

1 December 2005, N°28

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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December 2005 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alert

Ethiopia/Eritrea
Iraq



Conflict Resolution Opportunity

None

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Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

- ↳ Burundi UNSG Annan recommended downsizing UN mission (ONUB) from December, with drawdown of 2,000 troops (40% of authorised presence) by April 2006. Proposal came after newly elected Burundi government urged shift in emphasis from peacekeeping to reconstruction and development. Security Council extended UNOB mandate to 15 January 2006. UNOB condemned allegations linking it to FNL rebels after media reported rebels wearing peacekeepers' uniforms. Clashes between FNL and security forces continued, killing 41 rebels. New commission began identifying political prisoners held throughout country.

 - ["Annan recommends downsizing UN mission"](#), IRIN, 24 Nov. 2004.
 - ["UN mission says claims linking it to rebels 'unfounded'"](#), IRIN, 21 Nov. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°31, ["Elections in Burundi: A Radical Shake-Up of the Political Landscape"](#), 25 Aug. 2005.

- ↳ Central African Republic Civil servant strike continued: agreement reached with government 14 November offering 2 of 45 months owed in salary arrears, but government failed to pay by 25 November deadline.

 - ["Civil servants resume strike"](#), IRIN, 16 Nov. 2005.

- ↳ Chad Situation tense between government and army deserters calling themselves Rally for Change, National Unity and Democracy (SCUD). SCUD said possessed means to topple President Deby. President reshuffled top military posts after gunmen raided army bases in N'djamena 14 November. Chad accused Sudan of using deserters to help fight Darfur rebels and destabilise Chad, sparking accusation from Khartoum of Chadian support for Darfur rebels. Sudanese army claimed it clashed with deserters in Darfur.

 - ["Chad deserters 'used in Darfur'"](#), BBC, 21 Nov. 2005.
 - ["Embattled president turfs kinsmen from military leadership"](#), IRIN, 17 Nov. 2005.

- ↳ Democratic Republic of Congo Preparations continued in run-up to 18 December constitutional referendum. Nearly 23 million voters registered, but questions raised about accuracy of voter list as electoral commission announced 150,000 registered twice. Joint UN-Congolese army operation to drive out rebels in east began early November; 4 soldiers and 90 rebels were killed, 350 Mai Mai and Rwandan Hutu rebels (FDLR) surrendered, while thousands fled to avoid fighting. Scepticism about effectiveness of operation, as rebels reported to have advance knowledge of impending attacks. In northern and central Katanga province, 50,000 reportedly fled homes after DRC army launched operation to forcefully disarm Mai Mai militia. UN imposed travel ban and assets freeze on 15 individuals and 1 organisation for violating arms embargo.

 - ["Fighting displaces 60,000 in Katanga Province, bishop says"](#), IRIN, 23 Nov. 2005.
 - ["Thousands flee fighting in DRC"](#), ISN, 18 Nov. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°34, ["Congo Action Plan"](#), 19 Oct. 2005.

- ↳ Kenya President Kibaki suffered heavy setback after voters rejected draft constitution in referendum 21 November. Run-up to poll marred by violence: police killed 2 "no" supporters while attempting to disperse rioting crowd. Kibaki dismissed divided cabinet 23 November; later rejected opposition calls for elections and banned planned opposition rallies.

 - ["Kenya's entire cabinet dismissed"](#), BBC, 23 Nov. 2004.

- ↳ Republic of Congo Former PM Kolelas, in exile since 1997, given amnesty for 2001 war crimes death sentence.

 - ["Amnesty passed for Congo's ex-PM"](#), BBC 24 Nov. 2005.

- ↳ Rwanda During proceedings at UN tribunal on Rwandan genocide, former army colonel Theoneste Bagosora denied accusations he masterminded 1994 slaughter. Former interior minister surrendered to tribunal but likewise denied directly participating. Rwanda and Burundi signed communiqué classifying Rwandans seeking asylum in Burundi as "illegal immigrants".

 - ["Accused Rwanda genocide 'kingpin' defiant on stand"](#), AlertNet, 13 Nov. 2005.

- ↳ Tanzania Zanzibar President Karume sworn in after being re-elected 30 October with 53.2% of vote. International observers reported elections generally ran smoothly, despite violent clashes and fraud claims. Opposition Civic United Front (CUF) boycotted first session of parliament 11 November. 100 opposition supporters fled to Kenya allegedly to escape police persecution. CUF rally on Zanzibar ahead of 14 December nationwide elections, earlier postponed due to death of presidential running mate, dispersed by police.

 - ["Africa rising"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 11 Nov. 2005.
 - ["Politics-Zanzibar: Third time unlucky for the opposition party"](#), AllAfrica (IPS), 5 Nov. 2005.

- ↳ Uganda Opposition leader Kizza Besigye, seen as President Museveni's main challenger in first multi-party polls March 2006, arrested 14 November soon after returning from exile: accused of treason, rape, terrorism and weapons offences. Arrest sparked worst riots in decades and strong police response; 1 killed, 57 arrested. 14 of Besigye's co-accused granted bail, but returned to jail for fear of being killed outside court. Government banned public demonstrations 23 November prior to Besigye's court appearance. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) reportedly made overture for talks with government. LRA killed 23 in attacks in north Uganda and south Sudan, including aid worker. Sudan extended agreement allowing Ugandan troops to pursue LRA into Sudanese territory. Commanders of Ugandan and Sudanese forces as well as Sudanese People's Liberation Movement agreed joint strategy to execute International Criminal Court arrest warrants against top LRA commanders.

 - ["Where democracy eludes quick definition"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Nov. 2005.
 - ["More rioting in Uganda after opposition leader's arrest"](#), CNN (AP), 15 Nov. 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 Opposition protests over disputed May elections sparked massive crackdown by security forces; at least 46

dead. Over 8,000 detainees later released after calls from U.S and EU, but as many as 3,000 remain in custody, including top opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy party officials. PM Zenawi said opposition leaders and newspaper editors would face treason charges - which carry death penalty - for role in protests.

- "Ethiopia downplays massacre, uprising reports", ABC News (Reuters), 18 Nov. 2005.
- "In African showcase, democracy fails a test", *International Herald Tribune*, 14 Nov. 2005.

↙ ↘ Ethiopia/Eritrea Border tensions continued to rise with high concentrations of troops deployed on both sides. Ethiopian soldiers breached demilitarised zone, withdrawing 23 November. UN Security Council passed resolution threatening sanctions if sides failed to reduce troop numbers and if Eritrea refused to lift restrictions on UNMEE monitors, including ban on helicopter flights; also called on Ethiopia to respect boundary commission ruling on border demarcation, but did not threaten punishment. Eritrea dismissed resolution as biased.

- "Bias charge weakens Horn of Africa peace bid", AlertNet, 1 Dec. 2005.
- "UN warns of rising tensions in Ethiopia, Eritrea", ISN, 22 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°68, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: War or Peace?*, 24 Sept. 2003.

↳ Somalia IGAD regional body called on UN to lift arms embargo, saying Jowhar-based transitional government has right to arm its security forces to establish authority. Statement angered faction of dissident parliamentarians based in Mogadishu and sparked fears dispute could escalate into violence. Mogadishu group had earlier agreed to hold talks with Jowhar government on condition international observers attend. Interim PM Gedi's convoy attacked during Mogadishu visit 7 November, killing 5. Puntland region began demobilisation program to reduce number of military personnel in order to finance development.

- "E.Africa states back arming of Somalian govt troops", Reuters, 29 Nov. 2005.
- "MPs resolve to bridge differences", IRIN, 16 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°95, *Counter-Terrorism in Somalia: Losing Hearts and Minds?*, 11 July 2005.

↳ Somaliland (Somalia) First session of newly elected parliament ended in fist fight after MPs not permitted to elect speaker. Students protested alleged killing of peer by police.

- "Scuffles mar opening of Somaliland's parliament", IRIN, 1 Dec. 2005.

↳ Sudan Situation in Darfur remained dire. New round of AU-sponsored talks postponed until 29 November "for logistical reasons"; growing rifts in main Darfur rebel group Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) believed reason for delay. Secretary-General Minnawi elected new SLA president 3 November during Unity Conference boycotted by current President El-Nur. AU and U.S. mediators pressed SLA to resolve internal disputes: factions agreed on common position before resumption of Abuja talks. UNSG Annan warned Darfur descending into complete lawlessness: clashes in south displaced 15,000, while 62 Justice and Equality Movement rebels killed in attacks involving SLA and armed tribesmen.

Rebel National Movement for Reform and Development demanded to participate in peace talks after attacking West Darfur town 29 November, killing 37. Fighting in Western Equatoria state between Dinka and Zande tribes left several dead and forced humanitarian agencies to evacuate.

- "Darfur rebels 'united' for talks", BBC, 29 Nov. 2005.
- "Withdraw support from the despot of Darfur", *The Daily Star*, 15 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°99, *The EU/AU Partnership in Darfur: Not Yet a Winning Combination*, 25 Oct. 2005; and Briefing N°32, *Unifying Darfur's Rebels: A Prerequisite for Peace*, 6 Oct. 2005.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

↳ Swaziland Government passed guidelines for NGOs, likely to improve response to HIV/AIDS and poverty. Arson attacks on government buildings continued.

- "New policy recognises value of NGOs", IRIN, 17 Nov. 2005.

↳ Zimbabwe President Mugabe's Zanu-PF party won elections to new 66-member senate, taking 43 out of 50 elective seats (16 appointed by government). But turnout estimated at just 15-20%. Divisions within opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) worsened: members defying election boycott expelled. Rival faction suspended MDC president Tsvangirai pending disciplinary action, fuelling fears of defections to new party, United Peoples' Movement. U.S. ambassador returned to Washington after Mugabe government threatened expulsion for criticising regime: U.S. widened sanctions against officials, freezing assets of those hindering democratic reforms. Government evicted over 300 families in Mbare in defiance of High Court order. President Mugabe later granted UN permission to build emergency housing following Operation Murambatsvina.

- "Mugabe's party wins Zimbabwe poll", BBC, 28 Nov. 2005.
- "Mugabe's self-defeated foes", *The Economist*, 17 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°97, *Zimbabwe's Operation Murambatsvina: The Tipping Point?*, 17 Aug. 2005.

WEST AFRICA

↳ Côte d'Ivoire Deadlock continued over appointment of new PM despite mediation efforts, including visit by Presidents of Nigeria, Niger and South Africa. Rebel Forces Nouvelles accused international mediators of bias and rejected 4-name shortlist. UN warned government its efforts to rebuild air force, destroyed by French forces 2004, may breach arms embargo; accused government of using cocoa to buy banned arms.

- "New peace hitch as African heavyweights fail to overcome stalemate on PM", IRIN, 23 Nov. 2005.
- "Ivorians pushed to accept new PM", BBC, 22 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°33, *Côte d'Ivoire: Halfway Measures Will Not Suffice*, 12 Oct. 2005.

↳ Guinea Chief editor of weekly newspaper arrested for "defamatory" article about PM Diallo. President Conte retired 2,000 soldiers including head of Armed Forces. Police and students clashed in protests over economic depression. Security forces killed 3 during protest over education in Telimele 24 November.

- [“Students clash with police as rare strike disrupts schools, hospitals”](#), IRIN, 15 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°94, [Stopping Guinea’s Slide](#), 14 June 2005.

↳ Guinea-Bissau President Vieira named close ally Aristides Gomes as PM 2 November. PAIGC, main party in parliament, challenged move, citing constitutional provision for parliamentary approval of appointment. Army guarded government buildings after street protests against appointment. PM named new cabinet 9 November, ending fortnight of institutional paralysis, but exclusion of PAIGC raised fears of further instability. IMF delegation left Bissau, saying lack of interlocutor would block discussions on financial assistance.

- [“New government named but national unity still a long way off”](#), IRIN, 10 Nov. 2005.
- [“Guinea-Bissau president names new prime minister”](#), AlertNet, 2 Nov. 2005.

↳ Liberia Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf confirmed first female elected head of state in Africa 23 November after 8 November run-off vote. Announcement delayed 2 weeks as elections commission investigated fraud claims by opponent George Weah. International observers said vote, with 60% turnout, was free, fair and transparent. Johnson-Sirleaf received 59.4% of vote; Weah 40.6%. In days following election, peacekeepers used tear gas after violent clashes between Weah supporters and security forces; government banned unauthorised street protests. Month ended with general calm as formal inquiry into fraud allegations continued.

- Comment by John Prendergast (Crisis Group) and Chris Fomunyoh, [“Lend Liberia a hand”](#), *Los Angeles Times*, 21 Nov. 2005.
- [“A society at a crossroads”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°98, [Liberia’s Elections: Necessary but Not Sufficient](#), 7 Sept. 2005.

↳ Nigeria High Court allowed 2 torture victims to challenge asylum status of former Liberian President Charles Taylor. Biafran separatist Ralph Uwazurike charged with treason 4 November; supporters clashed with police. Former police inspector Gen. Tafa Balogun pleaded guilty to corruption charges; first senior official to be convicted in anti-corruption drive. Bayelsa state Governor Alamiyeseigha charged with money laundering, skipped UK bail and returned to Nigeria, claiming immunity as sitting governor; now faces impeachment. Extra troops deployed to Bayelsa state as tensions rose in capital Yenagoa with protests for and against impeachment.

- [“Protests hit Nigerian oil state under army watch”](#), Reuters, 28 Nov. 2005.
- [“Ten Years On: Injustice and Violence Haunt the Oil Delta”](#), Amnesty International Report, 3 Nov. 2005.

↳ Sierra Leone Tensions escalated between Vice President Berewa and opposition leader Margai, threatening political turmoil. Margai arrested on charges of provoking instability after his supporters reportedly harassed Berewa 21 November, later released on bail. Violent protests after arrest; situation somewhat defused upon Margai’s release. Media censorship continued but journalist Paul Kamara released 30 November. Anticorruption Commissioner Val Collier sacked; considered

blow to commission’s independence. UN Security Council authorised UNMIL to arrest Charles Taylor and transfer him to Sierra Leone Court if he returns to Liberia.

- [“Jailed S Leone journalist freed”](#), BBC, 30 Nov. 2005.
- [“Justice in Motion: The Trial Phase of the Special Court for Sierra Leone”](#), Human Rights Watch Report, 2 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, [Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States](#), 8 Dec. 2004.

↳ Togo National Commission of Inquiry report on April 2005 violence issued 10 November: stated 154 killed, 654 injured. Discrepancy in fatality figures with September UN report citing over 400 deaths. Government and opposition met in Rome to discuss political reform 11 November.

- [“Official inquiry says 154 died in political violence”](#), IRIN, 11 Nov. 2005.

Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

↳ Kazakhstan Former Emergency Situations Minister Zamanbek Nurkadilov found shot dead 12 November: fired 2004 for accusing government of corruption, later joined opposition and was reportedly planning to disclose high-level corruption. Official investigation ruled death suicide. EU urged Kazakhstan to let opposition candidates and media operate freely ahead of 4 December presidential election. Opposition newspaper *Juma Times* 3 November issue seized. Televised debate between presidential candidates held without participation of president.

- [“Astana moves to minimize possible disturbances after presidential election”](#), Eurasia Daily Monitor, 29 Nov. 2005.
- [“Kazakhstan opposition member slain”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 14 Nov. 2005.

↳ Kyrgyzstan Situation in prisons normalised after October-November unrest. President Bakiev presented constitutional drafting committee with ready-made constitution in move seen as attempt to use Constitutional Conference to rubber-stamp his amendments, including abolition of position of PM. May Revolution leader Azimbek Beknazarov won parliamentary by-election, while former FM and revolutionary leader Roza Otunbaeva defeated. Head of National Security Service presented report into recent murders of 2 MPs, saying deaths due to business dispute and drug deal. Asan Erkinbaev, whose MP brother killed September, hospitalised after setting self on fire to demand killers’ capture.

- [“Otunbayeva loses last chance to remain in Kyrgyz politics”](#), Eurasia Daily Monitor, 30 Nov. 2005.
- [“Kyrgyz leader pushes for more power”](#), IWPR, 15 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°97, [Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution](#), 4 May 2005.

↳ Tajikistan New Economic Reform and Agrarian Parties registered, bringing total number of official political parties to 8. Opposition Social Democratic Party accused regime of campaign to eliminate President Rahmonov’s potential rivals ahead of November 2006 presidential poll. Independent media under pressure as government enforcing tougher registration procedures.

- [“Tajikistan’s disappearing opposition”](#), IWPR, 12 Nov. 2005.

- [“Independent media face registration challenges”](#), IRIN, 8 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, [Tajikistan’s Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?](#), 19 May 2004.

➤ Turkmenistan President Niyazov fired several top energy officials for alleged abuse of office and misappropriation of funds prior to gas deal with Ukraine. UN General Assembly committee passed resolution expressing concern about Turkmenistan’s repression of opposition groups, censorship of media and corrupt legal system.

- [“Turkmen leader wins on gas deal”](#), IWPR, 18 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°85, [Repression and Regression in Turkmenistan: A New International Strategy](#), 4 Nov. 2004.

➤ Uzbekistan Supreme Court completed show trial of 15 suspects accused of instigating May Andijon violence, convicting all 15 and handing down sentences of 14 to 20 years in prison. New trials begun in near-secrecy for others linked to May events. EU imposed arms embargo and visa bans on 12 top Uzbek officials linked to Andijon events, including Interior Minister Almatov. Despite ban, Germany admitted Almatov for medical treatment on “humanitarian grounds”. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan banned European NATO members from using its airspace to support Afghanistan peacekeeping operations. In Moscow, Presidents Karimov and Putin signed unprecedented mutual defence treaty, giving Russia broad latitude to intervene against “threats to peace”.

- Comment by Andrew Stroehlein (Crisis Group), [“Blind to the ‘Butcher of Andijan’”](#), *European Voice*, 24 Nov. 2005.
- [“Uzbekistan: Between East and West”](#), RFE/RL, 17 Nov. 2005.
- [“15 Uzbeks jailed for ‘terrorism’”](#), CNN, 14 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°38, [Uzbekistan: The Andijon Uprising](#), 25 May 2005.

SOUTH ASIA

➤ Afghanistan Joint Electoral Management Body certified National Assembly (upper and lower houses) and provincial election results marking end of election process; President Karzai still to appoint 34 seats in upper house. National Assembly, due to open in December, to be largely conservative and dominated by former mujahidin commanders. New and increasing phenomenon of suicide attacks killed 6 in Kabul and Kandahar, including German peacekeeper. Portuguese, Swedish and U.S. soldiers also killed in separate incidents adding to NATO security fears ahead of expansion to southern areas in 2006.

- [“Security fears emerge as NATO readies Afghan push”](#), Reuters, 29 Nov. 2005.
- [“Certification of upper house completes election process”](#), IRIN, 28 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°101, [Afghanistan Elections: Endgame or New Beginning?](#), 21 July 2005.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°107, [Rebuilding the Afghan State: The European Union’s Role](#), 30 November 2005. Despite its recent elections, Afghanistan remains a fragile state that could all too easily slip back into being a danger for the world. As a key contributor to rebuilding the war-ravaged country,...



...the EU needs to remain deeply engaged, translating its considerable prestige into an increasingly cohesive policy that delivers more effective action and influence in the political process. The new “Kabul Agenda” that donors are developing should emphasise sustainability and specific targets, with pay out of aid linked more explicitly to performance by the Karzai government. Europe’s concerns over human rights issues should be translated into hard demands for good governance from an administration that has allowed a culture of impunity.

➤ Bangladesh Suspected Islamist militants intensified attacks on judiciary: at least 9 killed in Chittagong and Gazipur blasts 28 November, while 2 senior judges killed 14 November. Lawyers and judges held widespread protests against violence. General strike held by main opposition Awami League 24 November calling for government’s resignation. World Bank and other donors conditioned further aid on improved anti-corruption efforts and legislation aimed at improving government transparency.

- [“Fear of Islamic state in Bangladesh grows after bombers target courts”](#), *The Independent*, 30 Nov. 2005.
- [“Twin JMB suicide strikes spell carnage in courts”](#), *The Daily Star*, 30 Nov. 2005.

➤ India (non-Kashmir) Separatist violence in northeast continued: grenade attack on market in Manipur state, and ongoing ethnic clashes in Assam state’s Karbi Anglong district between Dimasa and Karbi ethnic groups killed 2. Maoists launched 2 large-scale operations: 700 Maoist rebels stormed jail in Bihar state, killing 2 and freeing 350 prisoners; later stormed police training centre in eastern Jharkhand state, killing 5. Toll from 29 October Delhi blasts rose to 66. FM Natwar Singh stripped of post after allegations he benefited from UN oil-for-food program in Iraq.

- [“Caste out”](#), *The Economist*, 24 Nov. 2005.
- [“Maoist rebels storm jail in east India, free 350”](#), AlertNet, 14 Nov. 2005.

➤ Kashmir 24 Indian Kashmiris became first in 60 years to cross to Pakistani side but growing dissatisfaction more not allowed after 8 October earthquake. Pakistani PM Shaukat Aziz and Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh discussed normalisation process in side meeting at SAARC summit. All 5 promised crossing-points officially opened. 3 high-profile Srinagar attacks killed 14, 16-23 November.

- [“Fifth Kashmir border point opens”](#), BBC, 16 Nov. 2005.
- [“Aziz discusses peace process with Singh - Free trade linked to progress on Kashmir”](#), ReliefWeb, 12 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°79, [India/Pakistan Relations and Kashmir: Steps toward Peace](#), 24 June 2004.

➤ Maldives Opposition Maldivian Democratic Party held first ever internal political party elections in Maldives’ history.

- [“Provisional results announced for elections to MDP provincial executive committees”](#), Mivan News, 1 Dec. 2005.

➤ Nepal Landmark deal announced between 7 political parties and Maoist rebels 22 November: Maoists agreed to accept multi-party democracy, stop terrorising civilians and accept democratic process. Maoist chief Prachanda committed to “march ahead peacefully” into new political mainstream and work with political parties to end absolute powers of monarchy. Maoists’ 3-month unilateral ceasefire to end 2 December. 2 high-level Maoist commanders reportedly killed in 30

November aerial attack. India pressed King Gyanendra to restore multi-party democracy at South Asian regional summit. Supreme Court refused to block law banning criticism of king and barring private radio stations broadcasting news; thousands protested new law. FM radio station that rebroadcasted BBC interview with Prachanda raided by government but reopened after Supreme Court intervention.

- [“Losing war to win peace”](#), *Kathmandu Post*, 30 Nov. 2005.
- [“Nepal bans S Asia’s oldest FM station”](#), ISN, 28 Nov. 2005.
- [“Parties, Maoists announce 12-pt agreement”](#), *Kathmandu Post*, 22 November 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°104, [Nepal’s Maoists: Their Aims, Structure and Strategy](#), 27 Oct. 2005.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°106, [Nepal’s New Alliance: The Mainstream Parties and the Maoists](#), 28 November 2005. The just announced alliance of Nepal’s Maoists and mainstream parties has created a new dynamic. If managed carefully, the resulting process of further talks could strengthen democracy and help address weaknesses in the 1990 multiparty constitution and the parties that have embodied it. The new agreement, though vague on many key points including the rebels’ arms, restoration of parliament and the fate of the monarchy, about which there is only agreement to disagree, identifies a possible structure for peace talks - progressing via interim arrangements to a constitutional assembly and disarmament. The parties’ willingness to make a deal with the rebels has raised the stakes. There is only a bilateral process; other crucial players, notably the palace, are excluded. It could prompt a violent backlash if the monarchy feels threatened.



- ↳ Pakistan Responding to domestic criticism over government’s response to earthquake, President Musharraf deferred procurement of F-16s from U.S. International donors pledged \$5.8 billion in aid amid growing concerns for estimated 3.5 million homeless. 15 November blast outside Karachi offices of state-run petroleum company killed 3; 3 alleged Baloch Liberation Army members arrested. Interior Minister Khan Sherpao announced new force to tighten security at national installations in Balochistan province.
 - [“Pakistan arrests 3 suspects in Karachi bomb attack”](#), AlertNet, 17 Nov. 2005.
 - [“Donors Need Accountability on Human Rights”](#), Human Rights Watch, 16 Nov. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°102, [Authoritarianism and Political Party Reform in Pakistan](#), 28 Sept. 2005.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°43, [Pakistan’s Local Polls: Shoring Up Military Rule](#), 22 November 2005. Following Pakistan’s recently rigged local elections, the U.S. and others should make clear they will withdraw support for the regime unless it takes genuine steps to restore civilian rule. The deeply flawed vote was marred by serious violence: at least 60 people died and more than 500 were injured. As the military-led government enters its sixth year, regime survival has become even more its imperative. Four years after the devolution plan was implemented, local governments have only nominal autonomy. Continuing political engineering by the regime of President Pervez Musharraf is...



...increasing divisions at local and provincial levels, which in turn are producing greater political violence. This should serve as a wake-up call to the international community, especially the U.S., that Pakistan is not politically stable.

- ↳ Sri Lanka PM Rajapakse, known for hard-line approach to Tamil Tiger rebels (LTTE), won 17 November presidential election with 50.3% of vote. Low turnout in Tamil areas due to internal LTTE divisions and reported intimidation of Tamils helped Rajapakse defeat Wickramasinghe, who pledged to uphold current peace agreement. 3 killed and 17 wounded in bomb and grenade attacks in east, but election-related violence generally lower than expected. LTTE leader Prabhakaran issued ultimatum to new government for political settlement within year. Rajapakse declared intention to re-negotiate peace deal and joint mechanism for aid distribution. New president named new cabinet 23 November; kept defence and finance portfolios, gave new PM Wickremanayake disaster relief.
 - [“Sri Lanka foes rattle sabers”](#), BBC, 28 Nov. 2005.
 - [“A polarized vote in Sri Lanka”](#), Asia Times Online, 23 Nov. 2005.
 - [“Rajapakse’s perilous victory”](#), *The Economist*, 18 Nov. 2005.

NORTH EAST ASIA

- ↳ China (internal) UN rapporteur on torture started 2-week fact-finding mission to examine allegations of official maltreatment of prisoners.
 - [“China’s grip on Xinjiang Muslims”](#), BBC, 29 Nov. 2005.
- ↳ North Korea Fifth round of 6-party talks in Beijing revealed continuing divisions between Washington and Pyongyang: NK called for economic and energy assistance (including nuclear power reactor) in exchange for dismantlement; U.S. demanded dismantlement first. No progress made; no date given for next round of talks. Proposal made by Pyongyang and rejected by Washington leaked by South Korea after talks: offered 5 steps for abandoning nuclear weapons programs.
 - [“Seoul’s North Korean dilemma”](#), Asia Times Online, 23 Nov. 2005.
 - [“Bush and Roh agree to differ on North”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Nov. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°87, [North Korea: Where Next for the Nuclear Talks?](#), 15 Nov. 2004.
- ↳ Taiwan Strait In positive development, Beijing and Washington resumed official consultations on cross-strait affairs, suspended since 2000, following summit between Chinese President Hu Jintao and President Bush. Wang Zaixi, deputy director of China’s State Council’s Taiwan Affairs Office, attended meetings in New York. Ruling Democratic Progressive Party considered granting president power to order pre-emptive strike in face of imminent attack by mainland; currently only possible to order counter-attack (rests with defence minister). Opposition again rejected U.S.-Taiwan arms deal, blocking proposed \$62.8 million pay out to prepare for already trimmed purchase.
 - [“Taiwan vote seen as test for Chen”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Nov. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°42, [China and Taiwan: Uneasy Détente](#), 21 Sept. 2005.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

Indonesia Aceh peace process continued: GAM ended third round of disarmament program 22 November, again handing over required weapons. Violence continued in Poso with 2 more schoolgirls (1 Christian, 1 Muslim) shot in head, both survived: but no new conflict. Malaysian bomb-maker Azhari Husin, suspected chief technician behind Bali bombs, killed in East Java police operation 9 November. Noordin Mohamad Top, main strategist behind JL attacks, remains at large. Police identified all 3 suicide bombers from October attacks, 2 from West Java and 1 from Central Java. 42 indigenous Papuans inaugurated as members of long-awaited Papuan People's Council (MRP) 31 October by Interior Minister Mohammad Ma'ruf. Meetings between central government, leaders of MRP, Papuan and West Irian Jaya provincial government leaders 24-25 November resulted in agreement to settle legal status of controversial new province. U.S. State Department lifted Congress-approved arms embargo against Indonesia. Crisis Group South East Asia Project Director Sidney Jones refused entry to country 24 November, but allowed to return within week.

- "Papua residents told not to celebrate 'independence day'", *Jakarta Post*, 1 Dec. 2005.
- "Indonesia president intervenes in Jones case", *Financial Times*, 29 Nov. 2005.
- "Crisis Group Shocked at New Ban on Sidney Jones", Crisis Group Statement, 25 Nov. 2005.
- "Ex-rebels end third weapons handover in Indonesia", ReliefWeb, 22 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°103, *Weakening Indonesia's Mujahidin Networks: Lessons from Maluku and Poso*, 13 Oct. 2005.

Myanmar/Burma UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar condemned human rights violations ranging from torture, rape and forced labour to violation of political and civil liberties. Military junta announced capital to be moved to Pyinmana, 300 km north of Yangon, suggesting growing paranoia of leadership. Convention to draft constitution due to resume 5 December. National League of Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest extended for 1 year. Karen villages near Thai border reportedly attacked by Burmese troops 26 November.

- "U.S. pushes UN for Myanmar inquiry", *International Herald Tribune* (AP), 30 Nov. 2005.
- "Political reforms sans Suu Kyi", IPS, 28 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°34, *Myanmar: Update on HIV/AIDS Policy*, 16 Dec. 2004.

Philippines Violence flared as military battled on 2 fronts: against Islamic militants in Jolo and Communist rebels in central and northern areas. At least 31 killed 11-15 November in fighting between military and Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in southwestern island province of Sulu where military searching for ASG leader, Radullan Sahiron. Communist New People's Army (NPA) continued assault on military. At least 30 killed in series of clashes throughout month. Military launched offensive against NPA 21 November in Barangay San Agustin, Palo Leyte, with reports of civilian casualties.

- "Fighting in Philippine south rages, soldier killed", AlertNet, 24 Nov. 2005.
- "Upsurge in communist attacks raise political stakes in Philippines", ReliefWeb (AFP), 22 Nov. 2005.

- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°80, *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, 13 July 2004.

Thailand Army adopted more aggressive posture in response to rising southern violence; began retraining southern troops for offensive operations. Violence showed no sign of abating: family of 9 of defected militant killed in Narathiwat province 16 November in revenge for cooperation with government; coordinated bomb attacks in Narathiwat and Yala 2 and 7 November; suspected insurgents decapitated local government worker in Pattani province 22 November. Former Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohammad met PM Thaksin Shinawatra on unofficial trip to Thailand to ease diplomatic tensions over southern violence; both sides agreed to refrain from "megaphone diplomacy".

- "Pledge to ease Thai-Malay tension", BBC, 22 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°98, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad*, 18 May 2005.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°105, *Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution*, 18 November 2005. The state of emergency imposed on Thailand's majority Muslim provinces will not solve the separatist conflict in the south. The Executive Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations took effect in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat provinces on 19 July 2005 and despite the absence of any demonstrable strategic gain, was renewed for three months on 19 October. Designed as a softer version of martial law, it is in many ways worse. To avoid plunging the area into deeper violence, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra should immediately moderate the decree. Strengthening police forensic capacity and guaranteeing lawyers' access to administrative detainees would also help ameliorate the climate of fear. There is still no evidence of outside involvement in the violence, but if it continues to worsen, the risk of foreign jihadis coming to help may rise.

Europe

BALKANS

Crisis Group Europe Report N°168, *EU Visas and the Western Balkans*, 29 November 2005. EU visa policy towards Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro including Kosovo, contributes to the ghettoisation of the region and undermines Balkan efforts for reform and stability. Its sclerotic deficiencies jeopardise the objective of enhanced European integration and damage the countries' European outlook and hopes for eventual EU membership. This is not about emigration, permanent residence or threats to EU jobs but rather liberalising the limited-term visa regime for certain categories, primarily students, business people and tourists, and making the application process speedier and less painful for all. In 2003, the EU assured the peoples of the region that Brussels would not regard the map of the Union as complete until those countries had joined, but it has not moved on implementing its travel commitment.

➤ Albania Country paralysed by power cuts in worst energy crisis in 5 years. Greek president cut short visit to Albania after Cham minority group held Tirana protests.

- [“Albania paralysed by power cuts”](#), BBC, 11 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°153, [Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?](#), 25 Feb. 2004.

➤ Bosnia & Herzegovina Representatives of leading Bosnian parties agreed in principle - under heavy U.S. and EU pressure - to constitutional amendments strengthening central institutions of government. Declaration signed in Washington 22 November; many details still to be worked out. Agreement came day after Brussels authorised negotiations on Stabilisation and Association Agreement as step towards EU membership; expected to start by year-end. UN Security Council extended EU Stabilisation Force (EUFOR) mission for 12 months.

- [“From Dayton to Brussels”](#), Transitions Online, 30 Nov. 2005.
- [“Redefining Bosnia”](#), ISN, 15 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°164, [Bosnia's Stalled Police Reform: No Progress, No EU](#), 6 Sept. 2005.

➤ Kosovo Former Finnish President Marti Ahtisaari appointed as Special UN Envoy to lead Kosovo final status talks. Contact Group elaborated guiding principles which process and outcome must satisfy. Ahtisaari travelled to Pristina, meeting with Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb leaders, as well as Belgrade, where President Tadic proposed reshaping Kosovo within Serbia along dual entity model of Bosnia. Belgrade also announced negotiating team for talks: President Tadic and PM Kostunica to be co-presidents; minimal Kosovo Serb representation. U.S. Under Sec. State Burns called on constructive participation of all sides, emphasised Kosovo Albanians responsible for making convincing case for independence, warned against use of violence. 4 injured in market bomb in mainly Serb town Strpce 17 November.

- [“Kosovo Albanians, Serbia must help status talks, UN envoy says”](#), Bloomberg, 29 Nov. 2005.
- [“Kosovo: U.S. says ethnic Albanians must demonstrate good governance”](#), RFE/RL, 9 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°165, [Bridging Kosovo's Mitrovica Divide](#), 13 Sept. 2005.

➤ Macedonia EU Commission recommended candidate status for Macedonia 9 November. Negotiations start date announcement expected at 15-16 December EU Summit. EU established EU Policy Advisory Team (EUPAT) to replace police mission Proxima on 15 December.

- [“Council of Europe head tells Macedonia to be vigilant on human rights”](#), RFE/RL, 14 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°37, [Macedonia: Not out of the Woods Yet](#), 25 Feb. 2005.

➤ Serbia & Montenegro Serbian parliament adopted resolution authorising government to enter talks with Kosovo Albanians on province's final status. Serbia sought international support for stance with high-level visits to Russia and China: President Tadic put to Russian President Putin proposal to reshape Kosovo within Serbia along dual entity model of Bosnia; warned of destabilisation if independence granted. In first PM visit to Zagreb since 1991, Kostunica pledged with Croatian PM to resolve legacy of 1991-95 conflict,

offered mutual support for EU membership. First round of negotiations on Stabilisation and Association Agreement with EU began.

- [“Serbia's Kostunica visits former foe Croatia”](#), *Washington Post*, 23 Nov. 2005.
- [“Serbia seeks international backing on Kosovo's status”](#), Southeast European Times, 23 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°39, [Serbia: Spinning its Wheels](#), 23 May 2005.

CAUCASUS

➤ Armenia Referendum on package of constitutional amendments held 27 November; central election commission stated more than 93% approval. Official turnout figure of 65% challenged by opposition who, claiming 16.3% turnout, staged protests; had previously called for boycott. Only international observation came from 14 Council of Europe observers who said vote marred by “serious abuses” putting “credibility” of result in doubt.

- Comment by Sabine Freizer (Crisis Group), [“Armenia's emptying democracy”](#), Open Democracy, 30 Nov. 2005.
- [“Turnout controversy clouds Armenian constitutional referendum”](#), EurasiaNet, 29 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°158, [Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead](#), 18 Oct. 2004.

➤ Azerbaijan Police used violence to break up peaceful rally in Baku 26 November. Hundreds injured, 24 detained. Around 10,000 protesting 6 November parliamentary elections that failed to meet OSCE and Council of Europe standards. Protest was latest in series of moves by opposition who claimed election fraudulent, also announced boycott of seats in parliament. Ruling New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) won overwhelmingly: preliminary results indicated YAP won 58 of 121 seats, supported by number of pro-government independents. Turnout low at 46.8%. Election Commission annulled results in 4 constituencies and 460 polling stations; 2 extra seats awarded to opposition. Government fired 7 officials for illegal interference in voting.

- [“Election results finalized, but tensions simmer on”](#), EurasiaNet, 28 Nov. 2005.
- Comment by Sabine Freizer (Crisis Group), [“Azerbaijan's unfinished election”](#), Open Democracy, 8 Nov. 2005.
- [“The two faces of Azerbaijan and its president”](#), *The Economist*, 7 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°156, [Azerbaijan: Turning Over a New Leaf?](#), 13 May 2004.

Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°40, [Azerbaijan's 2005 Elections: Lost Opportunity](#), 21 November 2005. As with previous elections, Azerbaijan failed to demonstrate commitment to democracy and reform in its 6 November parliamentary vote. Instead, there was fraud nationwide. The international community should make it clear to President Ilham Aliyev that the quality of relations depends on movement toward genuine democracy, and it should continue pressing for a democratic outcome of the 2005 elections. If the government does not continue to take steps to redress election violations, and particularly if it uses violence or arrests against peaceful opposition demonstrators, the following actions should be considered: by the EU, putting on hold its talks with the government about its new Action Plan; by the U.S. and...



...others, initiating a diplomatic embargo on high-level visits; and by the Council of Europe, taking steps toward suspending Azerbaijan's membership.

- Chechnya (Russia) Preliminary results of 27 November parliamentary elections indicated pro-Moscow United Russia Party victorious with over 61% of vote. Human rights activists criticised poll as rubber-stamping exercise by Kremlin and local pro-Russian elite; EU hailed it as "important step towards broader representation" in region. Chechen President Alkhanov said ready to talk with exiled separatist leaders. Violence continued as Russian soldier and 3 suspected militants killed in clashes, while mayor of Avtury killed by unidentified assailants. Russian military admitted killing 3 civilians 16 November while in separate incident, 6 injured in allegedly accidental army mortar attack on village.
 - "Results of parliamentary elections in Chechnya were as predicted", ReliefWeb, 30 Nov. 2005.
 - "In a Climate of Fear – 'Political Process' and Parliamentary Elections in Chechnya", International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights Report, 24 Nov. 2005.

- Georgia Situation in Abkhazia deteriorated with reports of at least 2 Georgians killed in separate incidents. UN observers expressed concern and urged sides to convene high-level meeting. Dispute topped agenda of 19 November meeting between UNSG Annan and President Saakashvili. OSCE talks held 15-16 November on South Ossetia conflict. Georgian PM argued for broadening of Joint Control Commission to include U.S. and EU, saying current format futile.
 - "Russia rejects charges against troops in South Ossetia", RFE/RL, 30 Nov. 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) OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs stated intention to relaunch talks with Azerbaijan and Armenia FMs at 5-6 December OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Slovenia.
 - "Homesick Azeris vote in 'virtual constituency'", Reuters, 1 Nov. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°167, *Nagorno-Karabakh: A Plan for Peace*, 11 Oct. 2005.

- North Caucasus (Russia) Crackdown on suspected militants continued: Dagestan police said 2 militants killed, 1 wounded and 8 detained. Islam expert Ruslan Nakhshiev reported missing in Kabardino-Bakaria after 4 November police questioning; prosecutor said Nakhshiev suspected of instigating major October raid on Nalchik. Local inquiry into September 2004 Beslan school siege blamed Russian security forces for failings over prevention and rescue operation.
 - "First two bitter wars in Chechnya...", *The Guardian*, 30 Nov. 2005.
 - "Suspects in Caucasus Attack Ill-treated", Human Rights Watch, 18 Nov. 2005.

EASTERN EUROPE

- Belarus EU warned of "restrictive measures" unless 2006 presidential election free and fair. Growing concerns over media freedom: UN human rights envoy urged government to investigate recent murders of 2 journalists and end systematic

harassment of non-state media, while state postal services excluded 3 periodicals from distribution in move interpreted as "cleansing" of opposition media. Belarus parliament gave initial approval to legislation aimed at preventing Ukraine-style revolution.

- "Rights group decries Belarusian bill", RFE/RL, 30 Nov. 2005.
- "UN envoy asks Belarus to probe journalists' murders", AlertNet, 11 Nov. 2005.

- Moldova Russian foreign minister defended military presence in Transdniestrian region, arguing essential to region's stability. EU launched 2-year Border Assistance Mission on Moldova-Ukraine border 30 November.
 - "EU launches Moldova-Ukraine border mission", ISN, 30 Nov. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°157, *Moldova: Regional Tensions over Transdniestria*, 17 June 2004.

- Ukraine Controversy over position of prosecutor-general continued: parliament approved President Yushchenko's nominee, Oleksandr Medvedko, but Kiev court ruled dismissal of previous prosecutor-general illegal and reinstated him. FM Tarasyuk accused Russia of violating terms of its Black Sea fleet presence at Ukrainian port.
 - "How Ukraine 'verged on civil war'", BBC, 22 Nov. 2005.
 - "Ukraine marks Orange anniversary", CNN, 22 Nov. 2005.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

- Basque Country (Spain) Spain's largest ever trial started in High Court 21 November with 56 defendants charged with belonging to ETA support network. Spokesman for banned nationalist Batasuna party, Arnaldo Otegi received 1-year prison sentence for defamation of king. ETA suspects for 3 blasts in region, no injuries.
 - "EU declines ETA request for Basque conflict mediation", *International Herald Tribune (El Pais)*, 26 Nov. 2005.
 - "Spain opens trial against alleged ETA support networks", AlertNet, 21 Nov. 2005.

- Cyprus EU-funded project to open symbolic roadblock dividing main street of Nicosia since 1963 began with Turkish Cypriot clearance work 24 November. Greek Cypriot government withdrew consent on issue 28 November, saying Turkish troops violated ceasefire line in buffer zone. Greek-Cypriot presidential aide Tzision controversially stated Annan Plan could not be basis for Cyprus solution.
 - "Turk Cypriots demolish symbol of island's division", Reuters, 24 Nov. 2005.

- Northern Ireland (UK) Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Hain announced plans to overhaul local government in region, including reduction of number of local councils from 26 to 7. All parties except Sinn Fein warned move could lead to repartition along sectarian lines; Sinn Fein dismissed warnings. House of Commons passed bill on amnesty for returning fugitive paramilitaries by 310 votes to 262 despite concerns raised by many MPs and criticism of bill by victims' families. County Armagh man shot dead 7 November reported to have republican dissident connections.
 - "NI councils overhaul 'too sharp'", BBC, 26 Nov. 2005.
 - "IRA fugitives will be free to return home under amnesty scheme", *The Guardian*, 10 Nov. 2005.

- ↓ Turkey Situation in southeast deteriorated after claims state security services involved in 9 November bomb attack on Semdinli bookshop and drive-by shooting at crime scene. 3 gendarmerie officers and 1 ex-PKK militant detained. Several days of rioting over incident in Hakkari province, Istanbul and elsewhere. At least 5 killed in clashes with police. PM Erdogan visited Semdinli 21 November promising justice. Sporadic violence continued across Turkey, including bombing in Istanbul that killed 2. EU cautioned Turkey on freedom of speech after prosecution of several authors and academics.
- ["Turkish leader visits town fearful of police killings"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 21 Nov. 2005.
 - ["Several killed in Turkish clashes"](#), BBC, 16 Nov. 2005.



Latin America / Caribbean

- ↳ Bolivia Interim President Rodriguez settled long-standing dispute over distribution of parliamentary seats by basing rules on latest census; set election for 18 December. Organisation of American States to oversee poll. Energy minister resigned after failing to renegotiate international oil contracts in line with new hydrocarbons law.
- ["Bolivia government: Complex times"](#), *Prensa Latina*, 25 Nov. 2005.
 - ["Bolivia decrees new election date"](#), BBC, 2 Nov. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°12, [Coca, Drugs and Social Protest in Bolivia and Peru](#), 3 Mar. 2005.
- ↳ Colombia President Uribe announced candidacy for May 2006 elections after constitutional court cleared him to run for second term. AUC paramilitaries agreed to resume demobilisation, after suspending cooperation in October for fear their leader would be extradited to U.S. Washington agreed to provide up to \$20 million for demobilisation. Up to 2,000 fled, many to Ecuador, to escape upsurge in violence in southern Putumayo and Narino departments; 24 guerrillas surrendered to authorities 16 November. Security forces continued forced eviction of indigenous protestors from farms in Cauca.
- ["The successes and failures of President Uribe"](#), *Colombia Journal*, 28 Nov. 2005.
 - ["AUC militia resumes disarmament"](#), BBC, 17 Nov. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°14, [Colombia: Presidential Politics and Peace Prospects](#), 16 June 2005.
- ↳ Ecuador Congress debated whether to accept President Palacio's request to hold constitutional referendum. New Supreme Court sworn in after being disbanded following ouster of former President Gutierrez. Indigenous groups marched on Congress demanding new constitution and protesting trade talks with U.S.; police responded violently.
- ["Indigenous protest on day 3 in Ecuador"](#), *Prensa Latina*, 18 Nov. 2005.
 - ["Concern over Colombian refugees"](#), BBC, 15 Nov. 2005.
- ↳ Haiti Presidential and legislative elections postponed for third time to 8 January due to security, logistics and likely shortage of international observers over Christmas period. Schedule provides for second round 15 February and local elections

- early March. UN troops established permanent presence in Cite Militaire slum to quell gang violence after 4 killed in clashes with peacekeepers. Police fired or jailed 50 officers in effort to clean up force, including 14 formally changed in connection with killings at August football match.
- Comment by Mark Schneider (Crisis Group), ["Politics at the point of a pistol in Haiti"](#), *Los Angeles Times*, 29 Nov. 2005.
 - ["Haiti vote delayed again"](#), *The Miami Herald* (AP), 26 Nov. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°8, [Can Haiti Hold Elections in 2005?](#), 3 Aug. 2005.

Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°9, [Haiti's Elections: The Case for a Short Delay](#), 25 November 2005. Haiti's forthcoming presidential and parliamentary elections, currently set for 27 December, must be delayed once again in order to be credible. Even with two earlier postponements, the situation on the ground means it is still unlikely a legitimate government can be installed by the target date of 7 February 2006. The government and the international community should delay the process one month, with transfer of power set for March 2006. Once the month's postponement is made, action is needed on electoral restructuring, security and the development of political accords aimed at reconciliation. Immediate international pressure is required to end the internal Haitian disputes and delaying tactics. If the process falters again, options begin with a new Security Council resolution mandating a virtual international takeover of the election process.



- ↳ Venezuela Opposition parties withdrew ahead of 4 December legislative elections, accused electoral body of favouring pro-government candidates. President Chavez called Mexican president "puppy" of U.S. imperialism sparking diplomatic row. Government-controlled Citgo Petroleum Corp. announced plan to sell discounted heating oil to low-income areas of U.S.
- ["Chavez pushes petro-diplomacy"](#), *Washington Post*, 22 Nov. 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 U.S. Sec. State Rice brokered deal with Israel and Egypt to reopen Gaza-Egyptian border under Palestinian control with EU monitors. Major shakeup of Israeli domestic politics with Labour Party's withdrawal from governing coalition after early November election of new leader, Amir Peretz. PM Ariel Sharon later announced resignation from Likud to form own centrist party, "Kadima"; former Labour head Peres left party to back Sharon. President Katsav dissolved parliament, set election for 28 March 2006. Israeli troops killed head of al-Qassam Brigade during West Bank clash; Hamas vowed to avenge death. Earlier in month Hamas declared would not extend informal ceasefire at year-end because Israel has failed to reciprocate. Palestinian Fatah party suspended primary election due to violence and fraud.

- "Abbas seeks to salvage flawed Fatah election", AlertNet, 30 Nov. 2005.
- "The "bulldozer" sends tremors through Israeli politics", *The Economist*, 23 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°44, *The Jerusalem Powder Keg*, 2 Aug. 2005.

Lebanon Hezbollah and Israeli soldiers clashed in disputed Shebaa Farms area; 4 Hezbollah fighters killed 21-23 November. UN Security Council expressed concern about hostilities, which it said Hezbollah initiated. President Lahoud interviewed by UN team investigating former PM Hariri's assassination; denied any involvement.

- "Fresh round of clashes erupts at Lebanon-Israel border", *The Daily Star*, 24 Nov. 2005.
- "Lebanon leader quizzed in Hariri probe", CNN, 12 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°39, *Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria*, 12 April 2005.

Jordan Iraqi suicide bombers launched 3 coordinated attacks on Western hotels in Amman 9 November, killing 60 and wounding over 115. Al Qaeda in Iraq, led by Jordanian-born militant al-Zarqawi, claimed attack retaliation for Jordanian assistance to U.S. in Iraq. Fourth would-be bomber detained by police. King Abdullah II dismissed government and top officials of royal court, including national security adviser. Former military intelligence officer and ambassador to Israel and Turkey Marouf Bakhit named PM, given strong mandate to fight Islamist militancy.

- "Jordan Islamists fear crackdown", CNN (Reuters), 25 Nov. 2005.
- "Al Qaeda claims responsibility for Amman blasts", *International Herald Tribune*, 10 Nov. 2005.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°47, *Jordan's 9/11: Dealing With Jihadi Islamism*, 23 November 2005. The 9 November terror attacks in Jordan were a preview of further instability in the country unless the regime implements an ambitious reform program that addresses the root causes of growing public dissatisfaction. New security measures in response to the bombings must be complemented by political, economic and cultural reforms that tackle growing public alienation toward Jordan's Westernised elite. These should include amending laws that curtail political freedoms, expanding economic opportunities for the poor and creating an opening for credible religious teachers who denounce violence, even those critical of government policy. The regime currently has the public's support because of outrage over the civilian casualties. It should use this small window of opportunity to deliver long-promised reforms.

Syria Damascus agreed to allow investigators to question officials in Vienna, ending impasse with UN inquiry into killing of former Lebanese PM Hariri; denied reports UN wanted to question sixth official, Assef Shawkat, head of military intelligence and President Assad's brother-in-law. Assad earlier agreed to cooperate with UN inquiry so long as Syrian national interests not "harmed". Syria began own investigation into assassination and imposed travel ban on officials named in October UN report. Damascus freed 190 political prisoners in effort to strengthen national unity.

- "Hariri witness says he was bribed", BBC, 28 Nov. 2005.
- "Assad of Syria: No more Mr. Nice Guy", *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Nov. 2005.

- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N° 24, *Syria Under Bashar (II): Domestic Policy Challenges*, 11 Feb. 2004.

GULF

Bahrain Series of demonstrations held throughout month protesting law on activities of political societies; unemployment; law to regulate marriage, divorce and inheritance rights for women; and U.S.-led "Forum for the Future" conference to promote democracy which ended without agreement on declaration.

- "Setback for US Mideast reform hopes", Middle East Online, 14 Nov. 2005.

Iran International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-nation board met 24 November, agreeing to give Tehran more time to accept nuclear compromise before pushing for UN Security Council referral. Proposal from Moscow to allow Iranian uranium enrichment activities in Russia, not on Iranian soil, agreed by U.S. and EU, but Iran continued to insist on right for indigenous fuel cycle capability. In move thought to be attempt to strengthen Tehran's negotiating hand, Iranian parliament voted to begin uranium enrichment and end in-depth international inspections if referred to UNSC. Depth of support for President Ahmadi-Nejad questioned as his third nominee for oil minister rejected by parliament; his abrasive foreign policy and series of high-profile ambassadorial-level reshuffles having created concern even among conservatives.

- "He's even stirring up the oil ministry", *The Economist* (subscription), 24 Nov. 2005.
- "Iran looks to new nuclear talks", BBC, 25 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°18, *Iran: What Does Ahmadi-Nejad's Victory Mean?*, 4 Aug. 2005.

Iraq Insurgency intensified as approach of 15 December parliamentary elections prompted fears of major escalation. Wave of suicide bombings included twin blasts at Shiite mosques in Khanaqin, near Iranian border, killing 80 and car bomb outside hospital south of Baghdad killing 30. Gunmen dressed in Iraqi army uniforms shot dead prominent Sunni Arab tribal chief and 4 family members 23 November. Escalation of violence coincided with opening of preparatory Iraqi reconciliation meeting run by Arab League in Cairo. Detainee abuse scandal emerged 13 November after U.S. troops found 173 prisoners, mostly Sunni Arabs and some reportedly tortured, in bunker in interior ministry building. U.S. military forces completed 17-day counter-insurgency operation in western province of Anbar near Syrian border, which left 139 insurgents and 10 marines dead. UN Security Council voted unanimously to extend mandate of U.S.-led multinational forces to end of 2006. 1666 Coalition soldiers, including 1548 Americans, and thousands of Iraqis now killed by hostile fire since declared end of combat 1 May 2003.

- "Bush outlines Iraq 'victory plan'", BBC, 30 Nov. 2005.
- "Moral stakes of exiting Iraq", *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 Nov. 2005.
- "Scores killed in Iraq as 2 mosques are hit", *International Herald Tribune*, 18 Nov. 2005.
- Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°19, *Unmaking Iraq: A Constitutional Process Gone Awry*, 26 Sept. 2005.

➤ Saudi Arabia Women participated and voted in Chamber of Commerce election for first time in Kingdom's history 28 November. Saudi Arabia became 149th member of World Trade Organisation after 12 years of talks. U.S. added country to list of violators of religious freedoms.

- "Saudi women score twice in first polls", Middle East Online, 30 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°45, *The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia*, 19 Sept. 2005.

➤ Yemen Clashes between security forces and Zaidi rebels continued in northern province of Saada with at least 16 rebels and 10 police killed.

- "At least 16 rebels killed in Yemen fighting", Middle East Online, 30 Nov. 2005.

NORTH AFRICA

➤ Algeria Opposition parties in Berber Kabylia region won local elections called in June as part of reconciliation plan. President Bouteflika pardoned thousands of prisoners 1 November after October referendum approved plan. Police Chief Ali Tounsi announced plans to double force over next 3 years, while military completed destruction of landmine stock. 3 killed in Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat attacks.

- "Algeria pardons thousands", News24.com, 1 Nov. 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 Parliamentary elections began relatively peacefully but later stages marred by violence, widespread intimidation, hundreds of arrests and voting irregularities; 2 killed. National Democratic Party (NDP) won large majority of seats, while

Muslim Brothers, running as independents, allowed to campaign openly despite ban; won 76 seats in first 2 rounds, nearly 5 times current representation in parliament. Opposition al-Ghad Party leader, runner-up in September presidential elections, lost to NDP candidate.

- "Violence mars Egyptian elections", BBC, 1 Dec. 2005.
- "New big gains for Egypt's Brotherhood", *The Daily Star*, 28 Nov. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°46, *Reforming Egypt: In Search of a Strategy*, 4 Oct. 2005.

➤ Mauritania Military junta announced intention to reduce period of transition to constitutional rule by 5 months. Now to hold presidential elections in March 2007.

- "Junta pledges presidential poll earlier than expected, in March 2007", IRIN, 10 Nov. 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 Morocco's King Mohammed VI announced support for Western Sahara autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty on anniversary of 1975 Moroccan seizure of region, but continued to reject possibility of referendum on independence. Western Saharan Polisario Front dismissed proposal. Pro-independence riots throughout month in multiple townships sparked strong police response. Moroccan parliamentary delegation to Algeria sought to renew diplomacy over Western Sahara during 22 November visit.

- "US Congressional panel looks at stalled Western Sahara peace efforts", Voice of America, 18 Nov. 2005.
- "All quiet on the Western Sahara front", *The Guardian*, 11 Nov. 2005.

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