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## CrisisWatch:

- summarises briefly developments during the previous month in some 70 situations of current or potential conflict, listed alphabetically by region, providing references and links to more detailed information sources (all references mentioned are hyperlinked in the electronic version of this bulletin);
- assesses whether the overall situation in each case has, during the previous month, significantly deteriorated, significantly improved, or on balance remained more or less unchanged;
- alerts readers to situations where, in the coming month, there is a particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict, or a particular conflict resolution opportunity (noting that in some instances there may in fact be both); and
- summarises Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers that have been published in the last month.

*CrisisWatch* is compiled by Crisis Group's Brussels Research Unit, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of our more than 100 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 50 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to [crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org](mailto:crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org).

## March 2005 Trends



### Deteriorated Situations

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### Improved Situations

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### Unchanged Situations

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## April 2005 Watchlist



### Conflict Risk Alert

Kyrgyzstan  
Nepal  
Pakistan



### Conflict Resolution Opportunity

None

## Crisis Group

Crisis Group is an independent, non-profit, multinational organisation, with over 100 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict. Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, Crisis Group produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers, and backed up with high level advocacy. Crisis Group is co-chaired by President Emeritus of the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations Leslie H. Gelb and former European Commissioner for External Relations Lord Patten of Barnes, and its President and Chief Executive is former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.



## Africa

### CENTRAL AFRICA

🏠 Burundi Power-sharing constitution accepted by 90% of voters in 28 February referendum, opening path to series of elections, beginning with scheduled 22 April vote. South African mediator Jacob Zuma appeared to reject, then accept, concept of short delay requested by independent electoral commission. Electoral code adopted by National Assembly 11 March; communal law adopted 5 days later. Report released by UN Sec.-Gen. Kofi Annan 28 March called for both non-judicial truth commission (with international involvement) and special chamber within Burundi's court system to try humanitarian crimes since 1962; government previously indicated preference for single, judicial truth commission.

- [“Electoral commission preparing timetable, official says”](#), IRIN, 22 Mar. 2005.
- [“90% approval of Burundi constitution”](#), Afrol, 3 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°20, [Elections in Burundi: The Peace Wager](#), 9 Dec. 2004.

🏠 Central African Republic After 3-week count President François Bozizé officially credited with 43% of first-round 13 March votes; former PM Martin Ziguèle second with 24%; run-off to be held 1 May. Earlier in month, 9-party coalition accused Bozizé of “electoral hold-up” as preliminary results suggested first-round victory for incumbent. Vice-President Abel Goumba fired 15 March having signed petition questioning vote. Former military leader – and presidential candidate – Andre Kolingba claimed shoot-out near his house was assassination attempt.

- [“Central African coup-maker leads in poll count”](#), Afrol, 23 Mar. 2005.


🏠 Chad President Déby reportedly accused Sudan of backing Chadian Alliance nationale de la résistance rebels; Sudan allegedly claimed Darfur rebels' weapons originated in Chad. Over 200,000 Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad.

- [“Chad accuses Sudan of harboring, arming opposition”](#), *The Sudan Tribune*, 24 Mar. 2005

🏠 Democratic Republic of Congo Rwandan Hutu FDLR rebels in east renounced armed conflict, denounced 1994 genocide and agreed repatriation to Rwanda; major step forward if followed through; African Union had earlier offered 6-7,000 troops to help disarm them. In Ituri province, conflict continued despite hardened MONUC posture and “cordon and search” missions, backed by fresh UN mandate. MONUC killed 60 Lendu militia 1 March following ambush near Loga. UN set end-month deadline for militia disarmament; 1 April MONUC chief of staff Gen Jean-Francois Collot d'Escury warned militias they would be pursued if they failed to disarm. High-ranking members of Hema and Lendu militias arrested Kinshasa; may face ICC for crimes committed since 2002. UN report said MONUC thus far “failed the Congolese people”; UN separately described eastern DR Congo as “world's worst humanitarian crisis”. National election date of 30 June in doubt given lack of progress on militia demobilisation, instability in eastern DR Congo and fears of flare-up in Katanga or Kasai; UN Sec.-Gen. Kofi Annan recommended addition of 2 MONUC brigades to cover provinces.

- [“Uncooperative fighters will be hunted down, MONUC says”](#), IRIN, 1 April 2005.
- [“Elections and governance now key issues in DR of Congo but security inadequate – Annan”](#), UN News, 28 Mar. 2005.
- Comment by Nancy Soderberg (Crisis Group), [“Africa's forgotten war”](#), *The Boston Globe*, 21 Mar. 2005.
- Human Rights Watch, [“Arrest all Ituri warlords”](#), *Le Potentiel*, 11 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°21, [Back to the Brink in the Congo](#), 17 Dec. 2004.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°91, [The Congo's Transition Is Failing: Crisis in the Kivus](#), 30 March 2005. As the UN Security Council debates this week the terms of renewing the mandate of its peacekeeping force in the Congo (MONUC), decisive action is needed to prevent a return to full-scale combat and the possible destabilisation of much of Central Africa. The country's political transition is stalled, and there are new military tensions in the Kivus region, where 1,000 people are dying every day in ongoing political and humanitarian tragedy. The international community needs to rein in spoilers and do a better job of training the new Congolese army. MONUC also needs to get tougher with the Rwandan insurgents. All sides must live up to the promise of the Sun City Agreement: former belligerents must complete their military integration.



🏠 Rwanda After meeting with Congolese representatives, Rwandan Hutu FDLR rebels based eastern DR Congo renounced armed conflict, denounced 1994 genocide and agreed repatriation to Rwanda; doubts remained over FDLR intentions and implementation. Gacaca trials for those suspected of involvement in 1994 genocide began after multiple delays; 179 sentenced and 1 acquitted by 23 March. Some possible indictees reportedly fled; number of judges, accused of complicity in genocide, asked to resign.

- [“Rwandan Hutus end armed struggle”](#), BBC, 31 Mar. 2005.
- [“Over 80 people flee Rwanda as gacaca trials begin”](#), *Hirondelle*, 14 Mar. 2005.
- For background to ICTR, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°69, [The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda: Time for Pragmatism](#), 26 Sept. 2003.

🏠 Uganda Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) increased attacks northern Uganda following expiry of government ceasefire and apparent failure of peace bid; Gulu and Kitgum districts particularly affected. LRA returned to tactics of abduction and mutilation: local officials said more than 70 civilians abducted and 80 defence officials killed. Army claimed had forced LRA leader Joseph Kony into Sudan. Northern Ugandan Acholi community leaders went to Hague in bid to convince ICC that issuing indictments would undermine possibility of LRA accepting amnesty deal; ICC moves further criticised by government mediator Betty Bigombe. But government minister Grace Akello reiterated position that LRA commanders should be tried by ICC. Parliament moved closer to accepting end to term limits for presidency and allowing president Museveni to stand again in March 2006 elections; police broke up Kampala opposition demonstration.

- [“Term limits are an expression of the sovereignty of the people”](#), *The Monitor*, 24 Mar. 2005.
- [“Violence mounts in troubled northern Uganda”](#), AlertNet, 23 Mar. 2005.
- For background see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°22, [Peace in Northern Uganda: Decisive Weeks Ahead](#), 21 Feb. 2005.

## HORN OF AFRICA

↳ Ethiopia/Eritrea UN Security Council renewed UNMEE force mandate for 6 months amid tension over alleged military build-up; UNMEE political chief warned of continuing war risk. UN Sec.-Gen. Kofi Annan urged Security Council visit to region to push peace efforts; Eritrea said UNSC needed to pressure Ethiopia to fully implement 2002 border ruling.

- "UN needs to encourage Ethiopia-Eritrea peace", Afrol, 10 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°68, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: War or Peace?*, 24 Sept. 2003.

↳ Somalia Amid worsening infighting among Somali warlords, regional IGAD body agreed to 6,800-strong troop deployment to Somalia, with troops to come from Sudan and Uganda, not neighbouring Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti; deployment to begin late April. This followed 17 March parliamentary vote against deployment of neighbouring countries' troops, leading to brawl in parliament. Some MPs threatened impeachment of president over foreign deployment and his proposal to base government in Baidoa and Jowhar instead of Mogadishu, claiming president in breach of transitional charter. Militia leaders opposed to government proposal captured Baidoa and menaced Jowhar 26 March. Ongoing insecurity central Somalia; clashes over several days between rival Hawiye clan militias killed 16 near Hobyto port.

- "PM urges end to Somali fighting", BBC, 28 Mar. 2005.
- "Somali govt crisis deepens as warlords want president impeached", *The Sudan Tribune*, 23 Mar. 2005.
- "Crisis Group response to IGAD charge", Crisis Group media release, 21 Mar. 2005.
- "Militants plotting chaos in Somalia", *The East African*, 21 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°88, *Somalia: Continuation of War by Other Means?*, 21 Dec. 2004.

↳ Sudan UN Security Council voted to strengthen Darfur arms embargo and impose asset freeze and travel ban on those deemed to impede peace – application to begin within 30 days. U.S. backed down from threat to veto resolution on referral of Darfur war crimes to ICC, having obtained immunity guarantees for U.S. staff. But situation in Darfur remained grim. UN said refugee crisis contained, but violence ongoing; pulled staff out of most of western Darfur following threats from Janjaweed militia; and raised its mortality estimates from 70,000 to at least 180,000, while accepting true figure might be higher. Security Council voted 24 March to send 10,000 troops and 700 civilians as peacekeeping mission in southern Sudan amidst fears over stalling implementation of north-south Naivasha peace. Mission also set to "foster peace in Darfur".

- "U.N. Security Council refers Darfur to the ICC", Human Rights Watch press release, 31 Mar. 2005.
- "10,000-strong UN peacekeeping mission authorized for South", UN News, 24 Mar. 2005.
- "Militia movements reportedly fuelling tension in the east", IRIN, 11 Mar. 2005.
- "Darfur's hunger set to continue", BBC, 11 Mar. 2005.
- Comment by Don Cheadle and John Prendergast (Crisis Group), "Never again' – again", *USA Today*, 2 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°19, *Sudan's Dual Crises: Refocusing on IGAD*, 5 Oct. 2004.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°89, *Darfur: The Failure to Protect*, 8 March 2005.



The UN Security Council must overcome divisions and act immediately to halt the mounting atrocities and death toll in Darfur. Three resolutions have failed to stem the violence; the fourth must be strong enough to make a difference. The key to stabilisation is persuading Khartoum to fulfil its commitments to disarm and neutralise the Janjaweed, but it will not do this as long as it believes the cost of inaction is minimal. Altering this calculus requires a resolution that: imposes targeted punitive measures; authorises the International Criminal Court to tackle atrocity crimes; and imposes a UN-authorized no-fly zone over Darfur. Equally vital, the inadequate African Union force in Darfur must be expanded to at least 10,000 and its mandate strengthened explicitly to protect civilians.

## SOUTHERN AFRICA

↳ Angola Rights groups claimed government providing inadequate aid to returnees; repatriation planned to end October 2005 – but refugees from oil-rich Cabinda unwilling to return.

- "Coming home", Human Rights Watch report, 17 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°61, *Angola's Choice: Reform or Regress*, 7 Apr. 2003.

↳ Swaziland High Court upheld ban on opposition parties and rejected union bid to block parliamentary debate on new constitution increasing royal power. Summit between King Mswati III and South African President Mbeki postponed indefinitely; South Africa reportedly hoped to push democracy agenda. Humanitarian situation continued to decline.

- "Only int'l pressure can end corruption", Inter Press Service, 31 Mar. 2005.
- "Court upholds ban on opposition parties", IRIN, 24 Mar. 2005.

↳ Zimbabwe Fewer incidents of violence than in past elections, but intimidation widespread in run-up to 31 March vote; little doubt elections neither free nor fair. Catholic Bulawayo Archbishop Ncube called for peaceful "Orange Revolution" against Mugabe regime. City-dwellers banned from rural areas during campaign; food crisis ongoing in rural areas with food aid used as political tool by ruling Zanu-PF. Five opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) supporters surrendered to police claiming they had been weapons' trained with aim of destabilising Zimbabwe; rejected by MDC. Supreme Court ruled 3 million expatriates ineligible to vote. Newly-established Electoral Court reversed first major ruling, suspending earlier order allowing jailed MDC MP Roy Bennett to run. Media clampdown continued as government jammed broadcasts from London-based SW Radio Africa.

- "Zimbabwe opposition takes early poll lead", *The Washington Post*, 1 Apr. 2005.
- "Archbishop Ncube urges Mugabe overthrow", IWPR, 28 Mar. 2005.
- "Not a level playing field", Human Rights Watch briefing, 21 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°85, *Zimbabwe: Another Election Chance*, 30 Nov. 2004.



## WEST AFRICA

Crisis Group Africa Report N°92, *Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?*, International Crisis Group, 31 March 2005. A military-only approach to fighting terrorism in the Sahel would risk fuelling what it aims to prevent: a rise of Islamist militancy. While not a hotbed of terrorist activity, the vast region bordering the Sahara – Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad – is vulnerable. The initial U.S. response aimed not only to hunt terrorists but also expand programs for training African militaries. An unbalanced program could be counter-productive. Broader Western efforts are needed to tackle underlying problems of weak governance and poverty. A new U.S. initiative – not yet finalised – envisages complementing military aid with economic and political engagement. U.S. and EU partners should cooperate more on both counterterrorism and development work in the Sahel, which needs more than stronger armies to help it resist extremism.

- ↙ Côte d'Ivoire UN Sec.-Gen. Kofi Annan repeated call for extra 1,200 peacekeepers, warning of degenerating security, particularly in west; 16 reported killed in clashes. Local militias increasingly armed, while presence of Liberian mercenaries reported. African Union-backed political mediation led by South African President Mbeki stalled; further meeting scheduled for Pretoria early April. Lack of political movement led to doubts over viability of October elections and fears government or Forces Nouvelles (FN) rebels may seek military solution; sides exchanged accusations and counter-accusations of imminent attacks throughout month. FN claimed New Zealand passport-holder arrested 12 March intended to assassinate FN leaders. Youth groups supporting President Gbagbo demanded removal of UN and French Licorne missions – both mandates up for renewal 4 April; counter-demonstrations took place rebel-held Bouaké supporting international presence.
- "Recruitment of ex-child soldiers in Cote d'Ivoire", Human Rights Watch briefing, 30 Mar. 2005.
  - "On the brink", *The Economist*, 17 Mar. 2005.
  - "Rebels warn of imminent government attack", IRIN, 11 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°82, *Côte d'Ivoire: No Peace in Sight*, 12 July 2004.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°90, *Côte d'Ivoire: The Worst May Be Yet to Come*, International Crisis Group, 24 March 2005. Cynically exacerbating social tensions for political gain, Côte d'Ivoire's leaders risk losing control, sparking ethnic cleansing and a disastrous regional conflict. With both UN and French peacekeeping mandates expiring in April, the international community must act to prevent an explosion of violence. The UN Security Council should strengthen the efforts of the African Union (AU) mediator, South African President Thabo Mbeki, and the AU, together with the UN, should organise the process to demobilise and reintegrate ex-combatants; undertake voter registration; and establish a new calendar for elections. Targeted sanctions should be introduced against those who attempt to block the peace process. While Paris should gradually withdraw its controversial peacekeeping force, any departure of French troops should only happen once adequate UN replacements are on the ground.

- ↗ Guinea Three key ministers, including widely disliked security minister Moussa Sampil, removed, in potential signal of easing of restrictions on opposition and repression by security forces. Opposition and government met in national dialogue forum 18 March.
- "Three senior ministers sacked from government", IRIN, 9 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°74, *Guinea: Uncertainties at the End of an Era*, 19 Dec. 2003.
- ↗ Liberia Situation fragile: only 23% of 108,000 de-mobilised soldiers involved in rehabilitation and reintegration; other ex-combatants, including disbanded Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, not yet disarmed. UNMIL peacekeepers attacked 22 March when Ganta checkpoint, near Guinea, petrol-bombed, wounding 1. Speaker of Liberia's parliament, George Dweh, rejected corruption allegations and subsequent suspension but did not return to legislature.
- "Abandoned child soldiers roam villages", *The Analyst*, 24 Mar. 2005.
  - "Petrol bombers attack UN checkpoint in Ganta", IRIN, 23 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 Dec. 2004.
- ↗ Nigeria Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, leader of Niger Delta People Volunteer Force, urged Ijaw to retaliate massively should they be attacked by Yoruba in oil-rich Delta province. In Anambra state, long-running dispute between governor and local power-broker led to both being expelled from ruling People's Democratic Party. Anti-corruption drive ongoing: national education minister Fabian Oujii sacked as result of allegations he bribed MPs to pass inflated education budget; president of Senate indicted for accepting bribe.
- "Another term for Obasanjo?", *This Day*, 28 Mar. 2005.
  - "Obasanjo fires Osuji, indicts Wabara, others", *This Day*, 23 Mar. 2005.
  - "OPC threat: I'm battle ready, says Dokubo-Asari", *The Daily Champion*, 22 Mar. 2005.
- ↗ Sierra Leone War crimes tribunal chief prosecutor, David Crane, announced will leave July, casting doubt on extradition of Charles Taylor. Court welcomed arrest of Dutch citizen in connection with arms trafficking, while 3 members of former military junta went on trial for crimes against humanity. Deputy defence minister and ruling Sierra Leone People's Party member Joe Blell accused of corruption. Fuel shortages continue.
- "Deputy defence minister bribed councillor for SLPP west district chairmanship", *Standard Times*, 22 Mar. 2005.
  - "Si Leone war crimes trial starts", BBC, 7 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 Dec. 2004.
- ↗ Togo Presidential elections set for 24 April; opposition criticised short time-frame. Having resigned from presidency February, coup-leader Faure Gnassingbé to run. Paris-based leader of opposition UFC, Gilchrist Olympio, barred by residency requirement; UFC vice-president, 75 year-old Emmanuel Akitani Bob, runner-up in 2003, picked as candidate of 6 opposition groups instead. Nephew of Gilchrist, said he would also stand, raising prospect of split opposition.
- "Togo opposition unity threatened", BBC, 18 Mar. 2005.
  - "Joint candidate for Togo opposition presented", Afrol, 15 Mar. 2005.

## Asia/Pacific

### CENTRAL ASIA

- Kazakhstan Reacting to turmoil in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, President Nursultan Nazarbayev said events there resulted from leadership's "weakness". Domestically, Kazakh opposition remains active but divided, with continuing internal rift in Ak Zhol party. Presidential elections scheduled for December 2006, but speculation they will be held early.

  - "A shock to the system for Kyrgyzstan's neighbours", IWPR, 27 Mar. 2005.
  - "Adviser says Kazakh presidential elections to be held in December 2006", RFE/RL, 2 Mar. 2005.
  
- ➤ Kyrgyzstan Government of President Askar Akayev toppled following mass protests over rigged parliamentary elections. Although sudden turn of events may usher in positive change on range of political, economic, and social fronts, situation remains highly unstable, with risk of further unrest. Protests began in southern city of Jalal-abad 21 March, spreading across south and to capital, Bishkek, and culminating in storming of government headquarters 24 March. Widespread looting and confusion ensued. Akayev forced to flee to Russia, but refused to resign; indications he will if family and economic interests protected. Opposition leader Kurmanbek Bakiyev confirmed by controversial new parliament as PM and acting president until elections can be held (date tentatively set for 26 June 2005); former vice president Feliks Kulov, freed from jail by protestors, briefly assumed control of security services, but stepped down 30 March; seen as likely challenger to Bakiyev for presidency, though prison sentence technically disqualifies him. Situation remains fragile, with heated rivalries among those in apparent control, and doubts about loyalty and capacity of police forces.

  - "Kyrgyzstan's new leaders urged to co-operate", *Financial Times*, 31 Mar. 2005.
  - "Kyrgyzstan installs a new leader", *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Mar. 2005.
  - "A proliferation of revolutions", *The Economist*, 28 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°81, *Political Transition in Kyrgyzstan: Problems and Prospects*, 11 Aug. 2004.
  
- Tajikistan Four opposition parties filed complaint with Central Election Commission claiming violations in February parliamentary elections. According to Commission, President Rakhmonov's National Democratic Party received 74% of vote, and 52 of 63 seats in lower house of parliament.

  - "Hard times for Tajik opposition", IWPR, 16 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, *Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?*, 19 May 2004.
  
- Turkmenistan In latest public health disaster, President Saparmurat Niyazov ordered closure of all hospitals country-wide save those in capital, Ashgabat.

  - "UN should respond to Turkmen abuses", letter available on HRW website, 17 Mar. 2005.
  - "Turkmenbashi wields the axe", IWPR, 11 Mar. 2005.

- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°85, *Repression and Regression in Turkmenistan: A New International Strategy*, 4 Nov. 2004.



- Uzbekistan Government cancelled visit of British minister Bill Rammell after latter said he intended to press Tashkent on human rights issues. Authorities reportedly denied registration to U.S.-based International Republican Institute, adding IRI to list that already includes Soros Foundation and Internews.
  - "Uzbekistan bars British minister", BBC, 2 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°93, *The Curse of Cotton: Central Asia's Destructive Monoculture*, 28 Feb. 2005.

### SOUTH ASIA

- Afghanistan Parliamentary elections, originally scheduled for June 2004, to be held 18 September along with provincial elections; district council elections postponed. UN Security Council voted unanimously to extend UN mission to continue electoral support. UN envoy Jean Arnault said Afghanistan has only U.S.\$40 million of total U.S.\$148 million needed to hold election. U.S. claimed security improving though sporadic violence continued – notably Kandahar car bomb during U.S. Sec. State Condoleezza Rice's visit to Kabul 17 March, which killed 5. Elsewhere, Taliban claimed responsibility for 8 March killing of UK man working as adviser to Afghan government. End of month violence increased with insurgent attacks in eastern and western provinces killing at least 6.
  - "Taliban claim to be behind new violence", *International Herald Tribune*, 31 Mar. 2005.
  - "Opium production compounds Karzai's woes", ISN, 31 Mar. 2005.
  - "Security Council extends Afghanistan role", *The Guardian*, 25 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°35, *Afghanistan: Getting Disarmament Back on Track*, 23 Feb. 2005.
  
- Bangladesh UN called on Bangladesh opposition parties to end general strikes, saying stoppages detrimental to economy; strikes continued. Ten members of Bangladesh Nationalist Party charged 20 March with January assassination of former finance minister Shah A.M.S. Kibria. Border tensions continued with India over disputed route of Indian fence construction.
  - "Hartal observed peacefully", *New Nation*, 31 Mar. 2005.
  - "Bangladesh in foreigners warning", BBC, 15 Mar. 2005.
  
- India (non-Kashmir) Communist (CPI-M) rebels continued to clash with Andhra Pradesh security forces: at least 18 killed including 3 policemen on eve of visit by Congress Party leader Sonia Gandhi. In northeast Assam state, separatists killed 4 in 3 days of grenade attacks claimed by United Liberation Front of Assam. Head of separatist National Socialist Council of Nagaland-IM threatened to end 7-year ceasefire if long-running talks with federal government make no progress. Clashes between members of NSCN-IM and rival NSCN-Khaplang faction also threaten ceasefire.
  - "Rival groups clash, threatening ceasefire in Nagaland", IANS, 17 Mar. 2005.
  - "Naga rebels ready to rekindle anti-India revolt", AlertNet, 16 Mar. 2005.
  
- Kashmir India/Pakistan normalisation process continued amid signs of Pakistani impatience over lack of progress over

Kashmir and differences over U.S. sale of F-16s to Pakistan. Over 500 prisoners, mostly Gujarat fishermen, released by Pakistan, while New Delhi extended invitation to President Pervez Musharraf for 17 April cricket international and meeting with Indian PM Manmohan Singh. Srinagar/Muzaffarabad bus link due to start 7 April. Sporadic attacks by separatist militants (opposed to bus link) on security forces continued.



- ["Fueling South Asia's rivalry"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 30 Mar. 2005.
- ["Overcoming mistrust must to resolve Kashmir issue: India"](#), *Dawn*, 24 Mar. 2005.
- ["Musharraf urges Kashmir solution"](#), BBC, 23 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°s 68, 69, and 70 [Kashmir: The View From Islamabad](#); [The View From New Delhi](#); and [Learning from the Past](#), 4 Dec. 2003; and N°79 [India/Pakistan Relations and Kashmir: Steps toward Peace](#), 24 June 2004.

  Nepal Dissent against royal coup increased with pro-democracy protests – hundreds arrested. Maoists called 11-day bandh (countrywide general shutdown) for 2-12 April. Former PM Sher Bahadur Deuba released from house arrest 12 March, urged King Gyanendra to begin talks with political parties. Government claimed security forces in western district of Arghakhanchi killed 30 Maoists 7 March. Reports emerged of wide-ranging human rights violations by government-backed vigilante groups in Kapilvastu late February. International community remained largely united against coup: World Bank suspended disbursement of \$70 million; UK cancelled \$2.5 million aid meant for police, prison services and PMs office; while EU, UN and international aid agencies released joint statement condemning worsening humanitarian situation. Pakistan, however, offered to supply arms (subsequently turned down by Nepal) while China has been publicly supportive and sent Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing to Kathmandu 31 March. Royal Nepalese Army announced split within Maoist leadership 14 March, claiming second-in-command Baburam Bhattarai expelled from party – subsequent reports appeared to confirm Bhattarai facing internal disciplinary action for criticisms of party line.

- ["Nepal protests planned"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Mar. 2005.
- ["Int'l screw tightens on Kathmandu"](#), *Times of India*, 18 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°36, [Nepal: Responding to the Royal Coup](#), 24 Feb. 2005, and Asia Report N°91, [Nepal's Royal Coup: Making a Bad Situation Worse](#), 9 Feb. 2005.


Crisis Group Asia Report N°94, [Nepal: Dealing with a Human Rights Crisis](#), 24 March 2005. Effective international action on Nepal's human rights crisis – beginning at the UN Human Rights Commission (CHR) now in session – is vital to forming a substantial peacebuilding process. The international community now finds itself confronted with what it fears the most: a no-party state that has decimated democracy and kills people at will. The crisis of protection clearly parallels the deepening military conflict, and to assist the return to a peace process, the international community needs to speak with one voice. The CHR can contribute to peace by passing a strong resolution that calls for restoration of basic freedoms and establishes robust enforcement mechanisms and clear benchmarks, including an effective, on-the-ground UN human rights monitoring mission to strengthen national efforts.



  Pakistan Dramatic escalation in Balochistan violence.


Explosion at Shia shrine in Fatehpur village 19 March killed at least 50; no claim of responsibility. Clashes between paramilitary Frontier Constabulary (FC) and Bugti tribesmen demanding greater economic and political rights killed 23 according to government, but opposition presented to parliament list of 59 civilians who allegedly died in crossfire. Access to Dera Bugti blocked by FC; tribesmen besieged over 300 troops; infrastructure also targeted as 2 bombs detonated on Balochistan trains 18 March. High-level negotiations underway to defuse crisis though deal between military and tribal chief Nawab Akbar Bugti could provoke even more violence by Baloch political activists since will be seen as sellout. Muthahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) opposition alliance of Islamic parties held Karachi rally against President Musharraf and his pro-U.S. policies.

- ["New round of talks held in Dera Bugti: 3-man body to be set up"](#), *Dawn*, 28 Mar. 2005.
- ["Pakistan tribal chief stands firm"](#), BBC, 22 Mar. 2005.
- ["Balochistan bomb blast death toll reaches 50"](#), ISN, 21 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°86, [Building Judicial Independence in Pakistan](#), 9 Nov. 2004.

 Sri Lanka Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) factional fighting killed at least 17, hampering Norwegian peace and aid distribution efforts. Norway drafted joint mechanism between Colombo and LTTE to handle foreign tsunami aid; parties reportedly close to agreement.

- ["Internecine killings unabated in Sri Lanka"](#), *The Hindu*, 27 Mar. 2005.
- ["Sri Lanka close to sealing tsunami relief deal with Tamil rebels, says foreign minister"](#), *Khaleej Times*, 25 Mar. 2005.
- ["Fresh fighting in Sri Lanka as Norway tries to move aid deal"](#), ReliefWeb (AFP), 21 Mar. 2005.

## NORTH EAST ASIA

 China (internal) Beijing-appointed Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa edged out; successor to serve remaining 2 years of Tung's 5-year term, allowing new Chief Executive to be chosen under old system 2007. Beijing's interpretation of Hong Kong Law criticised by democracy activists as delaying possible democratisation until 2012. Human Rights Watch welcomed release of prominent Uighur activist – but criticised ongoing detentions in Xinjiang.

- Human Rights Watch press release, ["Uighur prisoner released, critical resolution abandoned"](#), 18 Mar. 2005.
- ["Rule of law at risk in Hong Kong, critics say"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 14 Mar. 2005.

 North Korea U.S. Sec. State Condoleezza Rice, on Asia tour, warned North Korea against non-cooperation on 6-party talks. State news agency announced lifting of moratorium on long-term missile testing as U.S.-North Korean dialogue, reason for ban, now suspended.

- ["North Korea wants nuclear talks to focus on 'arms reduction'"](#), Chosun Ilbo, 1 Apr. 2005.
- ["China sends 'goodwill delegation' to North Korea"](#), AlertNet, 29 Mar. 2005.
- ["US raises pressure on N Korea"](#), BBC, 21 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°87, [North Korea: Where Next for the Nuclear Talks?](#), 15 Nov. 2004 and



N°89, *Korea, Backgrounder: How the South Views its Brother from Another Planet*, 14 Dec. 2004.

- ↳ Taiwan Strait President Chen Shui-ban sharply criticised “anti-secession law” passed by China’s National Peoples’ Congress authorising “non-peaceful means” to prevent Taiwan from moving towards greater independence. Law led to reconsideration of EU plans to lift arms embargo on China in place since 1989. U.S. said law “unfortunate”. Taipei peace demonstration against law numbered at 1 million by organisers; 500,000 by police. Representatives of opposition Kuomintang party travelled to Beijing in attempt to defuse tensions and undermine Chen.
  - “China reaches out to Taiwanese opposition party”, *The Washington Post*, 1 April 2005.
  - “China back at odds with tense Taiwan”, *International Herald Tribune*, 28 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°s 53-55, *Taiwan Strait I: What’s Left of ‘One China’?*, *Taiwan Strait II, The Risk of War*, and *Taiwan Strait III, The Chance of Peace*, 6 June 2003; and N°75, *Taiwan Strait IV: How an Ultimate Political Settlement Might Look*, 26 Feb. 2004.

## SOUTH EAST ASIA

- ↳ Indonesia Despite 3rd round Helsinki talks between government and Free Aceh Movement (GAM) scheduled for 12-17 April, security officials vowed to intensify operations against rebels. Jakarta announced extension by up to 2 months of 26 March deadline for aid agencies to leave Aceh. Devastation returned to region with 28 March earthquake near Nias island off coast of Sumatra. Tensions with Malaysia over disputed oil concessions off coast of Borneo, near Sebatik, led to increased military presence in area but diplomatic rhetoric generally restrained. Simmering unrest in Ambon as Muslim/Christian attacks 5 and 21 March left several injured. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono ordered police and military “intelligence operation” to capture culprits. Military announced 15,000 troops from Kostrad (Strategic Reserve Command) to be deployed to Papua province over next 4 years, bringing total to more than 50,000. Radical Islamic cleric Abu Bakar Ba’asyir found guilty of conspiracy over October 2002 Bali bombings, sentenced to 30 months in jail, but sentence could be overturned on appeal due to weak case.
  - “19 injured in new sectarian violence in Indonesia’s Ambon province”, AFP, 22 Mar. 2005.
  - “Indonesia to step up military operation against rebels in Aceh”, Reliefweb, 17 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°92, *Recycling Militants in Indonesia: Darul Islam and the Australian Embassy Bombing*, 22 Feb. 2005.
- ↳ Myanmar/Burma Promising diplomatic shift as Malaysia said would press for denial of Myanmar’s 2006 chairmanship of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) without concrete democracy moves. ASEAN’s foreign ministers due to meet in Philippines 10 April. Delegation from rebel Karen National Union (KNU), largest ethnic armed group yet to sign ceasefire agreement with government, met military officials to plan talks. At least 100 intelligence officials under former PM Khin Nyunt found guilty on various charges after October 2004 purge. Suspects denied lawyers and media barred from trials.
  - “Asia voices concern on Myanmar”, *International Herald Tribune*, 1 Apr. 2005.

- “MI defendants ‘found guilty, awaiting sentencing’”, Irrawady, 11 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°34, *Myanmar: Update on HIV/AIDS Policy*, 16 Dec. 2004.

- ↳ Philippines Security forces on alert for revenge attack after 15 March police storming of Manila prison left 22 dead, including 3 top Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) commanders. ASG detainees killed 3 guards in attempted jailbreak. Several arrests made relating to Valentine’s Day bombs in Manila and 2 other cities in which Jemaah Islamiyah-trained operatives from ASG and Muslim convert group, Rajah Solaiman Movement, said to be involved. Those arrested included JI member Rohmat, alias Zaki, JI’s liaison to ASG. Zaki reported 23 Indonesians just finished training and had left for Indonesia.
  - “US warns Philippines about militant ties of MNLF”, AFP, 31 Mar. 2005.
  - “Philippines: Keep group off terror list”, *Boston Globe* (AP), 30 Mar. 2005.
  - “28 killed in Philippines as police storm prison”, *International Herald Tribune*, 16 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°80, *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, 13 July 2004.

- ↳ Thailand PM Thaksin Shinawatra formally began second term 9 March, while violence in south worsened. At least 15 killed in various attacks on school teachers, Buddhist leaders and local female administrator as well as coordinated attack on train station in Sungai Padi, Narathiwat. During special parliamentary session Thaksin admitted heavy-handed approach to south failed; ordered reduction of troops and change in tactics. Leader of united front of Muslim separatist groups ‘Bersatu’ seeking permission to attend meeting of Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) as observer. Thai Government asked OIC to deny exiled leaders any political platform. Three generals involved with 26 October deaths of 78 Muslim demonstrators removed from positions – will face no further disciplinary action.
  - “Southern unrest: Troop levels to be reduced”, *The Nation*, 1 Apr. 2005.
  - “OIC to be asked to refuse pleas by southern separatist leaders”, *The Nation*, 16 Mar. 2005.
  - “Thai PM pledges peace effort for Muslim south”, AlertNet, 23 Mar. 2005.



## BALKANS

- ↳ Albania Political forces split on date for June/July parliamentary elections. PM Fatos Nano briefed North Atlantic Council in Brussels 24 March on political and defence reform. NATO Sec.-Gen. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer stressed importance of successful elections for Albania’s Euro-Atlantic integration.
  - “Albanian Prime Minister visits NATO”, NATO Update, 24 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°153, *Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?*, 25 Feb. 2004.

- Bosnia & Herzegovina Bosnian Croat president Dragan Covic fired by UN High Rep. Paddy Ashdown over corruption charges 29 March. Former Bosnian Serb general Vinko Pandurevic surrendered to Hague 23 March – faces charge of genocide for alleged role in Srebrenica massacre. Ashdown noted change in approach of Republika Srpska towards tribunal. Sarajevo war crimes chamber opened 9 March.
  - [“Bosnian Croat president sacked”](#), ISN, 30 Mar. 2005.
  - [“UN: Surrender of war crimes suspects to Hague sets new tone of cooperation”](#), RFE/RL, 24 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°31, [EUFOR: Changing Bosnia's Security Arrangements](#), 29 June 2004.

- Kosovo Hague tribunal's long-speculated indictment of PM Ramush Haradinaj for war crimes announced 8 March. Haradinaj resigned and turned himself in immediately. Despite annual KLA commemoration and anniversary of March 2004 riots, Kosovo's subdued reaction, aided by Haradinaj's calls for calm, surprised many: NATO had deployed additional 1,000 troops to bolster KFOR in anticipation of large demonstrations. Violence limited to grenade attacks – none fatal – and bomb scares, some claimed by new “Albanian Liberation Army”. Roadside bomb hit President Rugova's motorcade 15 March. Haradinaj's home region of west Kosovo (Dukagjini) remained security concern; head of UNMIK Soren Jessen-Petersen's offer of guarantees in support of Haradinaj bail release reduced tensions. Bail decision, due in several weeks, will mark next test of stability. Bajram Kosumi, deputy leader of Haradinaj's Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) party, elected PM 23 March – vowed to follow Haradinaj's policies. New government maintained narrow AAK-Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) coalition despite EU, U.S. and UK pressure for inclusion of Hashim Thaci's Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK).
  - [“Daily stabs of violence in Kosovo rattle U.N.”](#), AlertNet, 29 Mar. 2005.
  - Comment by Alex Anderson (Crisis Group), [“Consolidating Democracy in Kosovo”](#), *European Voice*, 24 Mar. 2005.
  - Comment by Gen. (ret.) Wesley Clark (Crisis Group), [“A settlement for Kosovo”](#), *New York Times*, 14 Mar. 2005.
  - Comment by John Norris (Crisis Group), [“Kosovo: A stern test of maturity”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 12 Mar. 2005.
  - For background see Crisis Group Europe Report N°161, [Kosovo: Toward Final Status](#), 24 Jan. 2005.

- Macedonia OSCE observers reported serious irregularities in first round of local elections 13 March, seen as test for future EU integration. Independent candidate Trifun Kostovski won Skopje mayoral race after incumbent Risto Penov announced withdrawal 30 March, though second round 10 April still needed to confirm victory. Opposition Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) and Party of Democratic Prosperity (PDP) boycotted second round of municipal elections 27 March. Ex-interior minister Ljube Boskovski, already in jail in Croatia, successfully transferred to Hague after indictment related to 2001 conflict.
  - [“Observer mission cites flaws in Macedonia vote”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Mar. 2005.
  - [“Poll incidents mar Macedonian image”](#), IWPR, 16 Mar. 2005.
  - [“Observers: Macedonia poll blighted”](#), CNN, 14 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°37 [Macedonia: Not out of the Woods Yet](#), 25 Feb. 2005.

- Serbia & Montenegro State Union parliament's mandate expired 3 March. No new elections called, but parliament continued to function. Four ICTY indictees surrendered, 12 still remain. Police issued warrant for retired general Nebojsa Pavkovic. PM Kostunica said government to announce new Kosovo policy at end of month and mentioned several possible options, all of which exclude independence, but by month end promised policy failed to materialise. Anti-semitic posters and graffiti appeared throughout Serbia, as right wing website published names of prominent Serbian Jews. Serbia hoping for green light from EU on starting feasibility study for accession; landmark textile import agreement signed 31 March.
  - [“Want to join EU? Turn in your war criminals”](#), *The Guardian*, 20 Mar. 2005.
  - [“Serbia: EU green light would secure wobbly government”](#), IWPR, 23 Mar. 2005.
  - [“A wasted year. The continuing failure to fulfil key human rights commitments made to the Council of Europe”](#), Amnesty International, 22 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°32, [Serbia's Changing Political Landscape](#), 22 July 2004.

## CAUCASUS

- Armenia Cracks appeared in ruling three-party coalition as Prime Minister Andranik Markarian continued to bicker publicly with parliamentary speaker Artur Baghdasarian. President Robert Kocharian played down dispute and signalled he had no intent of dismissing Markarian and his cabinet.
  - [“Armenian president plays down coalition discord”](#), RFE/RL, 11 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°158, [Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead](#), 18 Oct. 2004.
- Azerbaijan Elmar Huseynov, editor of opposition newspaper *Monitor* and one of country's best-known journalists, shot dead 2 March in apparent contract killing. Government hindered opposition efforts to organise anti-government protests around funeral, saying opposition politically exploiting Huseynov's death. President Ilham Aliiev condemned killing, calling it “stain on Azerbaijan's reputation.” Meanwhile, Aliyev announced pardons for 114 prisoners, including 7 opposition leaders arrested in 2003 for alleged roles in violence following rigged elections. Pardons came after calls from Council of Europe for Azerbaijan to release its estimated 180 political prisoners, and increasing pressure from international community for government to ensure parliamentary elections scheduled for November are free and fair. Senior interior ministry officials implicated in series of high-profile kidnappings and murders.
  - [“Rage at editor's murder”](#), IWPR, 9 Mar. 2005.
  - [“Thousands mourn Azeri journalist”](#), BBC, 4 Mar. 2005.
  - [“International community increases pressure on Azerbaijan”](#), RFE/RL, 4 Mar. 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°156, [Azerbaijan: Turning Over a New Leaf?](#), 13 May 2004.
- Georgia Relations with Russia remained tense, as parliament unanimously approved resolution calling for dismantlement of Russian military bases by 2006. South Ossetian situation also remained on edge, with no progress on demilitarisation of conflict zone, and intensified Georgian anti-smuggling efforts. Amid continued strengthening of Georgian military, President Saakashvili declared would not wait forever for South Ossetia



to respond to his January peace initiative. Meanwhile, newly appointed PM of breakaway Abkhazia shot at, but uninjured, 28 February; uncertain whether incident connected to wider power struggles between newly elected President Bagapsh and VP Khajimba.

- [“Georgia MPs oppose Russian troops”](#), BBC, 10 Mar. 2005.
- [“Sabre rattling over South Ossetia”](#), IWPR, 2 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°159, [Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia](#), 26 Nov. 2004.

➤ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Sixth round of “Prague Process” negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan cancelled due to reported illness of Armenian FM Vartan Oskanian. Talks postponed indefinitely. Azerbaijani officials speculated reason for postponement was Armenian attempt to buy time so as to reach internal consensus on what concessions to offer. Tensions along Karabakh Line of Contact increased as sides reported increasing number of ceasefire violations and exchanges of fire, leaving at least 3 dead.

- [“Karabakh: Political party boom”](#), IWPR, 2 Mar. 2005.
- [“Oskanian’s illness delays fresh Karabakh talks”](#), Armenia Liberty, 1 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Reports N°158, [Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead](#), 18 Oct. 2004, and N°156, [Azerbaijan: Turning Over a New Leaf?](#), 13 May 2004.

## EASTERN EUROPE

➤ Chechnya (Russia) Chechen rebel leader Aslan Maskhadov killed, allegedly in 8 March raid by Russian forces in Tolstoy-Yurt, northern Chechnya – dealing blow to hopes for political solution to conflict. Despite Maskhadov’s loss of influence since days as Chechen president and his inability to control radical rebel commander Shamil Basayev, who claimed responsibility for Beslan and Moscow theatre sieges, considered by many to be integral to any negotiated settlement. Little-known cleric Abdul-Khalim Saidulayev named as Maskhadov’s successor as leader of rebel State Defence Council. Russian police reportedly launched major sweep for Islamic radicals in Western Caucasus republics of Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachai-Cherkessia.

- [“Police mount huge operation in West Caucasus”](#), IWPR, 16 Mar. 2005.
- [“Now let the Chechens select their leaders”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 12 Mar. 2005.
- [“Obituary: Aslan Maskhadov”](#), IWPR, 9 Mar. 2005.

➤ Moldova Communist Party maintained parliamentary majority, taking 56 of 101 seats in 6 March elections described by OSCE as broadly democratic (but condemned by CIS observers). Despite victory, incumbent Communist majority reduced significantly, making opposition support necessary for re-election of party leader Vladimir Voronin as president. Valeriu Pasat, former Moldovan defence minister and current high level official at major Russian state-owned company, arrested 12 March in Moldova on charges of embezzlement, prompting statement of concern from Russian government.

- [“Moldova Communists stay in power”](#), BBC, 7 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°157, [Moldova: Regional Tensions over Transnistria](#), 17 June 2004.

➤ Ukraine Russian President Putin visited Kiev for first time since Victor Yushchenko’s inauguration. Yushchenko brushed aside Moscow’s concerns of cancellation of lease for Russia’s Black Sea fleet base should Ukraine join NATO; lease expires 2017. Former president, Leonid Kuchma, returned to Ukraine to answer questions over killing of journalist Georgiy Gongadze 2000; former interior minister due to testify found dead in suspected suicide.

- [“Putin makes fence-mending trip to Ukraine”](#), *The Guardian*, 19 Mar. 2005.
- [“Ukrainians sold missiles to Iran, China, prosecutors say”](#), *The Washington Post*, 19 Mar. 2005.
- [“Ukraine says ex-minister killed self”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 7 Mar. 2005.

## WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➤ Basque Country (Spain) Newly-formed Basque nationalist party, Aukera Guztiak, banned from 17 April regional elections accused of being ETA front. Mainstream nationalist premier Ibarretxe plans regional autonomy referendum – opposed by Spain’s central government and opposition – should he win. Seven suspected members of ETA terrorist group arrested; guns and explosives also recovered.

- [“State prosecutors move to outlaw Basque party”](#), *El Pais*, 25 Mar. 2005.

➤ Northern Ireland (UK) Sinn Féin (SF) under pressure over claims of widespread IRA criminal activity and murder of Belfast Catholic Robert McCartney. On trip to U.S. SF leader Gerry Adams not allowed to raise funds, excluded from White House St. Patrick’s day celebrations and refused meetings with Senator Ted Kennedy; pro-nationalist Republican Congressman Peter King called on IRA to disband. McCartney’s family met President Bush 17 March. £400,000 in Westminster parliamentary allowances withdrawn from SF. McCartneys announced they would not stand for office following SF deputy-leader Martin McGuinness’s warning to be “very careful”.

- [“Irish PM confirms IRA link to bank haul”](#), *The Guardian*, 23 Mar. 2005.
- [“No talks’ until IRA row settled”](#), BBC, 18 Mar. 2005.

➤ Turkey Two Kurdish Kongra-Gel militants killed in firefight early March. European representatives said Turkey’s EU drive had lost momentum since agreement that accession negotiations begin October 2005; EU warned recognition of Cyprus remained pre-condition.

- [“EU warns Turkey that talks hinge on quick recognition of Cyprus”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 1 Mar. 2005.
- Crisis Group Middle East Report N°35, [Iraq: Allaying Turkey’s Fears Over Kurdish Ambitions](#), 26 Jan. 2005.

## Latin America / Caribbean

➤ Bolivia Political turmoil and nation-wide protest over government and its energy policies. President Carlos Mesa’s credibility damaged after resignation vacillations: 6 March resignation to Congress rejected by parliament – after massive display of public support, Mesa agreed to govern until end of

term in 2007. Opposition Movement Towards Socialism supported disruptive anti-Mesa street protests and roadblocks, but called them off without extracting concessions. Lower house passed hydrocarbon bill 16 March – to be discussed in Senate, where disagreement continued over terms of bill.

- [“Bolivia leader to stay in office”](#), BBC, 18 March 2005.
- [“Bolivia lower house approves energy bill”](#), Reuters, 16 March 2005.
- [“Throwing down the gauntlet”](#), *The Economist*, 10 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°7, [Bolivia’s Divisions: Too Deep to Heal?](#), 6 July 2004.

Crisis Group Latin America Report N°12, [Coca, Drugs and Social Protest in Bolivia and Peru](#), 3 March 2005. Coca cultivation is expanding in Bolivia and Peru, where weak states and flawed U.S. drugs policy have produced social unrest and instability. Governments are caught between a desire to please international allies, and pressure from domestic social and opposition movements often representing farmers who rely on cultivation of coca – legal and illegal. The current war on drugs is not effective: lack of clarity about the size of permitted coca crops for traditional purposes and lack of viable local alternatives are the major obstacles to cutting production. Forced eradication should not leave farmers without alternatives. U.S. aid should shift emphasis from eradication to rural development.



Colombia FARC operations against infrastructure and military targets continued while demobilisation of right-wing paramilitaries remained stalled due to dispute over accompanying legislation. Paramilitary negotiating commission in Santa Fe de Ralito said demobilisation bill submitted to parliament includes insufficient legal guarantees. FARC ambushed military convoy in Putumayo department 23 March killing 10 soldiers. At least 25 soldiers, guerrillas and civilians killed in clashes throughout month. Spokespersons of “peace community” of San Jose de Apartado (Antioquia), which saw assassination of 8 of its inhabitants late February, refused army entry, rejecting accusation FARC members hiding in area. Bogota and leftist National Liberation Army moved towards peace talks and called for international support.

- [“Colombia says moving toward peace talks with rebels”](#), AlertNet, 29 Mar. 2005.
- [“Colombian rebels kill 10 soldiers”](#), *The Guardian*, 24 Mar. 2005.
- Comment by Markus Schultze-Kraft (Crisis Group), [“El año de las definiciones políticas”](#), *El Espectador*, 26 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°11, [War and Drugs in Colombia](#), 27 Jan. 2005.

Ecuador Judicial crisis unresolved, forcing President Lucio Gutierrez to ask for international mediation. Congress unable to reach agreement on December dissolution of Supreme Court (27 of 31 judges replaced with magistrates of Congress’ choice). Court system further paralysed by 15 March strike, while 25,000 demonstrated against Gutierrez in Cuenca.

- [“Ecuador’s chief seeks help in court dispute”](#), *New York Times* (Reuters), 24 Mar. 2005.
- [“Thousands march against President in Ecuador city”](#), ABC News (Reuters), 15 Mar. 2005.

Haiti Two UN peacekeepers killed 20 March in separate clashes with disbanded army soldiers in Petit-Goâve and Central Plateau Region. Peacekeepers raided occupied police

station in Terre-Rouge town without casualties next day. Raids follow months of criticism for UN inaction toward armed former soldiers/gangs; UN SRSG Juan Gabriel Valdés said UN Mission prepared to take tough action following peacekeeper deaths. U.S. Defense Sec. Rumsfeld raised doubts about autumn elections due to security concerns. Reports of police brutality and summary executions persisted, while armed gangs continued to spread violence in capital.

- [“UN peacekeepers killed in Haiti”](#), BBC, 21 Mar. 2005.
- Comment by Mark Schneider (Crisis Group), [“Save nation from sliding into more violence”](#), *The Miami Herald*, 17 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°7, [Haiti’s Transition: Hanging in the Balance](#), 8 Feb. 2005.

Venezuela Tensions with Colombia resurfaced after Venezuelan forces crossed border in search of gasoline smugglers 23 March. U.S. Defense Sec. Donald Rumsfeld voiced U.S. concerns over Venezuelan arms acquisitions. Defence and energy deals signed with Spain 31 March.

- [“Colombia says Venezuelan army violated sovereignty”](#), AlertNet, 23 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°5, [Venezuela: Headed Toward Civil War?](#), 10 May 2004.



## Middle East / North Africa

Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°37, [Understanding Islamism](#), 2 March 2005. The West’s failure to understand the diverse nature of Islamic activism, and adopt a discriminating strategy in response, risks sidelining non-violent and modernist tendencies, and strengthening militant jihadis. Though Shiite Islamism remains unified, its behaviour usually communally-focused and defensive, Sunni Islamism now has three distinct main types: political, missionary, and jihadi. Which of these three will prevail is of great importance to the Muslim world and – although none of them can be considered tamely “pro-Western” – to the U.S. and Europe. By adopting a sledgehammer approach that does not differentiate jihadi Islamism from other brands, or between fundamentalist and modernist streams of activism, Western policy-makers risk provoking an undesirable outcome: either inducing the different strands to band together in reaction, or causing the modernist trends to be eclipsed by the jihadis.



### EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Israel/Occupied Territories Israeli defence ministry approved construction of 3,500 new homes in Maale Adumim, largest West Bank settlement, provoking Palestinian and international criticism and overshadowing positive peace steps earlier in month. Critics said expansion would cut off Palestinians in East Jerusalem from others in West Bank. Earlier, Israel handed over West Bank towns of Jericho and Tulkarm to Palestinian Authority, while 13 Palestinian groups, meeting in Cairo, announced would maintain informal ceasefire until end of 2005 provided Israel reciprocated and released Palestinian prisoners. Israeli PM Ariel Sharon won key budget vote in parliament, paving way for Gaza withdrawal beginning July. Palestinian President Abbas ordered security crackdown

after rampaging gunmen fired on his Ramallah compound 30 March.

- "Abbas orders crackdown on defiant militants", *The Daily Star*, 1 Apr. 2005.
- "Budget vote clears way for Israeli pullout", *The Washington Post*, 30 Mar. 2005.
- "Palestinian asks U.S. to dissuade Israelis", *International Herald Tribune*, 26 Mar. 2005.
- "Israeli troops hand over Tulkarm", BBC, 22 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°16, *After Arafat? Challenges and Prospects*, 23 Dec. 2004.

Lebanon Increasing concern political crisis following February assassination of former PM Hariri could lead country into chaos. Opposition leaders blame Syrian-backed security agencies for several bomb attacks in Christian areas that killed at least 3. Hezbollah organised large pro-Syrian demonstration Beirut 8 March; eclipsed by 800,000-strong counter-demonstration 14 March. U.S. called on Lebanon to follow through with May elections with international monitors, and continued pressing for Hizbollah disarmament, while encouraging peaceful Hizbollah political role. UN fact-finding mission report stated Syrian government primarily responsible for political tension at time of former PM Hariri's February assassination, and called for independent international investigation. Syrian army and intelligence services continued redeployment to Bekaa valley; Damascus committed to pulling out remaining troops (though not intelligence agents) before May elections.

- "Syria vows full Lebanon pullout", BBC, 30 Mar. 2005.
- "Lebanon gives Annan OK to solve Hariri killing", AlertNet, 24 Mar. 2005.
- "Washington and Hizbullah trade blows on disarmament", *The Daily Star*, 17 March 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°7, *Hizbollah: Rebel Without a Cause?*, 30 July 2003.

Syria Intense international pressure continued for Syria to ease grip on Lebanon. UN report on Hariri assassination hinted at Syrian responsibility and cover-up of evidence but stopped short of pointing fingers. Syria dismissed report as biased, but promised to withdraw remaining forces before Lebanon's May elections in accordance with UN Resolution 1559. 8,000 Syrian troops pulled back to Lebanon's Bekaa Valley 18 March. Both opposition and pro-government demonstrations took place in Damascus. Syria and Israel negotiated first time trade deal, importing Golan Heights apples into Syria.

- "UN Security Council to vote on Hariri murder probe", *The Daily Star*, 1 Apr. 2005.
- "Syria vows full Lebanon pullout", BBC, 30 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Reports N°s 23 and 24, *Syria Under Bashar (I): Foreign Policy Challenges*; *Syria Under Bashar (II): Domestic Policy Challenges*, 11 Feb. 2004.

## GULF

Iran Nuclear talks with France, UK and Germany ended 23 March with no agreement. "EU-3" offered economic, political and technological incentives in return for Iran abandoning uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities (on hold while talks underway). EU and Iran differ on definition of "objective guarantees" that no nuclear weapons being built – Iran views intrusive inspections by UN International Atomic Energy Agency as sufficient; EU wants uranium enrichment to be

given up entirely. Tehran, reportedly seeking assurances of U.S. non-aggression, called U.S. offer of economic incentives "insignificant".

- "Impasse is unbroken in Iran talks", *International Herald Tribune*, 25 Mar. 2005.
- "US rules out Iran security pledge", BBC, 22 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°15, *Iran: Where Next on the Nuclear Standoff?*, 24 Nov. 2004.

Iraq Following historic swearing-in of 275 members of Transitional National Assembly 16 March, Shiite United Iraqi Alliance and Kurdish parties began heated negotiations to decide composition of transitional government. Distribution of key posts, inclusion of Sunni Arabs, and role of Islam main obstacles; decision on status of oil-rich Kirkuk deferred till later. Insurgency continued with assassinations of security officials, and number of larger attacks: 47 died in Sunni bombing of Shiite funeral Mosul; car bombings 25 March in Ramadi and Iskandariya killed 15. Dozens of insurgents killed in shoot-outs with Iraqi and U.S. forces; raid on insurgent training camp near Tikrit 23 March led to death of 85 militants. Netherlands began troop withdrawal and Ukraine began reductions. Italy mooted September withdrawal in wake of protests over death of Italian agent, shot accidentally by U.S. forces while escorting released Italian hostage. 1,166 Coalition soldiers, including 1,059 Americans, and thousands of Iraqis killed by hostile fire since declared end of combat operations 1 May 2003.

- "Two months on, still no Iraqi government", *The Economist*, 30 Mar. 2005.
- "Iraqis fear long delay on government deal", *International Herald Tribune*, 30 Mar. 2005.
- "Straw denies war advice claims", *The Guardian*, 24 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°34, *What Can the U.S. Do in Iraq?*, 22 Dec. 2004, and N°35, *Iraq: Allaying Turkey's Fears Over Kurdish Ambitions*, 26 Jan. 2005.


Crisis Group Middle East Report N°38, *Iran in Iraq: How Much Influence?*, 21 March 2005. Iran has the potential to do great mischief in Iraq, but despite wide-spread allegations, evidence of attempts to destabilise the country is rare and evidence of achievement rarer still. Instead, Iran's priority has been to prevent Iraq from re-emerging as a threat, which means preventing both outright failure in Baghdad or clear success. Iran and Iraq need to cooperate on their security concerns, but continuation of Tehran's relatively cautious approach primarily depends on relations with Washington. So long as these remain unchanged, Iran is likely to view events next door as part of its broader rivalry with, and fears of, the U.S. To avoid worst case scenarios, the U.S. should soften its rhetoric and heighten its participation in EU negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program.



Saudi Arabia Second phase of municipal council elections – held in eastern and southern provinces – passed off well, with strong turnout and campaigning. Shiites won all seats in Qatif stronghold. First round held 10 February in Riyadh; next set for 21 April in west.

- "A democratic door the Saudi regime won't easily close", *The Daily Star*, 19 Mar. 2005.
- "Saudi ruler urges Syrian pullout", BBC, 3 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°31, *Saudi Arabia Backgrounder: Who are the Islamists?*, 21 Sept. 2004.



-  Yemen Some 65 killed in outbreak of violence in Saada province, northwest Yemen, between security forces and followers of Husain al-Huthi – radical Shia cleric who died leading 2004 revolt.
  - [“Yemen toll mounts to 65”](#), Middle East Online, 31 Mar. 2005.

## NORTH AFRICA

-  Algeria Arab League leaders met in Algiers 22-23 March; Moroccan King Mohammed met Algerian president Bouteflika in first visit to Algeria since 1999 accession. Tensions over Western Sahara not directly discussed. Authorities banned March issue of *Afrique Magazine* and French weekly *L'Express*, prompting fears of new censorship wave. Two soldiers reported killed 30km east of Algiers by Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) 24 March; security forces claimed killed GSPC founder-member Malik Nacer 28 March. Government report said security forces responsible for over 6,000 disappearances during 1990s.
  - [“Algeria hopes for image boost from Arab summit”](#), Reuters, 15 March 2005.
  - [“Second Foreign Publication Banned”](#), International Federation of Journalists, 11 March 2005.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°29, *Islamism, Violence and Reform in Algeria: Turning the Page*, 30 July 2004.
-  Egypt Opposition politician Ayman Nour released from detention 12 March; rearrested 22 March on charges of forging signatures to register Al-Ghad (“Tomorrow”) party. Following President Mubarak’s surprise February move to allow multi-candidate presidential elections, Nour announced candidacy.

Most opposition figures meeting in Shura Council backed Mubarak’s move but expressed concerns on implementation; opposition Hizb al-Amal protested elections would still be “masquerade”. Police prevented banned Muslim Brothers from holding demonstrations 27 March; dozens arrested, including leadership figure Abd al-Mon’im Abu’l-Futuh.

- [“Opposition snipes at government”](#), *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 31 Mar. 2005.
- [“Protests against Mubarak’s electoral reform”](#), Middle East Online, 7 Mar. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Briefings N°s 12 and 13, *Islamism in North Africa: Legacies of History* and *Egypt’s Opportunity*, 20 Apr. 2004.
-  Mauritania Freelance journalist investigating slavery in Mauritania arrested for damaging Mauritania’s image; slavery was officially banned 1981. Government ministers awarded themselves 600% pay rise in bid to stem corruption.
  - [“Ministers receive 600 percent pay rise”](#), IRIN, 28 Mar. 2005.
  - [“Slavery research ‘damages Mauritania’s image’”](#), Afrol, 22 Mar. 2005.
-  Western Sahara Algerian President Bouteflika and Moroccan King Mohammed met on sidelines of Algiers Arab League summit, leading to hopes for movement on Western Sahara question (though issue not directly discussed). 20,000 demonstrators demanded release of 408 Moroccan soldiers held by Polisario.
  - [“Scores of Moroccans protest over W Sahara inmates”](#), Middle East Online, 7 Mar. 2005.

## Advocacy Offices

<b>Brussels</b>	brussels@crisisgroup.org +32 2 502 9038
<b>Washington</b>	washington@crisisgroup.org +1 202 785 1601
<b>New York</b>	newyork@crisisgroup.org +1 212 813 0820
<b>London</b>	london@crisisgroup.org +44 20 7031 0230
<b>Moscow</b>	moscow@crisisgroup.org +7 095 251 4485

## Field Offices

Crisis Group has regional or local field offices in Amman (amman@crisisgroup.org), Belgrade (serbia@crisisgroup.org), Bishkek (bishkek@crisisgroup.org), Cairo (cairo@crisisgroup.org), Dakar (dakar@crisisgroup.org), Dushanbe (dushanbe@crisisgroup.org), Islamabad (islamabad@crisisgroup.org), Jakarta (jakarta@crisisgroup.org), Kabul (kabul@crisisgroup.org), Nairobi (nairobi@crisisgroup.org), Port-au-Prince (haiti@crisisgroup.org), Pretoria (pretoria@crisisgroup.org), Pristina (pristina@crisisgroup.org), Quito (quito@crisisgroup.org), Seoul (seoul@crisisgroup.org), Skopje (skopje@crisisgroup.org) and Tbilisi (tbilisi@crisisgroup.org).

Crisis Group also has a field presence (with analysts operating from regional offices) in Albania, Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Burundi, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Iran, Iraq, Israel/Occupied Territories, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Yemen and Zimbabwe.