

# CrisisWatch

A monthly bulletin by the ICG on current and potential conflicts around the world



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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 ICG reports and briefing papers that have been published in the last month.

*CrisisWatch* is compiled by ICG'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 40 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to [crisiswatch@icg.org](mailto:crisiswatch@icg.org).

## August 2004 Trends



### Deteriorated Situations

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| Bangladesh (p.5)  | Israel/Occupied Territories (p.10) |
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### Improved Situations

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### Unchanged Situations

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## September 2004 Watchlist



### Conflict Risk Alert

- DR Congo
- Georgia



### Conflict Resolution Opportunity

- Northern Ireland (UK)

## The International Crisis Group

ICG 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. ICG'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, ICG produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers, and backed up with high level advocacy. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, and its President and Chief Executive is former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.



## Africa

### CENTRAL AFRICA

↓ Burundi Massacre of 160 Congolese Tutsi refugees 13 August at UN-run Gatumba camp, 9km north of Bujumbura; only remaining Burundi rebel group, Forces Nationales de Libération (FNL), claimed responsibility, though eyewitnesses reported involvement of Congolese army, Mai-Mai militias and Rwandan Hutu rebels based in DR Congo (DRC). DRC border opened and closed repeatedly on spillover fears: Burundi accused DRC soldiers of shooting across border 30 August. Burundi peace process remained broadly on-track at regional summit Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, 18 August with affirmation of 31 October 2004 deadline for elections (as stipulated in 2000 Arusha accords) and agreement on interethnic power-sharing formula. However, 10 main Tutsi parties boycotted saying process sidelined them. Burundi army claimed 3 FNL rebels dead after clashes near Ruyaga army base, south of Bujumbura. 3,000 displaced by fighting in Bujumbura province 28 August.

- "Fighting displaces another 3000", IRIN, 30 Aug. 2004.
- "Burundi army says three FNL rebels killed in clash", Reuters AlertNet, 24 Aug. 2004.
- "Regional leaders spurn Burundi rebels and call for elections", IRIN, 19 Aug. 2004.
- "Grisly attack stuns Congo refugees", *International Herald Tribune*, 16 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Report N°81, *End of the Transition in Burundi: The Home Stretch*, 5 July 2004.

↙ Chad Refugee situation in Chad remained dire, particularly in central border region, with fears of sudden influx of 30,000 refugees. Deadly hepatitis outbreak in Djabal and Goz Amer camps. 200 French troops deployed to eastern border with Sudan's Darfur region in bid to stabilise security situation.

- "Hepatitis E breaks out as more refugees threaten to cross border", IRIN, 20 Aug. 2004.
- "On the Sudan-Chad border: a disaster waiting to happen", *International Herald Tribune*, 13 Aug. 2004.

↙ Democratic Republic of Congo Instability increased following killing of 160 Congolese Tutsis in Burundi refugee camp 13 August. Refugees had fled fighting in Bukavu, eastern DR Congo (DRC), June 2004. Burundi suggested DRC army involvement in massacre; Rwanda blamed DRC-based Rwandan Hutu Interahamwe rebels; both warned of possible military intervention in DRC. Azarias Ruberwa, DRC vice president and head of Rwanda-backed RCD Tutsi former rebel movement, temporarily left transitional government 23 August, protesting Kinshasa's failure to provide security and reintegrate militias in Ituri and Kivu provinces. DRC President Kabila rejected renegotiation of transitional government under South African mediation; but South African President Mbeki met with Ruberwa on 2-day visit in attempt to end dispute. Talks in Kampala, Uganda, led to DRC, Uganda and Rwanda agreement 25 August to disarm all rebel groups immediately. Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan suggested 16 August increasing size of UN peacekeeping mission (MONUC) from 10,800 to 23,900 as part of ongoing Security Council

discussions on strengthening MONUC mandate and capacity; U.S. and others suggested such increases unrealisable. MONUC mandate to be renewed by 1 October.

- "Ex-rebel leader returns to government", IRIN, 27 Aug. 2004.
- "Things fall apart?", *The Economist*, 26 Aug. 2004.
- "Uganda, Rwanda and Congo agree to disarm rebels", Reuters AlertNet, 25 Aug. 2004.
- "The 'Jews' of Africa", *The Economist*, 19 Aug. 2004.
- "Annan: More troops needed for DRC", CNN, 16 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Briefing, *Pulling Back from the Brink in the Congo*, 7 July 2004.



ICG Africa Report N°84, *Maintaining Momentum in the Congo: The Ituri Problem*, 26 August 2004. The collapse of the peace process in the Congo (DRC) and a return to war are real possibilities. While last week's massacre of Congolese refugees in Burundi focused attention on the Kivus region of the Congo, the closely related situation in Ituri is equally worrying. The Security Council must strengthen the UN Mission in the Congo (MONUC) when it is up for renewal on 1 October. It is vital to clarify when and for what purposes MONUC should be prepared to use force and to improve the capabilities of its Ituri Brigade. MONUC needs a clearer mandate and more resources to encourage it to go proactively after armed groups and to devise a diplomatic and political strategy that can help the fragile Transitional Government in Kinshasa assert control before it is too late.

↙ Rwanda Kigali said would intervene in DR Congo (DRC) to protect Congolese Tutsis following 13 August Burundi massacre of 160. Fears Rwanda will carry out threat either directly or through proxy groups. Ugandan, Rwandan and DRC ministers meeting Kampala 25 August agreed to disarm militia groups, including DRC-based Rwandan Hutu Interahamwe rebels. In separate development, ICTR prosecutor Hassan Jallow said had identified 40 cases to be transferred to Rwandan courts, prompting defence concerns about fairness of trials and Rwandan use of death penalty. Jallow further announced 18 August that ICTR would evaluate until 2005 possible Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) 1994 war crimes; current President Kagame was leader of RPF.

- "DRC, Rwanda and Uganda agree on armed groups' disarmament", IRIN, 26 Aug. 2004.
- "Evaluation of evidence on RPF crimes to continue until 2005", *Hirondelle*, 18 Aug. 2004.
- For background to 2003 elections, see ICG Africa Report N°53, *Rwanda at the End of the Transition: A Necessary Political Liberalisation*, 13 Nov. 2002. For background to ICTR, see ICG Africa Report N°69, *The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda: Time for Pragmatism*, 26 Sept. 2003.

↙ Uganda Combination of extended amnesty law and military pressure further weakened LRA, raising hopes for end to conflict, though President Museveni discounted possibility of political – rather than military – peace. LRA said leader Joseph Kony willing to talk to Museveni. Ugandan army claimed 10 LRA rebels killed 24 August. Further 14 killed in Parajok, southern Sudan, 26 August. LRA surrenders continued as 32 fighters, including 3 commanders, gave themselves up 15 August, taking total fighters surrendered over last 2 months above 500. Catholic church claimed war could end soon, but warned of difficulties of converting

“military peace” to “social peace”. ICC investigators began work northern Uganda.

- “Kony ready to meet president”, *The Monitor*, 1 Sept. 2004.
- “Ugandan army says 14 LRA rebels killed in Sudan”, Reuters AlertNet, 26 Aug. 2004.
- “Northern war could end soon but challenges remain – church”, IRIN, 18 Aug. 2004.
- “Museveni rules out talks with LRA as more rebels surrender”, IRIN, 17 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Report N°77, *Northern Uganda: Understanding and Solving the Conflict*, 14 Apr. 2004; and ICG Issues Report N°3, *HIV/AIDS as a Security Issue in Africa: Lessons from Uganda*, 16 Apr. 2004.

## HORN OF AFRICA



Ethiopia/Eritrea Eritrea re-opened key supply road to UN peacekeepers (UNMEE) 10 August, prompting hopes of UNMEE/Eritrea thaw. Ethiopia dropped objections to direct Addis Ababa-Asmara UNMEE flights 20 August. Neither side moved from position on status of disputed village of Badme. UNMEE mandate expires 15 September.

- “UNMEE allowed direct Addis-Asmara flights”, IRIN, 20 Aug. 2004.
- “UN looking forward to ‘positive’ ties with government”, IRIN, 13 Aug. 2004.
- For background see, ICG Africa Report N°68, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: War or Peace?*, 24 Sept. 2003.



Somalia After multiple delays to current stage of peace process backed by regional mediator IGAD, Somalia inaugurated transitional parliament Nairobi 23 August, with 214 of 275 seats allocated. By month end only 17 seats (of 61 given to Darod clan) remained under discussion. UN Security Council condemned ongoing violations of Somalia’s arms embargo 17 August, extending Monitoring Group mandate 6 months.

- “More new Somali lawmakers sworn in”, Reuters AlertNet, 29 Aug. 2004.
- “Somali parliament sworn in as clan dispute flares”, *The Washington Post*, 23 Aug. 2004.
- “UN condemns arms embargo violations, extends mandate of monitoring group”, IRIN, 18 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Reports N°80, *Biting the Somali Bullet*, 4 May 2004; and N°66, *Somaland: Democratisation and Its Discontents*, 28 July 2003.



Sudan First 150 African Union (AU) troops, of total 300 expected, arrived Darfur 15 August to protect 100 unarmed AU ceasefire monitors. African and international pressure still fell short of that necessary to pressure Sudanese government and provide protection for people of Darfur. Sudan appeared to accept possible 2,000 further AU troops 25 August at AU-backed peace negotiations in Abuja, but said troops could only help with cantonment and disarming of rebel groups; rebels insisted would not confine themselves to base before political solution. Rebels briefly boycotted talks 28 August claiming 75 villagers killed in Sudanese government ceasefire violation; AU ceasefire commission suggested breaches by both sides. UN Special Envoy to Sudan Jan Pronk noted mixed progress, easing of aid restrictions and police deployment. Deadline for response to July 2004 UN Security Council resolution passed 30 August; Pronk will brief Security Council 2 September on situation,

with subsequent UNSC decision on possible further measures. In positive development 31 August, southern SPLA rebels and government extended 3-month truce to 30 November.

- “Another push for peace”, *The Economist*, 30 Aug. 2004.
- Comment by John Prendergast (ICG), “Darfur will not be saved by words alone”, *Wall Street Journal Europe*, 30 Aug. 2004.
- “Sudan peace talks deadlocked in new aid squabble”, Reuters AlertNet, 29 Aug. 2004.
- “Janjaweed camps still active”, Human Rights Watch release, 27 Aug. 2004.
- Comment by David Mozersky (ICG), “Help the African Union protect Darfur’s people”, *International Herald Tribune*, 25 Aug. 2004.
- Comment by Gareth Evans (ICG), “Why nobody is doing enough for Darfur”, *Financial Times*, 3 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Report N°80, *Sudan: Now or Never in Darfur*, 23 May 2004.



ICG Africa Report N°83, *Darfur Deadline: A New International Action Plan*, 23 August 2004. One week before the UN Security Council’s Darfur deadline expires, it is clear the international community needs to get much tougher. Failure now would not only mean many tens of thousands more dead, but likely condemn Sudan to more years of war and further spread instability to its neighbours. Khartoum has not met its commitments to neutralise the government-supported Janjaweed militias responsible for the massive human rights violations and humanitarian disaster. The Security Council should authorise the African Union to send a peacekeeping mission to protect civilians. To demonstrate seriousness and help persuade Khartoum to accept it, the Council should also impose an arms embargo, target sanctions against regime officials and ruling-party businesses, and establish an international commission to investigate mass atrocities.

## SOUTHERN AFRICA



Angola Angolan government announced election planned for September 2006, but conditional on series of technical and constitutional steps to provide electoral framework. UNITA former rebel movement welcomed long-awaited move and returned to electoral commission 26 August, but criticised earlier prevarication and late election date.

- “Opposition parties return to electoral commission”, IRIN, 26 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Report N°61, *Angola’s Choice: Reform or Regress*, 7 Apr. 2003.



Zimbabwe Opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) announced 25 August it would protest government harassment and lack of genuine electoral reform by not contesting upcoming by-elections and pulled out of Harare city council. MDC warned it might not contest any elections until Zimbabwe implemented Southern African Development Community (SADC) electoral guidelines agreed at regional conference Mauritius 16-17 August. SADC said countries which failed to meet guidelines would be ejected. Concern remains high over harvest shortfall in country, and proposed law restricting human rights organisations before March 2005 elections.

- [“Zimbabwe opposition to boycott elections until system changes”](#), *The Guardian*, 26 Aug. 2004.
- [“The politics of food assistance in Zimbabwe”](#), Human Rights Watch briefing paper, 12 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Report N°78, [Zimbabwe: In Search of a New Strategy](#), 19 Apr. 2004.

## WEST AFRICA

☞ Côte d’Ivoire 30 July “Accra III” agreement led to August return of opposition members to President Gbagbo’s government, re-instatement of 3 ministers and Gbagbo’s acceptance of power-sharing compromise. Full cabinet meeting held 9 August. UN announced creation of first mixed police unit 19 August to patrol Bangolo town, within “demilitarised zone” between rebel-held north and government-held south.

- [“First joint rebel and government police force to start patrols”](#), IRIN, 19 Aug. 2004.
- [“Ivorian rebels rejoin government”](#), BBC, 9 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Report N°82, [Côte d’Ivoire: No Peace in Sight](#), 12 July 2004.

☞ Guinea Dispute continued over status of Yenga, currently occupied by Guinean army but claimed by Sierra Leone. UN investigated reports of trafficking of Liberian arms and ex-combatants into Guinea, with ongoing fears over stability of Guinea/Liberia border zone.

- [“UN fears child mercenaries being hired in Liberia”](#), IRIN, 28 Aug. 2004.
- [“Yenga Belongs to Sierra Leone” – Banda Thomas](#), *Standard Times*, 9 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Report N°74, [Guinea: Uncertainties at the End of an Era](#), 19 Dec. 2003.

☞ Liberia UN announced Liberian disarmament would end December, later than planned; claimed 68,730 ex-combatants demobilised to date. Reports suggested former Liberian strongman Charles Taylor linked to al Qaeda.

- [“Disarmament to end in December, later than planned”](#), IRIN, 25 Aug. 2004.
- [“Former Liberian leader allegedly aided Al Qaeda”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 4 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Report N°75, [Rebuilding Liberia: Prospects and Perils](#), 30 Jan. 2004.

☞ Nigeria President Obasanjo visited Yelwa, Plateau state, site of Christian-Muslim clashes May 2004 and where state of emergency continues, opening month-long peace conference 18 August. Darfur peace talks continued in Abuja under Nigerian President Obasanjo, current African Union (AU) chair. Nigerian parliament gave authority to send up to 1,500 Nigerian troops to Darfur 19 August. Three died in clashes in oil-rich Port Harcourt 28-29 August.

- [“Troops patrol Port Harcourt after clashes”](#), BBC, 31 Aug. 2004
- [“Searching for peace in Nigeria”](#), BBC, 19 Aug. 2004.
- [“Nigerian senate approves sending 1,500 peacekeepers to Darfur”](#), IRIN, 19 Aug. 2004.
- [“Reforming the nearly unreformable”](#), *The Economist*, 5 Aug. 2004.

☞ Sierra Leone Dispute continued over status of Yenga town, occupied by Guinean troops. Sierra Leone and Guinea agreed 6 August at Conakry talks to joint mission to determine solution.

- [“Joint delegation to visit Yenga before end of month”](#), IRIN, 6 Aug. 2004
- For background, see ICG Africa Report N°67, [Sierra Leone: The State of Security and Governance](#), 2 Sept. 2003.

## Asia / Pacific

### CENTRAL ASIA

☞ Kazakhstan Authorities granted 2 leading dissidents – politician Ghalymzhan Zhaiqyanov and journalist Sergei Duvanov – conditional release from prison (though Zhaiqyanov to remain confined in lower-security settlement in north). Move greeted with scepticism; seen as attempt to clean up country’s international image ahead of 19 September parliamentary election.

- [“Comment: Mixed deal for Kazak prisoners”](#), IWPR, 20 Aug. 2004.

☞ Kyrgyzstan Government denied early release request of jailed opposition leader Feliks Kulov, saying latter not eligible for parole until November 2005 – after presidential elections. Kyrgyz civic group launched campaign in support of third term for President Akaev, despite constitution’s 2-term limit.

- Comment by David Lewis (ICG), [“Kyrgyzstan: No Georgia”](#), Transitions Online, 23 Aug. 2004.
- [“Kyrgyzstan: Opposition cries foul play over jailed leader”](#), IWPR, 6 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°66, [Youth in Central Asia: Losing the New Generation](#), 31 Oct. 2003.



ICG Asia Report N°81, [Political Transition in Kyrgyzstan: Problems and Prospects](#), 11 August 2004. Kyrgyzstan’s elections could lead to serious unrest if President Askar Akaev tries to retain power

by subverting the vote. The next eighteen months will witness three polls (local, parliamentary, presidential), which together form the decisive moment in the transition from Soviet rule. If Akaev tries to retain power, directly or indirectly, in fraudulent elections, 2005 will mark the end of Central Asia’s democratic experiments. If he leaves office and allows fair competition, it will be historic for Kyrgyzstan and the region. Kyrgyz political life is relatively sophisticated: both the public and much of the elite would object to moves to undermine the democratic process. Anything less than peaceful, democratic transfer of power would severely damage Kyrgyzstan’s ties with international financial institutions.

☞ Tajikistan Tension in Dushanbe after head of Tajik drugs agency and former commander of Presidential Guard Ghafur Mirzoev arrested 6 August and sacked. Mirzoev major political player: dismissal significant move by President Imomali Rakhmonov to consolidate power. Concerns over press freedom deepened after opposition editor assaulted and 2 newspapers forced to suspend operations.

- [“Tajikistan: Fall of Praetorian Guardsman”](#), IWPR, 10 Aug. 2004.

- [“Tajikistan: International concern over attack on journalist”](#), IRIN, 3 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Briefing, [Tajikistan’s Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?](#), 19 May 2004.

↳ Turkmenistan State religious board dismissed country’s chief mufti, citing his “serious shortcomings in carrying out religious work”. President Saparmurat Niazov increasingly dominating religious sphere: ordered collection of his own spiritual writings displayed alongside Koran in mosques.

- [“Turkmen religious board removes chief mufti”](#), RFE/RL, 25 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°44, [Cracks in the Marble: Turkmenistan’s Failing Dictatorship](#), 17 Jan. 2003.

↳ Uzbekistan Court sentenced 15 people to jail in connection with March and April attacks in Tashkent and Bukhara, which killed 47. Government claimed attacks carried out by Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir; also blamed group for 30 July Tashkent suicide bombings at U.S. and Israeli embassies and Uzbek prosecutor’s office. U.S. announced \$21 million in new military aid, month after State Department cancelled \$18 million in non-military aid due to Uzbekistan’s poor human rights record.

- [“Uzbekistan sentences convicted militants”](#), RFE/RL, 25 Aug. 2004.
- [“Uzbekistan’s obscure militants”](#), IWPR, 20 Aug. 2004.
- [“Top US general doles out more aid to Uzbekistan”](#), ISN, 16 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Reports N°76, [The Failure of Reform in Uzbekistan: Ways Forward for the International Community](#), 11 Mar. 2004; and N°72, [Is Radical Islam Inevitable in Central Asia? Priorities for Engagement](#), 22 Dec. 2003.

## SOUTH ASIA

↳ Afghanistan Security situation further deteriorated: at least 12 killed in 29 August Kabul car bomb in front of U.S. private security company offices; claimed by Taliban. Blast previous day in southern Paktia province killed 10, including 9 children. Fierce factional fighting erupted in western Herat province 14 August. Clashes between Herat Governor Mohammad Ismail Khan and rival local commander Amanullah Khan killed at least 24. Fighting stopped 18 August after deployment of 1,500 Afghan National Army troops and Kabul-brokered ceasefire. Attacks on election workers continued with 9 August ambush of Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) convoy in central Uruzgan province, killing 2. Election registration closed 20 August with 10.3 million registered to vote in 9 October presidential elections. Europe’s multinational Eurocorps took over command of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) 9 August. U.S. forces claimed 31 August strike in eastern Kunar province killed 20 militants, denied local reports of 8 civilian deaths. President Hamid Karzai met Pakistani counterpart Pervez Musharraf 24 August. Musharraf promised Pakistan would not allow Islamic militants to disrupt presidential elections.

- [“Taliban spectre returns as 17 die in blasts”](#), *The Guardian*, 30 Aug. 2004.
- [“Afghan voting number puzzle”](#), BBC, 27 Aug. 2004.
- [“The terrible cost of saving lives”](#), *The Guardian*, 25 Aug. 2004.
- [“Afghanistan: Rival factions clash in Herat province”](#), RFE/RL, 14 Aug. 2004.

- For background, see ICG Asia Briefing, [Elections and Security in Afghanistan](#), 30 Mar. 2004.

↳ Bangladesh Political violence escalated: grenade attack at opposition Awami League (AL) rally in Dhaka 21 August killed 19, including senior AL politician. Little-known organisation, Hikmatul Zihad, claimed responsibility. Violent and widespread protests and strikes followed. AL leader, Sheikh Hasina, accused government of links with militant Islamic groups and agreed with opposition leaders to launch united movement against Islamic radicals and government. Earlier bombing in Sylhet 7 August killed 1 AL supporter. More than 4 million people homeless after July flooding.

- [“Fear of AL-BNP face-off”](#), *The Daily Star*, 30 Aug. 2004.
- [“A bomb too far”](#), *The Economist* (subscription), 26 Aug. 2004.
- [“Opposition agree on broad-based unity”](#), *The Daily Star*, 25 Aug. 2004.
- [“Political violence grips Bangladesh”](#), *The Guardian*, 23 Aug. 2004.

↳ India (non-Kashmir) Violence erupted in northeast. Twenty-two killed in Assam explosion as India celebrated independence day 15 August. Attack claimed by United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) – sparked violent protests. Several smaller blasts followed throughout region killing at least 6. ULFA among 10 separatist groups that called boycott of independence day celebrations. National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and government resumed negotiations in New Delhi. In eastern Bihar state police killed 3 during protests against unfair distribution of relief for flood victims 17 August. Same day ongoing violent protests in Manipur against Armed Forces Special Powers Act – which gives troops right to arrest and shoot at suspected rebels – left 2 dead. Indian and Pakistani foreign ministers due to meet in New Delhi 5 and 6 September. Pakistan called for “strategic restraint” after India’s 29 August successful test-fire of long-range nuclear capable (Agni II) missile.

- [“India ‘test-fires guided missile’”](#), CNN, 29 Aug. 2004.
- [“Red alert in Assam”](#), *The Times of India*, 27 Aug. 2004.
- [“NSCN\(IM\) warns New Delhi to speed up solution”](#), South Asia Monitor, 24 Aug. 2004.
- [“Operation failure: Ulfa back with a ‘bang’”](#), *The Times of India*, 23 Aug. 2004.

↳ Kashmir Clashes between separatists and security forces continued as talks between India and Pakistan stalled. India’s ruling Congress party repeatedly expressed disappointment over what it says is Islamabad’s failure to curb Kashmiri guerrillas. Ten killed – including Manzoorul Islam, head of Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen separatist group – during 19 August visit by Indian President Abdul Kalam to Jammu and Srinagar. Further violence killed at least 18 in separate incidents. Possible talks between Indian government and Kashmiri separatist All Parties Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference (APHC) faltered at outset as government insisted next round should take place “within” constitution: rejected by APHC.

- [“Seven Jaish, Lashker militants killed in Kashmir”](#), South Asia Monitor, 29 Aug. 2004.
- [“Indo-Pak peace bid hits a bump”](#), *The Times of India*, 24 Aug. 2004.
- [“To bring peace, focus on Kashmir’s people”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 6 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG 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.

↳ Maldives Government detained 5 members of constitutional assembly 18 August. Week earlier, estimated 3,000 protested in uncommon show of dissent, calling for release of political prisoners and reforms. More than 180 protesters detained.

- "Maldives leader denies crackdown", BBC, 23 Aug. 2004.

↳ Nepal Maoist rebels suspended week-long blockade of Kathmandu 25 August, gave government 1 month to make concessions including release of jailed guerrillas and public report on missing rebel suspects. Journalists launched protest campaign against excesses of Maoist rebels following murder of reporter and death threats to journalists. Attacks within Kathmandu included killing of 4 soldiers, explosions in luxury hotel, police post and government office and killing of policeman. Maoists forced closure of 12 industries 17 August, and attacked Khalanga in Jumla district, inflicting heavy damage to government infrastructure. Government formed high level peace committee as first step towards institutionalising future peace talks – opposition parties still outside committee. Violent demonstrations 1 September after killing of 12 Nepali hostages in Iraq.

- "Escalating 'disappearances' amid a culture of impunity", Amnesty International, 30 Aug. 2004.
- Comment by Suman Pradhan (ICG), "Nepal needs help to escape its cycle of conflict", *Financial Times*, 27 Aug. 2004.
- "Analysis: Nepal's rebels back down", BBC, 25 Aug. 2004.
- "Jugular", *Nepali Times*, 20 Aug. 2004.
- "Nepal reporters in Maoist protest", BBC, 19 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Briefing, *Nepal: Dangerous Plans for Village Militias*, 17 Feb. 2004.

↳ Pakistan Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz appointed prime minister following resignation of caretaker PM Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Muhammad Yusuf's convoy attacked 2 August in Khuzdar, killing 2; claimed by Balochistan Liberation Army in protest against ongoing army operation and construction of new cantonments in province. Further violence in Balochistan killed 7. Military operations continued in South Waziristan tribal region in hunt for al-Qaeda suspects and local supporters. Bombs on rail tracks in Peshawar 25 August and Sindh province 16 August narrowly missed disastrous derailling. President Pervez Musharraf and visiting Afghan President Hamid Karzai vowed 23 August to enhance cooperation in fight against terrorism.

- "The banker, the mullahs and the inscrutable general at the top", *The Economist*, 26 Aug. 2004.
- "Pakistani, Afghan leaders vow to fight militants", RFE/RL, 23 Aug. 2004.
- "Baluchistan: stop the political slide", News International Pakistan, 5 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Reports N°77, *Devolution in Pakistan: Reform or Regression?*, 22 Mar. 2004; and N°73, *Unfulfilled Promises: Pakistan's Failure to Tackle Extremism*, 16 Jan. 2004.

↳ Sri Lanka Risk of escalation in violence remains as politically motivated killings continued. Top Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) politician, along with senior member of Eelam People's Democratic Party allied with President

Chandrika Kumaratunga, among those assassinated. Ceasefire remained hostage to split within LTTE: northern leadership accuses military intelligence of supporting breakaway rebel leader V. Muralitharan, a.k.a. Karuna, in attacks against northern-based LTTE rebels. President Kumaratunga stepped down as leader of ruling United People's Freedom Alliance (while remaining president), reportedly to spend more time on peace process with LTTE. Talks resumed: Norwegian envoy Eric Solheim met LTTE negotiator 31 August; LTTE leaders and military to meet 3 September to discuss security situation.

- "Norwegians meet Tigers in London", BBC, 31 Aug. 2004.
- "Killing spree dims Sri Lanka peace hopes, foreign concern mounts", Channel News Asia (AFP), 22 Aug. 2004.
- "Sri Lankan violence triggered by rift in Tamil camp", ISN, 17 Aug. 2004.

## NORTH EAST ASIA

↳ China (internal) Democratic Party candidate in 12 September Hong Kong elections jailed for 6 months on mainland for allegedly hiring prostitute.

- "China jails candidate in Hong Kong elections", *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Aug. 2004.
- Veron Hung, "Getting to democracy in Hong Kong", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Aug. 2004.

↳ North Korea Pyongyang refused to attend working-level talks for fourth round of 6-party talks scheduled for September. Analysts suggest Pyongyang stalling on talks in anticipation of U.S. November election. Pyongyang launched verbal tirade at President Bush after he referred to Kim Jong Il as "tyrant", putting further doubt on early resumption of talks.

- "Seoul doubts North Korea will budge until U.S. vote", *International Herald Tribune*, 26 Aug. 2004.
- "N.Korea dubs South 'wicked terrorist' over refugees", Reuters AlertNet, 22 Aug. 2004.
- "N. Korea did not deny HEU Program: Officials", *The Korea Times*, 15 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°61, *North Korea: A Phased Negotiation Strategy*, 1 Aug. 2003.

↳ Taiwan Strait Continuing tensions across Strait eased somewhat after China and Taiwan each cancelled upcoming military exercises. Both sides announced successful missile tests.

- "Taiwan cancels military exercise", BBC, 31 Aug. 2004.
- "Taiwan and China both play missile cards", ABC Online, 17 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG 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 Run-off vote between incumbent president Megawati Sukarnoputri and former general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to be held 20 September. Fighting escalated in Aceh in lead-up to Indonesian national day 17 August. Additional troops deployed to Free Aceh Movement (GAM) strongholds, where they reportedly forced villagers to fly

national flags. GAM rebels launched series of grenade attacks 17 August, killing civilians at national day ceremonies as well as security personnel throughout province. Villagers from Wei and Dambo tribes armed with arrows and machetes clashed in Papua's Keerom district 13 August in dispute over national day commemoration. Approx. 1,000 people gathered in Papua's capital, Jayapura, for peaceful rally calling for UN to convene Timor-Leste style referendum. Free Papua Movement (OPM) guerrillas ambushed army garrison in Papua's Puncak Jaya district 17 August; 2 OPM killed. In Ambon, 2 explosions 11 August raised fears after April violence.

- "Indonesian rebels vow to keep fighting", AP, 23 Aug. 2004.
- "Indonesia's generals take a back seat", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 Aug. 2004.
- "The long, slow task of building true democracy", *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°74, *Indonesia Backgrounder: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, 3 Feb. 2004.

Timor-Leste Secretary-General of Timor-Leste's foreign ministry Nelson Santos urged UN peacekeepers to remain until 2005, citing potentially unstable border with Indonesia and delays training security forces. UN to review 604-strong force in October. Clashes broke out between gangs in Ainaro 16-18 August. Police commander killed and dozens of houses burned. Three Indonesian army commanders and 1 police officer convicted in 1999 of crimes against humanity by Jakarta ad-hoc human rights court had sentences overturned by Indonesia's Supreme Court.

- "East Timor not ready for life without UN peacekeepers", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see "Two years on. What future for an independent East Timor?", Oxfam Community Aid Abroad Report, 20 May 2004.

Myanmar/Burma Constitutional assembly remained adjourned (since 7 July) with no indication from military government when this first step on "road map to democracy" would resume. National League for Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and deputy chairman Tin Oo remain under house arrest. Debate continued as to whether Myanmar should join Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit scheduled for October in Vietnam. ASEM finance ministers' meeting in July, and September gathering of group's economy ministers, already cancelled after EU insistence.

- "Britain and France fall out over seat at forum for Burma", *The Guardian*, 27 Aug. 2004.
- "Power-sharing the key to peace in Myanmar", *The Straits Times* (subscription), 25 Aug. 2004.
- "Myanmar's rulers defy sanctions", *International Herald Tribune*, 2 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°78, *Myanmar: Sanctions, Engagement or Another Way Forward?*, 26 Apr. 2004.

Philippines Communist National Democratic Front (NDF) asked for postponement of new round of peace talks in Norway after U.S. kept NDF on terrorist list. NDF military wing, New People's Army, clashed with government troops 6 August; 20 killed. Military helicopters launched assault on kidnapping syndicate "Pentagon gang", who have ties to Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), in southern Mindanao 13 August, killing 14 gunmen. Peace talks between Philippines government and MILF delayed over terms for

peace monitors. Malaysia (and other Muslim nations) to send 60 monitors to oversee truce between MILF and government. Seventeen Abu Sayyaf members sentenced to death 13 August for kidnappings and beheadings between 2000-2001.

- "Malaysia says Philippines rebels holding up talks", Reuters AlertNet, 31 Aug. 2004.
- "Manila paves the way for talks with insurgents", *International Herald Tribune*, 27 Aug. 2004.
- "Philippine communists to postpone peace talks", Reuters AlertNet, 11 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°80, *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, 13 July 2004.

Thailand Sporadic violence continued in restive south. In accordance with Bangkok's new hardline security policy, General Pallop Pinmanee, previously accused of using excessive force in April violence, re-assigned to south. National Human Rights Commission of Thailand reported rights abuses worsened in Thailand over past 3 years in increasing "culture of authoritarianism" under PM Thaksin Shinawatra.

- "Teachers blamed for Thai unrest", Taiwan News (AFP), 24 Aug. 2004.
- "Police defuse another bomb in Thailand's restive south", Channel News Asia (AFP), 23 Aug. 2004.

## Europe



### BALKANS

Albania Former premier Ilir Meta declared his Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI) to become third parliamentary force 6 September, and will not cooperate with ruling Socialist Party in 2005 parliamentary elections.

- "Albanian: North-South chasm widens", IWPR, 20 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Europe Report N°153, *Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?*, 25 Feb. 2004.

Bosnia & Herzegovina Forensic experts uncovered mass graves 10 August near ethnically-mixed municipality of Foca, 25 miles southeast of Sarajevo – believed to be victims of first wave of "ethnic cleansing" by Serb forces, ex-Yugoslav army and paramilitaries. NATO's Stabilisation Force in Bosnia (SFOR) detained Milovan Bjelica, former associate of Radovan Karadzic, for second time 31 August.

- "NATO proclaims victory in Bosnia", *The Boston Globe*, 15 Aug. 2004.
- "The farcical, wearisome 'hunt' for Karadzic", ISN, 9 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Europe Briefing, *EUFORIA: Changing Bosnia's Security Arrangements*, 29 June 2004.

Kosovo New head of UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Soren Jessen-Petersen, arrived 15 August. Declared priorities of preparing Kosovo for final status and new transfer of competencies to Kosovo government. Belgrade urged Kosovo Serbs to boycott 23 October parliamentary elections, unless its plan for territorial division of Kosovo accepted. Security Council session on Kosovo 5 August

urged Serbs to take part. KFOR dismissed 23 August Serbian security service (BIA) claim that extremists preparing to attack Kosovo Serbs. Contact Group to deliberate on recommendations of UN envoy Kai Eide for institutional transformation and progress towards final status talks.

- For unofficial posting of July report by Kai Eide, see [“The Situation in Kosovo”](#), Project on Transitional Democracies.
- [“New urgency”](#), Transitions Online (subscription), 23 Aug. 2004.
- [“Kosovo in limbo as violence continues”](#), *The Scotsman*, 18 Aug. 2004.
- [“Analysis: Kosovo’s decentralization debate”](#), RFE/RL, 6 Aug. 2004.
- For background to the March violence, see ICG Europe Report N°155, [Collapse in Kosovo](#), 22 Apr. 2004.

⏴ Macedonia Controversial decentralisation laws granting greater rights to ethnic Albanian minority narrowly passed 11 August, with 61 votes in 120-seat parliament. Decentralisation deal, which represents final phase of 2001 Ohrid accord (and is crucial to Macedonia’s EU membership bid), has polarised opinion and provoked riots. World Macedonian Congress (WMC) submitted approx. 180,000 signatures to force referendum on decentralisation plans. Parliament to set date for plebiscite – WMC calling for late November poll. Town of Struga, where opposition to plan is strongest, threatened to secede from Macedonia should decentralisation plans go ahead. Former interior minister Ljube Boskovski, suspected of murder of 7 migrants in 2001, arrested in Croatia 31 August, to be tried in Croatia.

- [“Boundary changes put ethnic peace to the test in Macedonia”](#), *New York Times*, 30 Aug. 2004.
- [“Macedonian town threatens to bid for independence”](#), *The Scotsman*, 24 Aug. 2004.
- Comment by Nicholas Whyte (ICG), [“Decentralisation plan: Right way forward for now”](#), IWPR, 5 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Europe Report N°149, [Macedonia: No Time for Complacency](#), 23 Oct. 2003.

 ICG Europe Briefing, [Macedonia: Make or Break](#), 3 August 2004. Protests in Skopje against devolution proposals on 27 July attest to lingering tension in Macedonia, and despite many promising signs, the survival of the state is still not fully assured. The country’s relative political calm in the face of potentially destabilising events earlier in the year -- the tragic death of the president and the explosion of violence in neighbouring Kosovo -- was a welcome sign. But perhaps the greatest challenge is now on the table: devolution of power to local government as set out in the 2001 Ohrid peace agreement. Significant challenges also remain on reforming the economy, stimulating employment and strengthening the rule of law. The lynchpin for progress in all these areas is the prospect of EU integration, which gives politicians their main motivation for pursuing reform policies and helps guarantee peaceful coexistence of the main ethnic groups.

⏴ Serbia & Montenegro Serbian PM Vojislav Kostunica continued to deny knowledge of Hague-indictees’ whereabouts. U.S. repeated demands for extradition of former Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladic to Hague Tribunal along with all other indictees. Interethnic tensions in Vojvodina and subsequent Hungarian and Croatian government protests increased pressure on Serbian government to address issue.

Montenegro’s governing Democratic Party of Socialists’ leader, Miodrag Vukovic, said 18 August that Montenegrin authorities to formally propose end of union talks in September, although Belgrade Agreement stipulates Serbia-Montenegro must hold parliamentary elections before referendum on future of state union. Milosevic trial resumed 31 August to hear long-delayed defence. Serbian local elections to be held 19 September.

- [“Yugoslavia: Milosevic launches long-delayed defense at war crimes trial”](#), RFE/RL, 31 Aug. 2004.
- [“Analysis: Montenegro seeks talks on dissolving joint state with Serbia”](#), RFE/RL, 21 Aug. 2004.
- [“Serbia: Police chief sacking seen as ‘purge’”](#), IWPR, 20 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Europe Briefing, [Serbia’s Changing Political Landscape](#), 22 July 2004.

## CAUCASUS

⏴ Armenia Opposition rejected package of constitutional amendments proposed by President Robert Kocharian and endorsed by pro-government majority in parliament. (See also Nagorno-Karabakh below.)

- [“Armenian opposition rejects news constitutional reform proposals”](#), RFE/RL, 3 Aug. 2004.

⏴ Azerbaijan Court upheld government’s July eviction of worshippers from Juma mosque in Baku. Human Rights Watch released report detailing government clampdown on press in aftermath of October 2003 presidential elections. Central Election Commission announced municipal elections to be held 17 December 2004. (See also Nagorno-Karabakh below.)

- [“Azerbaijan: Ilham tightens his grip”](#), IWPR, 4 Aug. 2004.
- [“Azerbaijan: Press freedom undermined”](#), Human Rights Watch press release, 4 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Europe Report N°156, [Azerbaijan: Turning Over a New Leaf?](#), 13 May 2004.

⏴ ⚡ Georgia Fighting between Georgian and South Ossetian forces intensified, leaving around 20 Georgian troops and at least 5 Ossetians dead. Risk of escalation in violence remains, despite announced reduction of Georgian troops in conflict zone to 500 – maximum allowed under 1992 peace agreement establishing joint peacekeeping force. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili lashed out at alleged Russian support to South Ossetia; called for international conference leading to demilitarisation of region and introduction of international peacekeeping force; expansion of OSCE mandate in separatist region; and joint Russian-Georgian border and customs checks at Roki tunnel, major route connecting Russia and South Ossetia. Tensions also worsened vis-à-vis separatist Abkhazia region, as Saakashvili ordered Georgian naval vessels to fire on ships travelling illegally in Georgian territorial waters along Abkhaz coast.

- [“The hazards of a long, hard freeze”](#), *The Economist*, 19 Aug. 2004.
- [“Georgian leader walks a separatist tightrope”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Aug. 2004.
- [“Off Georgia’s coast, calm seas and a risk of war”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 9 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Europe Report N°151, [Georgia: What Now?](#), 3 Dec. 2003.






ICG Europe Briefing, [Saakashvili's Ajara Success: Repeatable Elsewhere in Georgia?](#), 18 August 2004. Tbilisi's brinkmanship with South Ossetia may well not end as peacefully and successfully as it did with Ajara in May 2004. Through a skilful mix of threat and diplomacy, President Saakashvili manoeuvred Aslan Abashidze into peacefully ending his thirteen-year control of Ajara. Many compare South Ossetian tensions with those events, and assume the early success will be repeated. However, political conditions differ significantly. Even when the crisis was at its worst, Ajara's leadership never sought independence based on national self-determination. Unlike in South Ossetia or Abkhazia, Ajara's people are ethnic Georgians. Another key difference is the role of Russia, which was generally supportive in Ajara but perceives its security interests to run much deeper in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

- Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Public statements from Azerbaijani officials continue to indicate hardening of position on Karabakh, while no progress reported after 29 August foreign ministers meeting Prague. Local elections held 8 August in disputed region, sparking angry reaction from Azerbaijan. Opposition candidate victorious in 22 August run-off election for mayor of Stepanakert.
  - ["The hazards of a long, hard freeze"](#), *The Economist*, 19 Aug. 2004.
  - For background, see ICG Europe Report N°156, [Azerbaijan: Turning Over a New Leaf?](#), 13 May 2004.

## EASTERN EUROPE

- Chechnya (Russia) Surge of violence in Russia around 29 August presidential elections in Chechnya raised fears of new phase in conflict. Crashes of 2 Russian jetliners 24 August attributed to terrorism, as Russian investigators announced traces of explosives found in wrecks. Extremist group allegedly linked to al Qaeda claimed responsibility, but claim uncorroborated. Investigators focused on 2 female passengers – both apparently Chechens. Moscow suicide bomber killed 9 day after election; 2 days later, gunmen seized school in southern Russia, holding up to 400 hostages. Kremlin favourite General Alu Alkhanov won Chechen election, reportedly receiving nearly 74% of vote. Turnout said to have been over 85%, though observers noted empty polling stations. Dozens killed in rebel offensive in and around Grozny 21 August.
  - ["Gunmen seize Russian school"](#), CNN, 1 Sept. 2004.
  - ["Doubts voiced over Chechen poll"](#), BBC, 31 Aug. 2004.
  - ["Explosives traces found on 2nd Russian plane that crashed"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 30 Aug. 2004.
- Moldova Standoff continued with separatist Transnistrian region after latter closed local Moldovan schools teaching in Latin script. Sides traded accusations and sanctions, with Chisinau restricting Transnistrian exports and Tiraspol retaliating with brief blockade of rail links to Moldova. Siege of Benderi orphanage by Transnistrian security forces continued.
  - ["The hazards of a long, hard freeze"](#), *The Economist*, 19 Aug. 2004.
  - For background, see ICG Europe Report N°157, [Moldova: Regional Tensions over Transnistria](#), 17 June 2004.

## WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

- Basque region (Spain) ETA claimed responsibility for series of minor August blasts at northwestern coastal resorts.
  - ["Bombs rattle Spanish resort towns"](#), BBC, 21 Aug. 2004.
- Cyprus Trade between North and South resumed after 30 years, as EU measures to ease isolation of Turkish Cyprus came into force.
  - ["Northern Cyprus trade ban lifted"](#), BBC, 23 Aug. 2004.
-  Northern Ireland (UK) Negotiations to restore devolution scheduled for September. Devolution suspended since October 2002, but recent signs of flexibility suggest Sinn Fein-Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) agreement possible. Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams suggested republicans should remove IRA as excuse for unionist stonewalling. DUP said Sinn Fein members with terrorist convictions could not hold key security and justice portfolios. Meanwhile, youth riots rocked Londonderry 10 August. Petrol bomb exploded in Protestant housing estate, causing no injuries.
  - ["IRA 'interested in building peace'"](#), BBC, 31 Aug. 2004.
  - ["Officers attacked during riot"](#), BBC, 11 Aug. 2004.
- Turkey Turkish police blamed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a.k.a. Kongra-Gel, for 2 bomb attacks in Istanbul's tourist districts and further gas plant bombing 10 August, which together killed 2 and injured 11. PKK denied involvement and links to group claiming responsibility: Kurdistan Liberation Hawks (TAK). PKK official said it would halt attacks if Turkish government agreed to truce; PKK broke unilateral ceasefire June 2004. In separate incidents violence in southeastern Turkey claimed 14 lives.
  - ["Separate blasts in Turkey wound 11 people"](#), Reuters AlertNet, 29 Aug. 2004.
  - ["PKK says open to bilateral truce with Turkey"](#), Reuters AlertNet, 25 Aug. 2004.
  - ["Fatal blast rocks Turkish resort"](#), BBC, 23 Aug. 2004.

## Latin America /Caribbean

- Bolivia Protests by landless farmers and transport workers against government energy and land distribution policies continued, despite 18 July referendum results in favour of President Mesa's policies. Bolivia and Peru signed agreement on energy integration 4 August, allowing Bolivia access through Peruvian port of Ilo for gas exports.
  - ["Bolivian peasants end oil siege"](#), BBC, 20 Aug. 2004.
  - ["Bolivia signs big gas export deal"](#), BBC, 4 Aug. 2004.
  - For background, see ICG Latin America Report N°7, [Bolivia's Divisions: Too Deep to Heal?](#) 6 July 2004.
- Colombia AUC paramilitaries issued 12 August communiqué stating intention to demobilise several thousand fighters. Move followed President Alvaro Uribe's ultimatum for groups fighting in Casanare department to demobilise. Clashes between Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Casanare paramilitaries (not involved in AUC/government talks) and government troops 28 August left at least 21 dead. Uribe offered to release 50 leftist FARC fighters in return for 60 hostages. FARC rejected terms of exchange offer

but Bogota hopeful deal still possible. U.S. warned would enforce extradition warrants against imprisoned fighters if released. Ten coca farmers murdered by FARC in Norte de Santander 11 August, as well as town mayor in Casanare province 28 August. Clash between ELN and government troops killed 5 soldiers 7 August in eastern Arauca province, where 2 unionists, accused of being leftist rebels, killed earlier in month.

- "Colombian army kills at least 21 paramilitaries", Reuters, 28 Aug. 2004.
- "Hopes persist for Farc swap deal", BBC, 23 Aug. 2004.
- "Colombia's rightist militia to demobilize thousands", Reuters AlertNet, 13 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Latin America Report N°6, *Colombia: President Uribe's Democratic Security Policy*, 13 Nov. 2003 and ICG Briefing, *Hostages for Prisoners: A Way to Peace in Colombia?*, 8 Mar. 2004.



ICG Latin America Report N°8, *Demobilising the Paramilitaries in Colombia: An Achievable Goal?*, 5 August 2004. The Colombian government needs to threaten the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) credibly with force if its negotiations with the paramilitary group are to disband it, as projected, by the end of 2005. To achieve real, sustainable progress, the government also needs to develop a legal framework and comprehensive political strategy for collective demobilisation of all armed groups. Increasingly assertive AUC leaders say they are unwilling to accept any jail time for war crimes or extradition to the U.S. on drug-trafficking charges. But the government must not accept impunity for grave crimes. If there is to be a definitive agreement, the paramilitaries must be made to disarm all forces, end drug trafficking and other criminal activities, and pay reparations to victims.

- ↳ Haiti Former paramilitary leader Louis-Jodel Chamblain and former police chief Jackson Joanis acquitted of murder of Antoine Izmerly, pro-Aristide activist and businessman. Both face further charges. U.S., OAS and human rights groups expressed concern at verdict. Former members of disbanded Haitian army increasingly visible throughout country, demanding payment of salaries and pensions.
  - "Brazil brings Haiti a joyful respite", *The Washington Post*, 19 Aug. 2004.
  - "Complaints follow Haiti acquittal", BBC News, 18 Aug. 2004.

- ↳ Peru President Alejandro Toledo's approval ratings doubled (to 15.2 %) after he opened personal bank accounts to public scrutiny, resumed gas extraction and signed agreement with Bolivia to allow Bolivian gas to be exported via port of Ilo, creating special commercial zone for Bolivian companies.
  - "Peru: A National Human Rights Plan is key to ending the consequences of internal conflict", Amnesty International, 26 Aug. 2004.

- ↳ Venezuela Relative stability returned to Venezuela as President Hugo Chavez won backing of 58% of voters in 15 August recall referendum. Opponents claimed fraud though international observers endorsed results. Only few isolated incidents of violence. Referendum put end to 2-year struggle of democratic opposition to recall President Chavez through article 72 of Venezuela's constitution. Next presidential elections scheduled for late 2006; Chavez constitutionally entitled to run for re-election.
  - "Twice bitten, thrice lucky", *The Economist*, 19 Aug. 2004.

- "Venezuela reaffirms Chávez as president", *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Latin America Briefing, *Increasing Europe's Stake in the Andes*, 15 June 2004 and ICG Latin America Briefing, *Venezuela: Headed Toward Civil War?*, 10 May 2004.



## Middle East /North Africa

### EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

- ↳ Israel/Occupied Territories Suicide bombers blew up 2 buses in Beersheba 31 August, killing 16, in worst attack in Israel since October 2003. Hamas claimed responsibility, saying attacks retaliation for killing of its leaders. Yasser Arafat survived challenge to his authority led by former security chief Muhammad Dahlan. In 19 August speech, Arafat acknowledged serious mistakes and pledged reform of Palestinian Authority. But inter-Palestinian violence continued in Gaza as factions struggle for power ahead of planned Israeli pullout in 2005. Gaza intelligence chief wounded and 2 bodyguards killed in attack by unknown gunmen west of Gaza city 25 August. In Israel, PM Ariel Sharon's Likud Party voted to prevent Labor Party from joining governing coalition, in effect blocking Sharon's Gaza pullout plan (Labor votes crucial for plan's approval by cabinet). Sharon, meanwhile, adjusted Gaza plan, saying pullout would occur at one time rather than in 3 phases, and announced expansion of some existing West Bank settlements. Thousands of jailed Palestinians launched hunger strike 15 August to protest Israeli prison conditions.
  - "Twin bus bombs kill 16 in Israel", *International Herald Tribune*, 31 Aug. 2004.
  - "No hospital for Palestinian hunger strikes – Israel", Reuters AlertNet, 24 Aug. 2004.
  - "Questions of legitimacy", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 19 Aug. 2004.
  - "A big man on a tightrope", *The Economist*, 19 Aug. 2004.
  - "Arafat outfoxes his political foes – again", *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Aug. 2004.
  - For background, see ICG Middle East Report N°25, *Identity Crisis: Israel and Its Arab Citizens*, 4 Mar. 2004 and N°22 *Palestinian Refugees and the Politics of Peacemaking*, 5 Feb. 2004.
- ↳ Jordan Court charged 9 militants for alleged role in thwarted April plot to attack Jordanian and American targets in kingdom.
  - "Jordan charges militants in foiled chemical plot", Reuters AlertNet, 17 Aug. 2004.
  - For background, see ICG Middle East Briefing, *The Challenge of Political Reform: Jordanian Democratisation and Regional Instability*, 8 Oct. 2003.
- ↳ Lebanon Under heavy pressure from Syria, Lebanese cabinet approved bill to amend constitution to allow President Emile Lahoud to stay on as country's leader after 6-year term ends in November 2004. Bill likely to be approved by parliament in September, despite strong domestic opposition. Newly re-elected leader of Hizbollah, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, said German-mediated talks with Israel on possible prisoner exchange continue.

- [“Move to bolster Lebanon president”](#), BBC, 28 Aug. 2004.
- [“Hizbollah leader says prisoner swap talks still on”](#), Reuters AlertNet, 21 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Middle East Briefing, [Hizbollah: Rebel Without a Cause?](#), 30 Jul. 2003.

➤ Syria Israeli army chief General Moshe Yaalon said returning Golan Heights to Syria – key Damascus demand in any peace deal – would not compromise Israel’s security. Syrian Kurds claimed new wave of arrests; said over 180 remain in detention following March riots. (See also Lebanon above.)

- [“Kurds accuse Syria of campaign of arrests, torture”](#), Reuters AlertNet, 26 Aug. 2004.
- [“Israelis ‘could leave the Golan’”](#), BBC, 13 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG 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 Tehran said new IAEA report – expected in coming days – would clear up outstanding issues surrounding its nuclear program, while President Mohammad Khatami promised “guarantees” Iran would not seek nuclear weapons. But U.S., EU, and Israel remain concerned over program’s extent and purpose. Iran successfully test-fired upgraded Shahab-3 ballistic missile following recent Israeli test of Arrow II anti-missile system. Several people reportedly arrested in Iran for spying on nuclear program.

- [“Iran arrests suspected nuclear spies”](#), *International Herald Tribune* (AFP), 1 Sept. 2004.
- [“Iran expects to be acquitted in next UN nuclear report”](#), Reuters AlertNet, 25 Aug. 2004.
- [“Iran upgrades anti-Israel missile”](#), BBC, 11 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Middle East Report N°18, [Dealing with Iran’s Nuclear Program](#), 27 Oct. 2003; and ICG Middle East Briefing, [Iran: Discontent and Disarray](#), 15 Oct. 2003.

➤ Iraq Top Shiite cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, returning to Iraq after surgery in London, brokered new ceasefire 27 August between U.S. forces and followers of radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. Previous ceasefire ended 5 August, with sides blaming each other for breakdown. Fierce fighting between Sadr’s Mahdi Army and U.S. forces raged throughout month in Najaf, with militants concentrating in and around holy shrine of Imam Ali and suffering heavy losses. In Baghdad, after intense debate and backroom deal-making, National Conference selected 100-member Consultative Assembly. Many delegates – particularly independents and representatives of small parties – complained selection process undemocratic. Assembly to oversee interim government until scheduled January 2005 elections. Security situation across Iraq remained poor, with attacks on oil pipelines in south, abduction of 2 French journalists, and killing of 12 Nepalese hostages. 698 Coalition soldiers, including 624 Americans, and thousands of Iraqis killed by hostile fire since declared end of combat operations on 1 May 2003.

- [“Killings shock, humiliate Nepalese”](#), CNN, 31 Aug. 2004.
- [“Sistani ends the siege”](#), *The Economist*, 30 Aug. 2004.
- [“After noise and deals, Iraq gets a parliament”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 20 Aug. 2004.

- For background, see ICG Middle East Report N°27, [Iraq’s Transition: On a Knife Edge](#), 27 Apr. 2004; and N°26, [Iraq’s Kurds: Toward an Historic Compromise?](#), 8 Apr. 2004.

➤ Saudi Arabia In positive step, authorities set November date for nation-wide municipal elections. Newly published election law unclear on whether women to participate. Rare public trial of 3 reformists, arrested in March, began amid disruptions caused by defendants’ supporters. Security forces said top militant Faris al-Zahrani arrested.

- [“Saudi Arabia: Justice must be seen to be done”](#), Amnesty International editorial, 25 Aug. 2004.
- [“Chaos at Saudi reformists’ trial”](#), BBC, 23 Aug. 2004.
- Comment by Robert Malley (ICG), [“Saudi solutions for political reform”](#), *Chicago Tribune*, 5 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Middle East Report N°28, [Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?](#), 14 July 2004.

➤ Yemen Government forces continued mountain offensive against radical Shiite cleric Hussein al-Houthi. Eleven Yemeni soldiers reportedly killed in rebel ambush 24 August.

- [“Eleven Yemeni troops killed in rebel ambush”](#), Reuters AlertNet, 24 Aug. 2004.

## NORTH AFRICA

➤ Algeria Editor of French-language daily *Le Matin*, Mohamed Benchicou, failed in appeal on 2-year prison sentence 11 August, amid media clampdown. Two members of Algerian security forces killed in Bouira, southeast of Algiers, 18 August. Further 7 soldiers killed in ambush east of Algiers 25 August by Group for Salafist Preaching and Combat (GSPC). 4 Islamic militants killed in Algerian army operations.

- [“Rebel ambush kills 7 Algerian soldiers”](#), Reuters AlertNet, 25 Aug. 2004.
- [“For critics of Algeria’s regime, a jail cell waits”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 11 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Middle East Report N°29, [Islamism, Violence and Reform in Algeria: Turning the Page](#), 30 July 2004.

➤ Egypt Israel reopened Rafah border-crossing between Gaza and Egypt 6 August, easing relations. Cairo continued talks with Palestinian groups on Gaza strip security after potential Israeli withdrawal, claiming agreement on deal with Hamas and Islamic Jihad; also destroyed 2 tunnels allegedly used to smuggle weapons from Egypt to Gaza. Ruling NDP party-inspired bill to ease restrictions on political party registration to be debated at second annual NDP conference September; viewed as insufficient by opposition.

- [“Egypt says needs more from Palestinians, Israel”](#), Reuters AlertNet 31 Aug. 2004.
- [“Opposition slams new parties law”](#), *Al-Ahram weekly*, 26 Aug. 2004
- [“Egypt said to have reached deal with Hamas, Jihad on post-pullout Gaza”](#), *Ha’aretz*, 17 Aug. 2004.
- [“In Egypt some see glimmer of change”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 11 Aug. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Middle East/North Africa Briefings, [Islamism in North Africa: Legacies of History](#) and [Egypt’s Opportunity](#), 20 Apr. 2004; and [The Challenge of Political Reform: Egypt after the Iraq War](#), 30 Sept. 2003.



- Libya Compensation deal agreed 10 August for 1986 Berlin disco bombing, further opening way for improved European-Libyan relations. IAEA report on Libyan nuclear disclosure praised Libyan cooperation while warning gaps remained.
  - "IAEA questions Libya's nuclear program", *The Washington Post*, 31 Aug. 2004.
  - "Libya agrees to Berlin bomb payout", CNN, 10 Aug. 2004.
- Mauritania Up to 40 officers, including high-ranking members of National Guard, arrested for allegedly planning coup attempt against President Maaouiya Ouid Taya. Islamists apparently not involved; opposition leader Mohamed Jemil Ould Mansour detained, later released. Some accuse government of using coup as pretext to crack down on opposition, purge army. President Taya suggested plot backed by Libya and Burkina Faso.
  - "Mauritania accuses Libya of another coup plot", Middle East Online, 27 Aug. 2004.
  - "Mauritania: Soldiers arrested but was it a coup or a purge?", IRIN News, 10 Aug. 2004.
- Morocco U.S. President Bush signed Free Trade Agreement with Morocco 19 August. Moroccan intelligence report said 2,000 Moroccan "terrorist elements" under surveillance.
  - "Bush signs trade pact with Morocco", *The Daily Star*, 19 Aug. 2004.
  - "2,000 'terrorists' under watch in Morocco", Reuters AlertNet, 12 Aug. 2004.
  - For background, see ICG Middle East/North Africa Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa I: The Legacies of History*, 20 Apr. 2004.
- Western Sahara Algerian President Bouteflika restated Algerian support for Western Sahara Baker plan 11 August. Plan rejected by Morocco, accepted by Polisario independence movement.
  - "Just deserts?", *The Economist*, 26 Aug. 2004.
  - "Bouteflika: Morocco must implement Baker plan", Middle East Online, 11 Aug. 2004.

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