalty to Syrian president could isolate Hezbollah", *New York Times*, 5 April 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°117, *Lebanon's Palestinian Dilemma: the Struggle Over Nahr al-Bared*, 1 March 2012.

➡ **Syria** Early-month saw upsurge in violence despite acceptance of Annan peace plan by Syrian regime, opposition. Security forces 9 April opened fire on Turkish refugee camp in Kilis, 2 killed. Following UN pressure, regime 12 April agreed to ceasefire with opposition; UNSG 24 April expressed alarm at surge in regime violence, 26 April said regime in contravention of peace plan; France 25 April said UNSC should consider use of force; U.S. 27 April said "patience exhausted". Renewed anti-regime demonstrations took place mid-month despite continued regime target-

ing. UNSC 14 April unanimously approved deployment of 30 UN observers, 21 April voted to increase number to 300. Activists 23 April claimed Hama shelled by regime as punishment for UN visit, dozens reported killed, 26 April reported up to 70 killed in explosion in Hama. Regime 27 April said 10 killed in "suicide bombing" in Damascus. At least 9 killed in 30 April blasts in Idlib reportedly targeting security buildings. Opposition fighters 28 April reportedly launched sea raid in Latakia province. 2nd Friends of Syria Summit held 1 April in Istanbul, opposition group SNC said rebel fighters to receive salaries. EU 23 April agreed new round of sanctions against Syria.

- "Rising Syria deaths question UN monitoring mission", BBC, 24 April 2012.

New Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°33, *Syria's Phase of Radicalisation*, 10 April 2012. With the Syrian crisis having taken a perilous turn, predictable obstacles in implementing UN envoy Kofi Annan's peace plan should not lead to give up on what – for now at least – remains the only serious option on the table.

Gulf

➡ **Bahrain** Month saw daily anti-govt and pro-reform protests against 22 April Formula 1 race, in support of detained activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja; govt 8 April rejected Danish govt demand to transfer al-Khawaja to Denmark; Court of Cassation 30 April ordered retrial in civil court of 21 pro-democracy activists, including al-Khawaja; leading activist Zainab al-Khawaja detained several times for allegedly insulting police while trying to access father. Explosion 9 April wounded 7 policemen; pro-govt Sunnis 10 April retaliated against Shiite store. Anti-riot police 13 April fired on funeral for activist killed in March. Activists claimed man found dead 21 April killed by police. Explosion 25 April wounded 4 policemen in Diraz. Amnesty International 17 April reported continuing govt violations, inadequate response to Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI).

- "Bahrain: shouting in the dark", Al Jazeera, 3 April 2012.

➡ **Iran** P5+1 negotiations resumed 14 April in Istanbul after 15-month freeze; U.S. said talks positive. Ayatollah Khamenei 2 April reiterated fatwa against production, use of nuclear weapons; U.S. Secretary of State Clinton reacted positively, requested Tehran take practical steps as proof; Israeli army chief Lt Gen Gantz 25 April said Iran not building nuclear bomb, international pressure working. Nuclear chief Abbasi 10 April signalled Iran's willingness to revive version of 2009/2010 uranium enrichment deal; FM Salehi 16 April expressed willingness to resolve all nuclear issues in next round of talks if West lifted sanctions. Tension with UAE increased following 17 March visit by President Ahmadinejad to disputed islands of Abu Musa; GCC described move as provocation, violation of UAE sovereignty. Parliament started discussions on amending internal rules of procedure to ease process of impeaching president, 17 April cancelled televised speech by President Ahmadinejad.

- "Seeking nuclear insight in fog of the Ayatollah's utterances", *New York Times*, 13 April 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East & Europe Report N°116, *In Heavy Waters: Iran's Nuclear Program, the Risk of War and Lessons from Turkey*, 23 Feb. 2012.

➡ **Iraq** Country-wide bombings 19 April killed 35; Islamic State of Iraq claimed responsibility. 21 April bombings in Baghdad killed 3; Diyala province Governor al-Hiyali's convoy bombed same day; 2 explosions 26 April in Diyala province killed 10. Electoral commission head al-Haidari briefly detained 15 April on suspicion of corruption. Qatar 3 April refused Iraqi request to hand over VP al-Hashemi; al-Hashemi 19 April warned of Iraq "break up" over sectarian polarisation by PM al-Maliki; 30 April charged with several murders, including those of 6 judges. Kurdistan regional President Barzani 1 April declared suspension of oil exports to Baghdad. New Kurdistan Regional Govt sworn in 6 April, headed by PM Nechirvan Barzani; Turkish PM Erdoğan 19 April criticised PM al-Maliki's treatment of minority coalition partners; al-Maliki denounced Turkish "illusion of regional hegemony", "stoking of sectarian tensions".

- "Iraq's government: on the verge of collapse?", Al Jazeera, 8 April 2012.

New Crisis Group Middle East Report N°120, *Iraq and the Kurds: The High-Stakes Hydrocarbons Gambit*, 19 April 2012. The political standoff between Iraq's Kurds and the government in Baghdad has left pressing disputes over oil and territories unresolved, intensifying the likelihood of conflict.

➡ **Saudi Arabia** Early-month saw protests by female students in Medina, Tabuk Universities against outdated educational system. Anti-govt protest in Qatif 6 April called for release of political prisoners. Court 17 April jailed co-founder of Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association Mohamad al-Bajadi for 4 years; authorities denied reports al-Bajadi on hunger strike since 11 March. Trial of 50 suspected of involvement in 2003 al-Muhaya compound bombing began 7 April in Riyadh.

- "Political imaginaries in Saudi Arabia: revolutionaries without a revolution", Jadaliyya, 2 April 2012.

➡ **Jordan** PM Al-Khasawneh 26 April resigned, replaced by former PM al-Tarawneh. Reform legislation introduced to Parliament mid-month amending voting system, banning religious political parties. Journalist arrested 23 April for promoting "anti-regime sentiment", after alleging corruption in Royal Court.

- "Jordanian vote reform vexes Brotherhood", *New York Times*, 18 April 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°118, *Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (IX): Dallying with Reform in a Divided Jordan*, 12 March 2012.

➡ **Yemen** President Hadi 6 April announced dismissal of 4 governors, rotation/reassignment of 20 military officers, including former President Saleh's half-brother General Mohammed Saleh al-Ahmar; Saleh loyalists 7-8 April closed Sanaa international airport in response; General Mohammed Saleh al-Ahmar eventually stepped down 24 April. Former President Saleh's nephew, General Abdullah Saleh, 27 April agreed to stand down as Presidential Guard chief. President Hadi 7 April deployed combined military force including Saleh, Mohsin loyalists to secure capital. Govt 12 April announced formation of preparatory committee for national dialogue. In South, month saw intensification in battle with al-Qaeda militants, deployment of counter-terrorism units from Republican Guards, Central Security Forces: militants 2 April reportedly blew-up pipeline in retaliation for killing of 5 al-Qaeda members in 31 March U.S. drone strike. Army 3 April said airstrikes against al-Qaeda in al-Rahha Mountains killed 43; al-Qaeda 9-14 April clashed with army, tribally-led popular com-

mittees outside Lowdar killing over 200, mostly militants. Army 13 April said 28 al-Qaeda fighters killed, 2 senior al-Qaeda leaders arrested during offensive in Abyan province, 18 April announced capture of al-Qaeda stronghold in Zinjibar. Gunmen 22 April kidnapped ICRC official near Hudaida. U.S. 26 April announced easing of restrictions on drone strikes.

- "Popular committees take control", al-Akbar, 19 April 2012.

North Africa

➡ **Algeria** Month saw reported attempt to oust National Liberation Front (FLN) SG Belkhadem as part of power struggle to succeed President Bouteflika. EU 17 April launched electoral observation mission ahead of 10 May legislative elections. Diplomats abducted 5 April in Gao (see Mali). Security forces 29 April reportedly killed 20 Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) fighters on Malian border in Tessalit region. 4 policemen killed 30 April in Kabylie by suspected Islamists.

- "Algeria ruling party mutiny reflects race for power", Reuters, 23 April 2012.

➡ **Egypt** April saw increasing constitutional and electoral turmoil ahead of 23-24 May presidential elections, mass demonstrations against Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). Former spy chief and VP Suleiman 6 April announced presidential candidacy, sparking mass demonstration primarily by Islamists; Muslim Brotherhood (MB) warned of second revolution should former regime sympathisers return to power. Higher Presidential Election Commission (HPEC) 15 April disqualified 10 of 23 candidates, including the MB's al-Shatir, Suleiman, Salafist Abu Ismail; MB said Freedom and Justice Party Chairman Mursi to run instead; tens of thousands of protesters from wide range of groups 20-21 April returned to Tahrir Square demanding handover of power to civilian rule. Salafist al-Nour Party 23 April suffered high-profile resignations over party's perceived failure to endorse Abu Ismail's presidential bid. Abu Ismail supporters organised sit-in opposite Ministry of Defence, violently attacked by unidentified assailants. Administrative court 10 April suspended Constituent Assembly following mass boycott by secular, minority groups; Advisory Council called on SCAF to issue complementary constitutional declaration setting criteria for equal representation. MB 18 April warned of "fierce war" to keep Islamists out of executive branch, said democracy in danger. Mohamed ElBaradei 28 April launched new Constitution Party. Protests 17 April disrupted start of trial of suspects in Feb Port Said football violence. Interpol 23 April refused Egyptian request to issue international wanted persons alerts for 15 foreigners linked to U.S.-based NGOs. Egypt state-owned gas company EGAS 23 April announced cancellation of gas deal with Israel over unpaid fees.

- "Egypt's transition imbroglio", *Foreign Policy*, 16 April 2012.

New Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°121, *Lost in Transition: The World According to Egypt's SCAF*, 24 April 2012. With Egypt's presidential election having become a free-for-all, zero-sum game, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) should take a step back and, with the full range of political actors, agree on principles for a genuine and safe political transition.

➡ **Libya** Communal clashes continued in South: PM el-Keib 1 April attempted to resolve protracted fighting in Sebha that has killed at least 150. 6 April fighting between pro-Qadhafi Tuaregs, Zin-

tani militiamen on Algerian border left around 12 dead. Clashes early-month between rival Zuwara, Ragdalein militias following detention by Ragdalein militia of 24 Zuwara militiamen accused of abusing residents. Mid-month clashes between soldiers, tribesmen after army sent to quell fighting in Kufra. Bomb 10 April targeted convoy of UN head of mission Ian Martin in Benghazi. Govt 20 April took over Tripoli international airport from militia. Cabinet 7 April stopped cash payout program to former rebels over corruption. ICC 4 April requested authorities hand over Saif al-Islam Qadhafi; Justice Minister Ashour declined; Saif al-Islam defence team 12 April requested judges reject Libyan appeal for additional time, report Libya to UNSC over non-compliance; Moreno-Ocampo 18 April arrived in Tripoli as part of investigation. NTC 25 April issued new law banning parties based on religious principles. Body of former oil minister Shukri Ghanem 30 April found in Danube.

- [“Libya struggles to contain tribal conflicts”](#), Reuters, 8 April 2012.

➔ **Mauritania** Thousands demonstrated 29 April following burning of Islamic Maliki legal texts legitimising slavery by head of Initiative for Abolitionist Resurgence (IRA), Biram Ould Abeid; Ould Abeid, 4 followers arrested. Coordination for Democratic Opposition (COD) leaders 8 April reiterated call for President Abdel Aziz to step down, organised massive demonstrations in Nouakchott 3, 22 April. Authorities 17 April arrested 36 Youth Movement for Mauritania (MJM) activists following clashes with police in Nouakchott. Former third-in-command of al-Qaeda, Mahfouz Ould al-Walid (alias Abu Hafs al-Mauritani) 11 April extradited from Iran.

- [“Paris favorable au respect du droit de manifester”](#), AFP, 24 April 2012.

➔ **Morocco** PM Benkirane 22 April criticised King Mohammed entourage, warned Arab Spring not over. Outspoken rapper Mouad Belghouat to be tried for insulting public employees following 29 March arrest. Human rights organisations 10 April said 27 prisoners currently on hunger strike, many in protest against political

nature of convictions. Interior Ministry 9 April said terror cell in Agourai disrupted, members allegedly preparing to attack gov't facilities, banks.

- [“Moroccan PM in rare criticism of king's entourage”](#), Reuters, 24 April 2012.

➔ **Tunisia** Polarisation between pro- and anti-Ennahda forces continued with violent repression by security forces of 9 April “Martyr's Day” demonstration. Security forces, pro-ruling coalition “militias” violently dispersed protest by unemployed youths in Rades. Islamist, left-wing student organisations 6 April clashed at Manar University. New centre-right Republican Party created 7 April following fusion of 7 parties, including Progressive Democratic Party.

- [“Tunisia: a revolution at risk”](#), *Guardian*, 18 April 2012.

➔ **Western Sahara** UNSC late-month renewed MINURSO peace-keeping mandate for 1 year; South Africa criticised UNSC for “conveniently ignoring” human rights abuses. Leaked report by UNSG Ban on last round of failed negotiations implied Morocco spying on MINURSO, said UN interaction with local population hindered by authorities.

- [“U.N. set to renew Western Sahara force despite criticism”](#), Reuters, 23 April 2012.

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