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March 2014 Trends



Deteriorated Situations

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Libya (p.12)
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Yemen (p.11)



Improved Situations

Philippines (p.7)



Unchanged Situations

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April 2014 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alerts

Libya (p.12)
Myanmar (p.6)
Yemen (p.11)



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.

CrisisWatch is compiled by Crisis Group's Brussels Research Unit, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of our some 140 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 60 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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Africa

Central Africa

Burundi Tensions over 2015 election preparations continued: parliament 23 March rejected constitutional review; contradictory statements by ministers, media about candidacy of President Nkurunziza. Police 8 March clashed with thousands of opposition Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (MSD) supporters protesting govt restrictions on political freedom; over a dozen protesters and 2 police injured. Govt 14 March suspended MSD for 4 months; public prosecutor issued arrest warrant for MSD leader; 69 demonstrators arrested. Court 21 March sentenced 21 protesters to life, 26 to prison terms. Former VP Frédéric Bamvuginyumvira, arrested Dec 2013, provisionally released 20 March. Dissident wing of FNL led by former commander Aloys Nzabampema attacked military bases close to capital early, mid-March; at least 2 killed.

- [“Rejecting term limits, Burundi president seeks re-election”](#), AFP, 25 March 2014.

Cameroon Army 2 March clashed with Nigerian Islamist Boko Haram (BH) members in far north following deadly BH attack on Mafa town: 6 militants, 1 soldier killed. BH suspected of recruiting members in Kousseri. Authorities 27 March arrested 3 suspected arms dealers reportedly linked to BH, seized cache including rocket launchers. President Biya 5 March instructed army chief to reorganise border security; govt 20 March announced deployment of 700 troops to NE border, part of regional force established by Lake Chad Basin Commission to tackle armed groups. Over 500 prisoners released following Biya's Feb amnesty, including former minister Seidou Monchipou.

- [“Cameroon offers 700 soldiers to Lake Chad regional force”](#), Reuters, 20 March 2014.

Central African Republic Security continued to deteriorate: anti-balaka forces 24 March killed MISCAs peacekeeper in Boali, injured 3 peacekeepers in Bangui. Chadian MISCAs peacekeepers 30 March reportedly opened fire on large crowd in Christian neighbourhood in Bangui, killed over 24, injured over 100; MISCAs said peacekeepers acting in self-defence. Communities in north being threatened by resurgence of former armed group Front Populaire pour le Redressement (FPR) and emergence of new group Révolution Justice (RJ). FPR 3 March killed 6 civilians near Paoua; 12 March allegedly attacked and burnt Koki village, 80km from Bossangoa. UNSG Ban 31 March expressed concern over upsurge in violence, said perpetrators will be held accountable. ICRC 28 March reported at least 11 killed in grenade attack on funeral in predominantly Christian neighbourhood of Bangui. Muslims remaining in Bangui continued to be targeted including at least 9 killed in clashes with anti-balaka 24-25 March. Govt 19 March announced intention to identify, disarm and demobilise anti-balaka. Increasing Muslim resentment against French Operation Sangaris, accused of siding with anti-balaka. UNSG Ban 3 March proposed peacekeeping force of nearly 12,000; next UNSC resolution on CAR under discussion. EU 29 March announced military mission, delayed by struggle to secure troop numbers, preparing to deploy; French President Hollande 24 March urged EU countries to immediately deploy pledged troops.

- [“Ban Ki-moon souhaite déployer près de 12 000 casques bleus”](#), *Le Monde*, 3 March 2014.

DR Congo FARDC/MONUSCO operations in N Kivu continued: eastern town Lukweti recaptured 15 March from APCLS rebels after 6 years; soldiers 1 March struck ADF-NALU base near Beni, throughout month engaged in minor clashes with FDLR in Virunga national park. ADF-NALU sporadically retaliated: grenade attack on MONUSCO vehicle 3 March injured 5. UN 28 March extended MONUSCO and Intervention Brigade mandate to 31 March 2015.

- [“With attack helicopters deployed, UN envoy urges rebels to lay down arms”](#), *AllAfrica*, 3 March 2014.

Rwanda Diplomatic tensions with South Africa intensified: Johannesburg residence of Rwandan dissident and former Army Chief of Staff General Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa attacked by armed men 3 March; S Africa 7 March expelled 3 Rwandan, 1 Burundian diplomats, accused them of complicity in murder attempt; Rwanda expelled 6 S African diplomats, accused S Africa of harbouring terrorists.

- [“S Africa-Rwanda diplomatic tensions intensify”](#), *Al Jazeera*, 8 March 2014.

New Crisis Group Africa Report N°215, *The Security Challenges of Pastoralism in Central Africa*, 1 April 2014. Sensible, inclusive regulation of pastoralism that has mitigated tension in parts of the Sahel should be extended to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR), where conflicts have worsened with the southward expansion of pastoralism.

Horn of Africa

Ethiopia Tensions with Egypt over Ethiopia's Renaissance Dam project continued: Ethiopia early March said dam 32% complete, Deputy PM Demeke Mekonnen said Egypt and other downstream countries would benefit from dam construction. HRW 25 March reported govt using foreign-supplied technologies to spy on dissidents.

- [“Troubled waters”](#), *Foreign Policy*, 6 March 2014.

Kenya Intercommunal clashes increased: at least 5 killed, hundreds displaced 7 March by clashes between Kalenjin and Luo along Kericho-Kisumu county border; Borana and Somali herders clashed in series of retaliatory attacks over watering points in Isiolo county. 6 Killed 31 March in suspected grenade attacks in Nairobi's Eastleigh suburb. Govt 25 March ordered urban-based Somali refugees to move into designated refugee camps citing “emergency security challenges” following several attacks by Al-Shabaab militants. Security services 17 March intercepted vehicle carrying 2 bombs allegedly heading for govt installation in Mombasa; 2 arrested. Suspected Al-Shabaab gunmen 14 March attacked police camp in Mandera near border; 1 police killed; gunmen 13 March opened fire on police reservist near Mandera roadblock, 1 civilian killed. Gunmen 23 March stormed church in Mombasa, killed 6; 2 suspects in attack killed by police in gunfight 28 March. ICC 31 March delayed trial of President Kenyatta to 7 Oct.

- [“Kenya orders all refugees back into camps”](#), *Al Jazeera*, 26 March 2014.

Somalia AMISOM and Somali Federal Govt (SFG) forces' offensive against Al-Shabaab continued; 9 strongholds seized 13-26 March in Bay, Bakool, Gedo, Hiiraan, Galgadud, Lower and Middle Shabelle regions; 20 soldiers killed 18 March in suicide bomb attack

in Buuloburto town, Hiiran region. Al-Shabaab leader Ahmed Godane in 9 March video message urged Somalis to wage jihad against foreign troops. Al-Shabaab 28 March executed 3 alleged SFG spies in Barawe town, Lower Shabelle. Puntland President Gas 5 March called for AMISOM assistance to secure southern borders from fleeing Al-Shabaab forces; Al-Shabaab attack 17 March killed senior Puntland defence forces commander in Galgala, near Bossaso. Tensions over formation of new federal state in central Somalia continued: 6-region conference selected president 3 March; 3-region conference held in Baidoa 27 March; another 2-region conference in Afgoye, Lower Shabelle, selected president of “Shabelle State” 10 March. SFG, UN, AU recognised 3-region “South West State” encompassing Lower Shabelle, Bay, Bakool as only legitimate process. Unidentified gunmen executed 8 members of Shabelle State delegation 23 March near Burhakaba, Bay region. UN SRSG Nicholas Kay 11 March briefed UNSC on deteriorating security.

- “AMISON expands operations against al-shabab in Somalia”, VOA, 13 March 2014.

➡ **Somaliland** President Silanyo 16 March visited Lasqoray town in disputed Sanaag region for first time since 1991 following visits to disputed Somaliland-Puntland areas by Puntland ministers; Puntland information minister said move “aggressive and provoking”. Govt began deployment of new forces in disputed Baran area, Sanaag 23 March. Puntland President Gas 24 March accused Somaliland of supporting Al-Shabaab in Galgala hideouts; UN SRSG Nicholas Kay called for “maximum caution and avoidance of confrontation”.

- “Puntland leader accuses Somaliland of financing Al Shabaab”, Garowe Online, 24 March 2014.

➡ **South Sudan** Armed conflict between govt and SPLM/A-in-Opposition continued despite Jan ceasefire agreement, including fierce clashes over Malakal late month. Second round of talks between govt and SPLM/A-in-Opposition led by former VP Riek Machar ended with no breakthrough: govt continued to demand return of 7 released detainees to Juba for trial; opposition continue to demand withdrawal of Ugandan and others foreign forces. Third round of talks opened 26 March with both govt and opposition threatening boycotts; parties unable to agree on Declaration of Principles; IGAD 31 March requested suspension of talks for 1 month. IGAD 13 March approved Protection and Deterrent Force (PDF), though mandate and composition still unclear, may include Uganda. Security officials in Lakes State 6 March intercepted 11 UN trucks transporting UNMISS firearms and uniforms; govt accused UNMISS of plotting to arm opposition; VP James Wani Igga 10 March led protest against UNMISS in Juba, called for resignation of UN SRSG and UNMISS head Hilde Johnson. EU and 10 states 28 March issued statement reiterating support for UNMISS, condemning obstruction by govt and opposition forces. UNOCHA 29 March reported over 1 million displaced by conflict so far.

- “South Sudan’s rebel leader Machar vows to target key oil fields”, Bloomberg, 30 March 2014.

➡ **Sudan** President Bashir 14 March met with Islamist opposition Popular Congress Party (PCP) leader Hassan al-Turabi, agreed to accelerate preparations for national dialogue; National Umma Party (NUP) leader Sadiq al-Mahdi also accepted dialogue. Ruling National Congress Party (NCP) 30 March announced 58 parties agreed to dialogue. National Consensus Forces (NCF) coalition,

of which PCP and NUP both part, 15 March issued “Shambat Declaration” rejecting dialogue unless, among other demands, political detainees released, wars in peripheries ended, laws restricting freedoms lifted. AUHIP-mediated talks with SPLM-N remained stalled. Renewed violence in Darfur; UN estimates some 100,000 civilians displaced since early 2014, 26 March said Khartoum had suspended refugee aid program in E Sudan. Following 7 March meeting with head of AU Commission, Darfur rebel groups claimed to have secured AU support for national dialogue to resolve armed conflicts; AU has not confirmed. Economic restrictions imposed 28 Feb by Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain began to take effect.

- “Alarm raised over violence in Sudan’s Darfur”, Al Jazeera, 28 March 2014.

➡ **Uganda** U.S. late March increased military help in hunt for LRA leader Joseph Kony; sent U.S. military aircraft and additional Special Forces.

- “More U.S. troops to aid Uganda search for Kony”, *New York Times*, 23 March 2014.

Southern Africa

➡ **Madagascar** Still no new PM, govt; President Rajaonarimampianina early-month rejected proposed candidates Haja Resampa and Rolland Jules Etienne. IMF restored relations, suspended following 2009 coup.

- “Deux mois sans Premier ministre”, RFI, 25 March 2014.

➡ **Mozambique** Govt 24 March rejected RENAMO demand that EU and UN observers monitor cessation of hostilities, clarified only SADC observers would be allowed. RENAMO 3 March killed 4, injured 5 soldiers in Gorongosa national park; 17 March killed army commander in Dimba, near Cheringoma. Authorities 28 March released RENAMO head of information, detained since June.

- “No observers from outside Africa, says government”, AIM, 25 March 2014.

➡ **Zimbabwe** Govt received \$53m development aid from mainly European countries following EU’s suspension of sanctions in Feb. IMF announced it will re-open office in Harare, closed since 2004. In ongoing battle between ZANU-PF factions, Masvingo Provincial Executive Committee members aligned with justice minister Emmerson Mnangagwa 14 March demanded rerun of Oct ZANU-PF provincial executive committee polls; power struggles intensified in Midland province. Increasing divisions in MDC-T: National Council meeting 7 March suspended deputy treasurer-general Elton Mangoma for provoking division; other senior leaders called for Morgan Tsvangirai to step down as leader. Party confirmed preparations for early elective congress in 2015 to address leadership dispute. President Mugabe 28 March announced boycott of 2-3 April EU-Africa summit because of visa ban on wife.

- “MDC-T prepares for early congress”, *Standard*, 16 March 2014.

West Africa

➡ **Côte d'Ivoire** Thousands in Abidjan 2 March welcomed President Ouattara's return from month-long medical stay in Paris; absence had stoked fears of return to political upheaval. Ouattara 12 March dismissed higher education minister after violent clashes between students and campus police at Cocody University; at least 20 injured. Govt 20 March announced it will transfer Charles Blé Goudé, close ally of former President Gbagbo, to ICC to face crimes against humanity charges.

- "Charles Blé Goudé rejoint Laurent Gbagbo à la CPI", *Jeune Afrique*, 22 March 2014.

➡ **Guinea** Electoral commission (CENI) 1 March confirmed local elections delayed due to lack of preparation, budget; CENI continued preparations but opposition expressed concern about lack of dialogue and non-implementation of July 2013 political agreement, threatened to resume peaceful demonstrations unless 1st session of newly elected assembly on 5 April is used to discuss issues. Supreme Council of Judiciary, oversight body, established 10 March following 19 Feb visit by ICC delegation investigating Sept 2009 massacre. Riots broke out in Conakry 11 March after gendarme killed civilian. Govt raised death toll from "unprecedented" Ebola epidemic to 78; Senegal sealed border amid fears of regional pandemic.

- "Massacre du 28 septembre, l'enquête se poursuit", *Jeune Afrique*, 10 March 2014.

➡ **Guinea-Bissau** Interim President Nhamadjo 3 March announced he would abide by transition agreements and not run for president. PAIGC finally chose former minister José Mario Vaz as presidential candidate, barring ousted PM Gomes Júnior from running; decision received negatively by pro-transition forces. Attorney General Abdou Mané called on Supreme Court to bar Vaz from race over ongoing investigation for embezzlement; Supreme Court rejected call, 15 March released list of vetted candidates approving 13 of 21 presidential hopefuls, including Vaz; 15 out of 22 parties authorised to run for legislative elections. Reports of violent attack on PRS politician 20 March and threats against magistrates; ECOWAS 30 March insisted people trying to derail electoral process would face harsh consequences.

- "Tudo a postos para realização de eleições na Guiné-Bissau", *DW*, 12 March 2014.

➡ **Liberia** In report to UNSC, UNSG Ban 26 March said follow-through on corruption cases still weak. Executive Protection Service director 4 March said Nigerian Islamist sect Boko Haram using Liberia as "hideout", called on National Assembly to reinforce security.

- "Weak follow-through on corruption in Liberia, UN Secretary", *Front Page Africa*, 26 March 2014.

➡ **Mali** Increasing fears peace talks may be compromised as several armed groups, including MNLA and wing of Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA), 13-14 March and 20-21 March refused to attend workshops co-organised by MINUSMA and national reconciliation ministry, denouncing gov't's unwillingness to comply with provisions of June 2013 Ouagadougou agreement (including release of prisoners and freedom of movement for armed groups). Former MNLA leader Ibrahim ag Mohamed Assaleh 9 March

announced creation of new dissident movement Coordination of People of Azawad, deepening leadership and legitimacy crisis affecting Tuareg and Arab armed groups. Security situation in north continued to deteriorate: Mourabitoune jihadi group affiliated to Mokhtar Belmokhtar 2 March claimed responsibility for attacks on Timbuktu and Gao; group of unidentified armed men 4 March shot at local MNLA commander; rockets fired at Gao 7 March; military vehicle near Ansongo hit landmine 9 March; 4 Chadian peacekeepers wounded when MINUSMA vehicle hit landmine between Aguelhok and Tessalit 16 March. French army 5 March announced 10 jihadis killed early month in north, including former MUJAO leader Omar Ould Hamaha; 20 March said at least 40 killed in recent operations. Investigators 2 March discovered body of Colonel Youssouf Traoré, former member of junta, possibly killed late Sept 2013 after clash with former junta leader General Sanogo. National Assembly 27 March voted to create High Court of justice to try cases of high treason for heads of state and ministers; court expected to indict former President Touré.

- "Le Drian annonce la mort d'une quarantaine de jihadistes au Mali", *Jeune Afrique*, 20 March 2014.

➡ **Niger** Agadez police 7 March released NGO umbrella group Committee for Renewal and Innovation (CRI) coordinator and SG, arrested with 8 others following 21 Feb demonstration against permanent ban on public protests. Agadez mayor again banned planned CRI demonstration 5 March. U.S. sponsored military exercises "Flintlock 2014" in N and E, for capacity-building in fight against terrorism, drug trafficking. Refugee influx from N Nigeria continued; UNHCR said 40,000 concentrated in Diffa region, expressed concern about possible infiltrations by Boko Haram militants.

- "Niger fears contagion from Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists", *Reuters*, 19 March 2014.

➡ **Nigeria** Violence continued in NE: some 200 civilians killed in Boko Haram (BH) attacks including 91 in Maiduguri and Mainok, Borno State, 1 March; 29 killed 2 March in Mafa, Borno State. Military reported significant gains against BH including over 200 killed, 700 vehicles captured 11 March near Lake Chad, Borno State. Several hundred, mostly escaping prison inmates, killed 14 March by military reportedly after BH freed prisoners during attack on Giwa barracks in Maiduguri, Borno State; 21 killed in Abuja 30 March as security forces reportedly foiled attempted jailbreak by BH detainees. BH leader Shekau 24 March issued new video claiming to have freed 2,000 BH members, vowed to attack vigilante groups, universities, moderate Muslim clerics. Communal violence escalated in Plateau, Katsina, Kaduna, Nassarawa and Benue states: some 110 killed 10-13 March in raids on villages in Katsina State by suspected Fulani tribesmen; approx 200 killed 14-15 March in raids on 3 villages in Kaduna state. Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) claimed responsibility for attacks 1, 20 and 27 March on oil and gas pipelines in Bayelsa and Delta states.

- "Herders kill 100+ in Nigerian conflict over land", *AP*, 13 March 2014.

➡ **Senegal** President Sall 17-19 March visited Casamance separatist region, reiterated unspecified peace offer, announced €35mn development plan. Following meeting with U.S. envoy, moderate separatist leader César Badiate 25 March called for real negotiations, suggested U.S. host.

- "Le MFDC veut négocier l'avenir de la Casamance aux Etats-Unis", *RFI*, 28 March 2014.

Asia

North East Asia

➡ **China (internal)** 29 people killed, over 130 injured in mass stabbing attack at Kunming Railway station in Yunnan province, SW 1 March; authorities blamed separatists from Xinjiang region, which is now reportedly considering drafting anti-terror laws for first time.

- [“Kunming rail station attack: China horrified as mass stabbings leave dozens dead”](#), *Guardian*, 2 March 2014.

➡ **China/Japan** Japan’s ruling coalition 25 March agreed to ease self-imposed arms export ban, would allow Tokyo to export weapons to nations along important sea lines; Beijing criticised what it called “major shift from Japan’s policy of pacifism”. China welcomed Japan’s move to hand over nuclear materials for potential use in bombs to U.S. as agreed during nuclear security summit 25 March. Japanese PM Abe 14 March promised to honour WWII apologies expressed in 1993 Kono and 1995 Murayama statements. Japan 23 March scrambled military jet in response to Chinese aircraft flying near disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.

- [“Japan’s ruling bloc approves new rules on arms exports”](#), *Japan Times*, 25 March 2014.

➡ **Korean Peninsula** Exchange of fire across disputed western sea border between ROK and DPRK 31 March after latter fired 500 artillery shells near Northern Limit Line (NLL) with 100 rounds falling south of NLL. ROK returned 300 rounds into disputed waters. Earlier in month DPRK launched rockets and missiles into Sea of Japan, including 9 short-range missiles 3-4 March, 46 rockets 22-23 March, 2 medium-range Nodong missiles 26 March. Nodong launches, first since 2009, occurred hours after trilateral U.S.-Japan-ROK summit. UNSC condemned launches, ROK urged DPRK to refrain from provocative actions. DPRK 30 March threatened to carry out “new form of nuclear test”. DPRK leader Kim Jong-un 9 March won first Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA) elections under his rule with 100% of vote. Chinese FM Wang Yi 8 March called for resumption of six-party talks, declared “red line” on DPRK saying war or chaos on peninsula is unacceptable. Chinese nuclear envoy 17 March visited DPRK, first visit by Chinese official since Dec purge of Chang Song-taek. U.S. President Obama and Chinese President Xi 25 March disagreed over when to resume six-party talks. Japan, DPRK resumed high-level talks over normalisation of relations, abductions of Japanese citizens 30-31 March. UN DPRK sanctions committee 11 March reported DPRK circumventing sanctions.

- Daniel Pinkston, [“Live Performance: North Korea’s Missile Exercises”](#), *Strong and Prosperous*, 4 March 2014.
- [“N. Korea fires on South during North’s military drills; South responds”](#), *CNN*, 31 March 2014.

South Asia

➡ **Afghanistan** Insurgent attacks continued ahead of 5 April presidential polls: Taliban 10 March threatened to “use all force” to disrupt polls, warned Afghans not to vote; official 12 March reported 3 campaign workers shot dead; Taliban 20 March attacked Serena hotel in Kabul, killed 9 including 1 international election observer; 2 foreign election observation missions pulled out staff. Taliban attack killed 11 police in Jalalabad 20 March. Taliban 25 March attacked Independent Election Commission (IEC) office in Kabul, killing 5, and IEC HQ 29 March; security forces killed at least 4 attackers. President Karzai announced support for former FM Zalmay Rassoul in elections after brother Qayum Karzai withdrew 6 March. Former Defence Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak also pulled out 16 March. Karzai 12 March reiterated opposition to signing Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with U.S. before elections, said country does not need troops. Govt 20 March released another 55 detainees from Bagram prison. 6 March NATO air strike accidentally killed at least 5 Afghan soldiers, injured 8 in eastern Logar province. Anti-insurgency operations continued: 16 insurgents killed 14 March; govt 3 March said Taliban insurgents driven from strongholds in Helmand province.

- Graeme Smith, [“Voices On Afghanistan: How Will The Nato Troop Withdrawal Impact Security?”](#), *The National*, 8 March 2014.
- [“Afghanistan elections: domestic and international spoilers”](#), *Al Jazeera*, 30 March 2014.

➡ **Bangladesh** Special anti-corruption court 19 March indicted Bangladesh National Party (BNP) leader Khaleda Zia on charges dating from her last term as PM 2001-2006, could see her jailed for life; Zia’s son and political heir Tarique Rehman, currently in self-exile in London, also indicted. Zia rejected charges as politically motivated, vowed to restart protests to oust Awami League (AL) govt, prompting fears of renewed political tensions, violence. Zia’s trial due to start 21 April. Continued violence surrounding ongoing non-party upazila (local body) elections amid opposition allegations of rigging by AL and its supporters; at least 7 killed, hundreds injured in violence during 3rd and 4th round voting and during campaigning. In 15 March speech to Supreme Court Bar Association Zia urged opposition groups to launch movement against AL’s “killer and repressive government”. Following BNP-allied candidates’ lead in 1st and 2nd rounds, AL-affiliated candidates took lead following 3rd and 4th rounds. In continuing war crimes cases against Jamaat-e-Islami leaders, prosecution in case against Jamaat leader Motiur Rahman Nizami 12 March reiterated demand for death penalty. Govt minister 14 March announced that Jamaat would be banned by June 2014 for its role in 1971 war crimes. ICT set April date for decision on contempt of court proceedings against UK journalist David Bergman for criticising tribunal’s procedural flaws and biases towards prosecution in blog posts

- [“Bangladesh’s political unrest threatens economic gains, democracy”](#), *Washington Post*, 22 March 2014.

➡ **India (non-Kashmir)** Attack by over 200 Maoists on Central Reserve Police Forces killed 16 in Chhattisgarh’s Sukma district 11 March. Govt announced deployment of over 6,000 extra paramilitary personnel to Odisha ahead of 10 April Lok Sabha elections in response to fears of intensified Maoist attacks. Police intensified operation to catch top Maoist commander Sabyasachi Panda in Odisha’s Gajapati district. 11 Naxals apprehended by security forces

15 March in Balrampur jungle, Chhattisgarh. Maoist attacks in Jharkhand injured 4 security personnel 24 March.

- [“Maoist attack in Sukma to avenge big turnout in Chhattisgarh polls?”](#), *Hindustan Times*, 12 March 2014.

➡ **Kashmir** Protests erupted in Jammu and Kashmir after security forces killed teenager in Srinagar 14 March; govt imposed curfew, arrested separatist leaders including Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front leader Yasin Malik. PM Sharif 24 March asked for U.S. assistance to settle Kashmir dispute in meeting with Sec State Kerry. Tensions over normalisation of bilateral trade ties continued. Security forces killed 3 suspected militants in Kathua following 28 March terror attack that killed 2.

- [“Pakistan to strike trade deal with new govt in India: Pervaiz Rashid”](#), *Economic Times*, 22 March 2014.

➡ **Nepal** Constituent Assembly (CA) 21 March approved regulations paving way for constitution-drafting process. Leaders of Nepali Congress (NC), Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-UML) and UCPN-Maoist 25 March agreed to form High-Level Political Committee to prepare new constitution; 27 March agreed on roadmap to facilitate constitution-writing process. CPN-UML 23 March decided to exert pressure on govt and Election Commission to hold local elections by mid-June.

- [“Major parties agree to form HLPC”](#), *Republica*, 25 March 2014.

➡ **Pakistan** Militant attacks continued as talks between govt and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) revived: TTP 1 March announced month-long ceasefire; bombs targeting polio vaccination workers’ convoy killed 11 police in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province same day; 3 March suicide attack on Islamabad court killed at least 11, injured 24, TTP splinter group Ahrar-ul-Hind claimed responsibility. Ahrar-ul-Hind bombing 14 March targeting Frontier Corps van in Quetta and market in Peshawar killed at least 18 civilians. Reconstituted govt negotiating team met TTP committee 14 March in FATA: TTP demanded release of 300 non-combatants, creation of free travel “peace zone” in S Waziristan. Govt and TTP held direct talks in N Waziristan 26 March. TTP 30 March announced ceasefire extended beyond 31 March. Interior minister 2 March said govt will halt air strikes on terrorist hideouts; defence minister Khawaja Asif 7 March warned strikes will resume if insurgent attacks continue. Madrasa students in Sindh’s Larkana district 15 March burned Hindu temple after alleged act of blasphemy by Hindu community member. 10 March UN report called for independent investigations of drone attacks in Pakistan. Former President Musharraf formally indicted for high treason 31 March.

- [“Talks with the Pakistani Taliban. As we were saying”](#), *Economist*, 4 March 2014.

➡ **Sri Lanka** UN Human Rights Council (HRC) 27 March passed resolution with 23 yes votes (12 opposed, 3 abstained) criticising Sri Lanka govt for impunity for rights violations and lack of reconciliation; established investigation by OHCHR into alleged war crimes by govt and LTTE. Govt won easy victory in western and southern provincial council elections 29 March, though with reduced majorities; President Rajapaksa, other govt candidates used HRC process and threat of “international intervention” to win votes, sharply criticised Tamil National Alliance (TNA) for supporting HRC resolution. Govt launched military and police crackdown in N and E, alleging attempt to revive LTTE; increased

pressure on human rights activists and NGOs, accused of propagating “false information” to tarnish govt’s image internationally. 6 activists arrested, others threatened mid-March; 2 activists held 48 hours under Prevention of Terrorism Act released 16 March following international outcry. Govt 7 March suspended excavation of mass grave outside Mannar following excavation of over 80 bodies.

- Crisis Group, [“The Forever War?: Military Control in Sri Lanka’s North”](#), Sri Lanka’s Search for Lasting Peace, 25 March 2014.
- [“UN takes steps towards Sri Lanka war crimes inquiry”](#), *Guardian*, 27 March 2014.

South East Asia

➡ **Indonesia** Increase in political violence in Aceh province ahead of 9 April legislative elections, with spate of attacks on political parties and politicians amid rivalry between Aceh Party and new National Aceh Party (PNA). Police 23 March arrested 21 members and supporters of Aceh Party over attacks on PNA. 3 people including 18-month-old shot dead in attack on minivan by unknown gunmen 31 March. Police arrested several terrorism suspects during month, including one wanted for alleged involvement in 2012 attack on police in Poso, Central Sulawesi.

- [“Aceh Party members arrested in election violence crackdown”](#), *Jakarta Globe*, 23 March 2014.

➡ **Myanmar** Controversial UN/donor-backed census began 30 March amid fears of intercommunal violence in Rakhine state, as Rakhine nationalists threatened to boycott census over issue of people being allowed to self-identify ethnicity as Rohingya; called off boycott after govt 29 March decided to prevent people self-identifying as Rohingya. Protests in Rakhine state mid-month against census, escalated to attacks on offices and homes of international humanitarian workers 26-27 March; 1 bystander killed by police warning shot; some 100 humanitarian staff evacuated to Yangon. Commission established by President Thein Sein to investigate allegations of killings of Rohingya villagers in Du Chee Yar Tan village in Maungdaw submitted report to President 28 Feb, finding no evidence to support allegations; also recommended addressing status of Rohingya in Rakhine State, granting citizenship to those who meet criteria under restrictive 1982 law. President late Feb, responding to letter with over 1 million signatures received from monk-led campaign, requested legislature to consider enacting legislation that would restrict inter-faith marriage, conversion from one religion to another, polygamy and number of children, likely to be targeted at Muslim/Rohingya communities. President 7 March appointed commission charged with drafting 2 bills on conversion and balancing population by 30 June; requested legislature to take lead on drafting the other 2 bills, in consultation with Supreme Court. Moves prompted condemnation by rights groups. Govt peace negotiators and armed group representatives met in Yangon 9-10 March, reached agreement to work on consolidated ceasefire accord text, established joint drafting group comprising 9 members from ethnic armed groups and 9 from govt (3 each from executive, legislature and military). President met with Aung San Suu Kyi in Naypyitaw 9 March, 5th formal meeting.

- [“Religious tensions cloud Myanmar census”](#), *New York Times*, 30 March 2014.

Philippines Govt and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) 27 March signed historic final peace deal Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), ending 40-year conflict in Mindanao region. Under deal, MILF to become political group, new autonomous Bangsamoro entity to be in place by 2016. Govt, MILF and observers stress remaining obstacles to implementing peace agreement including MILF disarmament, danger posed by potential spoilers including other rebel groups. New People's Army (NPA) threatened to intensify attacks in S Mindanao after 2 Communist Party of the Philippines-NPA leaders arrested on charges including murder 22 March; 2 soldiers killed in NPA ambush in Lopez town, Quezon province 24 March. Military 13 March captured 4 suspected NPA rebels in Sorsogon, Bicol region. 16 injured in suspected NPA landmine explosion in Bansalan 2 March. Several abductions early month blamed on Abu Sayyaf group. Chinese Coast Guard 10 March prevented 2 Philippines vessels from reaching disputed Second Thomas Shoal in South China Sea (SCS). Philippines vessel 29 March delivered supplies, fresh troops to military outpost on shoal despite 2 Chinese Coast Guard ships trying to block its way. Manila 30 March submitted formal plea at UN tribunal in its case against China's SCS claim; China said it would not accept international arbitration, urged return to bilateral talks to resolve dispute.

- "Philippines prepares for historic peace deal", Al Jazeera, 25 March 2014.

Thailand Constitutional Court 21 March ruled 2 Feb general election invalid because it was not held in all constituencies on same day. PM's Sec Gen 19 March said nullification would be acceptable if new elections, with Democrat Party (DP) participation, could be arranged quickly; DP stated prior to ruling it would not participate in immediate rerun, continues to demand reform before election. Following ruling, anti-govt protest marches resumed in Bangkok. DP, anti-govt activists continue to file petitions with courts and independent agencies, seeking removal of PM Yingluck and caretaker govt. Yingluck appeared before National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) 31 March to answer charges of dereliction of duty for failing to halt alleged corruption in govt's rice-pledging scheme. Red-Shirt leaders mobilised several thousand supporters in NE early month, attempting to form volunteer "democracy-protection force" to confront any move to remove caretaker govt. Change in leadership of United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship mid-month also indicating more combative stance in preparation for widely anticipated ouster of govt. Banners urging formation of separate Lanna state in north displayed in Chiang Mai, Phayao provinces early March; army adopted hard line on alleged northern separatism. Political violence decreased following anti-govt People's Democratic Reform Committee 28 Feb announcement of end to "shut down" Bangkok rallies, but regular night-time grenade and shooting attacks continued in Bangkok and upcountry. Insurgent attacks continued in southernmost provinces, with civilian and security-force casualties.

- Jonathan Prentice, "Thailand Needs Friends To Help It Through Its Crisis", *Guardian*, 21 March 2014.
- "Redshirts in Isan, north-east Thailand, keep faith with benefactor Thaksin", *Guardian*, 24 March 2014.

Europe and Central Asia

Balkans

Bosnia Anti-govt protests that began early Feb continued on smaller scale in several towns and cities. EU foreign policy chief Ashton, visiting 12 March, said EU will switch focus from constitutional reform to economy, welfare, judiciary.

- "How to drag a country out of the mire?", BBC, 13 March 2014.

Kosovo Govt announced plan to transform Kosovo Security Force into Kosovo Armed Forces by 2019; Belgrade said plan violates April 2013 normalisation agreement, cited guarantees forces will never enter Serb-majority north of Kosovo. Kosovo Serbs 16 March cast votes in Serbian election in polls organised by OSCE. Russian embassy in Belgrade said Moscow's policy of non-recognition of Kosovo unchanged notwithstanding developments in Crimea.

- "The Balkans watch Ukraine, but see themselves", RFE/RL, 5 March 2014.

Caucasus

Armenia Ukraine protested, withdrew ambassador after President Sargsyan endorsed 16 March referendum in Crimea (see Ukraine). Sargsyan in phone call to Russian President Putin 19 March reportedly voiced support for right to self-determination. Armenia one of only 11 states to vote against 27 March UNGA resolution affirming Ukraine's territorial integrity.

- "Russia's Crimea gambit draws various responses in Caucasus", Eurasianet, 4 March 2014.

Azerbaijan Amid scrutiny of regional responses to Russian actions in Ukraine, President Aliyev 20 March reportedly said "a country's territorial integrity cannot be changed without its agreement". Court in N city Saki 17 March sentenced 2 leading opposition figures to 5 and 7 years' prison for mass disorder over Jan 2013 unrest in Ismayili. 8 others jailed, 8 given suspended sentences. U.S. embassy said verdicts politically motivated, EU also critical.

- "In Crimea, Baku's moment of truth", RFE/RL, 17 March 2014.

Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Amid uncertainty over impact of Russian intervention in Ukraine on OSCE Minsk Group mediating between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents met on sidelines of 24-25 March nuclear security summit in The Hague, pledged to continue peace talks. Minsk Group's U.S. Co-Chair James Warlick 16 March said on Twitter that U.S. and Russia could still work together on resolving N-K conflict. Baku 28 March accused Armenia of firing on Azerbaijani village near border in violation of ceasefire, injuring 2.

- "Armenia: Karabakh peace seen as more elusive after Crimea annexation", Eurasianet, 20 March 2014.

Georgia EU Enlargement Commissioner Štefan Füle met with FM in Tbilisi 4 March, pledged continued support for closer ties between EU and Georgia. Talks between Georgian and Russian officials to discuss possible high-level meeting postponed twice

early March. Prosecutors summoned former President Saakashvili for questioning as witness in several criminal cases including investigation into 2005 death of former PM Zurab Zhvania; U.S.-based Saakashvili said he will not return to Georgia for questioning.

- [“Does Ukraine crisis improve Euro-Atlantic integration odds?”](#), Eurasianet, 6 March 2014.



North Caucasus (Russia) Insurgency news website Kavkaz Center 18 March reported Caucasus Emirate leader and Russia's most wanted terrorist Doku Umarov dead, apparently confirming rumours circulating since Jan, said Emirate's Sharia judge Dagestani Ali Abu Mohammed (Aliaskhab Kebekov) selected as his replacement; National Anti-terrorist Committee has not confirmed Umarov's death. In Dagestan at least 4 suspected militants, 1 suspected of involvement in Dec 2013 Volgograd attacks, killed in special operation in Izberbash 3 March. 2 police injured by militant shelling in Dagestan capital Makhachkala 17 March. Several members of illegal armed formations, 1 security agent killed 25 March during special operation in Khasavyurt district. Several suspected militants killed in counter-terrorism operation in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria 14 March. 2 suspected militants killed in special operation in Ingushetia 22 March. NC republics demonstrated support for Russia's Crimea invasion: Dagestan, Ingushetia, N Ossetia, Chechnya saw mass solidarity demonstrations, people reportedly forced to participate in some cases; republics sent aid.

- [“North Caucasus rebel leader Umarov dead, replaced: website”](#), Reuters, 18 March 2014.

Eastern Europe



Moldova Senior NATO commander 23 March warned Moscow could be targeting Moldova's separatist Transnistria region. Transnistrian parliamentary speaker Nikhail Burla 17 March urged Russia to admit region. President Timofti 19 March urged EU to bring forward planned signing of association agreement with country. U.S. pledged additional \$10m to Moldova to help secure borders.

- [“Russia ready to annex Moldova region, Nato commander claims”](#), *Guardian*, 23 March 2014.



Ukraine Russia annexed Crimea in move condemned as illegal by Western states, fuelling uncertainty in region, fears of war between Russia and Ukraine. Russian legislature 1 March approved use of armed forces in Ukraine to protect ethnic Russians, Russian armed forces in Crimea. Crimean parliament 6 March voted in favour of joining Russia, scheduled 16 March referendum: authorities claimed 97% yes vote, parliament next day applied to join Russia. Meanwhile widespread unrest through most of month as pro-Russian protesters in SE demonstrated against Kiev govt, often demanding to join Russia. Russian President Putin and pro-Russian leaders in Crimea 18 March signed treaties making Crimea part of Russia; pro-Russian forces seized Ukrainian military installations, captured several military officers. Second half of month saw heavy Russian troop build-up on Ukrainian border, prompting expressions of concern from U.S., NATO. Putin 21 March signed laws formalising Russian annexation of Crimea, ordered Russian govt administration to be installed by 29 March. Acting Ukrainian President Turchynov ordered withdrawal of all Ukrainian troops

from Crimea. U.S., EU refused to recognise referendum, imposed targeted sanctions on senior Russian officials, private individuals and bank with close ties to govt; offered financial aid to Kiev. IMF offered \$14-18bn bailout. Acting PM Yatsenyuk signed political chapters of association agreement with EU 21 March. UNGA 27 March passed resolution declaring 16 March Crimea referendum invalid. OSCE 21 March announced monitoring mission to Ukraine; UN planning human rights monitoring mission to east. UNSG Ban urged “direct and constructive” dialogue. G8 members meeting without Russia 25 March suspended Russian membership, cancelled upcoming G8 meeting in Sochi. U.S. Sec State Kerry and Russian FM Lavrov met for talks 30 March, no breakthrough.

- [“Russia's Crimea move poses West huge questions”](#), BBC, 18 March 2014.
- [“Crimea's contested future”](#), *New Yorker*, 12 March 2014.

Western Europe/Mediterranean



Cyprus Little sign of progress since reunification talks restarted 11 Feb despite regular meetings between negotiators: Republic of Cyprus President Anastasiades 16 March said initial indications not encouraging. Extreme right Greek Cypriot group Elam attacked former Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat in Limassol 26 March; Talat unhurt.

- [“President Anastasiades: Initial indications on Cyprus talks not encouraging”](#), *Famagusta Gazette*, 17 March 2014.

New Crisis Group Europe Report N°229, [Divided Cyprus: Coming to Terms on an Imperfect Reality](#), 14 March 2014. To avoid another failed effort at federal reunification in the new round of Cyprus negotiations, all sides should break old taboos and discuss all possible options, including independence for Turkish Cypriots within the European Union.



Turkey Ruling AKP won more than 44% of vote in 30 March local elections. 8 killed in clashes between supporters of rival candidates on polling day in Sanliurfa and Hatay province; mayoral candidate for Islamist Felicity Party shot dead in Siirt province 31 March. 15-year-old in coma since June 2013 clashes between protesters and police, described by PM Erdoğan as “terrorist”, died 11 March prompting more protest; 1 shot dead 12 March in Istanbul in clash between rival political groups, 1 policeman died of heart attack due to tear gas in Tunceli same day. Continued social media leaks of corruption allegations and phone conversations involving Erdoğan govt led to ban on Twitter 20 March, blocking of YouTube. No new progress in govt-PKK peace process; first combat death since March 2013 ceasefire as Turkish soldier killed in 6 March explosion in Uludere, Şırnak province. Amid fighting between Syrian regime and rebels in border area, Turkey 23 March shot down Syrian warplane outside Hatay province, saying it crossed into Turkish airspace. 3 alleged members of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from Syria started firefight in central Niğde province 20 March; 2 soldiers, 1 police, 1 civilian killed. 2 suspected ISIL members and 3 police injured in raid in Istanbul 25 March.

- [“A referendum on Erdogan's rule”](#), *Economist*, 31 March 2014.

Central Asia

➤ **Kazakhstan** Amid uncertainty over regional response to Russian actions in Ukraine, President Nazarbayev fielded series of phone calls with U.S., Russian, German, UK leaders 10-14 March. Foreign ministry initially voiced respect for Ukraine's territorial integrity and international law, but govt 18 March recognised as legitimate results of 16 March referendum in Crimea, regarded Russian actions "with understanding". EU decided to discontinue post of Special Representative for Central Asia as of 28 Feb.

- "Russian roulette", *Economist*, 13 March 2014.

➤ **Kyrgyzstan** Govt coalition collapsed 18 March when Ata-Meken pulled out; President's Social Democratic Party, Ar-Namys and Ata-Meken 31 March agreed to form new coalition. Opposition grouping pulled together by pro-Western independent MP Ravshan Jeenbekov held first conference; leading opposition figures former mayor of Osh Melis Myrzakmatov and Ata-Jurt leader Kamchybek Tashiev did not attend. Former FM Alikbek Jekshenkulov denied involvement in Jeenbekov's movement. Jeenbekov denied allegations he obtained funds from U.S. govt. Govt late Feb set up new force under interior ministry to deal with public unrest. Bishkek police early March outlined formation of local militias to guarantee law and order in event of public unrest. Kyrgyz and Tajik govts reportedly discussing possible land exchanges to resolve longstanding border disputes; following Jan closures, some border checkpoints reportedly reopening. Govt ended right to sit final school exams in Uzbek language, contradicting positive rhetoric on seeking to improve relations with 14% ethnic minority population. Govt 11 March said ousted Ukrainian President Yanukovich not Ukrainian president, 20 March recognised as legitimate results of 16 March referendum in Ukraine's Crimea region.

- "Russia-Ukraine crisis alarms Central Asian strongmen", *Eurasianet*, 4 March 2014.

➤ **Tajikistan** Chair of Federation Council of Russia Valentina Matvienko visited Dushanbe 12-13 March, reportedly discussed migration, political-military cooperation and border issues with President Rahmon. Matvienko reiterated Russia will help Tajikistan strengthen borders ahead of Afghan presidential elections and NATO troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan. Russian FM Lavrov early March praised Tajikistan for hosting Russia's 201st military base. Govt refrained from commenting on Russian actions in Ukraine. Parliament considering changing legislative basis of how Tajikistan is governed by doing away with regions, re-organising country as a single unit.

- "If Crimea sanctions bite Russia, Central Asia will feel the pain", *Eurasianet*, 19 March 2014.

➤ **Turkmenistan** Taliban denied responsibility for 26 Feb killing of 3 Turkmen border guards, said it was a set-up by Afghan govt. Turkmenistan reportedly stepped up patrols in border towns, sent reservists for training on border at Serhetabat, important outpost for Russian logistics during Soviet-Afghan war. Govt refrained from commenting on Russian actions in Ukraine.

- "Clashes, appeasement, isolation on the Turkmen-Afghan border", *RFE/RL*, 6 March 2014.

➤ **Uzbekistan** Uzbekistan 4 and 28 March urged Ukraine's territorial integrity to be respected. Govt made changes to constitution seemingly devolving more powers to PM's office and creating more reporting procedures between regional and central govt; observers dismissed changes as window dressing that will not impact govt practices. In interview with U.S. Central Command-funded news website, Uzbek security official claimed there are 5,000 IMU members in Afghanistan, group still aims penetrate Uzbek borders; said some 7,000 people detained or under surveillance because of suspected links to IMU. Socio-economic conditions continue to worsen with inflation running high on food items and gas, electricity price hikes due 1 April.

- "Crimea from across the Caspian", *Economist*, 11 March 2014.

Latin America

➤ **Colombia** Congressional elections took place 9 March amid high abstention rate, allegations of fraud and election of 69 candidates allegedly linked to illegal armed actors, but relatively few security incidents overall. Polls brought no radical change in balance of political forces; preliminary results showed President Santos' ruling coalition lost clout but still boasts strong majority in Lower House (92/166 votes) and remains well positioned in Senate (47/102 votes); opposition Democratic Centre led by former President Uribe came 2nd in Senate (19 votes). Santos 19 March signed decree removing Bogotá mayor and former M-19 guerrilla Gustavo Petro from office, executing highly controversial decision of Inspector General; move came day after Inter American Human Rights Commission (IACHR) asked govt to suspend dismissal; govt argued IACHR measures non-binding. 22nd cycle of peace talks between govt and FARC ended 30 March; parties optimistic to conclude discussions on illegal drugs "soon". FARC 21 March acknowledged responsibility for earlier killing of 2 policemen in Tumaco (Nariño), but 26 March refused to hand over perpetrators. National Liberation Army (ELN) 6 March liberated in Antioquia police official kidnapped in Feb; 17 March reiterated its willingness to engage in new talks. Santos 26 March said peace process had sufficiently matured to re-activate National Peace Council. Social movements participating in "National Agrarian Summit" 16 March threatened new strike for early May. Santos 6 March announced major security force intervention in Buenaventura (Valle) to combat escalating criminal violence.

- Christian Voelkel, "Es el tiempo para el ELN", *Razón Pública*, 30 March 2014.
- "Santos definirá suerte de alcalde de Bogotá en puja legal por su destitución", *AFP*, 19 March 2014.

➤ **Guatemala** Govt 18 March extradited suspected drug lord Waldemar Lorenzana to U.S. to face cocaine smuggling charges. Former President Portillo 18 March pleaded guilty in New York to money-laundering charges, nearly 3 years after acquittal on similar charges in Guatemala. Attorney General Paz y Paz 7 March announced decision to seek another term in office, filing paperwork before nominating commission that will submit candidates to president for final selection; her 4-year term was cut short by Feb technical Constitutional Court ruling, criticised by some human rights groups as payback for prosecuting former dictator José Efraín Ríos Montt on genocide charges. Trial of former Revolutionary Organisation of the People in Arms (ORPA) commander Felipe

Solano Barillas, aka “Lieutenant David”, began 27 Feb; Solano accused of murder and war crimes in connection with 1988 massacre of 22 people in Chimaltenango dept.

- [“Guatemala ex-leader Portillo pleads guilty in US court”](#), BBC, 19 March 2014.

➡ **Haiti** President Martelly said long-delayed senatorial and municipal elections, initially due 2011, “could take place in summer”; opposition parties appeared sceptical of president’s commitment to polls. UN Independent Expert on Human Rights in Haiti 2 March said UN “should be first to honour” principle of compensation for victims of rights violations; victims’ lawyers demanding \$100,000 compensation for every person who died, \$50,000 for each who became ill from cholera epidemic blamed on UN peacekeepers; UN argued it is immune from such claims under Convention on Privileges and Immunities.

- [“Senior UN expert calls for Haiti cholera compensation”](#), BBC, 2 March 2014.

➡ **Mexico** Govt 9 March confirmed Nazario Moreno González, leader of Knights Templar cartel in Michoacán state, killed in shootout with federal forces; authorities said fingerprint analysis confirmed identity of Moreno, who was also reported dead in 2010. Authorities said federal forces seized 119,000 tons of illegally-obtained iron ore since taking over port of Lázaro Cárdenas Nov 2013; illegal mining a main source of cartel income. State officials 11 March arrested key “self-defence” leader Hipólito Mora in Michoacán for allegedly murdering 2 members of rival vigilante group. National Security Commissioner Manuel Mondragón y Kalb, who oversees federal police forces, resigned 17 March citing “personal reasons”. Tlaxiaco mayor Gustavo Garibay shot dead in Michoacán state 22 March.

- [“‘Long dead’ Mexico drug lord Nazario Moreno killed”](#), BBC, 10 March 2014.

➡ **Venezuela** Despite announcement by President Maduro and other leading govt members that protest movement launched early Feb (which they term a “coup”) has been defeated, protests continued: most barricades rebuilt, no sign of protesters’ determination wavering. Continued clashes between protesters and pro-govt forces; since protest movement began 39 people have been killed and 2,041 placed in detention facilities, half still with probationary measures. Security forces deployed 17 March on Plaza Altamira in Caracas, but rapidly outnumbered by peaceful civilian protesters from surrounding neighbourhoods. Govt’s “peace conference” and truth commission set up in Feb failed to incorporate radicals or moderates from opposition Democratic Unity (MUD) alliance. FMs from Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) visited Caracas 25-27 March, met with opposition groups as well as govt. Immediately after UNASUR’s 12 March decision to send mission, Maduro announced he would take “drastic measures” to end protests; announcement followed by deployment of National Guard in Caracas, arrest of mayors of San Cristobal (Táchira) and San Diego (Valencia), stripping of parliamentary immunity for MUD legislator Maria Corina Machado with view to prosecuting her for murder of political violence victims, and arrest of 3 air force generals for alleged coup plot. Vatican 28 March announced it is willing to facilitate peaceful resolution of crisis; Maduro said govt would accept its mediation.

- Javier Ciurlizza, [“Searching for an Exit: Latin America and Venezuela”](#), Latin America Crime and Politics, 11 March 2014.
- [“Un país que tomó rumbo de colisión”](#), El País, 16 March 2014.

Middle East and North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

➡ **Israel-Palestine** 16-month ceasefire between Israel and Gaza, which eroded during past several months, temporarily broken 12 March when Palestinian group Islamic Jihad launched largest salvo of rockets towards Israel since last major escalation in Nov 2012; 3 members of group killed previous day in Israeli airstrike during border clashes. Israel struck back with airstrikes. Egypt negotiated reactivation of ceasefire between Islamic Jihad and Israel 13 March. Escalation followed cross-border attacks early March, including 2 Palestinians killed in Israeli airstrike 3 March. In W Bank, Israeli forces killed several Palestinians including: 10 March shot dead 18-year-old stone-thrower near Ramallah and Palestinian judge from Jordan on border crossing causing protests in Jordan, demands for expulsion of Israeli ambassador; 22 March killed 3 during raid against Palestinian militants in Jenin refugee camp. Several clashes along Israel’s northern borders: Israeli forces 5 March killed 2 suspected Hizbollah fighters on border between occupied Golan Heights and Syria; 4 Israeli soldiers wounded by roadside bomb 18 March on same border, Israel blamed Syrian regime, retaliated against Syrian army positions. Following 14 March bomb attack targeting patrol on Lebanese border Israeli forces shelled Hizbollah positions. Amid ongoing peace talks PM Netanyahu met U.S. President Obama in Washington 3 March; PM Abbas met Obama 17 March.

- [“Who’s in charge?”](#), *Economist*, 29 March 2014.

New Crisis Group Middle East Report N°149, [The Next Round in Gaza](#), 25 March 2014. With Hamas’s fortunes on the decline and Gaza suffering its worst isolation and economic constriction in years, it is only a matter of time until a flare-up with Israel escalates into a major conflagration – unless the two reach a modest understanding to extend a fragile quiet.

➡ **Lebanon** Continued spillover from Syrian conflict as Syria’s Assad regime intensified fight with Syrian rebels along Lebanese border. Rebel defeat in Syrian town Yabroud 16 March saw refugees and fighters fleeing to Lebanese city Aarsal. Hizbollah and local residents blocked roads around city prompting protests, road blockings and tyre burnings by Sunni militants elsewhere in Lebanon. Aarsal and other Bekaa Valley areas targeted by Syrian regime airstrikes throughout month. Dozens killed in Tripoli during fighting starting 13 March between supporters of rival parties to Syrian conflict; fighting later spread to Beirut, 1 killed in clashes 23 March. Sunni jihadis continued rocket attacks, car bombings inside Lebanon in retaliation for Hizbollah’s involvement in Syria: 2 killed in suicide bombing in Bekaa Valley 16 March, claimed by Jabhat al-Nusra. 3 soldiers killed 29 March in suicide bombing at army checkpoint in Aarsal; 2 civilians killed hours later by soldiers at another checkpoint. Israel held Hizbollah responsible for 14 March bomb targeting Israeli patrol on border, retaliated against group’s positions (see Israel-Palestine). New govt 20 March won confidence vote in parliament.


- [“Rockets in Bekaa as Lebanon struggles to contain Syria spillover”](#), Reuters, 17 March 2014.

➡ **Syria** Following Feb breakdown of Geneva II negotiations seeking political resolution to conflict, regime intensified push to secure control over areas bordering Lebanon, part of long-running Qalamoun offensive: with backing of Lebanese Hizbollah seized city of Yabroud 16 March, largest remaining rebel bastion in area;


19 March took village SW of Yabroud, 29 March seized another 2 villages near border. Many rebels fled across border to Lebanon; regime forces 21 March claimed to have killed at least 93 fleeing takeover of Crac des Chevaliers. Rebels meanwhile announced offensive in Latakia province in NW: dozens killed in fighting as rebels captured Kaseb town and border crossing with Turkey; Hial al-Assad, cousin of President Assad and pro-regime militia leader, killed 23 March. Rebels 19 March took prison outside southern city Daraa. Fighting between rebel groups continued: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) rejected demands for mediation by al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra; mid-month withdrew eastwards, pulling out of Idlib and Latakia provinces, concentrating fighters in eastern Aleppo, Raqqa. More than 50 rebels reported killed after ISIL seized town in Hasakah province in NE 30 March. Govt 15 March missed UN-imposed deadline for destroying chemical weapons (CW) production facilities; UN mission overseeing CW removal 20 March said 53.6% of CW removed from or destroyed in Syria. Turkish air force 23 March shot down Syrian plane, saying it crossed into Turkish territory; regime denied crossing border, said Turkey complacent in “terrorism”. Following Feb UNSC resolution to increase aid access, UN aid trucks 20 March entered Syria from Turkey for first time in 3 years; aid entered through regime-held crossing near Qamishli, will be distributed through partners approved by Damascus. Regime continued siege and starvation tactics around Damascus, temporarily resuming siege of Palestinian neighbourhood Yarmouk early March.

- [“Throwing Windmills at the Wyndham”](#), *Foreign Policy*, 20 March 2014.


Gulf

 **Bahrain** 3 police killed in bombing 3 March in Manama, opposition group Saraya al-Ashtar reportedly claimed responsibility; govt next day designated group terrorist organisation along with 2 others. More bombings followed, several police injured.

- [“Explosion in Bahrain raises tensions in Gulf”](#), *Financial Times*, 4 March 2014.


 **Iran** Second round of negotiations on comprehensive nuclear agreement between Iran and P5+1 held in Vienna 17-19 March, following expert-level talks early March. Escalating animosity between Russia and Western members of P5+1 over Ukraine crisis had no tangible impact, however Russian deputy FM Ryabkov subsequently threatened unspecified “retaliatory measures” against U.S. and EU in negotiations. Next round planned for 7-9 April. EU foreign policy chief Ashton 8-9 March visited Iran, first such visit since 2008; met with rights activists without govt approval, FM Zarif reportedly cancelled 17 March dinner ahead of Vienna talks to protest Ashton’s “uncoordinated” move. IAEA, monitoring compliance with Nov Joint Plan of Action (JPA), 20 March said Iran fulfilling obligations, govt to start conversion of enriched uranium stockpiles to below 5% 9 April. At least 14 border guards killed in attack near Pakistani border claimed by Sunni insurgent group Jaish al-Adl, 16 alleged “rebel” prisoners hanged by local authorities in apparent revenge killing; insurgents later reportedly killed 1 border guard held hostage since early Feb, 4 still in captivity.

- [“Iran meeting nuclear commitments, but key plant not ready”](#), Reuters, 20 March 2014.



 **Iraq** Amid ongoing fight against insurgents in Anbar province, Anbar Provincial Council accused Iraqi army of not seriously trying to solve crisis. Shia chairman of secular Iraqiya Alliance in parliament Iyad Alawi criticised lack of progress; criticism also from members of Sunni Mouttahidoun electoral list, with one MP calling

govt operation “not a war on terrorism, but a war against Anbar and its people”. Local Mouttahidoun officials in Ramadi negotiated with central govt, including over deployment of army and enrolment of recruits in local police force; tribal leader Ahmed Abu Richa 16 March urged uniting army, Ramadi police forces and tribes in joint operation against insurgents controlling neighbouring Falluja. Ahead of April parliamentary elections, Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) discussed postponement of poll in Anbar due to ongoing turmoil and high numbers of displaced; UN 27 March said 400,000 displaced since beginning of year. IHEC commissioners resigned 25 March blaming political and judicial “interference” in electoral process; 30 March withdrew resignations following UN appeals, reports parliament ruled to limit judiciary’s powers to impose candidate bans. Widespread violence continued ahead of elections with bombings across Iraq claiming hundreds of lives: at least 45 killed 9 March in single car bombing in southern city Hilla, at least 80 killed 25 March including 41 soldiers.

- [“Iraqi forces, images testify to atrocities in new fighting”](#), Reuters, 20 March 2014.


 **Saudi Arabia** Govt 7 March designated Muslim Brotherhood (MB) terrorist organisation.

- [“Saudi Arabia designates Muslim Brotherhood terrorist group”](#), Reuters, 7 March 2014.

  **Yemen** Violence in North increased: clashes between Huthis and opposing tribesmen in Jawf killed over 30 late Feb-early March. Fighting spread to Hamdan area near Sanaa, killing over a dozen early March; military entered Hamdan to separate warring factions; ceasefire negotiations ongoing. 12 killed 22 March when Huthis clashed with security forces near Amran city; tensions remain high. Govt 12 March concluded deal in Dalia governorate ending clashes between army and Hiraak. Hadramout tribal confederation mid-month accused govt of not following through on deal to provide financial compensation and jobs in exchange for end to hostilities. AQAP attacks continued including at least 20 soldiers killed 24 March at checkpoint in Hadramout; at least 5 drone strikes conducted. President Hadi 8 March replaced several officials including head of political security and interior minister; same day appointed constitution-writing committee. Thousands protested in Sanaa 21 March calling for release of political prisoners, trial of former President Saleh.

- [“Yemen’s decade of division”](#), Al-Monitor, 4 March 2014.

North Africa

 **Algeria** Preparations for 17 April presidential polls continued. Authorities 1 March dispersed youths protesting in Algiers against President Bouteflika’s intention to run for 4th term. Recently-formed citizen’s movement “Barakat” (“enough”) 2 March filed complaint at Constitutional Court against Bouteflika 4th term; protested outside Constitutional Court 4-6, 8 March. At least 264 arrested 1-6 March; presidential candidate and former PM Ali Benflis denounced wave of arrests; rights groups also denounced ongoing repression. Security forces killed over a dozen suspected terrorists in series of operations during month near Tizi Ouzou, Tébessa, Bouira. Intercommunal tensions in Ghardaïa continued: at least 10 injured in clashes between Mozabites (Berbers) and Chaambis (Arabs) 6 March; at least 1 injured 10 March in attacks on buses; at least 20 injured, 3 killed in clashes 11-16 March.

- [“Manifestations à Alger, heurts communautaires dans le sud”](#), AFP, 16 March 2014.

➔ **Egypt** Field Marshal Abdelfattah el-Sisi resigned as defence minister 26 March in order to run in May presidential election; candidate registration open 30 March-20 April. Interim President Mansour 8 March decreed controversial new election law protecting decisions of election commission from legal challenges, refused to amend it after some parties protested on grounds that doing so could lengthen electoral process. Previously announced contender Sami Anan withdrew from presidential race; second runner-up in 2012 presidential election General Ahmed Shafik in leaked recording said election bound to be rigged in favour of Sisi, in subsequent public statement backed Sisi; another former candidate, human rights lawyer Khaled Ali, announced he would not run, called election “farce”. New govt formed 1 March by PM Ibrahim Mehleb, member of pre-2011 ruling party; departure of outgoing PM Biblawi and Deputy PM Ziad Bahaa Eddin, who represented liberals in anti-Muslim Brotherhood (MB) alliance, seen by observers as further reducing prospect of reconciliation with MB. Court 24 March sentenced 529 Muslim Brotherhood (MB) members to death for murder and other offences, sparking domestic and international condemnation; sentence to be appealed. Several police and army officers killed during month, including 6 officers by gunmen at checkpoint near Cairo 15 March; army blamed MB, MB denied. 2 senior army officers, 6 militants killed 19 March in Nile Delta region during army raid on jihadi group Ansar Beit al-Maqdis. Clashes continued between MB supporters and police across country, several casualties: MB-led National Alliance to Support Legitimacy called for 11 days of protests starting on 19 March anniversary of 2011 constitutional referendum, 2 killed in clashes same day; 5 killed in Cairo 29 March during protests against Sisi presidential bid.

- “Security top priority for new Egypt government: PM”, AFP, 2 March 2014.

➔ **Libya** Crisis over blockade of oil export terminals continued, risking expansion into wider fight between Islamists and non-Islamists, and respective militia allies. Tensions between Tripoli and gunmen loyal to eastern pro-autonomy leader Ibrahim Jedran escalated after Jedran forces loaded crude oil on North

Korean-flagged tanker in Sidra terminal 8-10 March in defiance of state authority; U.S. naval forces 16 March took control of tanker near Cyprus, returned it to Libyan govt authority. General National Congress (GNC) president ordered use of force to liberate terminals; clashes ensued in Sirte and Zillah oil field; GNC president 12 March suspended military action and gave 2-week deadline to vacate terminals peacefully or face force; pro-Jedran forces mid-March gathered at Wadi Ahmar in anticipation of further clashes. GNC 11 March passed no-confidence motion ousting PM Zeidan, ending long standoff over Zeidan’s failure to address oil crisis; defence minister Abdallah al-Thinni sworn in as interim PM. At international conference on Libya in Rome 6 March, NATO reaffirmed commitment to help with transition. UNSC 13 March renewed UNSMIL mandate, 19 March mandated international community to seize ships transporting Libyan oil acquired illegally. Bomb exploded at Tripoli airport 22 March.

- “Libyan army in heavy fighting with oil port rebels”, Reuters, 22 March 2014.

➔ **Mauritania** Opposition parties Rally for Democratic Forces (RFD), Coordination for Democratic Opposition and Islamist party Tawasoul threatened boycott of July presidential elections.

- “L’opposition menace de boycotter l’élection présidentielle”, AFP, 1 March 2014.

➔ **Tunisia** Jan political truce between Islamists and secularists continued. Ongoing debate over new electoral law in National Constituent Assembly; main issue is whether to hold parliamentary and presidential elections on same day and right of illiterate voters to use proxies. Independent Election Commission head 26 March said polls will go ahead in 2014 despite election law delays. Social tensions driven by economic insecurity increased, particularly in south: police and residents in Ben Guerdane clashed 11 March following temporary closure of border post with Libya. 6 security officers wounded 17 March in shootout in Jendouba, NW; 2 officers injured same day in Sidi Bouzid.

- “Tunisia sees elections in 2014, despite delays”, Reuters, 26 March 2014.

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