

**113** 30 December 2012

## December 2012 Trends



### Deteriorated Situations

Central African Republic (p.2)  
China/Japan (p.5)  
North Korea (p.5)  
Syria (p.10)



### Improved Situations



### Unchanged Situations

Afghanistan (p.5), Algeria (p.11), Armenia (p.8), Azerbaijan (p.8), Bahrain (p.10), Bangladesh (p.5), Bolivia (p.9), Bosnia (p.7), Burundi (p.2), Cameroon (p.2), Chad (p.2), Colombia (p.9), Côte d'Ivoire (p.3), Cyprus (p.9), Democratic Republic of Congo (p.2), Egypt (p.11), Ethiopia (p.2), Georgia (p.8), Guatemala (p.9), Guinea (p.4), Guinea-Bissau (p.4), Haiti (p.9), India (non-Kashmir) (p.6), Indonesia (p.6), Iran (p.10), Iraq (p.11), Jordan (p.11), Kashmir (p.6), Kazakhstan (p.5), Kenya (p.2), Kosovo (p.7), Kuwait (p.11), Kyrgyzstan (p.5), Lebanon (p.10), Liberia (p.4), Libya (p.12), Macedonia (p.8), Madagascar (p.3), Mali (p.4), Mexico (p.9), Morocco (p.12), Myanmar (p.6), Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) (p.8), Nepal (p.6), Niger (p.4), Nigeria (p.4), North Caucasus (Russia) (p.8), Northern Ireland (p.9), Pakistan (p.6), Philippines (p.7), Rwanda (p.2), Saudi Arabia (p.11), Senegal (p.4), Serbia (p.8), Somalia (p.2), Somaliland (p.3), South Sudan (p.3), Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories (p.10), Sri Lanka (p.6), Sudan (p.3), Tajikistan (p.5), Thailand (p.7), Timor Leste (p.7), Tunisia (p.12), Turkey (p.9), Turkmenistan (p.5), Ukraine (p.8), Uzbekistan (p.5), Venezuela (p.9), Yemen (p.11), Zimbabwe (p.3)

## January 2013 Watchlist



### Conflict Risk Alerts

Central African Republic (p.2)



### Conflict Resolution Opportunities

## 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.

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## Africa

### Central Africa

➡ **Burundi** Opposition Democratic Alliance for Change (ADC-Ikibiri) 5 Dec rejected new electoral commission, approved 4 Dec by National Assembly and Senate. President Nkurunziza 22 Dec announced postponement of Truth and Reconciliation Commission bill, will now be tabled early 2013.

- [“Le Parlement adopte une nouvelle commission électorale en catimini”](#), RFI, 5 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Cameroon** Cameroon and Nigerian govts 17 Dec agreed to start process for demarcation of land-based areas yet to be identified in Bakassi peninsula; Nigeria expressed concern at reported cases of maltreatment of its citizens in Bakassi. Soldier 27 Dec reportedly shot at President Biya’s motorcade in failed assassination attempt. Court 14 Dec sentenced opposition leader Enoh Meyomess, arrested Nov 2011 for alleged coup attempt, to 7 years jail on charges of aggravated theft, illegal sale of gold.

- [“Govt warns Cameroon against maltreating Nigerians in Bakassi”](#), *Guardian*, 13 Dec. 2012.

➡ ➡ **Central African Republic** Resurgence of rebel activity in north under new Seleka coalition early Dec threatened Bozizé regime. Rebels made swift gains in north and east: 11 Dec captured Ndele town, 18 Dec seized central mining town Bria, 29 Dec seized Sibut, 114 miles from capital Bangui; rebels currently control approximately a third of country. Estimated 400 Chadian soldiers deployed 18 Dec in Sibut and Damara cities to contain rebels, prevent fall of Bangui. Rebels 26 Dec called on troops to stand down, said did not intend to march on capital, but later warned they may enter Bangui, despite 28 Dec agreeing to talks with govt starting early Jan. Regional presidents 21 Dec met with President Bozizé, called for deployment of regional peacekeepers, negotiations under aegis of regional organisation (ECCAS); ECCAS 29 Dec announced deployment of additional troops. AU chair Boni set to discuss crisis with Bozizé end-month. UN late month began evacuation of staff, U.S. evacuated embassy and urged citizens to leave. Bozizé 27 Dec appealed for U.S., French intervention. Hundreds late Dec demonstrated, stoned French embassy, criticised France for failing to intervene; French president Hollande said French military will protect embassy and French citizens, will not interfere in domestic affairs.

- [“C. African rebels advance as AU holds crisis talks”](#), AFP, 30 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Chad** Govt mid-Dec agreed to enhance surveillance of border with Libya during visit by Libyan PM Zeidan. President Déby 5 Dec met with French President Hollande, discussed potential deployment of Chadian troops to Mali, security deterioration in Central African Republic (see CAR). Govt 18 Dec deployed some 400 troops to fight CAR rebels, said intervention an “interposition” mission, Chad not siding with any protagonists in CAR conflict.

- [“Crise en RCA: le Tchad s’agace de l’absence d’implication de Bangui dans les négociations”](#), RFI, 24 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Democratic Republic of Congo** M23 rebel group withdrawal from Goma completed 2 Dec. Opposition parties 6 Dec rejected invitation to join govt-M23 talks facilitated by Uganda beginning 7 Dec; talks made little progress, extended to end of 2012. Insecurity around Goma, IDP camps continues. 2 MONUSCO helicopters reportedly fired at from areas under M23 control 26 Dec. ICC 18 Dec acquitted former militia leader Mathieu Ngudjolo (Chui) of war crimes, crimes against humanity in 2003 in Ituri.

- [“DRC opposition rejects offer to join M23 talks”](#), VOA, 6 Dec. 2012.

**New** Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°93, [Eastern Congo: The ADF-Nalu’s Lost Rebellion](#), 19 Dec. 2012. The fight against entrenched armed groups in eastern Congo such as the ADF-Nalu needs to switch from a military to an intelligence-based approach.

➡ **Rwanda** Govt 2 Dec said FDLR rebels crossed border from DR Congo into Rwanda, killed national park warden near Musanze province. U.S. President Obama 18 Dec called for end to Rwandan support for DR Congo M23 rebels.

- [“Obama tells Rwanda to end DRC rebel support”](#), AFP, 19 Dec. 2012.

### Horn of Africa

➡ **Ethiopia** PM Desalegn late Dec expressed willingness to negotiate with Eritrea following official Qatari govt effort to open negotiations. Federal High Court 12 Dec convicted several opposition members on terrorism charges for links to banned Oromo Liberation Front. 29 Muslim leaders arrested in July on terrorism charges appeared in court 17 Dec. Rebel Ogaden National Liberation Front reportedly resumed talks with govt late-month.

- [“Ethiopian Court slaps lengthy terms against opposition leaders”](#), *Sudan Tribune*, 12 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Kenya** Ahead of March 2013 presidential elections key politicians forming alliances: PM Odinga, VP Kalonzo Musyoka and Ford Kenya’s Moses Wetangula formed Coalition for Reform and Democracy (CORD); ICC indictees William Ruto and Uhuru Kenyatta formed Jubilee Alliance. Official figures released 21 Dec showed 14.3mn registered voters following month-long electronic voter registration exercise, falling short of 18mn target. Govt 13 Dec ended urban stays for refugees, requiring them to move back to refugee camps, and instigated mandatory registration for new arrivals. Police 17 Dec reported 7 Yemenis and 1 Somali arrested following grenade blast in predominantly ethnic Somali Eastleigh neighbourhood of Nairobi. Suspected Islamists 27 Dec shot dead policeman in Mandera town on border with Somalia. Court 19 Dec sentenced to death 6 police officers convicted of killing 7 taxi operators in Kawangware March 2010.

- [“After grenade attacks, Kenya wants Somali refugees in camps”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Somalia** At least 38 killed, 60 wounded in inter-tribal gun battle in Galgaduud province 1-2 Dec. Somali govt protested Kenya’s 18 Dec order requiring Somali refugees in Kenyan cities to return to camps. Federal Govt cabinet ministers visited Kismayo 27 Dec, met leaders of Ras Kamboni militia controlling city. President Sheikh 21 Dec visited Kenya; joint communiqué with Kenyan President Kibaki expressed intention to cooperate on bilateral, regional issues. Al-Shabaab 16 Dec cut ties with U.S. extremist Abu Mansoor Al-Amriki, accused him of “spreading discord and

disunity". AMISOM and Somali troops 9 Dec took strategic town of Jowhar, Middle Shebelle region. AU convoy caught in roadside bomb blast in Marko city 2 Dec shortly after visit by defence, interior and justice ministers. Ras Kamboni and govt forces spokesman 14 Dec denied reports of "heavy fighting" with al-Shabaab fighters in Kismayo. Political and constitutional disputes continued in Puntland: leader of Puntland opposition Midnimo 13 Dec called for dialogue with govt following demonstrations, rising political tensions prompted by one-year extension to Puntland President Farole's term, originally scheduled to end 7 Jan 2013. 11 Puntland soldiers killed 4 Dec by suspected al-Shabaab militants near govt outpost in Galaga mountains.

- "Security challenges await Somalia after historic year", VOA, 25 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Somaliland** At least 3 killed, 7 injured in violent protests following 6 Dec release of preliminary district election results in Hargeisa; regional court validated vote late Dec following recount. Editor of *Waaheen* newspaper arrested 13 Dec, accused of publishing unsubstantiated allegations concerning rights violations.

- "Somaliland's election: fair or farce?", SomalilandPress, 10 Dec. 2012.

➡ **South Sudan** At least 10 killed 8-9 Dec when protesters clashed with police in Wau town following move of local govt seat to nearby Bagarre. Relatives of those killed reportedly kidnapped 28 pro-govt Dinka tribespeople; discovery of 6 Dinka bodies 19 Dec reignited violence, protests. Many residents fled town, govt flew in police reinforcements from Juba, UN deployed peacekeepers. New round of talks with Sudan reached agreement on steps toward border security (see Sudan). 29 militia fighters, 5 soldiers reportedly killed mid-month in army operation to combat ethnic militias in Jonglei, targeting fighters led by self-proclaimed prophet Dak Kueth. Journalist critical of govt shot dead 5 Dec outside home in Juba; President Kiir announced full investigation, UN condemned killing. Army 21 Dec shot down UN peacekeeping helicopter, killing 4 crew members, said it mistook it for Sudanese plane.

- "In South Sudan, a town simmers amid unrest", CNN, 20 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Sudan** Govt 18 Dec announced breakthrough in security talks with S Sudan despite top S Sudan negotiator saying talks "deadlocked". AU mediator Thabo Mbeki said leaders agreed to take immediate steps on border security but implementation remains unclear; next round of talks scheduled for Jan 2013. AU 14 Dec did not refer situation in Abyei to UNSC despite Oct threat to do so. Amnesty International called for end to violent govt repression of student protests following death of 4 Darfuri students arrested with 49 others during student sit-in at Al-Gazira University in Madani town, south of Khartoum. Police violently dispersed protests following deaths, scores arrested. Opposition National Consensus Forces (NCF) coalition leader Farouq Abu Issa detained 13-15 Dec following participation in forum protesting killing of students. Sudanese Armed Forces 11 Dec launched unsuccessful assault on SPLM-N in Deldoko and Rusires, S Kordofan. SPLM-N rebels 20 Dec said they shot down combat jet near El-Obeid, capital of North Kordofan state; Khartoum claimed it was a crash due to technical failure. Darfur SRF troops led by Abdel Wahid 28 Dec claimed capture of 2 garrison towns in West Jebel Marra.

- EJ Hogendoorn and Benjamin Dalton, "Boldness Required to End Sudan Misery", CNN GPS, 12 Dec. 2012.
- "Sudan's opposition leader arrested", *Sudan Tribune*, 13 Dec. 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°194, *Sudan: Major Reform or More War*, 29 Nov. 2012.

## Southern Africa

➡ **Madagascar** SADC heads of state summit 8 Dec endorsed "nini" option, meaning neither transitional President Rajoelina nor former president Ravalomanana can run in May-July 2013 elections. Following 10 Dec meeting with SADC troika chair Tanzanian President Kikwete, Ravalomanana 11 Dec announced decision not to contest elections; Kikwete 14 Dec met with Rajoelina to dissuade him from running, but agreement with Rajoelina not confirmed. UN 28 Dec said it will launch investigations into allegations of extra-judicial killings and mob lynchings in southern region Anosy since start of military's Operation Tandroka against cattle rustlers in Sept; EU envoy Tezapsidis late-month expressed concern insecurity in south could affect preparations for polls. Govt 20 Dec declared state of emergency in capital due to increased number of armed assaults.

- "Andry Rajoelina: 'la décision de ma candidature est en réflexion'", RFI, 20 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Zimbabwe** Belligerent calls for elections continued throughout month: at ZANU-PF's peoples conference in Gweru 7-9 Dec, party insisted polls will be held by end of March 2013; President Mugabe threatened to force collapse of GPA and call elections if no progress made on draft constitution before Christmas day, accused "dirty western hands" of "smuggling foreign anathema views" into draft. Despite Mugabe's ultimatum, draft constitution not finalised. In ZANU-PF report on political violence. ZANU-PF said 2011-2012 period saw more members subjected to attacks by MDC elements, adopted resolution "shunning violence unless provoked by other parties"; raising fears of renewed inter-party violence in forthcoming elections. Deputy PM Mutambara 19 Dec said country will hold general elections next year "with or without new constitution"; Finance Minister Biti 21 Dec said country "cannot afford" to hold elections in 2013, appealed to international community for aid. SADC Executive Secretary Salomão 11 Dec said Zimbabwe will send peacekeeping troops to DRC as part of SADC mission under Tanzanian command.

- "Peacekeepers work to smooth Zimbabwe's rocky road to elections", *Guardian*, 3 Dec. 2012.

## West Africa

➡ **Côte d'Ivoire** UN panel of experts report on Liberia 7 Dec stated cross-border raids by mercenaries, armed groups, and supporters of former president Gbagbo from Liberia into CDI becoming more violent, better organised, could have profound effects on regional security. ICC ruling 12 Dec confirmed its jurisdiction to try former president Gbagbo. Delegation of Ivorian Popular Front 13 Dec met Senegalese President Sall in Dakar to discuss stalled domestic reconciliation efforts. Gunmen 20-21 Dec attacked gendarmerie garrison in Abidjan and military post in Agbaou, 100km north of Abidjan.

- "Sénégal: Macky Sall et les frères ennemis ivoiriens", *Jeune Afrique*, 20 Dec. 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°193, *Côte d'Ivoire: Defusing Tensions*, 26 Nov. 2012.

➡ **Guinea** Controversy over electoral preparations continued as opposition coalitions 10 Dec denounced new president of electoral commission Bakary Fofana for failing to release latest audit of electoral list by International Organisation of La Francophonie. Fofana 11 Dec said elections will be held 12 May 2013, thus opening access to EU assistance funds. At least 2 killed, 52 wounded 8-11 Dec in Guéckédou town when police clashed with demonstrators protesting against local administrator, accused of abusing power to strengthen ruling RPG party. 2 suspects arrested late month in murder of Treasury Office director Aïssatou Boiro.

- [“Guéckédou: les émissaires d’Alpha Condé peinent à convaincre”](#), *Guinée58*, 18 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Guinea-Bissau** Joint assessment mission comprising AU, UN, EU, ECOWAS and Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) visited Bissau 16-21 Dec. UN SRSG Mutaboba 11 Dec briefed UNSC on progress since UNSG Ban’s 27 Nov report; UNSC 13 Dec expressed concern over lack of progress on return to constitutional order. Forum of Political Parties (FPP), a pro-transition structure including ruling Social Renovation Party (PRS), said appointment of Rui Néné as new president of electoral commission illegal, called for replacement of national assembly by transitional council; President Nhamadjo 17 Dec attempted mediation. Govt 11 Dec said elections planned for May 2013 should be delayed by a few years to provide time for necessary reforms. Alberto Nambeia appointed as president of PRS during party’s 11-14 Dec congress following withdrawal of former president Kumba Ialá from race. U.S. 21 Dec suspended G-B from African Growth and Opportunity Act preference scheme; U.S. ambassador 18 Dec accused military/civilian officials of involvement in drug trade, encouraged CPLP/EU to support transition process. ECOWAS 27 Dec expressed concern following late-month beatings of ex-Prosecutor General Eduardo Mendes and former Gabu region administrator José Carlos Monteiro.

- [“Security Council seriously concerned over lack of progress on return to constitutional order”](#), *UN News*, 13 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Liberia** President Johnson Sirleaf’s office 5 Dec announced former opposition presidential candidate George Weah to lead national reconciliation process. ECOWAS president 19 Dec highlighted need for security along border with CDI, praised coordination efforts between countries. UN panel of experts on Liberia 17 Dec reported over 10,000 Sierra Leoneans illegally mining diamonds in Liberia.

- [“Sirleaf makes rival Weah peace ambassador”](#), *RNW*, 5 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Mali** UNSC 20 Dec unanimously authorised deployment of International Support Mission in Mali (MISMA) troops but urged more efforts toward political reconciliation, elections, army training. Junta 10-11 Dec reportedly forced PM Cheick Modibo Diarra to resign; interim President Traoré 12 Dec appointed Diango Sissoko as new PM. Sissoko 15 Dec named new govt but military still in charge of defence, justice, interior ministries. Foreign Minister Tieman Coulibaly said elections not possible until north regained and Islamists defeated. French Defence Minister Le Drian 24 Dec said military intervention could happen early 2013; *Le Figaro* reported General François Lecointre will head EU training mission (EUTM Mali) set to be deployed early 2013. Representatives of MNLA Tuareg rebels met with ECOWAS mediator Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan 14 Dec as part of regional tour by group, 21 Dec signed deal with Ansar Dine in Algiers agreeing to

start negotiations with govt. Head of al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb’s (AQIM) Moulathamine brigade, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, 8 Dec announced creation of new “blood signatories” group (see Algeria); AQIM emir Abou Zeid 25 posted video accusing France of blocking negotiations to release hostages. Islamists, reportedly comprised of Libyan extremists and Mali-based jihadis, 9 Dec announced creation of new “Ansar al-Sharia” group in Gao. U.S., UN mid-month listed MUJAO as terrorist movement. MUJAO 21 Dec reportedly amputated 2 people in Gao, 27 Dec took control of Halil town in Kidal region; Ansar Dine 23 Dec destroyed 3 mausoleums in Timbuktu.

- [“UN backs Mali intervention force to oust rebels”](#), *BBC*, 21 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Niger** Malian colonel Alhaji Ag Gamou narrowly escaped assassination attempt in Niamey 2 Dec. Media early-month reported increasing influx of Nigerians into south fleeing Boko Haram violence in northern Nigeria.

- [“Mali: El Hadj Ag Gamou échappe à une ‘tentative d’assassinat’ à Niamey”](#), *AFP*, 2 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Nigeria** Boko Haram (BH) attacks continued in north: sect killed 10 Christians in Borno state, NE 2 Dec; 14 killed in Potiskum, Yobe state, in exchange of fire with security forces 10 Dec. Suspected BH killed District Head of Dusuma Ward, Borno state, and son 10 Dec; 6 killed 25 Dec in suspected BH attack on church in Potiskum, Yobe state; at least 15 killed 28 Dec by suspected BH gunmen in Musari village, near Maiduguri; at least 25 killed 28-29 Dec in suspected BH attacks in Adamawa, Borno state. Gunmen loyal to Islamist group “Ansaru”, suspected BH offshoot formed in June 2012, killed 2 guards, kidnapped French engineer in Katsina town in north 19 Dec. Army 27 Dec killed 5 suspected BH in shootout in Kaduna, discovered bomb-making factory. Human Rights Commission 29 Dec criticised detention of 2 journalists arrested 28 Dec following publication of stories alleging abuses by military.

- Thierry Vircoulon, [“Pirates of the Guinean”](#), *Foreign Policy*, 20 Dec. 2012.
- [“At least 15 killed in sect attack in north Nigeria”](#), *AP*, 29 Dec. 2012.

**New** Crisis Group Africa Report N°196, [Curbing Violence in Nigeria \(I\): The Jos Crisis](#), 17 Dec. 2012. Unless addressed immediately, recurrent violence in Nigeria’s Plateau state will continue to fuel settler-indigene tensions and exacerbate intercommunal strife across the country.

➡ **Senegal** National Assembly 19 Dec passed law authorising creation of special chamber to try former Chadian dictator Hissène Habré, created new anti-corruption investigative structure after son of former president Wade and several former senior ministers appeared in court on suspicion of embezzlement and fraud. Radical wing of Casamance separatist movement MFDC 9 Dec freed 8 soldiers; peace talks scheduled to resume in Rome in Jan. President Sall 14 Dec announced Casamance would be test-case for advanced decentralisation policy.

- [“Casamance rebels release eight hostages”](#), *AFP*, 9 Dec. 2012.

**New** Crisis Group Africa Report N°195, [The Gulf of Guinea: The New Danger Zone](#), 12 Dec. 2012. Rising piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, which supplies around 40 per cent of Europe’s oil and 29 per cent of the U.S.’s, demands effective regional security cooperation and better economic governance to prevent the region becoming another Gulf of Aden.

## Asia

### Central Asia

➡ **Kazakhstan** Following Nov closures of opposition media, opposition website guljan.org suspended, independent TV channel StanTV and opposition TV channel K-Plus banned along with associated websites and print publications; ongoing lawsuits put further media outlets under threat. Rights activist who filed lawsuits on behalf of citizens claiming police abuse during Dec 2011 unrest in Janaozen jailed 7 Dec for 12 days for hooliganism, resisting arrest. Opposition activists gathered in several cities 16 Dec to mark anniversary of police killings of protesters. Activist Vadim Kuramshin jailed for 12 years 8 Dec for extorting bribe; rights groups condemned case as politically motivated. Vladislav Chelakh, border guard accused of killing 15 people in May on Kazakh-Chinese border, found guilty of murder, sentenced to life in prison 11 Dec.

- [“Growing crackdown on free speech”](#), Human Rights Watch, 14 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Kyrgyzstan** Brothers of Alisher Saipov, ethnic Uzbek journalist known for criticism of Uzbek regime who was killed in Osh 2007, reportedly beaten by group of ethnic Kyrgyz, among them nephew of MP Omurbek Tekebayev, in Bishkek 2 Dec; brothers alleged attack ethnically motivated. Widespread electricity blackouts including in capital as temperatures dropped. Head of mostly state-owned natural gas company Kyrgyzgaz 21 Dec announced entire company to be sold to Russian gas company Gazprom.

- [“Cold snap sparks energy emergency”](#), Eurasianet, 17 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Tajikistan** Country joined WTO 10 Dec. Tajik, Russian and Afghan police carried out joint drug raids 10 Dec in several Afghan villages. Tajik communications service 21 Dec instructed internet providers to block access to 131 websites, including major social network sites; decision reportedly annulled 26 Dec. Facebook not on list of sites, but inaccessible since late Nov.

- [“Russian, Tajik, and Afghan forces conduct joint drug raid”](#), RFE/RL, 10 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Turkmenistan** Commonwealth of Independent States leaders met in Ashgabat 5 Dec; agreed on joint anti-terrorism training efforts, cooperation in tackling drug trafficking, terrorism, separatism, organised crime.

- [“CIS council of heads of state adopts important documents at Ashgabat summit”](#), Turkmenistan.ru, 5 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Uzbekistan** Collective Security Treaty Organisation agreed to Uzbekistan's termination of its membership at 19 Dec summit in Moscow.

- [“CSTO accepts Uzbekistan's withdrawal”](#), RFE/RL, 19 Dec. 2012.

### North East Asia

➡ **China/Japan** China's State Oceanic Administration agency sent surveillance aircraft into airspace over Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, marking new stage in dispute over islands with air and sea patrols to challenge Japan's de facto control. Japan responded by sending 8 fighter jets, made formal diplomatic protest; Japanese defence minister said this was first intrusion of Japanese airspace by China since 1958. China 13 Dec submitted to UN detailed claim to its continental shelf, opposed by Japan. China's largest fishery patrol ship sent to patrol waters near islands. Shinzo Abe elected PM of Japan 26 Dec following Liberal Democratic Party landslide victory in Diet lower house elections 16 Dec; Abe seen as hawkish on territorial disputes, fuelling concern in region. U.S. Senate reaffirmed support to Japan over islands late Nov, sparking criticism from China.

- [“Ex-premier is chosen to govern Japan again”](#), *New York Times*, 26 Dec. 2012.

➡ **North Korea** DPRK 12 Dec successfully launched Kwangmyŏngsŏng-3 North Korea satellite into orbit, violating UNSC Resolutions 1718, 1874, which prohibit DPRK from launches using ballistic missile technology. Launch condemned by U.S., UNSC, Russia; China expressed regret, urged sides to refrain from actions that could worsen relations. Satellite reportedly malfunctioning. In ROK, Conservative Saenuri Party's Park Kŭn-hye won 19 Dec presidential elections; Park seeks to re-engage with DPRK. DPRK continued to purge officials, reshuffle senior military officers; mid-Dec demoted vice marshal Choi Ryong-hae. First anniversary of Kim Jong-il's death commemorated 16 Dec in mass rally in Pyongyang.

- Daniel Pinkston, [“Negotiating with North Korea in the Wake of the Kwangmyŏngsŏng-3 Satellite Launch”](#), Strong & Prosperous, 21 Dec. 2012.
- [“With successful launch, Kim and allies cement rule in North Korea”](#), Reuters, 14 Dec. 2012.

### South Asia

➡ **Afghanistan** UK PM Cameron 19 Dec announced UK withdrawing 3,800 troops by end of 2013; President Karzai welcomed move, said Afghan security forces ready to take over from NATO. 4 Afghan police shot, 3 wounded 19 Dec in suspected insider attack, Kandahar province. Nadia Sediqqi, acting head of women's affairs in Laghman province, shot dead 10 Dec. 1 killed, dozens injured 17 Dec in car bomb attack on U.S. military contractor compound in Kabul; 4 killed, 18 injured 13 Dec in Taliban car bomb attack on convoy outside U.S. army base, Kandahar; 4 Afghan soldiers killed, several injured 2 Dec in attack on U.S.-Afghan airbase; 3 killed 26 Dec in car bomb attack on U.S. base in Khost. Afghan security forces clashed with armed militants mid-month in Du-Aab district. U.S. army 19 Dec announced it will seek death penalty against soldier accused of March 2012 village massacre.

- [“Bomber strikes coalition convoy in Afghanistan”](#), *New York Times*, 13 Dec. 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°236, [Afghanistan: The Long, Hard Road to the 2014 Transition](#), 8 Oct. 2012.

➡ **Bangladesh** Jamaat e-Islami and Islami Chhatra supporters continued nationwide protests against trial of party leaders accused of committing war crimes during 1971 independence war. Amid fears govt might rig 2014 parliamentary elections, 18 opposition parties led by Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) held nationwide protests early Dec to demand reinstatement of caretaker govt dismissed in 2011; 4 reported killed, hundreds injured in clashes between police and protesters 9 Dec; further protests in Dakha 26 Dec. Ruling parties led by Awami League 22 Dec held nationwide demonstrations to protest Jamaat-e-Islami and BNP protests and violence. Clashes broke out 22 Dec between supporters of 2 defeated candidates of local election in Rangpur, 1 killed.

- "Clashes mark Bangladesh opposition protest", AP, 13 Dec. 2012.

➡ **India (non-Kashmir)** 8 Maoists killed, 9 arrested 14 Dec in security forces raid on Maoist training camp in Chhattisgarh. Security forces 4 Dec arrested 3 Maoists in Odisha, 6 Dec arrested top Maoist leader in Assam. Maoist leader 4 Dec reportedly killed in gunfight with police in South Gadchiroli. Villager allegedly shot dead by Maoists in Andhra Pradesh 1 Dec. At least 28 Maoists surrendered to police in Bihar, West Bengal during month. Unidentified militants 19 Dec attacked Central Reserve Police Force patrol in Manipur.

- "Eight Maoists killed, nine arrested in Kanker", Press Trust of India, 14 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Kashmir** Security forces killed several Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) militants in Baramulla, Kulgam and Pulwama districts during month; 13 Dec killed 3 unidentified militants in separate gunfights. Militant suspected of involvement in 2011 Delhi high court blast shot dead by police 20 Dec in Kishtwar district. Violent anti-India protests broke out 28 Dec in Pulwama district; police reportedly injured 7 protesters, imposed curfew. Pakistani troops allegedly fired at Indian outposts along Line of Control. Indian soldier killed 25 Dec in Poonch district by cross-border fire from Pakistan.

- "Indian soldiers kill 2 rebels in Kashmir", AP, 28 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Nepal** Following pressure from major parties, President Yadav 24 Dec extended for 6th time deadline for parties to agree on PM candidate to lead national unity govt, but still no consensus. Opposition Nepali Congress (NC) 5 Dec announced party President Sushil Koirala as PM candidate. PM Bhattarai called for opposition to join current govt before NC-led govt can be formed. Federal Democratic Republican Alliance led by ruling Maoist-Madhesi coalition 25 Dec proposed reinstating collapsed Constituent Assembly to promulgate new constitution or make legal and constitutional amendments necessary for elections. Election Commission 24 Dec claimed it needs at least 120 days for electoral preparations.

- "In Nepal, the quest for April elections", Hindu, 12 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Pakistan** 9 workers conducting UN-backed polio immunisation drive shot dead 17-19 Dec, prompting UN and govt to suspend vaccinations in Sindh and Khyber provinces. Car bomb targeting local politician 17 Dec killed at least 17, wounded dozens in Jamrud, Khyber tribal agency. Taliban attack on Peshawar airport 15-16 Dec left at least 15 dead, including 5 militants killed in attack and further 5 killed in police raid on nearby hideout. Taliban 27 Dec attacked 3 checkpoints near Peshawar, kidnapped and killed at least 21 security personnel. Pakistan Taliban leader 28 Dec said group willing to negotiate with govt, would not disarm. At least

6 killed, 12 injured 29 Dec in Karachi bus bombing; at least 19 killed 30 Dec in bomb attack on bus in Balochistan. Over 200,000 gathered at former PM Benazir Bhutto's mausoleum to mark 5-year anniversary of assassination; son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari gave keynote speech promising to defend Pakistani democracy. Media 19 Dec reported Pakistan building domestic drone fleet. At 20 Dec UNSC meeting, Pakistan reaffirmed support for Afghanistan-led peace process in Afghanistan, emphasised need for tangible steps by stakeholders.

- "21 Pakistan tribal policemen are found shot to death", AP, 29 Dec. 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°237, *Pakistan: No End To Humanitarian Crises*, 9 Oct. 2012.

➡ **Sri Lanka** Parliament Select Committee 8 Dec found Chief Justice Bandaranayake guilty of financial misconduct, abuse of power. Court of Appeal 21 Dec summoned parliament speaker, Select Committee members to appear in Jan to respond to Bandaranayake's suit to overturn ruling; court asked parliament to refrain from impeachment vote until final court judgment. Govt 28 Dec announced impeachment debate to be held 10-11 Jan 2013; Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa 29 Dec said foreign and local elements using judiciary in attempt to destabilise country and govt. Bar Association, religious leaders called on govt to abandon impeachment; Commonwealth Secretary-General, U.S., EU expressed concerns, called on govt to respect independence of judiciary. Lawyers protested two violent attacks on lawyers opposed to impeachment. 4 Tamil university students sent to govt "rehabilitation" centres for alleged support for LTTE following public commemoration of Tamil war dead; Jaffna University shut down in protest at arrests, military harassment.

- "Chief Justice wants verdict annulled", AP, 19 Dec. 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°239, *Sri Lanka: Tamil Politics and the Quest for a Political Solution*, 20 Nov. 2012.

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## South East Asia

➡ **Indonesia** Series of terrorism-linked arrests: police arrested 7 terror suspects in Central and East Java during month and foiled planned attacks, while in Central Sulawesi police 12 Dec arrested alleged terrorist following clash with militants in Poso, discovered terrorist camp linked to Santoso group, 28 Dec arrested another suspect in Donggala regency. Suspected terrorist group shot dead 4 police in 20 Dec Poso attack. Poso police defused 10kg homemade bomb 25 Dec. Violence marred local election in Bangkalan, E Java, where supporters of district chief candidate Imam Buchori Cholil 10 Dec vandalised election commission office and police station after court invalidated his candidacy; security forces arrested 11, sent 3,500 troops to ensure peaceful 12 Dec polls. In Papua, angry residents in Manokwari torched 2 police posts 5 Dec after police shot dead escaped prisoner Timotius Ap. Police 15 Dec shot KNPB leader Hubert Mabel, wanted for role in 27 Nov deadly attack on Pirime police station; another police post burnt in response.

- "Clash with terrorists kills 3 Indonesian policemen", AP, 20 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Myanmar** Govt mid-Dec suggested further round of peace talks with Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) early Jan. However, fighting in Kachin state in north continued; heavy clashes 9-10 Dec in Pangwa, Lajayang regions. Myanmar army 28 Dec launched heavy attacks on base near KIO headquarters reportedly using

attack helicopters and fighter jets, a potentially serious escalation. President Thein Sein 1 Dec appointed commission headed by Aung San Suu Kyi to investigate 29 Nov violent crackdown by security forces on protesters at Letpadaung copper mine in NW. Amid ongoing protests, govt 15 Dec apologised for injuring monks. Visiting UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos 7 Dec urged aid for Kachin IDPs in rebel-controlled areas, increased assistance for Rakhine IDP camps and better security for humanitarian workers in Rakhine State, where tensions still high. UN envoy Vijay Nambiar visited Rakhine State 16-20 Dec. UNGA 24 Dec expressed concern over Rakhine State violence, urged govt to improve situation of Rohingya Muslims. Following agreement with govt, ICRC 11 Dec announced it will resume detention visits to prisons, blocked since 2005. Following Jan 2012 ceasefire, Chin National Front armed group 9 Dec reached 27-point follow-up agreement with govt in Naypyitaw. Karen National Union (KNU) annual congress ended with election of Gen Mutu Say Poe as KNU chair, Kwe Htoo Win as general-secretary, Gen Saw Johnny as commander-in-chief of Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA); expected to take pragmatic approach to ongoing peace talks with govt. In speech to cabinet 26 Dec President announced “third phase of reform” aimed at tackling govt corruption.

- “Army steps up air offensive against Kachin rebels”, Democratic Voice of Burma, 28 Dec. 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°238, *Myanmar: Storm Clouds on the Horizon*, 12 Nov. 2012.

➡ **Philippines** Govt and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) 12-15 Dec held second round of talks since agreement signed in Oct; failed to agree on whether MILF would lead transition Bangsamoro govt prior to elections in 2016, delaying completion of supplementary annexes to peace pact. President Aquino 17 Dec signed executive order to create transition commission in charge of drafting legislation to create new Bangsamoro govt. Typhoon killed around 1,000 people in eastern Mindanao early Dec, hit stronghold of communist New People’s Army (NPA), which announced month-long ceasefire amid relief operations. Army reciprocated with holiday ceasefire 16 Dec-3 Jan. NPA 12 Dec attacked police station in Palawan, killing 1 police officer; 7 soldiers, 5 NPA guerrillas killed in 17 Dec clash in Isabela province. NPA leader Filemon Mendrez arrested 25 Dec in Central Visayas. In Mindanao bus bomb explosions 29 Dec injured at least 7. Police 13 Dec arrested alleged member of violent extremist Abu Sayyaf Group in Davao. Meeting between claimants of South China Sea scheduled for mid-Dec postponed amid speculation of pressure from China. Philippines and U.S. held bilateral strategic dialogue. China 27 Dec reportedly sent patrol vessel to disputed waters; Philippines issued statement to “strongly object”.

- “Talks between gov’t, MILF in Malaysia hit impasse”, *Philippines Star*, 18 Dec. 2012.

**New** Crisis Group Asia Report N°240, *The Philippines: Breakthrough in Mindanao*, 5 Dec. 2012. The next round of talks between the Philippines’ largest Muslim insurgent group and the government is a crucial step towards implementing a sweeping peace agreement signed in October.

➡ **Thailand** Violence in South intensifying with series of attacks on civilians: in Narathiwat teacher killed 3 Dec, another injured 4 Dec; teachers closed province schools in protest 6-7 Dec. 4 killed, 5 injured 11 Dec in drive-by shooting in Rangae district; many locals reportedly believe attack to be Buddhist retaliation for attacks on

teachers. In Cho Airong district suspected insurgents injured 6 paramilitary rangers 14 Dec, killed 2 civil servants 17 Dec. In Patani, teacher and school director shot dead 11 Dec in Mayo district; 2 killed 3 Dec in Khok Po, Sai Buri districts. Authorities closed all state-run schools in South 12-17 Dec. Unidentified sniper 19 Dec shot dead police in Yala. PM Yingluck visited region 13 Dec. Cabinet 11 Dec voted to resume process to amend 2007 constitution. Coalition parties 14 Dec agreed to hold referendum on charter reform early 2013. Department of Special Investigations early Dec charged former PM Abhisit and former deputy PM Suthep with authorising murder of taxi driver during 2010 red shirt protests; Abhisit and Suthep dismissed charge.

- “Teachers being targeted and murdered in Thailand”, *International Herald Tribune*, 16 Dec. 2012.

**New** Crisis Group Asia Report N°241, *Thailand: The Evolving Conflict in the South*, 11 Dec. 2012. After a decade of violence, the capabilities of Malay-Muslim insurgents in Thailand’s Deep South are outpacing the counter-measures of successive governments in Bangkok that have been mired in complacency and protracted national-level political disputes.

➡ **Timor Leste** Dili District Court 11 Dec sentenced 3 former members of Besi Merah Putih militia to 3-6 years jail for crimes against humanity committed in 1999 in Ulmera. UNMIT mandate ending 31 Dec.

- Cillian Nolan, “Trickery” and the rule of law in Timor-Leste”, *Resolving Conflict in South East Asia*, 11 Dec. 2012.
- “East Timor facing challenges as UN leaves”, *Australian Associated Press*, 28 Dec. 2012.

## Europe

### Balkans

➡ **Bosnia** Continued uncertainty over Mostar city govt and budget after Bosniak Party of Democratic Action (SDA) 28 Nov walked out of OHR-led negotiations among political parties. Republika Srpska VP Vlajki 12 Dec said entity “should declare independence”. Gunman who shot at U.S. embassy Oct 2011 jailed for 18 years.

- “Massive government administration and insufficient budgets plague BiH”, *SE Times*, 27 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Kosovo** PM Thaçi and Serbian PM Dačić met for 3rd time in Brussels 4 Dec, agreed to implement controversial Integrated Border Management agreement, under which border and trade officials from both sides to work in coordination. Implementation started 10 Dec at 2 crossing points. Belgrade rejected Pristina’s claims that it would shortly be appointing diplomats, reiterated officials would be “liaison officers”. Pristina-Belgrade dialogue scheduled to continue 17 Jan. Serbian govt officials 17 Dec circulated long-awaited govt platform for negotiations, treating Kosovo as autonomous province, calling for Autonomous Community of Serbian Municipalities in Kosovo; Thaçi dismissed plans. EU Council 12 Dec declined to give mandate for start of negotiations for Stabilisation and Association Agreement for Kosovo, called for progress on rule of law, public administration, minority protection, cooperation with EULEX and other areas. Public anger, protests

after Supreme Court panel of majority EULEX judges late Nov ruled retrial of Klecka case involving PDK party VP Fatmir Limaj and several other former KLA fighters, ordered detention of Limaj.

- [“Serbia to adopt Kosovo platform in New Year”](#), Balkan Insight, 27 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Macedonia** EU Council 11 Dec declined to open accession talks with Macedonia, after Greece again blocked start date for talks on grounds of bilateral name dispute, supported by Bulgaria. As thousands of pro- and anti-govt protestors clashed violently outside parliament over gov't's 2013 proposed budget and opposition attempts to block it, opposition ejected from parliament 24 Dec, began parliamentary boycott 25 Dec.

- [“Macedonia's budget debate is not over yet”](#), SE Times, 27 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Serbia** EU Council 11 Dec declined to open accession talks with Serbia; said talks might begin early 2013, if Belgrade makes progress in normalising relations with Kosovo.

- [“Confounding expectations”](#), *Economist*, 15 Dec. 2012.

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## Caucasus

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➡ **Armenia** Prosperous Armenia Party 12 Dec announced its leader, wealthy businessman Gagik Tsarukian, would not run in 18 Feb 2013 presidential election; former president Ter-Petrosian also said he will not run. President Sargsyan unlikely to face challenger in race.

- [“Is outcome of Armenia's presidential election now a foregone conclusion?”](#), RFE/RL, 17 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Azerbaijan** After almost a year of negotiations, Azerbaijan and Russia 9 Dec allowed agreement on Gabala radar station, last Russian base in country, to lapse; Russia to withdraw its almost 1,000-strong contingent within a year, expected to relocate radar and missile shield to N Caucasus. Govt 26 Dec pardoned 2 jailed journalists, 1 blogger, several rights and opposition activists. Police forcibly dispersed dozens of opposition activists attending unsanctioned rally in Baku 10 Dec. Court 3 Dec found 4 men guilty of terrorism, high treason, for plotting bomb attacks ahead of Eurovision Song Contest and links with Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

- [“OSCE media freedom representative welcomes release of journalists in Azerbaijan, calls for all journalists to be freed”](#), OSCE, 28 Dec. 2012.

➡ **North Caucasus (Russia)** In Kabardino-Balkaria republic (KBR), TV journalist Kazbek Gekkiyev shot dead in capital Nalchik 5 Dec. Govt minister injured in bomb attack near his house 6 Dec. State agricultural university principal and head of United Russia party in KBR parliament Boris Zherukov killed in his office 25 Dec. Authorities reported several militants killed in clashes with security forces in Tyrnyauz city 11-13 Dec, 1 police officer also killed; 1 militant reported killed in police operation in Elbrus district 14 Dec; 3 militants, including leader Amir Lampezh, killed in Baksan district 26 Dec. Deputy head of Spiritual board of Muslims of North Ossetia Ibragim Dudarov killed in Vladikavkaz 26 Dec. In Dagestan, senior police official killed at his home in capital Makhachkala 9 Dec. 3 militants reported killed in shoot-out with police in Makhachkala 13 Dec. 5 police injured in ambush by suspected militants 18 Dec. 7 suspected militants killed in Makhachkala 29 Dec.

- [“One family's story of death, terror in Daghestan”](#), RFE/RL, 10 Dec. 2012.
- For latest reports, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°220, [The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration \(I\)](#), [Ethnicity and Conflict](#), and N°221, [The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration \(II\)](#), [Islam, the Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency](#), 19 Oct. 2012.

➡ **Georgia** Detentions and questionings of former middle- and high-ranking officials continued: former PM Merabishvili taken for questioning 1 Dec for using fake passport travelling to Armenia; 2 former ministers, several others arrested and released on bail later in month in corruption investigation. NATO SG Fogh Rasmussen 5 Dec indicated he was content with reassurances from new gov't over arrests. Sharp spike in popularity ratings for Ivanishvili and Georgian Dream coalition since elections. Significant steps towards Georgia-Russia rapprochement, culminating in 14 Dec meeting in Geneva between Russian Deputy FM Grigory Karasin and Georgian PM's Special Representative for relations with Russia Zurab Abashidze. Abashidze said meeting envisaged creating new channel of communication and political dialogue; sides agreed to continue direct talks without assistance of international mediators. Talks to focus on trade and humanitarian areas of cooperation, Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia on back burner.

- [“Georgia, Russia tiptoe toward partial restoration of ties”](#), Reuters, 15 Dec. 2012.

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**New** Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°69, [Georgia: Making Cohabitation Work](#), 18 Dec. 2012. Whether the smooth transfer of power Georgia achieved after October's bitter election sets a standard for democracy in its region depends on whether the new government can strengthen the independence and accountability of state institutions in what remains a fragile, even potentially explosive political climate.

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➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Hopes that negotiations might be reinvigorated under auspices of OSCE Minsk group dashed at 6-7 Dec OSCE Ministerial Meeting, at which Armenia and Azerbaijan FMs said they were ready to “discuss new ideas” in 2013, but denied there had been any new initiatives. Azerbaijani FM Mammadyarov told EU officials 17 Dec that Armenians in N-K should become loyal citizens of Azerbaijan; Armenian FM Nalbandian told officials citizens should decide status in referendum. Exchanges of fire continue along LoC; Nagorno-Karabakh de facto officials proposed prohibiting shooting across LoC on “New Year's day, Christmas day and other holidays”. Regular OSCE monitoring of LoC again revealed no violations; local media continue to report daily violations by both sides. Tensions continue around opening of Stepanakert airport, rumoured to open 6 Jan.

- [“Armenia enraged over Nagorno-Karabakh at EU talks”](#), RFE/RL, 17 Dec. 2012.

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## Eastern Europe

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➡ **Ukraine** EU FMs 10 Dec said they aim to expand political, economic ties with Ukraine Nov 2013 provided country meets conditions.

- [“EU dangles carrot for wayward Ukraine leader”](#), EU Observer, 11 Dec. 2012.



## Western Europe/Mediterranean

➡ **Cyprus** No movement expected in reunification negotiations before Feb 2013 presidential elections in Republic of Cyprus. Main opposition Democratic Rally (DISY)'s president Nikos Anastasiades, warmer towards reunification under a looser federation than Turkish Cypriots also favour, maintains lead in poll with AKEL's Stavros Malas second and EDEK-backed hardliner Giorgos Lillikas third. 80 UNFICYP peacekeepers 30 Nov confronted Turkish soldiers in buffer zone over construction of fence by Turkish side; Turks later agreed to take it down.

- "Cyprob back in the limelight as elections draw near", Cyprus Mail, 28 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Northern Ireland** Widespread protests, some violent, following Belfast city council's 4 Dec decision to fly union flag only on designated days, rather than year-round.

- "Unionist leaders launch flag forum", Belfast Telegraph, 19 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Turkey** NATO 3 Dec approved Turkey's request for defensive Patriot missiles along its border with Syria; deployment expected early 2013. PKK-army fighting killed 4 militants 1 Dec in Elazig province; Turkish authorities said 26 PKK killed, 11 captured in one-month military operation in Osmaniye province in Dec. Stray Syrian shells continue to fall on Turkish border towns, no casualties in Dec; Turkish military more restrained in retaliating to incidents. 11 Dec EU General Affairs council's enlargement report mentioned "accession" with reference to Turkey first time in 5 years, stressed need for new constitution.

- "Turkey Patriot defenses to be ready next month", AP, 13 Dec. 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°222, *Turkey's Kurdish Impasse: The View from Diyarbakir*, 30 Nov. 2012.

## Latin America

➡ **Bolivia** Controversial consultation process on construction of highway through indigenous territory TIPNIS concluded 7 Dec with 53 of 69 communities approving it; ombudsman Rolando Villena criticised process as "lacking support from communities". President Morales 29 Dec signed decree nationalising 4 subsidiaries of Spanish-owned utility company Iberdrola.

- "Drogas: en 2012 la Felcn decomisó \$us 32 millones", *Los Tiempos*, 20 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Colombia** Some 1,300 delegates from 522 civil society organisations gathered in Bogotá 17-19 Dec to prepare input on rural development for FARC peace talks; negotiations set to resume mid-Jan. President Santos 2 Dec set deadline for talks to end in deal by Nov 2013. Alleged FARC attack 9 Dec left 1 dead, 3 injured in SW Cauca dept, but FARC armed activities reportedly dropped 70% since Nov ceasefire. Counter-insurgent operations ongoing; security forces 2-3 Dec killed at least 20 FARC rebels in Nariño dept near Ecuador, 4 Dec killed at least 7 alleged FARC rebels in Guanía dept near Venezuela and FARC guerrilla Franklin Pipas in central Meta dept 1 Dec; 20 Dec killed 2 alleged ELN leaders in western Chocó dept. FARC negotiation team member Sandra Ramírez in 2 Dec press interview claimed group still holding hostages, plans to exchange them for imprisoned guerrillas; denied

by Rodrigo Granda 3 Dec. Community leader and rights defender Miller Angulo killed in Tumaco, Nariño dept, after receiving death threats from New Illegal Armed Group "Águilas Negras". U.S. court 14 Dec sentenced retired police Gen Mauricio Santoyo, who served as former President Uribe's security chief, to 13 years jail for aiding paramilitaries and fine for drug trafficking. Rights groups slammed newly-approved military justice reform as "setback for human rights"; EU 29 Dec said expects govt will assuage concerns over impunity generated by reform. Gunmen 19 Dec killed respected indigenous leader Ismael Hurtado in Medellín.

- "Colombia's Farc peace talks resume in Cuba", BBC, 5 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Guatemala** Attorney General Claudia Paz y Paz 13 Dec published report highlighting successful prosecution of criminal organisations since taking office, including drug-trafficking networks and domestic gangs dedicated to extortion and kidnapping, said convictions overall are up, impunity rate reduced from 95% to 70%, claimed police dealt major blow to Zetas network by capturing chiefs in 5 depts. Following brutal killing of Federal Prosecutor Irma Yolanda Olivares and 6 others near Mexican border 23 Dec, Paz y Paz said cartels and other criminal outfits have infiltrated justice system.

- "Attorney General presents report on work of the MP", CICIG, 13 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Haiti** UN launched appeals to fight cholera epidemic that has killed almost 8,000 people and deal with aftermath of tropical storm Sandy. Bishop Pierre-André Dumas 20 Dec announced Religions for Peace would withdraw as mediator if executive and legislature fail to reach agreement by Christmas on electoral council to organise overdue polls; agreement reached 24 Dec.

- "L'ONU lance un appel à l'aide humanitaire", RFI, 19 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Mexico** Violent protests as President Peña Nieto took office 1 Dec; 65-70 people arrested, prompting protests calling for their release. Also 1 Dec major parties signed "Pact for Mexico", including proposals on security, justice, corruption and democratic governance; Peña Nieto 17 Dec unveiled 6-point anti-crime plan, including creation of new 10,000-member security force to be deployed in country's most violent regions. At least 24 people killed during 18 Dec attempted jailbreak in Gómez Palacio, Durango state. 9 bodies found 2 Dec in Coahuila state, 7 of them decapitated. 13 mutilated bodies found 7 Dec in Tamaulipas state; 4 people found dead same day in Saltillo, Coahuila state capital. Gunmen 24 Dec killed 7 police in separate drug-related attacks in Michoacán, Jalisco states. Several thousand Zapatista National Liberation Army supporters marched in Chiapas state 24 Dec to commemorate 1997 mass killing of indigenous Zapatista backers.

- "With a little help from my friends", *Economist*, 8 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Venezuela** National Assembly president Diosdado Cabello suggested delaying President Chávez's swearing-in ceremony scheduled for 10 Jan as Chávez facing "difficult" recovery after new cancer surgery in Cuba, 23 Dec said govt will not call fresh elections if Chávez unable to be sworn in. Chávez 8 Dec named VP Nicolás Maduro as potential heir. Ruling PSUV party won 20 governorships out of 23 in regional elections 16 Dec but former opposition presidential candidate Henrique Capriles re-elected as Merida state governor. Venezuelan Observatory of Violence 27 Dec reported over 21,000 people assassinated in 2012.

- "Nicolás Maduro: Hugo Chávez's incendiary heir", *Guardian*, 13 Dec. 2012.

## Middle East and North Africa

### Eastern Mediterranean

➡ **Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories** Several countries including EU states protested Israel's 30 Nov announcement of intention to increase settlements in occupied territories; UNGA resolution 18 Dec condemned settlement activity. Khaled Meshal, Hamas leader-in-exile, 6 Dec entered Gaza for first time for Hamas celebrations of anniversary of movement and first intifada. Thousands, including Fatah officials, 13 Dec participated in Hamas anniversary rally in Nablus, first such rally in WB since 2007; rallies also held in several WB cities. Raids, arrests, clashes in occupied territories continued: Israeli soldier 12 Dec shot dead Hebron teenager sparking clashes 12-13 Dec between residents and Israeli soldiers; Israeli soldiers 11 Dec raided offices of 3 civil society organisations in Ramallah; 2 Israelis 24 Nov assaulted Palestinian teenager in East Jerusalem. Several arrests of Palestinian fishermen in waters off Gaza by Israeli naval forces; Israel claimed men breached new 6-nautical-mile limit. Israel withheld PA tax revenues in reaction to Nov PA UN bid, said would use to offset PA debts; West Bank PA employee strikes over salary payments resumed. PA President Abbas 27 Dec threatened to disband PA if Israel doesn't make moves to renew peace talks following its 22 Jan elections.

- Robert Blecher and Ofer Zalberg, "A Changing Region: Israel's Islamist Dilemma", *World Politics Review*, 19 Dec. 2012.
- Robert Blecher, "Abbas' New York Minute - The Peace Process After the UN Vote", *Foreign Affairs*, 1 Dec. 2012.
- "Israel presses on with plans for 6,000 new settler homes", *Reuters*, 18 Dec. 2012.

**New** Crisis Group Middle East Reports N°134 and N°135, *Extreme Makeover? (I): Israel's Politics of Land and Faith in East Jerusalem*, and *Extreme Makeover? (II): The Withering of Arab Jerusalem*, 20 Dec. 2012.

The announcement of significant new Israeli settlement construction in East Jerusalem has put the spotlight on the city, but the changes it has undergone since 2000, when the parties first negotiated its fate, are far broader and have far deeper roots. Israelis, Palestinians and the international community must adjust their strategies accordingly, or Arab East Jerusalem will continue its perilous decline, with catastrophic consequences for all.

➡ **Lebanon** Boycott of govt by March 14 alliance, triggered by Oct assassination of Wissam Hassan, continued; dispute increasingly involving issue of new electoral legislation for 2013 parliamentary polls. March 14 alliance 28 Dec set incorporation of Hizbollah's arms into state as another pre-condition for attendance at scheduled 6 Jan National Dialogue. Syria 11 Dec issued arrest warrants for former Lebanon PM Saad Hariri and MP Oqab Saqr, accused of arming and funding Syrian opposition fighters; PM Mikati 15 Dec called warrants political and "legally void". New clashes between supporters of Syrian uprising in Bab al-Tabbaneh and supporters of Syrian president Assad in Jabal Mohsen neighbourhoods of Tripoli early Dec, 17 killed and over 70 injured; army deployed to restore security.

- "Mutual deterrence prevents Tripoli storm", *Daily Star*, 12 Dec. 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°132, *A Precarious Balancing Act: Lebanon and the Syrian Conflict*, 22 Nov. 2012.

➡ **Syria** Violence escalated with rising death tolls and displacement; intense fighting continued in Aleppo, reached new levels in Damascus, where fighting most intense in southern suburbs, particularly Palestinian-dominated Yarmouk where mid-Dec airstrikes and clashes left scores dead and caused mass exodus. Increased violence in Hama province as rebels launched new offensive, gained several towns; regime air strike, among most deadly to date, in Halfaya, Hama province killed dozens 24 Dec; nearly 400 reported killed 29 Dec, including approx 150 bodies found in Deir Baalba, Homs. Govt denied reports regime using Scud missiles. UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria 20 Dec said conflict escalating, becoming increasingly sectarian: video posted 12 Dec showed rebels destroying Shiite mosque in north; up to 200 Alawite civilians killed in Aqrab early Dec. UN 19 Dec increased refugee and IDP projections following significant increase in civilians fleeing Syria. Remainder of "Friends of Syria" group, including U.S., 12 Dec recognised National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, formed Nov, as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people at Morocco conference. U.S. 11 Dec officially designated rebel group Jabhat al-Nusra as terrorist organisation. UN/Arab League Envoy Brahimi met President Assad and opposition in Damascus late Dec, visited Moscow 29 Dec to discuss proposals for ending conflict, expressed strong support for "Geneva plan" based on formation of transitional govt; Assad 26 Dec sent senior diplomat to Moscow to discuss proposals. National Coalition leader Moaz al-Khatib 28 Dec rejected Russia's invitation for peace talks, demanded Russian apology for its support for Assad; said could meet in Arab country if clear agenda set. Major General Abdelaziz Jassim al-Shalal, head of Syria's military police, defected 25 Dec.

- "Syrian crisis triggers massive UN aid appeal", *Guardian*, 19 Dec. 2012.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°131, *Tentative Jihad: Syria's Fundamentalist Opposition*, 12 Oct. 2012.

### Gulf

➡ **Bahrain** Police 17 Dec violently dispersed rally commemorating 2 protesters killed in 1994; over 20 arrested including leading rights activist Sayed Yousif al-Muhafda. Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifah 7 Dec called for negotiations; opposition al-Wefaq welcomed appeal for dialogue, insisted outcome must be approved in referendum. Anti-govt activist Zainab al-Khawaja arrested 9 Dec for protesting abuses by security forces. 8 policemen charged 10 Dec with torturing detainees; jail sentence of rights activist Nabeel Rajab reduced next day from 3 to 2 years. Court of Appeals 26 Dec overturned death sentences, prison sentences of 2011 anti-govt protesters.

- "Bahrain king says he respects 'liberties' as clashes erupt", *Al Arabiya*, 17 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Iran** Govt 4 Dec announced capture of U.S. surveillance drone; U.S. rejected claim. Iranian National Security Committee member 12 Dec said Iranian experts now capable of manufacturing copies of advanced U.S. drone captured last year. U.S. and Iran stated willingness to re-engage in stalled P5+1 talks. U.S. 13, 21 Dec and EU 21 Dec announced new additions to sanctions list. Iran 25 Dec reported recent cyber attack, accused Israel and U.S. of planting malware.

- "U.S. acts with Europe to strengthen Iran penalties", *New York Times*, 21 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Iraq** Finance Minister Rafie al-Issawi, member of Sunni-backed Iraqiya, 20 Dec said bodyguards, staff snatched illegally, blamed Shiite PM al-Maliki; thousands protested in Anbar province next day demanding Maliki's resignation. Protests continued following days, tens of thousands late Dec blocked main trade route to Syria, Jordan, demanded fall of regime. Security forces 20 Dec raided house, office of Finance Minister. Ongoing tensions between central Baghdad govt and autonomous Kurdish region: troops in Kurdistan 17 Dec fired on army helicopter north of Kirkuk, reportedly to prevent surveillance of military positions; Kurdistan regional govt president Barzani 10 Dec vowed to protect Kurdish interests during visit to Kirkuk. Plane bringing Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yıldız to energy conference in Kurdistan denied permission to land by Baghdad govt 4 Dec. Setback in prospects for mediation between Baghdad and Kurds as President Talabani suffered stroke 17 Dec, transferred to Germany for treatment. Several killed by car bombs, roadside bombs targeting Shia places of worship in Kirkuk 16 Dec; car bomb near Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) office north of Baghdad killed 2 security recruits. Gunmen opened fire in several northern towns, villages 17 Dec, killing over 20. UNSG Ban arrived in Baghdad 6 Dec for talks with Iraqi leaders.

- ["Iraqi president's stroke fuels fears of crisis"](#), Reuters, 19 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Jordan** King Abdullah II 6 Dec visited West Bank city Ramallah to congratulate President Abbas and Palestinian people on new UN status. King 11 Dec ordered release of over 100 protesters detained during Nov fuel protests.

- ["Visit to West Bank by King gives Palestinians a lift"](#), *New York Times*, 6 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Kuwait** Controversial 1 Dec parliamentary election saw lowest ever turnout in Kuwait's electoral history at 40%. Opposition hailed boycott a success, described election and new parliament dominated by pro-govt MPs as "unconstitutional"; staged near-daily protests in following weeks, some drawing tens of thousands, demanding newly elected parliament and disputed electoral law be abolished. Large demonstration and sit-in 15-16 Dec protesting inauguration of new MPs and ministers.

- ["Kuwaiti demonstrators denounce elections"](#), *Gulf News*, 8 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Saudi Arabia** Activists accused police of firing "indiscriminately" on protesters demonstrating against detentions in oil-rich Shiite dominated Qatif district 27 Dec; 1 teenager shot dead, 6 injured; authorities confirmed incident but said security patrol had come under fire first. Saudi novelist Turki al-Hamad taken into custody 24 Dec by order of interior ministry for tweets criticising Islamists. Raif Badawi charged with apostasy 17 Dec for insulting Islam through his "Free Saudi Liberals" website. Saudi Arabia 24 Dec called for "strong and solid Gulf Union with shared defense and security systems" at Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit, leading to decision on unified command for all GCC military forces. Govt 20 Dec invited Pakistan foreign minister to Riyadh to discuss bilateral relations and, reportedly, to persuade Islamabad to cancel gas pipeline project with Iran.

- ["Protester shot dead in Saudi Arabia's eastern province"](#), Reuters, 28 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Yemen** President Hadi 19 Dec restructured armed forces, abolishing Republican Guard and First Armoured Division, as part of effort to unify military. Assassinations of military-security

personnel continued: 2 high-ranking officers killed in Sanaa 25 Dec; intelligence officer Shaker al-Bani killed 17 Dec; deputy head of political security office Ahmed Barmadah killed 11 Dec; chief-of-staff for central military region in Maarib province killed 8 Dec. 2 Finnish, 1 Austrian tourist kidnapped 21 Dec in capital's central square. Military court 15 Dec sentenced 93 Republican Guards to prison terms up to 7 years for Aug attack on military complex. Army 2 Dec launched major assault on tribesmen suspected of repeatedly blowing up main oil export pipeline, attacking power lines; 8 Dec ambush on army patrol at pipeline killed 17 army officers, soldiers; military 10 Dec retaliated with aerial attack on al-Qaeda insurgents suspected of carrying out ambush, at least 4 killed. Military 25 Dec launched new offensive against Marib tribes killing 10 and injuring dozens. At least 5 suspected al-Qaeda militants killed 24 Dec in 2 drone strikes in south; 2 suspected al-Qaeda militants killed 28 Dec in Hadramut province; at least 3 al-Qaeda-linked militants killed 29 Dec in al-Bayda province. Former South Yemen interior minister Mohammed Ali Ahmed 19 Dec said several southern groups had accepted offer of 50% of seats at proposed national reconciliation talks.

- ["Yemeni president curbs rival's power in army overhaul"](#), Reuters, 19 Dec. 2012.

## North Africa

➡ **Algeria** Security forces 19 Dec arrested al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) senior member Salah Gasmali alias 'Abou Salah'. AQIM "supreme emir" Abdelmalek Droukdel 3 Dec posted video warning France, African heads of state against military intervention in northern Mali; media early-month reported Droukdel "rupture" with head of Moulathamine brigade Mokhtar Belmokhtar and creation of new group known as "blood signatories". French President Hollande 19 Dec met President Bouteflika in Algiers, recognised colonial-era abuses, signed 4-year strategic partnership agreement covering defence, agriculture, education, finance, industry and civil protection.

- ["Hollande en Algérie : la vérité sur le passé, pour mieux préparer l'avenir"](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 19 Dec. 2012.

➡ **Egypt** President Morsi 25 Dec signed into law contentious constitution giving Islamist-dominated upper house of parliament full legislative powers until vote for new lower house is held in 2 months. Despite opposition "no" campaign, constitution passed by 63.8% in 2-stage constitutional referendum; turnout rate 32.9%. Opposition groups claimed violations in both rounds; leaders 23 Dec called new constitution "illegitimate", said would use "all peaceful, democratic means" to challenge it. Run-up to referendum saw daily pro- and anti-constitution rallies, some drawing tens of thousands. After series of violent attacks against Muslim Brotherhood offices and figures, clashes between thousands of Morsi supporters and hundreds of opponents 5-6 Dec marked worst violence between political factions since fall of Mubarak, with several killed, hundreds injured; 3 senior presidential advisers resigned, blamed Morsi for violence; in 6 Dec speech Morsi blamed Mubarak cronies, conspiracy of foreign agents, political opposition. Morsi 8 Dec revoked controversial Nov decree awarding him sweeping powers until constitutional referendum, but dispute with judiciary continued: many judges refused to oversee referendum despite legal requirement for judicial oversight.

- ["Egypt opposition gears up after constitution passes"](#), *New York Times*, 23 Dec. 2012.

➤ **Libya** General National Congress (GNC) 16 Dec announced southern provinces under state of emergency and ordered temporary closure of land borders with Chad, Niger, Sudan, Algeria. Ashour Shuail appointed Interior Minister after court 4 Dec cleared him of ties to Qadhafi regime; Mohamed Bargati appointed Defence Minister. 4 killed 16 Dec in one of several attacks on Benghazi police compounds and stations, 4 more killed in 20 Dec attack. 3 killed 15 Dec when security forces clashed with armed men in Bani Walid. Military tribunal 19 Dec suspended inquiry into death of rebel general Abdel Fattah Younes following protests in Tripoli over tribunal's questioning of former National Transitional Council leader Jalil.

- ["Libya flexes muscle to seal off problematic south"](#), Reuters, 18 Dec. 2012.

➤ **Morocco** Strikes, sit-ins, protests continued. 20 Feb movement activist arrested 10 Dec over impersonation of King, 8 others sentenced 18 Dec to 3-6 months jail. Long-time spiritual leader of semi-legal al-Adl wal Ihsane Islamist opposition movement, Cheikh Abdesslam Yassine, died 13 Dec; new secretary general Mohamed Abbadi 24 Dec reiterated organisation's desire for justice, meaningful political reform. Interior Ministry 4 Dec said al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and allies have intensified activities aimed at undermining stability in country; security forces 25 Dec arrested 6 alleged AQIM members in Fès.

- ["Les orphelins du cheikh Yassine"](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 18 Dec. 2012.

➤ **Tunisia** Security forces in Siliana 1 Dec violently dispersed thousands protesting worsening socio-economic conditions; hundreds injured. Protesters 17 Dec hurled rocks at President Marzouki and parliamentary speaker Mustapha Ben Jaafar during revolution anniversary celebrations. Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) 2 Dec suspended protests in Siliana after agreeing deal with govt; announced resumed protests 6 Dec following attack on Tunis office by Islamists; planned nationwide strike cancelled 12 Dec due to security concerns. Policeman killed 10 Dec during clashes with

suspected Islamist fighters near border with Algeria. Interior Ministry 15 Dec announced break-up of al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb jihadi recruitment network. Sakhr El Materi, son-in-law of former president Ben Ali, arrested 14 Dec for embezzlement of state funds.

- ["Tunisians frustrated over lack of change"](#), Al Jazeera, 4 Dec. 2012.

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