

CrisisWatch

A monthly bulletin on current and potential conflicts
Published by the International Crisis Group

No. 145

1 September 2015

August 2015 – Trends

↓ Deteriorated situations

[Afghanistan](#), [Burundi](#), [Central African Republic](#), [Colombia/Venezuela](#),
[Guatemala](#), [Kashmir](#), [Lebanon](#), [Nepal](#), [Yemen](#)

↑ Improved situations

[Guinea](#), [South Sudan](#), [Sri Lanka](#)

September 2015 – Watchlist

💣* Conflict risk alerts

[Colombia/Venezuela](#), [Guatemala](#), [Iraq](#), [Nepal](#), [Yemen](#)

☰ Conflict resolution opportunities

[South Sudan](#)

CrisisWatch summarises 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 sources. It 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. It identifies situations where, in the coming month, there is a risk of new or significantly escalated conflict, or a conflict resolution opportunity (noting that in some instances there may be both). It also summarises Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers published the previous month.

Arrows and alerts: Up, down and side arrows signify, respectively, improved, deteriorated or unchanged situations. Conflict Risk Alerts (identified with bombs) or Conflict Resolution Opportunities (with doves) are used in addition to arrows: a bomb signifies a risk of escalated violence; a dove an opportunity to advance peace. Both bombs and doves tend to be used where events are moving fast.

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Africa

Central Africa

↓ **Burundi** Violence escalated following President Nkurunziza's successful July bid for third presidential term: former intelligence chief and president's close advisor General Adolphe Nshimirimana killed 2 Aug in rocket attack on his car; leading civil society figure Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa seriously wounded by gunmen in apparent murder attempt 3 Aug; ex-army chief Jean Bikomagu murdered 15 Aug; opposition politician Pontien Barutwanayo killed 22 Aug; three people including ruling CNDD-FDD official shot dead 30 Aug. Arbitrary arrests, kidnappings and killings of opposition members, civil society and military, and anti- and pro-Nkurunziza youth throughout month compounded atmosphere of fear. Nkurunziza 26 Aug said groups that threaten national security must be destroyed, announced creation of special security committees. Amnesty International 24 Aug said security forces have been torturing suspected Nkurunziza opponents since beginning of protests 26 April. UNSC 10 Aug expressed concern, called on govt to resume dialogue with opposition. Nkurunziza opponents early month formed "National Council for Respect of Arusha agreement, Restoration of Rule of Law" (CNARED), 18 Aug called on Nkurunziza to resign. Nkurunziza 24 Aug appointed new govt comprising opposition National Liberation Forces (FNL) and ruling CNDD-FDD ministers after being sworn in 20 Aug.

- Thierry Vircoulon, "[Crise au Burundi: un risque régional](#)", L'Opinion, 24 Aug. 2015.
- "[Increasing violence in Burundi stokes fear of civil war](#)", Voice of America, 4 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Cameroon** Boko Haram (BH) violence in Lake Chad and Far North continued: some 30 killed, scores abducted in attacks throughout month. Security crackdown including road blocks, military deployment, burqa ban and monitoring of mosques continued. Govt 4 Aug announced more than 3,000 Nigerians have been expelled from country as part of fight against BH.

- "[Cameroon expels thousands of Nigerians in Boko Haram fight](#)", AP, 4 Aug. 2015.

↓ **Central African Republic** Amid worsening sex abuse allegations, UN mission MINUSCA continued to struggle to secure provinces, 2 Aug launched failed operation in PK-5 district in Bangui leaving at least five dead, including one peacekeeper. Rwandan peacekeeper, reportedly traumatised by operation, 8 Aug shot dead four colleagues, wounded eight before killing himself at base in Bangui. Following Amnesty International report of allegations of abuses during 2 Aug PK-5 operation including against children, UNSG Ban 12 Aug dismissed MINUSCA head. At least fifteen killed, twenty injured 20-24 Aug in clashes between ex-Seleka and anti-balaka forces in Bambari region; several killed in Bria in intercommunal clashes. Chief of former President Michael Bozizé's party Kwa Na Kwa (KNK) Bertin Béa 7 Aug announced Bozizé will run in presidential elections scheduled for Oct 2015 despite international warrant against him for crimes against humanity and inciting genocide. Police 15 Aug arrested Béa as he was trying to leave country, accused him of inciting public disorder; KNK supporters 20 Aug attacked prosecutor's office and liberated Béa, who voluntarily returned to detention 24 Aug. Transitional National Council 20 Aug agreed to grant ref-

ugees right to vote in Oct presidential polls, 30 Aug adopted draft new constitution, including two-term limit for presidency, to be submitted for referendum.

- [“UN peacekeepers accused of killing and rape in Central African Republic”](#), *Guardian*, 11 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Chad** Operations against Boko Haram (BH) continued in Lake Chad region. Chad, Nigeria, Benin, Niger and Cameroon chiefs of staff met 22 Aug to finalise Multi-national Joint Task Force (MJTF), no precise deadline set for its deployment. Ten BH members convicted for involvement in June attacks in N’Djamena executed 29 Aug. President Deby 11 Aug said BH leader Abubakar Shekau killed; BH 16 Aug released audio recording of Shekau denying death. Deby 11 Aug implied he will run for fourth term in 2016 presidential elections, citing concern for country’s security.

- [“Boko Haram est décapité”, affirme le président tchadien Deby](#)”, AFP, 12 Aug. 2015.

➔ **DR Congo** Electoral commission 21 August said elections for provincial governors delayed, no new date set. Senate 11 Aug approved law defining seats for local constituencies in extraordinary session boycotted by opposition. Amid ongoing disagreements on electoral calendar and other issues, opposition 5 Aug announced public mobilisation in Kinshasa to take place 15 Sept. UN mission MONUSCO 4 Aug confirmed its support for national army despite tensions between the two; govt same day said only 390 FDLR rebels left in N and S Kivu. Six soldiers killed in suspected FDLR ambush in Rutshuru 31 Aug.

- [“Beni: La Monusco réaffirme son soutien aux FARDC pour neutraliser définitivement les ADF”](#), Radio Okapi, 5 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Rwanda** Lawmakers 10 Aug reported only ten participants in national consultations opposed amending constitution to allow President Kagame’s third term bid, next day agreed to organise constitutional reform.

- [“Only 10 Rwandans oppose Kagame third term, says parliamentary report”](#), AFP, 11 Aug. 2015.

Horn of Africa

➔ **Ethiopia** High Court 3 Aug convicted eighteen Muslim activists and journalists, sentenced them to 7-22 years’ prison for terrorism, conspiracy to establish an Islamic state. Authorities 20 Aug charged twenty with plotting to form Islamic govt, promoting and inciting extremist ideology. Tripartite talks between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan on Renaissance Dam resumed 20 Aug.

- [“Ethiopian Muslims accused of terrorism, jailed for 22 years after Obama’s visit”](#), IBT, 4 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Kenya** Renewed clashes 4 Aug between Wardei pastoralists and Giriama farmers over grazing land along border between Tana River and Kilifi counties: three killed, some 150 families displaced. Some 100 Al-Shabaab fighters 15 Aug temporarily occupied Basuba village, Lamu county, held meeting with some 300 villagers before retreating to bases in Boni forest. Interior ministry 23 Aug said two terror suspects arrested in Garissa town.

- [“Suspected al Shabaab fighters warn Kenyan villagers to shun police”](#), Reuters, 16 Aug. 2015.

➡ **Somalia** Discussion on selection process for Somali Federal Govt (SFG) MPs when current parliament’s term ends in Aug 2016 continued following late-July two-day High Level Partnership Forum which concluded “one person, one vote elections’ will not be held. Over 100 SFG MPs 12 Aug tabled no-confidence motion against President Hassan Sheikh accusing him of violating constitution, corruption, nepotism and incompetence. Al-Shabaab attacks continued including suicide attack on AMISOM base in Kismayo and bombing in Mogadishu 22 Aug that killed at least twenty; dozens killed 26 Aug in Al-Shabaab attack on govt convoy in south. Process to combine Hiran and Middle Shabelle into new Interim Federal Administration launched 7 Aug, process expected to last four months. President of Interim Juba Administration (IJA) Ahmed Madobe re-elected after IJA mandate ended 1 Aug; local opposition groups including some SFG MPs disputed election process.

- [“Somali lawmakers seek to remove president”](#), Reuters, 15 Aug. 2015.

➡ **Somaliland** Constitutional Court 18 Aug upheld parliamentary upper house’s controversial decision to postpone elections by nearly two years to March 2017 following consultations with party leaders.

- [“Constitutional Court summons leaders of three political parties”](#), SomalilandPress, 12 Aug. 2015.

⬆️ ✂️ **South Sudan** Parties to conflict finally signed peace agreement, declared permanent ceasefire following months of negotiations. Chair of SPLM-IO, Riek Machar and Pagan Amum, representing the Former Detainees, 17 Aug signed final peace agreement that was modified following 16 August IGAD Heads of State summit which included meeting with Kiir and Machar. President Kiir 26 Aug signed deal after IGAD gave govt fifteen additional days for “consultations” and threatened sanctions, arms embargo if no signature following Kiir’s refusal to sign on 17 Aug deadline. Kiir and Machar declared permanent ceasefire effective midnight 30 August. Generals Peter Gadet and Gathoth Gathkuoth 13 Aug split from SPLM-IO; several other generals and politicians including head of opposition United Democratic Salvation Front (UDSF) party Gabriel Changson also withdrew support. Kiir 16 Aug announced dismissal of governors of Western and Central Equatoria, Warrap and Upper Nile states and put former Western Equatoria governor under house arrest for four days.

- [“South Sudan’s President signs peace deal despite doubts”](#), AFP, 26 Aug. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°228, [South Sudan: Keeping Faith with the IGAD Peace Process](#), 27 July 2015.

➡ **Sudan** National Dialogue (ND) committee headed by President Bashir 5 Aug announced process would recommence 10 Oct. President Bashir 20 Aug offered rebels two-month ceasefire and amnesty to join ND. Head of AU High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) Thabo Mbeki, tasked with mediating ND, addressed AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) following 25 August consultations with opposition parties and armed groups; AUPSC called for preparatory conference to be held in Addis Ababa to create conditions necessary for govt’s own ND process within Sudan. Security forces reportedly arrested some seventeen opposition members throughout month, most affiliated with Sudanese Congress Party (SCP). Sudan Revolutionary Front rebel coalitions

tion 26 Aug threatened to boycott current ND process and launch alternative. Fighting and civilian displacement increased in Blue Nile state as Sudanese Armed Forces clashed with SPLA-N rebels. Fighting continued in S Kordofan; SPLA-N mid-Aug announced seizure of strategic Gadier and Abu Grain garrisons. Former intelligence chief Awad Mohamed Ahemd bin Awaf appointed defence minister 23 Aug. U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan Donald Booth 25 Aug visited Khartoum in first such visit for two years, held meeting with FM Ibrahim Ghandour.

- Magnus Taylor, "[Sudan: What Next?](#)", African Arguments, 13 Aug. 2015.
- "[African Union reiterates call for Sudanese pre-dialogue conference](#)", Sudan Tribune, 25 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Uganda** Former PM Mbabazi 17 Aug collected nomination forms to seek presidency outside ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) platform following President Museveni's emergence late July as unopposed presidential candidate for NRM. Continued opposition infighting early Aug resulted in splits within Democratic Party following its 26 July leadership election and within Uganda People's Congress over revised electoral roadmap, undermining new "Democratic Alliance" coalition. Two Muslim clerics early Aug survived assassination attempts in Mbale district. UPDF early month intervened in ongoing border dispute between local communities in Lamwo district and S Sudan's Eastern Equatoria, 3 Aug forcefully evicted dozens of S Sudanese accused of erecting illegal border demarcation point.

- "[UPDF flushes out S.Sudanese soldiers](#)", Daily Monitor, 6. Aug. 2015.

Southern Africa

➔ **Madagascar** Electoral commission 11 Aug published results of 31 July municipal elections: ruling New Forces for Madagascar (HVM) won majority of mayoral races in rural areas; Tiako I Madagasikara (TIM) candidate and former first lady Lalao Ravalomanana won in Antananarivo. Former coup leader Andry Rajoelina's TV and Radio Viva stations ransacked 7 Aug after his MAPAR party accused ruling HVM of electoral fraud. Electoral observers 6 Aug identified several problems with elections including untrained poll workers and voter list issues; some 800 appeal cases filed to Administrative Court.

- "[Elections locales à Madagascar: les recommandations du KMF Cnoe](#)", RFI, 6 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Mozambique** Low-intensity govt-Renamo conflict in central provinces continued. Suspected Renamo gunmen 22 Aug ambushed police unit in Moatize district, Tete province; Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama 21 Aug called on veterans and demobilised soldiers to help install local govts by force in central provinces. Renamo 24 Aug suspended weekly talks with govt following clashes with police.

- "[Renamo again threatens to take power 'by force'](#)", Agencia de Informacao de Mocambique, 23 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Zimbabwe** Police violently dispersed trade union protests in Harare 8 Aug; protests prompted by massive job cuts following mid-July Supreme Court ruling allowing employers to terminate contracts with three months' notice. Union leaders detained; journalists allegedly detained and threatened with disappearance. Zanu-PF National

Disciplinary Committee 20 Aug began investigation into six pending cases involving senior party officials accused of plotting to depose President Mugabe.

- [“Zimbabwe police block trade union protests over job losses”](#), AFP, 9 Aug. 2015.

West Africa

➔ **Burkina Faso** Constitutional Council 25 Aug declared 42 candidates, all former affiliates of ousted President Compaoré, ineligible for Oct legislative elections according to April electoral law banning former president’s allies from contesting polls. Former ruling Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) 26 Aug said it will not contest elections and called for civil disobedience until ruling is revoked; held meeting 29 Aug where party leader Eddie Komboigo toned down rhetoric, said party will comply with Constitutional Council decision, told party youth to “avoid confrontation”. Constitutional Council 10 Aug stated it was not competent to rule on appeal submitted 27 July by CDP challenging National Transition Council (CNT)’s decision to press charges against Compaoré and members of his govt. Former CDP ministers Jérôme Bougouma, Jean Bertin Ouédraogo and Arthur Kafando accused of misappropriation of public funds, interrogated and transferred to Ouagadougou prison 18-19 Aug. Three military officers interrogated and arrested mid-Aug in connection with investigation into former President Thomas Sankara’s assassination. Chief Warrant Officer Hyacinthe Kafando summoned but reportedly fled.

- [“42 pro-Compaoré déclarés ‘inéligibles’ aux législatives”](#), RFI, 26 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Côte d’Ivoire** Electoral preparations moved ahead; 33 presidential hopefuls submitted candidacies ahead of 25 Oct elections. Pascal Affi N’Guessan, leader of moderate faction of opposition Ivoirian Popular Front (FPI), sworn in by FPI as their presidential candidate 8 Aug. Aboudramane Sangaré’s hardline FPI faction refused to recognise N’Guessan as party leader and presidential candidate, 3 Aug published declaration alleging President Ouattara’s ineligibility to contest Oct election; 18 Aug called for election boycott. MP Alphonse Soro (RDR) 17 Aug escaped assassination attempt in Korhogo. Military tribunal 4 Aug convicted Anselme Seka Yapou and Jean-Noël Abehi, military officers under former President Laurent Gbagbo, to twenty years for murder and five years for desertion respectively.

- [“Le FPI tendance Gbagbo appelle au boycott de la présidentielle”](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 18 Aug. 2015.

↑ **Guinea** Govt and opposition 20 Aug signed agreement to allow more opposition representation in local govt, reforms of National Electoral Commission (CENI) and upgrade of electoral roll, in attempt to ease political tensions ahead of Oct presidential polls. Opposition spokesperson 27 Aug expressed dismay at lack of implementation.

- [“Un consensus politique trouvé”](#), BBC, 21 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Guinea-Bissau** President Vaz 12 Aug sacked PM Pereira following accusation of lies, lack of transparency, lack of policy results and obstruction of justice; new PM Baciro Dja sworn in 20 Aug. Parliament 24 Aug adopted resolution demanding Dja resign. Ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) 15 Aug attempted to reappoint Pereira as PM, accused Vaz of “constitutional coup” fol-

lowing his rejection or Pereira's reappointment. Pereira and some thousand supporters protested 17 Aug in Bissau calling for his restitution. Armed forces chief of staff General Biague na Ntan 10 Aug promised military would refrain from intervening in political affairs.

- ["Le bras de fer Vaz-Pereira se poursuit dans la rue"](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 17 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Mali** Committee of the Agreement (CSA), tasked with implementing May peace agreement between armed Tuareg coalition Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA), govt and pro-govt armed groups, continued to face challenges as disagreements persisted over representation and responsibility-sharing. Fighting between armed groups resumed in north after pro-govt groups seized Anéfis, south of Kidal. Pro-govt group 30 Aug agreed to withdraw from Anéfis following request by President IBK and threat of UN sanctions. MINUSMA forced to establish 10km buffer zone after clashes 16 and 18 Aug in Kidal region. Rebel coalition CMA 24 Aug suspended its participation in CSA implementation process. International Mediation 26 Aug presented Malian parties roadmap to solve crisis in Anéfis. Attacks on security forces attributed to extremists groups and local criminals continued in central and northern regions: armed forces (FAMA) ambushed 1 Aug near Toulé in Ségou region, two soldiers killed; military camp attacked 3 Aug in Gouma-Rharous, Timbuktu region, eleven soldiers killed; police station attacked 12 Aug in Bamako. Gunmen 8 Aug stormed Byblos hotel in Sévaré, five MINUSMA-associated staff, five FAMA soldiers and two attackers killed.

- ["What peace deal? No end to Mali conflict"](#), IRIN, 19 August 2015.

➔ **Niger** Humanitarian crisis in Diffa region worsened amid intensified Boko Haram (BH) attacks in NE Nigeria and Lake Chad islands. Opposition coalition Alliance for Reconciliation, Democracy (ARDR) 10 Aug reiterated rejection of electoral timeline announced 29 July, deemed it "not consensual" as opposition not consulted, argued holding general elections before local ones constitutes violation of electoral and constitutional laws. Suspected BH attack 27 Aug in SE killed three, including soldier.

- ["L'opposition se réunit en front contre le pouvoir"](#), Afrik.com, 18 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Nigeria** Govt continued counter-insurgency operations against Boko Haram (BH) militants. Military airstrikes 31 July-1 Aug on Bitta village, Borno state, military reported some 50 insurgents killed. Army 2 Aug reported operation near Aulari in Borno state rescued some 178 hostages; govt forces 6 Aug repelled invasion of Gadaka town, Yobe state. Outgoing army chief Lt Gen Kenneth Minimah 6 Aug said BH fighters no longer able to engage with security forces and BH leadership in "hiding". Domestic intelligence agency (DSS) 30 Aug reported over a dozen key BH operatives arrested in past two months including nine in commercial capital Lagos. BH ground and suicide attacks continued in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states killing over 220 civilians. Suspected BH militants 22 Aug ambushed new army chief Lt Gen Tukur Buratai's convoy in Borno state, one soldier and at least five militants killed. BH leader Abubakar Shekau reportedly released audio message 16 Aug asserting full control over insurgents amid speculation over his possible death and split within group. Incidents of criminal violence continued: suspected sea pirates 7 Aug attacked outpost of military Joint Task Force in Nembe, Bayelsa state, four soldiers and one policeman killed.

- ["Death toll in Nigeria Boko Haram massacre rises to 160: locals"](#), AFP, 19 Aug. 2015.

Asia

North East Asia

➔ **China (internal)** Courts in Xinjiang late Aug jailed 45 people convicted of supporting terrorist organisations or helping people flee abroad. FM 4 Aug appealed for U.S. to help fight Xinjiang militants.

- [“China sentences 45 in restive region of Xinjiang”](#), *New York Times*, 27 Aug. 2015.

➔ **China/Japan** During 14 Aug speech on 70th anniversary of WWII Japanese PM Abe expressed “deep remorse” for “immeasurable damage and suffering” inflicted by Japan during war, but avoided direct, personal apology. China said apology lacked sincerity, was evasive. Japan complained to UN over UNSG Ban’s plan to attend Beijing military parade 3 Sept commemorating 70th anniversary of Japan’s defeat in WWII. China also denounced 15 Aug visit by three members of Japanese cabinet to controversial Yasukuni shrine; Abe sent financial offering. Negotiations for Abe to visit Beijing ended in failure. China and Russia held large-scale combined naval drills in Sea of Japan and off coast of Russia 20-28 Aug. Thousands across Japan 30 Aug joined largest protests yet against Abe’s controversial security bills.

- [“Abe’s mixed apology”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 16 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Korean Peninsula** Tensions on peninsula escalated after three mines detonated south of Military Demarcation Line 4 Aug, seriously injuring two ROK soldiers; joint UN Command (UNC) and ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff investigation 10 Aug concluded mines purposefully planted by DPRK army (KPA) to kill ROK soldiers. In retaliation ROK 10 Aug resumed anti-DPRK broadcasting on loudspeakers at border, first time in eleven years. DPRK 14 Aug denied planting mines, 15 Aug threatened military strikes against loudspeakers; ROK continued broadcasts. DPRK and ROK exchanged artillery fire 20 Aug after apparent DPRK shelling into Demilitarized Zone (DMZ); no casualties or damage reported, DPRK denied firing shells. DPRK 20 Aug threatened unspecified military operations if ROK did not stop broadcasts, ordered troops into “semi-wartime alert”; as 22 Aug deadline approached ROK ordered evacuation of over 10,000 living close to DMZ. DPRK and ROK 22 Aug agreed to emergency talks, however Pyongyang subsequently deployed submarines and mobilised artillery units along border. DPRK and ROK 25 Aug reached agreement to end standoff, DPRK expressed regret over ROK soldiers wounded by landmines and agreed to end “semi state of war”; ROK agreed to halt anti-DPRK broadcasts. ROK and U.S. 12-28 Aug carried out joint and combined military drills in Pochŏn, Kyŏnggi province; UNC and Combined Forces Command 17 Aug began annual Ulchi Freedom Guardian multinational combined exercise, prompting DPRK threat of military retaliation; U.S. 21 Aug said exercise temporarily suspended due to ROK-DPRK tensions. IHS Jane’s defence consultancy reported analysis suggesting apparent upgrade to DPRK main nuclear facility, doubling its capacity to produce highly-enriched uranium.

- [“Deal between North and South Korea defies their mutual disdain”](#), *New York Times*, 25 Aug. 2015.

South Asia

↓ **Afghanistan** Spate of insurgent attacks targeted Kabul, including bombings 7 Aug inflicting over 350 casualties, 50 killed. Govt blamed Pakistan for violence, claiming some bombs used military-grade explosives; senior delegation visited Islamabad 13 Aug for tense meetings with Pakistani officials about Kabul attacks. Acting defence minister 18 Aug said Pakistan had declared war against Afghanistan. Both sides also accused each other of initiating cross-border artillery exchanges: Afghanistan claimed eight security personnel killed in Kunar province, Pakistan accused Afghan forces of killing three paramilitaries, later in month said militants firing from Afghan territory killed four Pakistani soldiers. Govt 19 Aug lodged formal complaint with Pakistan's ambassador, Pakistan 20 Aug summoned Afghan ambassador. Amid increased tensions with Pakistan and Taliban leadership struggle following disclosure of Mullah Omar's death, fledgling peace process under which Pakistan had planned to host negotiations between Kabul govt and insurgents stalled. Officials 1 Aug reported at least 44 militants killed during clashes with security forces in NW Faryab province. Nangarhar province official 5 Aug reported at least 56 Taliban and Islamic State (IS) fighters killed in drone strikes. Residents of Dasht-e-Archi district, northern Kunduz province 10 Aug said Taliban forcing them to join their ranks, extorting money. Official 16 Aug said militants had blocked main route leading to Shohada district in N Badakhshan district. At least 29 members of pro-govt militia killed in Taliban suicide attack in Kunduz 8 Aug. Taliban 24 Aug captured Helmand's Musa Qala district HQ; district recaptured by govt forces backed by NATO airstrikes 30 Aug. Two NATO forces killed in Helmand province 26 Aug; twelve people killed in bomb attack on NATO convoy in Kabul 22 Aug.

- Graeme Smith, "[Taliban Factionalism Rises After Mullah Omar's Death](#)", *Interpreter*, 13 Aug. 2015.
- "[Taliban leadership struggle fuels wave of attacks in Afghanistan](#)", Reuters, 12 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Bangladesh** Attacks on freedom of expression intensified, with fourth murder of secular blogger and further actions by executive and judiciary pressuring journalists and human rights activists. Secular blogger Niladri Chattopadhyay (Niloy Neel) hacked to death in Dhaka 7 Aug, fourth such killing in 2015. Ansar ul Islam, linked to al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), claimed responsibility; several members of radical Islamist Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) arrested in connection with killing. Three other ABT members arrested 17 Aug in connection with killings of bloggers Avijit Roy in Feb and Ananta Bijoy Das in May. Dhaka police 2 Aug released statement accusing prominent human rights organisations Odhikar and Bangladesh Human Rights Commission of acting illegally by reporting extrajudicial killings allegedly committed by police. Police 17 Aug arrested journalist Probir Sikdar for defamation against Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain in social media (Facebook) post. High Court 5 Aug rejected opposition BNP leader Khaleda Zia's challenge to legality of 2007 graft case. Police 10 Aug arrested six BNP leaders in Savar, 31 BNP leaders and activists in Khuln, charged with subversive activities; 18 Aug arrested BNP's chief advisor Shawkat Mahmud on arson charges. Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS) activists 15 Aug clashed with security forces in Rangmati, five JSS killed. Bangladesh and India 31 July exchanged

control over 160 enclaves in historic land swap; residents previously considered stateless will be able to choose where they want to live and their citizenship.

- [“The brutal fight of Bangladesh’s secular voices to be heard”](#), *Guardian*, 22 Aug. 2015.

➔ **India (non-Kashmir)** Govt and Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN(K)) insurgent group signed peace agreement 3 Aug; NSCN (K) chief Thuingaleng Muivah 15 Aug reiterated insistence on sovereignty over territorial claims. Military reported five Naga militants killed by security forces in Tuensang district 28 Aug. Anti-Naxal operations reinforced with deployment of additional 5,000 Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) in Chhattisgarh state 4 Aug. Clashes between security forces and Maoist militants including in Kanker district 14 Aug. Maoists reportedly opened fire on police in Bijapur district 18 Aug, killing one. Senior Special Task Force official reported killed in Maoist attack in Bastar district 22 Aug. Two Maoist commanders reported killed in clash with police in Jharkand 28 Aug. PM Narendra Modi 18 Aug promised unprecedented Rs 1.25 lakh core development package for Bihar ahead of Oct Bihar assembly polls.

- [“Successful Naga talks has started new journey: PM Modi”](#), NDTV, 24 Aug. 2015.

↓ **Kashmir** Clashes across the Line of Control (LoC) and Working Boundary dividing Pakistan and Indian-administered Kashmir escalated, prompting UNSG Ban to express “serious concern” 18 Aug. Border security forces fired at each other 4 Aug near Sialkot in Pakistani Punjab; one Indian, two Pakistanis reported killed. UN Military Observer Group team visited area after Pakistan demanded inquiry. India 5 Aug reported arrest of Pakistani who allegedly attacked Indian Border Security convoy in India-administered Kashmir, killing two soldiers. India and Pakistan 15-16 Aug traded cross-border firing; three Pakistani and four Indian civilians killed, 40 injured. Pakistani sniper 25 Aug reportedly fired at Indian soldiers, killing one. Nine civilians reported killed, 63 wounded as Indian and Pakistani border guards traded gunfire near Sialkot 28 Aug. Countries 16-17 Aug summoned each other’s ambassadors to protest ceasefire violations. Planned talks between countries’ national security advisers cancelled at last minute 22 Aug; meeting of director-generals of Indian Border Security Force and Pakistan Rangers reportedly planned for Sept.

- [“Pakistan calls off talks with India as Kashmir not on agenda”](#), Bloomberg, 23 Aug. 2015.

↓ ***Nepal** Six-state federal model agreed 8 Aug between four major parties drew criticism from several constituencies including most plains-based Madhesi parties and groups, plains-based Tharu groups, and other ethnic/indigenous groups, for violating previous agreements and fragmenting regions where they held demographic majorities. Protests triggered in multiple districts including by groups demanding present regional administrative units remain intact; several protesters killed in police firing in separate incidents in the Tarai plains. Seven police and a child killed, over 40 security personnel injured 24 Aug in violent protests in Kailali demanding creation of Tharu-majority state; concerns raised over subsequent deployment of Nepal Army in protest-hit areas, local residents reportedly leaving villages. Over 100 arrested 16 Aug in nationwide strike protesting the deal, called by Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist-led alliance. Several Madhes-based parties called indefinite strike across southern districts beginning 18 Aug; Sadbhavana Party 18 Aug resigned from Constituent Assembly en masse protesting federal model and constitutional draft provisions. Fresh protests erupted 31 Aug in Parsa district, police fired into crowd of protesters, one killed. Three major parties revised fed-

eral model 21 Aug to add seventh state, recognising demands of some mid- and far-western groups; deal rejected by Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (Loktantrik), fourth signatory of six-state agreement, for neglecting demands of Tharu community.

- [“It’s time to drop the arrogance”](#), *Hindustan Times*, 25 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Pakistan** Supreme Court 5 Aug ruled in favour of Eighteenth and Twenty-first constitutional amendments, dismissing challenges to establishment of military courts to try suspects, including civilians, on terrorism charges; affirmed court’s right to oversee military courts. In Karachi, ongoing security operation mainly targeted Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM); MQM Senator Nasreen Jalil 10 Aug said 41 party workers killed since start of operation in 2013, 150 people missing in past three months; interior minister refuted allegations. MQM members of National Assembly, Senate and Sindh provincial assembly resigned 12 Aug, calling for creation of monitoring committee to oversee security operation and judicial commission to investigate alleged extrajudicial killings of party workers and release of imprisoned members. Sindh chief minister 8 Aug extended Sindh Rangers’ policing powers by another 120 days. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for murder of judge in Rawalpindi 5 Aug. Drone strike killed five suspected militants in N Waziristan 6 Aug. Military reported 90 militants in N Waziristan and fifteen in Khyber agency died in airstrikes 16 and 17 Aug. Military launched new offensive against TTP 21 Aug. Three bodies found in Balochistan’s Turbat on 25 July, nine in Quetta and Pishin districts 10 Aug. Police killed leader of sectarian militant outfit Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) Malik Ishaq, two sons and over ten members 29 July; at Ishaq’s funeral violent demonstrators attacked Shia mosques and private property, two police killed in attack on police station in Gujrat. 16 Aug suicide attack killed Punjab home minister and sixteen others; attack reportedly claimed by LeJ, TTP faction Jamaat ul Ah-rar and Khyber agency-based Lashkar-e-Islam.

- [“Pakistan’s secret military courts given Supreme Court blessing”](#), Reuters, 5 Aug. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°271, [Revisiting Counter-terrorism Strategies in Pakistan: Opportunities and Pitfalls](#), 22 July 2015.

⬆ **Sri Lanka** Following acrimonious but largely peaceful campaign, 17 Aug parliamentary election saw United National Party (UNP)-led United National Front for Good Governance (UNFGG) win 106 seats in 225-member parliament, while former president Rajapaksa failed in bid to become PM in a United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA) govt; result consolidated political shift begun by Jan victory of President Sirisena. UPFA won 95 seats. Sirisena 21 Aug appointed UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe as PM; MoU between Sirisena’s SLFP and Wickremesinghe’s UNP signed same day to form two-year national govt. UPFA’s and Rajapaksa’s electoral failure appears to have convinced majority of SLFP parliamentary group to back Sirisena and national govt. Days before election Sirisena 14 Aug moved to take control of Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and UPFA, replacing general secretaries and expelling a dozen members of SLFP executive committee; followed 13 Aug letter to Rajapaksa reiterating Sirisena’s determination to not appoint him as PM, and criticising Rajapaksa for “racist” UPFA campaign. Tamil National Alliance (TNA) won respectable sixteen seats from north and east. Plans for national govt include drafting new constitution, electoral reforms, further reduction in presidential powers and possible expanded devolution of power to provinces.

- [“Sri Lanka’s nice-guy president channels his inner Machiavelli”](#), Reuters, 21 Aug. 2015.

New Crisis Group Asia Report N°272, *Sri Lanka Between Elections*, 12 August 2015. Sri Lanka's parliamentary elections will test the country's fragile democratic opening. With the hardline Sinhala nationalism of ex-President Mahinda Rajapaksa challenging the "good governance" agenda of the United National Party and President Sirisena, the outcome will affect chances for reconciliation and lasting resolution of the country's long-running conflicts.

South East Asia

➔ **Indonesia** Clash between police and suspected terrorists believed to be led by Santoso, Indonesia's most wanted terrorist in Central Sulawesi 21 Aug; one police officer killed.

- ["Indonesian cop killed in jungle ambush"](#), *Straits Times*, 22 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Myanmar** Ahead of 9 Nov general elections, longstanding tensions between legislature and executive played out within ruling Union Solidarity and Development party (USDP): President Thein Sein 12 Aug deposed party chairman Shwe Mann and several allies after Shwe Mann's rejection of Thein Sein loyalists' applications for upcoming polls, and amid suspicion within USDP regarding Shwe Mann's relationship with opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Divisions within opposition as NLD selection committee rejected prominent non-NLD candidates who had been requested by party to run, including prominent former student leader Ko Ko Gyi and some twenty other members of 88 Generation group. Over 6,000 candidates registered by 14 Aug deadline. Heavy rain and cyclone Komen late July brought serious flooding; nearly 400,000 households displaced, candidate registration period extended. Parliament 18 Aug approved third 90-day extension of martial law in Kokang. Ninth formal round of peace talks 6-7 Aug: final ceasefire text agreed, but question of which groups will be eligible to sign Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) remains major sticking point. Parliament 19 Aug approved two controversial bills proposed by hardline Buddhist nationalists, completing package of four discriminatory bills aimed at "protection of race and religion". At request of UK, UNSC briefed on situation in Myanmar under AOB 28 Aug.

- ["Pistols and purges"](#), *Economist*, 22 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Philippines** Plenary session in House of Representatives on Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) stalled due to lack of quorum 4 and 5 Aug. Senator Ferdinand Marcos 12 Aug presented alternative BBL draft to Senate with 80% of provisions amended; govt peace panel 17 Aug said substitute BBL may encourage "personalistic" politics and perpetuate political dynasties by balancing representation in favour of district representatives. Meanwhile, MILF panel chair Iqbal has repeatedly said "no BBL is better than a bad BBL". Senate plenary to debate substitute BBL late Aug. Plenary debate on national budget 28 Sept, Congress goes on recess 10 Oct-2 Nov. Suspected Abu Sayyaf (ASG) set off home-made bomb in Basilan 7 Aug, two soldiers killed; killed in ambush two soldiers in Sulu 10 Aug. Around 40 ASG militants clashes with members of armed civilian group Barangay Peace Action Team 15 Aug in Sulu, two ASG killed. Seven soldiers and 15 ASG killed in firefight in Sulu 20 Aug. Three ASG killed in clash with security forces in Sulu 28 Aug. New People's Army (NPA) militants and military clashed in Masbate 5 Aug; four NPA and one soldier killed; five NPA killed in clash with military 19 Aug.

- ["Marcos: Substitute Bangsamoro bill is 'fair to all'"](#), CNN, 17 Aug. 2015.

➔ **South China Sea** ASEAN FMs summit 1-6 Aug included extensive discussions on SCS, issued joint communiqué reflecting concern over increased tensions, said land reclamations “have eroded trust and confidence” but did not name China or call for halt to such activities; reiterated call for Code of Conduct in SCS; China 3 Aug said SCS “should not be discussed at all” during ASEAN meeting. Chinese FM Yi 5 Aug said China had stopped land reclamation in Spratly islands; Philippines and U.S. raised concerns about constructions on newly-built islands. U.S. Sec State Kerry 5 Aug said U.S. “will not accept restrictions on freedom of navigation and overflight, or other lawful uses of the sea”. Japan continued cooperation with Philippines and Vietnam; 15 Aug joined U.S.-Philippine humanitarian exercises for first time. U.S. 18 Aug announced drone flights over SCS to increase by 50%; 21 Aug released report accusing China of dramatically increasing land reclamation activities and using naval patrols to aggressively assert territorial claims in SCS.

- Yanmei Xie, [“Fishing For Ways To De-Escalate South China Sea Tensions”](#), *Diplomat*, 3 Aug. 2015.
- [“Pentagon says China has stepped up land reclamation in South China Sea”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 20 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Thailand** Bomb exploded at Erawan Shrine in Bangkok 17 Aug in deadliest terrorist attack in recent Thai history; twenty killed, 120 injured, most victims were ethnic Chinese visitors to shrine. No claim of responsibility. Second bomb of same design detonated at Sathorn Pier on Chao Phraya River 18 Aug, no casualties; CCTV showed man dropped second bomb into river shortly after Erawan explosion. Police 29 Aug arrested Erawan bombing suspect in Bangkok outskirts and seized bomb-making equipment, seeking two other suspects. Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) late July agreed to establish National Strategic Reform and Reconciliation Commission (NSRCC) to lead reforms after promulgation of new constitution and general election; mid-Aug announced plans to grant NSRCC powers to override elected govt “in times of crisis”. NSRCC proposal criticised across political spectrum. CDC 22 Aug presented draft constitution to National Reform Council for 7 Sept vote. UNHCHR 11 Aug called for release of those jailed for lèse-majesté, urged amendment of law; followed handing down of heavy jail sentences in two cases for online lèse-majesté comments, amid significant increase in cases since 2014 coup. Several killed in ongoing insurgent violence in south. General Aksara Kerdpol led “pre-talks” with Majlis Amanah Rakyat Patani (MARA Patani), umbrella group of six Malay-Muslim separatist organisations, in Kuala Lumpur 25 Aug. Security forces 2 Aug killed insurgent leader Masukarueno Yakumo in Narathiwat.

- [“Bangkok bomb: Thai capital reeling after deadliest attack in years”](#), *Guardian*, 17 Aug. 2015.
- See Crisis Group Asia Report N°270, [Southern Thailand: Dialogue in Doubt](#), 8 July 2015.

Pacific

➔ **Fiji** Public prosecutor 24 Aug charged four people with sedition and urging political violence, bringing total number of people charged in separate cases to 70. Govt deployed military 19 Aug to assist police investigations regarding suspected rebel groups. PM Bainimarama late Aug vowed to arrest dissidents planning to overthrow govt.

- [“Fiji arrests 63 people accused of inciting political unrest”](#), ABC news, 19 Aug. 2015.

Europe and Central Asia

Balkans

➔ **Bosnia** At EU Balkan summit in Vienna 27 Aug EU representatives underlined commitment to region, called for further reforms. Republika Srpska (RS) entity opposition leader 27 Aug said he has tapes proving vote-buying in Oct 2014 local elections by RS PM Željka Cvijanović; ruling SNSD party denied accusations.

- [“Prime Minister ‘vote-buying tape’ is authentic, claims opposition”](#), Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, 28 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Kosovo** Following another round of EU-brokered talks, Kosovo and Serbia PMs 25 Aug signed landmark agreements including on energy, establishment of Association of Serbian Municipalities and freedom of movement/Mitrovica bridge. Parliament 3 Aug adopted necessary constitutional changes to establish War Crimes Court to try former Kosovo Liberation Army fighters, in move welcomed by EU and U.S.. Opposition said new court unconstitutional, 11 Aug asked constitutional court to annul law. Some 1,000 Kosovo Serbs protested in Mitrovica 14 Aug demanding release of hunger-striking politician Oliver Ivanovic, arrested in Jan 2014 for war crimes and awaiting his verdict, after EULEX judges 6 Aug extended his detention.

- [“Serbia and Kosovo in cooperation deal”](#), AFP, 26 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Macedonia** Govt and opposition met at EU-mediated talks 26 Aug to discuss appointment of new special prosecutor to investigate illegal surveillance claims, in accordance with June EU-brokered agreement; no consensus reached. Opposition leader Zoran Zaev 29 Aug said if special prosecutor not appointed by 15 Sept deadline he will release more tapes allegedly showing that govt was illegally wiretapping citizens. Govt 20 August declared state of emergency on borders with Serbia and Greece due to influx of refugees and migrants, deployed troops to border with Greece.

- [“Macedonians haggle over new special prosecutor”](#), Balkan Insight, 28 Aug. 2015.
- For latest briefing, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°75, [Macedonia: Defusing the Bombs](#), 9 July 2015.

Caucasus

➔ **Armenia** Russian military court 12 Aug sentenced Russian soldier Valery Permyakov, accused of killing seven people in Armenian town Gyumri in Jan, to ten years’ jail for desertion, illegal weapons possession; Permyakov still to stand trial in Armenia for murder.

- [“Russian suspect in Armenian massacre gets 10 years on military charges”](#), RFE/RL, 12 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Azerbaijan** Death of young man in police custody 21 Aug sparked protests in Mingachevir. Rights activists Arif and Leyla Yunus sentenced 13 Aug to seven-eight

years' jail for fraud and tax evasion; international rights groups condemned verdicts as political.

- [“Azerbaijan jails rights activists Leyla and Arif Yunus”](#), BBC News, 13 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Amid intensifying tensions along contact line and accusations of ceasefire violations on both sides, Azerbaijan defence minister 6 Aug said country prepared to use force to take control over Nagorno-Karabakh.

- [“Azerbaijan says it's prepared to take back Karabakh by force”](#), Bloomberg Business, 6 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Georgia** Following Defence Minister Tinatin Khidasheli's 20 Aug call for tangible steps toward NATO accession, NATO 27 Aug opened new training base in Georgia; Russia said move provocative. Govt 11 Aug called on Moscow to avoid escalation in breakaway republic South Ossetia (SO), after Russia's moving of SO border sign posts in July reportedly cut off residents from their farmland.

- [“Russia ‘would boost military presence’ in response to Georgia NATO membership”](#), *Telegraph*, 28 Aug. 2015.

➔ **North Caucasus (Russia)** Leader of Caucasus Emirate (CE) Magomed Sulaimanov killed 11 Aug in National Anti-terrorist Committee (NAK) special operation along with leader of Dagestani insurgency and two other militants, becoming second CE leader killed in five months. Security forces 16 Aug killed leader of mountain sector of Dagestani insurgency Abu Dudjuna and another militant in Gimry. Also killed eight militants in Ingushetia 2 Aug, killed six militants in Kabardino-Balkaria 3 Aug, and leader of Khasavyurt group 24 Aug; NAK said all killed militants had links to Islamic State. Several other suspected insurgents killed in Dagestan during month. Police officer killed in Novy Khushet, Dagestan 17 Aug; twelve people detained in subsequent police raid. Unidentified assailants 21 Aug attacked police officer's house in Novy Khushet, killing police officer and a fifteen-year old boy. Two Chechen police injured in Khasavyurt 21 Aug; one police officer killed, two injured in bomb attack in Chechnya 8 Aug. Deputy imam of Irgakly village in Stavropol Krai shot dead 20 Aug. Head of Buynaksk district Daniyal Shikhsaidov, son of powerful Dagestan parliament speaker, detained on suspicion of fraud. Former mayor of Dagestan capital Makhachkala Said Amirov sentenced to life on murder and terrorism charges 27 Aug.

- [“Caucasus insurgent leader killed in Russian raid”](#), World Bulletin, 11 Aug. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°237, [North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration \(IV\): Economic and Social Imperatives](#), 7 July 2015.

Eastern Europe

➔ **Ukraine** Exchanges of heavy artillery and shelling along contact line continued, including 9 Aug attack destroying four OSCE armoured vehicles in Donetsk, and intense shelling 14 Aug that left two civilians dead, fifteen injured. Limited direct infantry clashes, including 10 Aug attack by separatists reportedly leaving one govt soldier dead, thirteen wounded. During contact group meeting including govt and separatists, Russia, EU and OSCE representatives 26 Aug agreed to renewed ceasefire starting 1 Sept. Parliament 31 Aug gave initial approval to draft law on special status for sepa-

ratist regions; dozens of nationalists protested outside parliament against law, clashed with security forces, one security officer killed, dozens wounded by grenade reportedly thrown by protesters. Ukraine and Russia traded accusations of ceasefire violations: Russian FM Sergei Lavrov 17 Aug said Ukraine preparing new offensive. Govt and international creditors 27 Aug announced debt restructuring deal, including write-off of 20% of Ukraine's debt.

- [“Deadly anti-autonomy protest outside parliament”](#), BBC, 31 Aug. 2015.

Western Europe/Mediterranean

➔ **Cyprus** UN SRSG Espen Bath Eide 14 Aug expressed further optimism over ongoing reunification talks following 13 Aug meeting with Turkish foreign ministry officials, emphasised progress on contentious issues including sharing of island's natural resources.

- [“Cyprus dispute has best opportunity with Akinci and Anastasiades: UN envoy”](#), Anadolu Agency, 14 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Turkey** Clashes between security forces and PKK intensified in southeast: Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) reported 67 members killed in clashes with PKK 20 July- 30 Aug; PKK reported 53 of its members killed in same period; 28 civilians reported killed. Govt reported over 800 alleged PKK members detained. Govt 17-18 Aug designated over 100 “special security zones” in east and southeast, imposed curfews in parts of Mus and Diyarbakır. Govt continued air bombardments of PKK positions in Turkey and N Iraq, launching thirteen waves of airstrikes 24 July - 28 Aug. Senior PKK members blamed govt for breaking three-year ceasefire; said PKK would stop fighting if Turkey ends military operations, called for monitoring committee to oversee conditions of reinforced ceasefire, demanded direct contact with jailed leader Öcalan and new format for peace process. Govt late July initiated criminal investigations against Demirtas and fellow co-chair Yüksekdağ on criminal charges and engaging in terrorism propaganda respectively. Unable to agree on terms of coalition with opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) or Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), PM Davutoglu 18 Aug returned mandate to form govt to president; Erdogan 21 Aug announced snap elections for 1 Nov. U.S. 12 Aug conducted first airstrikes on Islamic State in Syria from Turkey's Incirlik airbase. Army 14 Aug began constructing wall in Hatay to stem illegal border crossings following govt's July pledge to tighten security at Syrian and Iraqi borders.

- Nigar Göksel, [“A New Cycle Begins in Turkey-PKK Conflict”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 11 Aug. 2015.
- Noah Bonsey, [“Turkey and the U.S. in Syria: Time for Some Hard Choices”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 10 Aug. 2015.
- [“Urban warfare escalates in Turkey's Kurdish-majority southeast”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 19 Aug. 2015.

Central Asia

➔ **Kazakhstan** Court ordered closure of opposition Communist Party 3 Aug for not meeting re-registration requirements of having at least 40,000 members; party leadership claimed closure politically motivated. Aqtobe court sentenced eight people to three-to-six years jail 3 Aug for inciting social, ethnic, religious discord via social media. Currency slumped in value by 25% 19-20 Aug; low oil prices driving reduced salaries, job losses for oil workers.

- [“Looming unrest in the oil sector’ is rattling Central Asia's biggest country”](#), Business Insider, 17 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Kyrgyzstan** Clashes reported along border with Tajikistan 3 Aug. Following 16 July anti-terrorist operation in Bishkek, State Committee for National Security (GKNB) end July detained former MP Maksat Kunakunov at Manas airport, accused of sponsoring suspected Islamic State (IS) cell which was eliminated during earlier security operation. First IS recruitment video addressing Muslims in Kyrgyzstan released late July. Ahead of 4 Oct parliamentary elections, controversial former Osh mayor Melis Myrzakmatov, third candidate on Ata Meken party list, rumoured to be hiding in Moscow or Urumqi after being found guilty of corruption 22 July. Country became full member of Eurasian Economic Union 12 Aug.

- [“Is the ISIS threat in Kyrgyzstan real?”](#), *Diplomat*, 4 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Tajikistan** President Rahmon 8 Aug signed new law depriving Tajiks of citizenship for joining/fighting for terrorist organisations abroad. Opposition crackdown continued: Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan’s (IRPT) publishing house closed 13 Aug for not meeting national “sanitary-epidemiological norms”; IRPT claimed targeted campaign against them. Justice ministry 28 Aug banned IRPT, citing insufficient number of members to qualify as officially registered party; gave party ten days to halt activities. Deputy leader of opposition in exile detained in Moldova 11 Aug on Tajik govt request. Afghan authorities apologised after two mortar shells launched in Afghanistan 13 Aug fell in Khatlon province in SW of Tajikistan.

- [“Activist faces extradition to Tajikistan”](#), Human Rights Watch, 17 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Turkmenistan** Relations with Moscow strained amid dispute over price Russia’s Gazprom pays for Turkmen gas.

- [“Pipeline race heats up in Central Asia”](#), Asia Times, 11 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Uzbekistan** Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) released videos in which leaders pledge allegiance to Islamic State (IS); in video released 2 Aug leader Usman Ghazi stated “Taliban cannot be trusted”. Uzbek militant group fighting in Syria pledged allegiance to new Taliban leader, condemned IS. U.S. Deputy Asst Sec State reportedly asked govt to contribute in fighting IS 27 Aug.

- [“What next for the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan?”](#), RFE/RL, 23 Aug. 2015.

Latin America and the Caribbean

➔ **Colombia** 40th round of FARC-govt negotiations ended 30 Aug amid optimism. Sub-Commission on gender 24-25 Aug received representatives from ten women's organisations; joint humanitarian demining pilot in Briceño, Antioquia department resumed 31 Aug. FARC 20 Aug extended month-long unilateral ceasefire indefinitely. 39th round had ended 2 Aug with seventeen new FARC members switching with counterparts to join talks, including several commanders of regional fronts. New legal advisory teams named by both parties joined talks to support discussions on transitional justice. UNSG Ban 13 Aug appointed former head of UN mission in Guatemala Jean Arnault as his delegate to Sub-Commission on End of Conflict Issues. President Santos 12 Aug suggested creation of "mini-congress" consisting of lawmakers from both chambers and FARC members to implement future peace accords; guerrillas 26 Aug rejected proposal as "unilateral". FARC 24 Aug admitted its Daniel Aldana mobile column responsible for 3 Aug murder of Afro Colombian leader in Tumaco (Nariño). ELN commander Gabino 24 Aug confirmed progress in exploratory talks with govt but said no date has been set for start of formal negotiations. Press rumours 16 Aug suggested security forces had killed Megateo, regional leader of dissident faction of Popular Liberation Army (EPL). "We are Defenders" right group released report 19 Aug showing 105% increase in violence against human rights defenders in first semester of 2015 compared to same period last year. Tensions with Venezuela spiked amid serious border crisis (see Colombia/Venezuela).

- ["Colombian Farc rebels extend unilateral ceasefire"](#), BBC, 20 Aug. 2015.

⚠️ **Colombia/Venezuela** Venezuelan President Maduro 19 Aug announced 72-hour closure of border between Venezuela's Táchira state and neighbouring Colombia following alleged Colombian "paramilitary" attack which left three Venezuelan soldiers and one civilian wounded; later extended closure indefinitely, implemented "state of exception" in six border municipalities and deployed 2,000 additional troops. Venezuela deported over 1,100 Colombians by 25 Aug, amid protests from Bogotá; at least an additional 7,000 have crossed back to Colombia. Venezuela's opposition MUD alliance 22 Aug said alleged incident was pretext for govt to declare nationwide state of emergency in response to possible opposition victory in Dec elections (see Venezuela). Both govts 27 Aug recalled their ambassadors, Colombian President Santos urged UNASUR and OAS to call emergency meetings to discuss tensions; OAS rejected call.

- ["Colombia and Venezuela recall ambassadors amid border crisis"](#), Reuters, 28 Aug. 2015.

⚠️ **Guatemala** Escalating political tensions as prosecutors 20 Aug named President Pérez Molina and former VP Roxana Baldetti leaders of customs fraud scandal. Baldetti arrested 21 Aug; head of International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) Ivan Velásquez and Prosecutor General Thelma Aldana 20 Aug requested pretrial hearing on lifting of president's immunity. Powerful business association CACIF, former ally of president, called for his immediate resignation 21 Aug. Eighteen high-level govt officers including eight ministers resigned in ensuing days. 100,000 protested 27 Aug demanding president's resignation; hundreds of businesses and organisations closed. Congress 27 Aug named special commission tasked with assessing request to lift president's immunity. President reiterated intent to complete

full term in office; more protests are expected ahead of planned 6 Sept elections. Supreme Electoral Tribunal 10 Aug charged leading opposition party Líder with exceeding campaign expenditure limits; party 14 Aug rejected decision, argued internal audits showed campaign complied with financing regulations; challenge hinders electoral reform efforts ahead of polls. Anti-corruption campaign supporters continued weekly demonstrations supporting CICIG and calling for president's resignation.

- Crisis Group Statement, [“Political Turmoil in Guatemala: Opportunities and Risks”](#), 31 Aug. 2015.
- [“Guatemala President balks at calls for resignation”](#), *New York Times*, 23 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Haiti** Parliamentary elections held 9 Aug, OAS election observers next day noted violent incidents and other disruptions but endorsed legitimacy of vote; voter turnout estimated at 18%. Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) 20 Aug announced run-off to be held 25 Oct in 25 constituencies where less than 70% of tally sheets arrived at voter tabulation centre; listed series of corrective measures to prevent violence in run-off polls including extending campaign period. CEP mid-Aug banned some sixteen candidates for election-related violence or disturbances. Dominican Republic 15 Aug resumed deportations to Haiti of Dominicans of Haitian descent following temporary suspension to allow migrants to obtain proper documentation; tens of thousands of Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans have reportedly fled since 17 June residency application deadline, settling in makeshift camps in Haiti.

- [“Haiti to redo legislative elections in 25 constituencies”](#), *Miami Herald*, 20 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Mexico** President Peña Nieto 27 Aug reshuffled cabinet, replacing six ministers, including national security commissioner. Midway through his six-year term, President's approval ratings continued to drop as govt grapples with stagnating economy, conflict of interest scandals and high rates of regional violence. Interdisciplinary Group of Experts (GIEI), appointed by govt and Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR) to monitor Sept 2014 disappearance of 43 students in Iguala, 17 Aug said govt denied its request to interview military personnel; also noted mishandling and destruction of evidence. Federal judge 18 Aug sentenced army second lieutenant to over 30 years' prison for a forced disappearance, marking first time a military official has been sentenced for this crime. Prosecutors 6 Aug charged suspect for 31 July killing of photojournalist Rubén Espinosa in Mexico City. Investigators in case facing criticism for allegedly dismissing political motivation for murder; 500 journalists, writers and advocates 15 Aug sent open letter to President Peña Nieto demanding thorough investigation into Espinosa's death. Police data showed 2015 increase in homicide rate in Guerrero state, with highest murder rate in 2014: 943 murders reported in first half of 2015, compared to 780 in first half of 2014.

- [“Mexico missing students: Investigators denied access”](#), BBC, 18 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Venezuela** Amid worsening economic crisis and scarcity of basic goods, incidents of looting reported early Aug in Bolívar and Zulia states. President Maduro and Bolívar state governor early Aug alleged U.S. agents and opposition provoked 31 July supermarket looting in San Félix, in which one person died and dozens were arrested. Four food trucks looted and town hall sacked 4 Aug in Sinamaica, Zulia state. Former opposition mayor of San Cristóbal Daniel Ceballos given house arrest on “medical grounds” 12 Aug while former defence minister Gen. Raul Isaías Baduel and anti-govt protester

Deivis Oliveros released from jail 13 Aug, all three banned from speaking in public or talking to press. Polls released in Aug suggest substantial opposition lead ahead of Dec parliamentary elections. Maduro 18 Aug used his TV program to present video in which self-confessed murderer accused senior opposition leaders and foreign adversaries of providing money and “paramilitary training” for campaign of violence. Tensions with Colombia spiked amid serious border crisis (see Colombia/Venezuela); opposition MUD alliance said alleged incident, in which three Venezuelan soldiers were killed by alleged “paramilitaries”, was pretext for govt to declare nationwide state of emergency in response to possible opposition victory in Dec elections.

- [“Looting and violence on the rise in Venezuela supermarkets”](#), Reuters, 6 Aug. 2015.

Middle East & North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

➔ **Israel-Palestine** Israel 20 Aug launched missiles into Syria's Quneitra region after two rockets from Syrian Golan hit northern Israeli village near Lebanese border; five deaths reported from Israeli missiles, identity of casualties not confirmed. Israel blamed initial attack on Palestinian group Islamic Jihad with Iranian sponsorship, Islamic Jihad denied involvement. Amid rumoured turmoil within Palestinian leadership, Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas 23 Aug announced he will resign from Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) executive committee, but will retain Palestinian presidency. In Gaza, 6 Aug explosion in Rafah killed four and injured 43; initial reports suggest explosion caused by undetonated ordnance left over from 50-day war in 2014. UNRWA early Aug reported infant mortality in Gaza increased by 70% between 2008 and 2013, highlighting eight-year Israeli blockade as contributing factor. Israeli Supreme Court temporarily suspended detention of Palestinian prisoner Mohammed Allan, after he reportedly suffered brain damage from 65-day hunger strike while under indefinite administrative detention.

- Ofer Zalberg, "[Prepare Now for High Holidays at the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif](#)", *Times of Israel*, 26 Aug. 2015.
- "[Israel launches strikes into Syria after rocket attack](#)", Reuters, 20 Aug. 2015.

New Crisis Group Middle East Report N°162, *No Exit? Gaza & Israel Between Wars*, 26 August 2015. Both Israel and Hamas recognise that another war is only a matter of time if Gaza's fundamental problems are not addressed: the economy is a shambles; the acting government lacks the ability to collect or otherwise obtain the revenue necessary to pay salaries and provide services; and most residents cannot access the outside world.

↓ **Lebanon** Amid growing discontent over political paralysis and Beirut garbage crisis which began mid-July, peaceful protests began early Aug, turning violent by late month. Responding to mass demonstrations that erupted in Beirut 22 Aug, riot police fired tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons on demonstrators; dozens of protesters and police wounded. Some demonstrators called for resignation of environment and interior ministers, others for government and parliament to resign. PM Salam 23 Aug announced security forces would be held accountable for violence against protesters, called emergency govt session 27 Aug over ongoing political stalemate; cabinet selected winning bidders for new waste collection contracts but cancelled them next day, invoking excessively high rates. Renewed demonstrations against corruption and political dysfunction 29 Aug rallied more than 10,000 protesters. Violent clashes erupted 24 Aug between Fatah and Jund al-Sham in Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp amid escalating rivalries between groups; three reported killed, several wounded. Supporters of Free Patriotic Movement 12 Aug rallied against perceived marginalisation of Christian rights and extension of terms of top army commanders.

- Sahar Atrache, "[Lebanon's Un-collected Problems](#)", *In Pursuit of Peace*, 27 Aug. 2015.
- "[Beirut protesters call for fall of Lebanese government](#)", Al Jazeera, 23 Aug. 2015.

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- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°160, [Lebanon's Self-defeating Survival Strategies](#), 20 July 2015.
 - ➔ **Syria** UNSC 7 Aug unanimously adopted resolution authorising investigators to identify actors responsible for chemical weapon attacks. Month also saw multiple high-level talks among external actors. Turkey and Iran early Aug facilitated negotiations between Hizbollah and Ahrar al-Sham, producing 12-14 Aug ceasefire in Zabadani town near Lebanese border, and two villages in Idlib province; no consensus on release of prisoners or possible withdrawal of fighters from Zabadani. Turkey FM Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu 24 August announced Turkey and U.S. will launch “comprehensive” air operations against Islamic State (IS) on Turkey-Syria border, providing air cover for mainstream rebels in fight against IS. U.S. train-and-equip initiative faced major setback late July when Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) captured affiliated fighters north of Aleppo. IS 6 Aug captured town of al-Qaryatain in Homs province between Palmyra and Qalamoun mountains; later abducted 230 civilians from al-Qaryatain and late Aug demolished ancient Christian monastery Mar Elian. Reports emerged 23 Aug that IS had destroyed Palmyra’s Baalshamin temple, and late month also destroyed Temple of Bel. Deadly regime airstrikes intensified in rebel-held city Douma near Damascus, including 16 Aug strike on civilian market which killed 80, injured 200.
 - Noah Bonsey, [“Turkey and the U.S. in Syria: Time for Some Hard Choices”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 10 Aug. 2015.
 - [“An Opening for Diplomacy in Syria”](#), *New York Times*, 24 Aug. 2015.

Gulf

- ➔ **Bahrain** Interior ministry 13 Aug confirmed arrest of five suspected of involvement in 28 July Sitra bombing, said suspects had links to Iran Revolutionary Guards and Hizbollah. Prominent cleric and former lawmaker Hasan Isa detained 18 Aug following visit to Iran, charged with financing terrorism and involvement in Sitra bombing; opposition al-Wefaq said Isa targeted under laws that criminalise peaceful political activism. Opposition figure Ibrahim Sharif, arrested mid-July, 24 Aug pleaded not guilty to charges of attempting to overthrow govt, inciting hatred. Authorities early Aug temporarily suspended independent newspaper al-Wasat for “dissemination of information that affects national unity”. Police officer killed, seven wounded 28 Aug by bomb in Karana village.
- [“Bahrain to try opposition figure for incitement to topple government”](#), Voice of America, 12 Aug. 2015.
- ➔ **Iran** Country passed first compliance test 15 Aug by submitting information on past nuclear activities to IAEA; IAEA will review and ask any additional questions within one month. Debate in U.S. administration over passage of nuclear deal by Congress continued ahead of Sept vote: two senior Democrats early Aug voiced opposition to deal, vote of ten undecided senators expected to be key. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) early Aug offered support for deal. Iran’s FM Zarif early Aug continued regional tour of Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Lebanon and Syria. Two sentenced 30 Aug to ten years’ prison for spying for U.S. and Israel. Authorities 22 Aug unveiled new solid-fuel

surface-to-surface missile. Official news agency 22 Aug reported reconnaissance drone shot down in west near Iraq border. UK 23 Aug reopened embassy in Tehran.

- [“Iran nuclear deal now backed by 31 senators”](#), Reuters, 30 Aug. 2015.

➡ **Iraq** Continued wave of anti-establishment protests in Baghdad and southern provinces over corruption and systematic inadequacy of service delivery brought country to edge of yet more serious conflict. Top religious authority Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani 7 Aug attempted to de-escalate tensions by denouncing corruption and calling on PM Abadi to undertake reforms to address problems. Parliament 11 Aug approved sweeping reform package that included reducing number of ministries, eliminating multiple deputy PM and VP positions. Kurdistan region also experienced political crisis: regional President Barzani’s term formally ended 19 Aug; Gorran and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), two of region’s largest political parties, challenged Barzani’s wish to serve third term, drafted law that would empower region’s parliament to elect new president. Clashes with Islamic State (IS) and IS attacks continued: at least 67 killed 14 Aug by truck bomb in Baghdad; at least 58 killed, 100 wounded 10 Aug in bomb attacks in Diyala province; five including two generals killed by suicide bomber 27 Aug near Ramadi. U.S. reported senior IS leader Haji Mutazz killed in drone strike 18 Aug. Turkey strikes on alleged PKK bases in Kurdistan Regional Govt territory continued (see Turkey).

- Crisis Group Conflict Alert, [“Iraq: Conflict Alert”](#), 24 Aug. 2015.
- [“Iraq parliament unanimously passes anti-corruption reforms”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 11 Aug. 2015.

↓ **Yemen** Anti-Huthi ground forces moved into southern governorates throughout Aug after capturing Aden late July, took al-Anad airforce base 3 Aug then pushed Huthis from Lahj, Dalia, Ayban and Shebwa. Anti-Huthi coalition airstrikes 18 Aug crippled Hodeida port which serves north of country. Huthis reinforced positions in Sanaa and took back some territory in Taiz during intense clashes. Huthis for first time offered significant concessions at UN mediation 8-9 August, including withdrawal from cities in accordance with UNSCR 2216. Govt rejected negotiations; both sides now preparing for potential battle in capital. Saudi-backed coalition began deployment of ground troops and heavy weapons to Marib governorate, east of capital. Amnesty International 18 August accused both sides of killing civilians, possible war crimes; UN aid official condemned Hodeida attack as violation of international law.

- April Longley Alley and Nabeel Khoury, [“Can U.S. Action Stop the War in Yemen?”](#), Atlantic Council, 13 Aug. 2015.
- Crisis Group Conflict Alert, [“Yemen Alert: Seize the Chance to End the Conflict”](#), 12 Aug. 2015.
- [“Amnesty International says all sides in Yemen have committed war crimes”](#), *New York Times*, 18 Aug. 2015.

➡ **Saudi Arabia** At least a dozen killed 6 Aug in bomb attack in Abha, near Yemen border; Islamic State (IS) claimed attack.

- [“Deadly suicide blast strikes Saudi security forces at mosque near Yemen”](#), *Washington Post*, 6 Aug. 2015.

North Africa

➔ **Algeria** Two soldiers killed in ambush 14 Aug in Skikda province, north, following reports group of some 30 militants operating in area. Security forces 23 Aug said two militants killed during operation in Skikda province; defence ministry 26 Aug said five militants killed in operations in east. Madani Mezrag, amnestied former chief of armed wing of National Salvation Front (Front islamique du salut, FIS) 27 Aug announced intention to create new party, Front de l'Algérie pour la réconciliation et le salut.

- [“Algerian troops kill five Islamist fighters in operation”](#), Reuters, 26 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Egypt** Govt 17 Aug passed counter-terrorism legislation giving police greater powers of detention and surveillance, criminalising public statements contradicting defence ministry; law widely condemned by rights organisations. Law also introduced punishments for public or private expressions of support for certain crimes. U.S. Sec State Kerry visited early Aug for security talks, warned success fighting terrorism depended on respect for human rights, trust between authorities and public. Counter-terrorist operations continued to intensify in North Sinai as militant attacks continued; multiple bombing attempts against security forces in al-Arish foiled early Aug. Islamic State-Sinai Province (SP) militants 13 Aug kidnapped and beheaded Croatian engineer in Cairo; bomb explosion claimed by SP targeting security facility in Cairo 19 Aug wounded at least 30. Two policemen killed, 24 wounded by roadside bomb targeting bus carrying conscripts in Beheria Province 24 Aug. President Sisi mid-Aug announced formation of Supreme Electoral Committee for upcoming parliamentary elections; Committee 30 Aug announced two-stage polls scheduled for 19-18 Oct and 22-23 Nov. Muslim Brotherhood (MB) leader Mohamed Badie and several other MB members sentenced 22 Aug to life in prison for murder and inciting violence, in connection to 2013 attack on police station in Port Said. Three Al Jazeera journalists convicted of “spreading false news”, sentenced to three years’ prison 29 Aug.

- [“Egypt imposes anti-terror law that punishes ‘false’ reporting of attacks”](#), *Guardian*, 17 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Libya** Residents of Sirte mid-Aug clashed with Islamic State (IS) fighters in city; at least twenty reportedly killed, though some claim as many as 100. Both Tobruk and Tripoli-based govts denounced IS and pledged help but neither sent ground forces. Almost no military factions loyal to Tripoli General National Congress (GNC) responded to GNC president’s 13 Aug call to rally in Sirte; Misratan brigades stationed near Sirte refused to deploy in absence of other groups from western Libya. Forces loyal to Tobruk-allied General Haftar’s Libyan National Army conducted airstrikes in the Sirte area but failed to hit IS targets. PM of Tobruk-based parliament Thinni 14 Aug said loyalist forces unable to take on extremist group, 18 Aug appealed to Arab League for military assistance and weaponry to fight IS. Fighting overshadowed UN peace talks held in Geneva 11-12 Aug and Skhirat (Morocco) 27-29 Aug, SRSG for Libya Bernardino León called on rival govts to unify. GNC continued to demand amendments to provisional July Skhirat Agreement; pro-Tobruk military leaders issued further threats they will oppose any deal made with Tripoli govt. Head of GNC delegation to talks resigned 25 Aug in protest at GNC president’s position opposing dialogue, delegation did

not attend Skhirat talks. Pro-Tobruk military alliance further fragmented: Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) early Aug announced it does not recognise Haftar's leadership.

- [“Libya asks Arab League countries to help battle Islamic State”](#), *New York Times*, 18 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Mauritania** Authorities 6 Aug reportedly freed Malian Islamist militant and former Ansar Dine spokesman Sanda Ould Bouamama from detention despite international arrest warrant. New anti-slavery law adopted early Aug doubling prison terms for offenders.

- [“Mauritania frees senior Malian Islamist insurgent”](#), Reuters, 6 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Morocco** Fourteen suspected of forming Islamic State (IS) recruitment network arrested 25 Aug in several cities including Fez and Casablanca, and near Madrid in joint operation with Spanish authorities.

- [“14 people arrested in Spain and Morocco over Islamic State links”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 25 Aug. 2015.

➔ **Tunisia** President Essebsi 7 Aug signed into law controversial new anti-terrorism bill following parliament's approval late July, despite widespread concerns from civil society, rights groups. Large-scale security sweeps and arrests continued, including a dozen reportedly attempting to cross border into Libya to join terrorist group. Suspects in Bardo Museum attack released 5 Aug, reportedly due to lack of evidence. Two soldiers killed 17-18 August by landmine in Kasserine region near Algeria border; police officer shot dead by gunmen in Sousse 19 Aug. Two customs officers killed, three wounded 23 Aug in shoot-out with militants in Bouchebka, near Algeria border.

- [“Tunisia's harsh response to terror threat raises fears over fledgling democracy”](#), AP, 24 Aug. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Report N°161, [Reform and Security Strategy in Tunisia](#), 23 July 2015.