

CrisisWatch

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



1 April 2004, N°8

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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@crisisweb.org.

March 2004 Trends



Deteriorated Situations

Afghanistan (p.5)	Nepal (p.5)
Chad (p.2)	Pakistan (p.6)
Côte d'Ivoire (p.3)	Serbia (p.8)
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Improved Situations

Guinea-Bissau (p.4)
Libya (p.12)



Unchanged Situations

Albania (p.7), Algeria (p.11), Angola (p.3), Azerbaijan (p.8), Basque region (Spain) (p.9), Bolivia (p.9), Bosnia & Herzegovina (p.7), Burundi (p.2), Chechnya (Russia) (p.9), China (internal) (p.6), Colombia (p.9), Cyprus (p.9), East Timor (p.7), Ecuador (p.10), Egypt (p.12), Equatorial Guinea (p.3), Ethiopia/Eritrea (p.2), Georgia (p.8), Guatemala (p.10), Guinea (p.3), Haiti (p.10), India (non-Kashmir) (p.5), Iran (p.11), Iraq (p.11), Jordan (p.11), Kashmir (p.5), Kazakhstan (p.4), Kyrgyzstan (p.4), Lebanon (p.11), Liberia (p.4), Macedonia (p.8), Moldova (p.9), Morocco (p.12), Myanmar/Burma (p.7), Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) (p.9), Nigeria (p.4), North Korea (p.6), Northern Ireland (UK) (p.9), Papua New Guinea (p.7), Peru (p.10), Philippines (p.7), Rwanda (p.2), Saudi Arabia (p.11), Sierra Leone (p.4), Somalia (p.2), Sri Lanka (p.6), Swaziland (p.3), Taiwan Strait (p.6), Tajikistan (p.4), Thailand (p.7), Turkmenistan (p.4), Uganda (p.2), Western Sahara (p.12), Yemen (p.11), Zimbabwe (p.3)

April 2004 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alert

Côte d'Ivoire	Kosovo
Israel/Occupied Territories	Sri Lanka
	Venezuela



Conflict Resolution Opportunity

Cyprus

The International 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. 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 Fighting continued between government forces and Hutu FNL rebels south of capital Bujumbura - 30,000 civilians displaced and 25 rebels killed, according to government. But training commenced of new national army; former Hutu FDD rebels will have 40% of positions under peace deal signed in November. World Bank to provide \$33 million to demobilise former Hutu rebels. Africa Union and UN Secretary General Annan called on Security Council to authorise early deployment of UN peacekeepers; Security Council considering proposal. In meantime, AU renewed mandate of its peacekeepers for additional month, to 2 May. Amnesty International called for the demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers.

- "AU urges UN to deploy troops", IRIN, 26 Mar. 2004.
- "Child soldiers - the challenge of demobilisation", Amnesty International report, 24 Mar. 2004.
- "Thousands flee Burundi fighting", BBC, 19 Mar. 2004.
- "Burundi soldiers begin training", BBC, 16 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Briefing, *Refugees and Internally Displaced in Burundi: The Urgent Need for a Consensus on Their Repatriation and Reintegration*, 2 Dec. 2003 (in French: executive summary also in English).

➤ Chad Army killed 43 Algerian Islamic militants in fighting near Niger border early March, according to government; 3 soldiers also killed.

- "Chad 'defeats' Algerian Muslim extremists", *The Guardian*, 26 Mar. 2004.

➤ Democratic Republic of the Congo In apparent coup attempt, gunmen attacked military bases and television stations in capital Kinshasa 28 March. Coup unsuccessful - government arrested 15, claiming were members of former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko's personal bodyguard, and placed security forces on high alert. UN peacekeeping mission (MONUC) continued to expand operation - deploying 3,500 soldiers to eastern city of Bukavu 2 March to restore calm after recent outbreak of violence. MONUC seized weapons from commanders of former rebel group RCD-Goma in Bukavu.

- "DRC says attack suspects were Mobutu bodyguards", Independent Online, 30 Mar. 2004.
- "Rebel weapons seized in DR Congo", BBC, 11 Mar. 2004.
- "MONUC deploys 3,500 soldiers to Bukavu to restore calm", IRIN, 3 Mar. 2004.
- For background to the conflict in Ituri, see ICG Africa Report N°64, *Congo Crisis: Military Intervention in Ituri*, 13 Jun. 2003.

➤ Rwanda French magistrate concluded President Kagame gave orders for 1994 rocket attack on plane that killed Rwanda's then President Habyarimana, from which genocide followed. Kagame denounced report, responding with claim that France directly involved in 1994 genocide, supplying weapons. Government extended 15 March deadline by 1 year for detainees to confess role in 1994 genocide. Now plans to release some 30,000 of 90,000 incarcerated genocide suspects by end of June for trial in community courts. In lead-up to April's

10th anniversary of genocide, Kagame defended government against claims was autocratic.

- "Rwanda to release at least 30,000 genocide suspects", *USA Today* (AP), 27 Mar. 2004.
- "Lessons of a genocide", *The Economist*, 25 Mar. 2004.
- "President defends democratic record", CNN (Reuters), 25 Mar. 2004.
- "Findings reopen Rwanda's wounds", *The Washington Post*, 24 Mar. 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.

➤ Uganda Fighting continued between Ugandan government forces and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group. Sudanese rebel groups, including SPLA, also launched offensive against LRA in southern Sudan, in retaliation for LRA atrocities. Ugandan armed forces claimed more than 50 LRA rebels killed in clash 20 March, after crossing into Uganda from Sudan. Earlier, at least 11 civilians killed by LRA in various clashes. Government rejected reported offer of peace talks from LRA leader Joseph Kony, claiming insincere. UNICEF claimed actual death toll from LRA 21 February massacre at least 337, not some 200 as first reported. Human Rights Watch claimed government security forces torturing political opponents.

- "Army rejects reported rebel offer for talks", IRIN, 30 Mar. 2004.
- "State of Pain: Torture in Uganda", Human Rights Watch report, 29 Mar. 2004.
- "Ugandan troops kill more than 50 rebels", *The Guardian* (AP), 21 Mar. 2004.
- "Cross-border war on Ugandan rebels", BBC, 5 Mar. 2004.

HORN OF AFRICA

➤ Ethiopia/Eritrea No progress in demarcation of disputed border. UN Security Council extended mandate of UN mission (UNMEE) further 6 months and called on Eritrea to engage constructively with UN special envoy Lloyd Axworthy. Eritrea rejected call. UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, warned 8 March border stalemate becoming dangerous.

- "Deadlock over border ruling drags on", IRIN, 22 Mar. 2004.
- "Ethiopia-Eritrea stalemate is potentially dangerous - Annan", UN News Centre, 8 Mar. 2004.
- For background see, ICG Africa Report N°68, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: War or Peace?*, 24 Sept. 2003.

➤ Somalia Clashes between rival clans over land and water in central Somalia killed at least 80. Third and final phase of Somali peace talks due to start in Nairobi, but currently stalled, with numerous faction leaders refusing to attend.

- "Hopes of revitalising peace talks", IRIN, 30 Mar. 2004.
- "More than 80 killed in Somali clan clashes", *The Scotsman*, 21 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Reports N°66, *Somaliland: Democratisation and Its Discontents*, 28 Jul. 2003; and N°59, *Negotiating a Blueprint for Peace in Somalia*, 6 Mar. 2003.

➤ Sudan Savage fighting continued in western province of Darfur. UN Coordinator for Sudan claimed 19 March conflict had created "the worst humanitarian crisis in the world", with more than 1 million people affected by "ethnic cleansing". Also claimed government-backed Arab militias systematically burned villages and raped women. Government called allegations 'heap of lies'. Boycotted peace talks with western rebels, due to start in Chad

30 March, because international observers present. Peace talks between government and Sudan People's Liberation Army, due to end 22 March, extended yet again. President Bush spoke separately to President Omar el-Bashir and to leader of SPLA 22 March, urging them to reach agreement. Issues to be resolved are administration of 3 disputed central regions and representation in transitional government. Government arrested opposition Islamist leader Hassan al-Turabi and number of other opposition politicians and army officers late March over alleged coup plot.

- "Sudanese Islamist leader arrested", BBC, 31 Mar. 2004.
- Opinion piece by Nicholas Kristof, "Will we say 'never again' yet again", *International Herald Tribune* (NYT), 30 Mar. 2004.
- Opinion piece by Nicholas Kristof, "Don't let Sudan's ethnic cleansing go on", *International Herald Tribune* (NYT), 25 Mar. 2004.
- "Bush pushing for peace in war-torn Sudan", *The Guardian* (AP), 22 Mar. 2004.
- "Latest round of Sudan peace talks extended again", Reuters AlertNet, 22 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Report N°65, *Sudan: Towards an Incomplete Peace*, 11 Dec. 2003.



ICG Africa Report N°76, *Darfur Rising: Sudan's New Crisis*, 25 March 2004. The steadily worsening, ethnically polarising conflict in Darfur now seriously threatens peace and stability throughout Sudan and in neighbouring Chad. The rapid onset of war in the western region of Darfur -- with thousands dead and some 830,000 uprooted from their homes -- endangers the IGAD peace talks between the government and the insurgent SPLA. It has taken more than a year of war in the region for the international community to begin to realise that the Darfur crisis requires its full engagement. Having invested so much in Sudan's peace, the U.S., the UK, and other interested countries have responsibility to ensure that the Darfur conflict is addressed. The IGAD talks must not be allowed to deadlock, and a parallel process needs to begin to address both the humanitarian and political crises in Darfur.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

- Angola Rebels in oil rich Cabinda peninsula claimed 4 March 47 government soldiers killed in clashes in prior weeks - government denied.
 - "Cabindans blame oil for their woes", IRIN, 22 Mar. 2004.
 - "Army denies rebels killed soldiers", IRIN, 5 Mar. 2004.
 - For background, see ICG Africa Report N°61, *Angola's Choice: Reform or Regress*, 7 Apr. 2003.
- Swaziland Parliament opened 17 March after number of unexplained delays following October's elections. King Mswati III forced elected speaker of House of Assembly to resign in dispute over king's purchase of private jet. Swaziland now has world's worst HIV infection rate, with UN saying 38.8% of adults infected.
 - "Swaziland alone with world's worst infection rate - UN", Reuters, 19 Mar. 2004.
 - "King opens parliament amid controversy", IRIN, 17 Mar. 2004.
 - "Swaziland king urges 'tough policies'", CNN, 15 Mar. 2004.
- Zimbabwe Opposition threatened to boycott next year's elections, citing growing violence against its members. Government moved to further tighten control over upcoming

election, proposing changes to electoral act affecting voter registration and education. Central bank banned use of foreign currency to buy goods and services, as 2 commercial banks collapsed. President Mugabe's salary increased by 265% to Z\$73.7 million (\$169,118) per year up from Z\$20.2 million. 70 men arrested as suspected mercenaries 7 March when their plane landed in Harare; authorities alleged men part of plot to overthrow government of Equatorial Guinea.

- "Zimbabwe hikes Mugabe's salary by 265% - report", SABC, 27 Mar. 2004.
- "UK led mercenaries ordered GBP 100,000 weapons - court told", *The Scotsman*, 23 Mar. 2004.
- "Proposed electoral act amendments questioned", IRIN, 23 Mar. 2004.
- "Zimbabwe's opposition", *The Economist*, 11 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Briefing, *Decision Time in Zimbabwe*, 8 Jul. 2003.

WEST AFRICA



➤ Côte d'Ivoire Peace process in tatters following massacre of hundreds of opposition supporters by security forces and pro-government militias. Deterioration began early March with leading opposition Democratic Party pulling out of transitional administration, accusing President Gbagbo of destabilising peace. Alliance of opposition groups and rebels held protest march in commercial capital Abidjan 25 March despite official ban. Security forces and pro-government militias closed off Abidjan, fired on march and rounded up protesters during and after it. Government reported 37 protesters killed – but credible reports to ICG claim security forces and pro-government militias may have massacred over 200 during march and in days immediately following. Many protesters killed in police stations. At least 127 bodies have been counted, and many more missing believed killed. Real risk of escalating violence and further massacres.

- "Claim of massacre in Ivory Coast", *The Australian*, 30 Mar. 2004.
- "Hundreds arrested in Ivory Coast crackdown", Independent Online, 29 Mar. 2004.
- "Ivory Coast coup claims denied", BBC, 14 Mar. 2004.
- "Ivory Coast opposition party quits gov't", *The Guardian* (AP), 5 Mar. 2004.
- For background see ICG Africa Report N°72, *Côte d'Ivoire: The War is Not Yet Over*, 28 Nov. 2003.



➤ Equatorial Guinea Apparent coup plot against despotic President Obiang foiled 7 March when 70 mercenaries arrested in Harare allegedly en-route to oil rich Equatorial Guinea. Some 15 other alleged mercenaries arrested in Equatorial Guinea - one later claimed plan was to overthrow Obiang and install exiled rival Severo Moto Nsa. Government responded by cracking down on foreigners, causing hundreds to flee.

- "Mercenaries in Africa", *The Economist*, 18 Mar. 2004.
- "Equatorial Guinea's great survivor", BBC, 17 Mar. 2004.
- "Ghana evacuating its citizens from Equatorial Guinea", CNN, 15 Mar. 2004.



➤ Guinea President Conte sacked finance and trade ministers and central bank president as economic crisis worsened, following earlier removal of prime minister and interior minister.

- "Conte sacks economic team in reshuffle", IRIN, 2 Mar. 2004.

- For background, see ICG Africa Report N°74, *Guinea: Uncertainties at the End of an Era*, 19 Dec. 2003.

↳ Guinea-Bissau Parliamentary elections held 28 March, following September 2003 coup. International observers certified that “in general the ballot took place under acceptable conditions” and that elections were free, fair and transparent. Results expected early April. Presidential election due March 2005. Former President Yala, overthrown in coup, released from house arrest 9 March, then rearrested 11 March after saying did not recognise transitional government; following election, claimed would not recognise outcome.

- “International observers generally satisfied with poll”, IRIN, 30 Mar. 2004.
- “Ousted Guinea-Bissau president back under house arrest”, CNN, 12 Mar. 2004.

↳ Liberia UN mission (UNAMIL) sent peacekeeping reinforcements to port city Buchanan 21 March to stop looting spree by MODEL rebels. UNMIL expressed concern that none of pre-conditions necessary for demobilisation and reintegration, such as construction of cantonments, have yet been met, though progress being made by UN and government and militia forces.

- “Violence flares in Buchanan while UN expresses concern over disarmament”, IRIN, 22 Mar. 2004.
- “Civilian killed amid looting”, CNN, 22 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Africa Report N°75, *Rebuilding Liberia: Prospects and Perils*, 30 Jan. 2004.

↳ Nigeria Number of political figures shot dead in lead-up to local elections on 27 March. Government responded by ordering massive deployment of police throughout country. Election day marred by violence and fraud, with some 50 killed, and widespread allegations of intimidation of voters and manipulation of results. Ruling People’s Democratic Party won clear victory. Further violence in delta oil town Warri, with at least 5 killed 9 March in shootout between troops and unidentified gunmen; local community group later claimed at least 51 unarmed villagers killed in fighting - denied by government.

- “Nigeria’s ruling party wins poll”, BBC, 29 Mar. 2004.
- “Nigeria seeks to ensure poll calm”, BBC, 25 Mar. 2004.
- “Army denies alleged massacre in Niger Delta”, IRIN, 15 Mar. 2004.
- “Shootout in Nigerian oil port kills five”, CNN, 10 March 2004.

↳ Sierra Leone Opening ceremony for Special Court for Sierra Leone courthouse held 10 March. Appeals chamber rejected application by lawyers for defendant that president of court, Geoffrey Robertson, stand down from all hearings because of possible bias, but ruled he should not hear cases involving former RUF rebels. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan asked General Assembly for \$40 million 15 March to cover shortfall in court funds. UN voted to extend mandate of peacekeeping force by 6 months to 30 June 2005.

- “UN extends mandate of peacekeepers to June 2005”, 31 Mar. 2004.
- “Sierra Leone Special Court needs funds”, *The Washington Times* (UPI), 16 Mar. 2004.
- “Special Court opens its doors amid controversies”, IRIN, 15 Mar. 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 Reshuffle saw Nurtay Abyqaev, ally of President Nazarbayev, promoted to speaker of senate, number 2 post in government. Following reshuffle, Emergency Situations head Zamanbek Nurqadilov sacked 2 days after calling on president to resign.

- “Kazakhstan: Abikaev is suddenly the number-two man”, RFE/RL, 11 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°72, *Is Radical Islam Inevitable in Central Asia? Priorities for Engagement*, 22 Dec. 2003.

↳ Kyrgyzstan Kyrgyz ombudsman announced will investigate case of jailed opposition figure Feliks Kulov following latter’s request for inquiry into violations of his rights.

- “Kyrgyz ombudsman to investigate Kulov case”, RFE/RL, 24 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Reports N°66, *Youth in Central Asia: Losing the New Generation*, 31 Oct. 2003; and N°37, *Kyrgyzstan’s Political Crisis: An Exit Strategy*, 20 Aug. 2002.

↳ Tajikistan Police detained Uzbek citizen for attempting to smuggle plutonium, likely of Russian origin, to Afghan or Pakistani buyers. Authorities rejected registration attempt by opposition Taraqqiyot party. UN narcotics agency noted huge increase in heroin trafficking through Tajikistan. Negotiations with Russia on future of Russian troop presence along Afghan border reportedly deadlocked: Tajik government said to be seeking debt write-off and US\$50 million payment from Russia in exchange for permission to set up permanent Russian base in frontier area. Authorities continued arrests of alleged members of banned Hizb ut-Tahrir in south.

- “Tajikistan: Radical group uncovered in south”, IWPR, 17 Mar. 2004.
- “Tajiks say little hope to stem flow of Afghan drugs”, Reuters AlertNet, 3 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°51, *Tajikistan: A Roadmap for Development*, 24 Apr. 2003.

↳ Turkmenistan Former chief mufti jailed for unknown reasons as government continues assault on religious freedom. Two Radio Free Europe journalists detained and, following international pressure, released; pair warned to stop reporting for RFE/RL.

- “Detained Turkmen correspondents released, warned to stop reported for RFE/RL”, RFE/RL press release, 22 Mar. 2004.
- “Turkmenistan: Religious leader arrested and imprisoned”, IRIN, 18 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°44, *Cracks in the Marble: Turkmenistan’s Falling Dictatorship*, 17 Jan. 2003.

↳ Uzbekistan Sudden spurt of violence rocked cities of Tashkent and Bukhara, days before U.S. State Department expected to review certification of Uzbekistan’s human rights record, possibly triggering aid cut. Details of attacks sketchy: violence reportedly broke out 28 March with blast at home of suspected militant in Bukhara, followed by 2 suicide bombings at Tashkent market 29 March, and gun battle between police and

militants in Tashkent 30 March. Further explosion in capital reported 31 March. Government quick to blame Islamist extremists for attacks, which reportedly killed 42 over 3 days and targeted mainly Uzbek police. Board of Directors of European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to meet 6 April to evaluate Uzbek progress on series of benchmarks set March 2003, including on human rights. Human Rights Watch and other international observers (including ICG - see box below) noted lack of progress in reforms and called for EBRD and international community to reduce financial aid. Uzbek government requested extradition from Pakistan of Uzbek fighters arrested in operations along Afghan border. Leader of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Tahir Yuldashev, reportedly among those eluding capture.

- "Karimov fights back", *The Economist*, 31 Mar. 2004.
- "Uzbekistan: Muslim dissidents jailed and tortured", Human Rights Watch, 23 Mar. 2004.
- "Uzbek militant may have slipped Pakistani net", Reuters AlertNet, 23 Mar. 2004.
- Comments by David Lewis (ICG), "Uzbekistan: Halting the money train", Transitions Online, 18 Mar. 2004, and Andrew Stroehlein (ICG), "The West is far too kind to Uzbekistan's tyrant", *International Herald Tribune*, 16 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°72, *Is Radical Islam Inevitable in Central Asia? Priorities for Engagement*, 22 Dec. 2003.



ICG Asia Report N°76, *The Failure of Reform in Uzbekistan: Ways Forward for the International Community*, 11 March 2004. International engagement with Uzbekistan's regime has resulted in continuation of extensive human rights abuses and encouraged economic decline. There has been no real progress towards meeting either EBRD reform benchmarks or the commitments to political and economic liberalisation in bilateral agreements with the U.S. and EU. Torture remains systemic, and the corrupt, non-transparent economy continues to be controlled by an elite while 80 per cent of the population live in poverty. The regime has been given too free a ride because it is seen as a partner against terrorism and Islamist extremism but engagement must become more critical and investment in civil society increased in order to stem long-term damage to Western credibility in this mainly Muslim region.

SOUTH ASIA

➡ Afghanistan Heavy fighting between pro-government factions in western city of Herat claimed over 100 lives. Civil aviation minister Mirwais Sadiq, son of powerful Herat provincial governor Ismail Khan, killed in 21/22 March clashes with 17th division military commander, Zahir Nayebzada. Khan claimed clashes followed assassination attempt on his life. 1,500 government troops sent to the area. At least 4 Afghan civilians killed in fighting between rival pro-government commanders of Shiite Muslim Hezb-i-Wahdat faction in Uruzgan province 16 March, with 2 U.S. soldiers killed 18 March. U.S. responded with attack on village in Uruzgan which Afghan officials claimed left 6 civilians dead. Attacks on aid workers continued: director of Afghan Red Crescent Society shot dead 7 March; Turkish engineer and Afghan guard also killed in southern province of Zabul. President Hamid Karzai asked NATO to provide troops as security for voter registration and elections. Karzai announced presidential and parliamentary elections to be delayed from June to September due to security and registration concerns. At donors'

conference in Berlin 31 March / 1 April Karzai government called for \$27.6bn over 7 years. International donors pledged \$8.2bn aid over next 3 years. U.S. promised \$2.2bn over 2 years.

- "Afghans to vote in September, security a worry", Reuters AlertNet, 28 Mar. 2004.
- "The cost of doing too little", CARE International, 25 Mar. 2004.
- "Troops head to west Afghan city as funeral held for slain minister", AFP, 24 Mar. 2004.
- "'Enduring Freedom:' Abuses by U.S. Forces in Afghanistan", Human Rights Watch, Vol. 16, No. 3(C), Mar. 2004.



ICG Asia Briefing, *Elections and Security in Afghanistan*, 30 March 2004. There is need to do more than ensure that Afghanistan gets adequate long-term funding -- the objective of the 31-March-1 April Berlin conference. Lack of security, slow progress in the disarmament of militias, and a weakly developed legal and institutional framework for democratic politics endanger the success of the presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for September. NATO has yet to deliver the robust international security presence outside Kabul it promised last fall. The registration of political parties and voters has proceeded very slowly. Poor coordination of Coalition counter-terrorism strategy with the Bonn political process has further stalled disarmament and reintegration of Afghanistan's numerous ex-combatants. Democratic institutions can only develop in an environment that allows open discussion about governance, something that continues to elude Afghanistan more than two years after the signing of the Bonn Agreement.

➡ India (non-Kashmir) Ethnic violence returned to northeastern state of Assam. In 2 attacks armed Kuki tribesmen killed 31 Karbi villagers 24/25 March, possibly in retaliation for 3 Kuki deaths week before. Indian police killed 4 Assam rebels and reported rebels planning attacks to disrupt national elections scheduled for 20 April to 10 May. Normalisation with Pakistan continued as India went on first cricket tour in 14 years. India test fired short range nuclear-capable missile 19 March.

- "31 Karbis gunned down by suspected Kuki militants", *The Hindu*, 25 Mar. 2004.
- "India terse on new U.S. ally status for Pakistan", Reuters, 21 Mar. 2004.
- "Rebels plan to disrupt polls in India's northeast", Reuters AlertNet, 18 Mar. 2004.
- "Indian police 'kill Assam rebels'", BBC, 4 Mar. 2004.

➡ Kashmir Fighting continued between Indian security forces and Kashmiri separatists with several incidents in and around Srinagar. Main separatist alliance, All Parties Hurriyat Conference, held second round of talks with Indian government March 27. Separatist group Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and militants Hizbul Mujahideen urged Indian Kashmiri voters to boycott April elections.

- "Musharraf sets Kashmir deadline", BBC, 31 Mar. 2004.
- "Kashmir separatists accept new talks with India", South Asia Monitor (AFP), 21 Mar. 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.

➡ Nepal Violence and disruptive strikes continued. Fierce fighting 20 March in Beni, 175 miles west of Kathmandu, worst

since cease-fire collapsed in August. Government sources claimed 500 rebels killed: Maoists put total dead at under 200 - 40 rebels, 150 security personnel. Earlier attack on telecommunications tower by Maoist rebels in eastern Nepal killed up to 29 troops and 10 rebels. Landmines killed 11 civilians in Kanchenpur district, 4 soldiers in western Kaski district. Maoists launched 15-day transport strike in 14 western districts 10 March. King Gyanendra announced intention to hold long-delayed elections by April 2005.

- "Nepal king aims for elections next year", Reuters, 28 Mar. 2004.
- "Nepal's students look for 'third way' out of civil war", *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 Mar. 2004.
- "Communist rebels attack Nepalese army barracks", CNN, 21 Mar. 2004.
- "At least 39 killed in Nepal rebel violence", Reuters AlertNet, 3 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Briefing, *Nepal: Dangerous Plans for Village Militias*, 17 Feb. 2004.

↓ Pakistan Despite precautions, violence erupted on Shiite holy day of Arusha 2 March. Suspected Sunni Muslim extremists attacked Shiites with automatic rifles and grenades in southwestern city of Quetta, killing 44 people, wounding more than 150. Attacks sparked mob violence and rioting. Army ended 12-day offensive in South Waziristan 28 March, after 150 deaths including 60 soldiers. President Musharraf had claimed 'high-value target' in area. Operations came as U.S. troops in Afghanistan stepped up hunt along that side of border and coincided with visit of U.S. Sec. State Colin Powell to Islamabad and declaration that Pakistan will be granted 'major non-NATO ally' status. Pakistan test fired intermediate-range nuclear-capable ballistic missile 9 March.

- "US panel hears testimony on Khan's nuke activities", Reuters AlertNet, 31 Mar. 2004.
- "Scepticism greets Pakistan 'success'", BBC, 30 Mar. 2004.
- "Alexander the Great also got in trouble here", *International Herald Tribune*, 30 Mar. 2004.
- "Powell says Pakistan ups efforts to crush militants", Reuters AlertNet, 17 Mar. 2004.
- "The other victims", *The Economist*, 4 Mar. 2004.

 ICG Asia Report N°77, *Devolution in Pakistan: Reform or Regression?* 22 March 2004, Pakistan's efforts at political devolution have only served to strengthen military rule and may actually raise the risk of internal conflict. The military government's devolution plan was ostensibly aimed at transferring administrative and financial power to local governments. Far from enhancing democracy, however, government policies have undercut established political parties and drained authority away from the provinces - doing little to devolve power, improve service delivery, reduce corruption or establish accountability at the local level. Despite the rhetoric of empowerment, Islamabad has used the scheme to bypass the provinces, creating disharmony between the centre and the federal units. The new structures were primarily instituted to create a pliant political elite to help root the military's power and displace its traditional civilian adversaries.

↙ ↘ Sri Lanka Country braced for 2 April general election violence following President Kumaratunga and PM Wickremesinghe feud. Split between Tamil commanders added to tensions. Eastern Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

(LTTE) leader Karuna (V. Muralitharan) accused LTTE leadership of discriminating against Tamils in east - dismissed by northern leadership 6 March. Karuna controls approx. 6,000 fighters compared to 11,000 for LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. Tamil National Alliance (TNA) candidate and supporter of Karuna shot dead, leading government to deploy troops as precaution. Norwegian peace envoy Erik Solheim reviewed Oslo-arranged truce 15 March. Both Prabhakaran and Karuna said they would abide by it. Kumaratunga pledged to abolish the presidency should her United People's Freedom Alliance win power, with her assuming prime minister's position. Also indicated she would remain defence minister, one of 3 ministries she took control of in November, regardless of election outcome.

- "Troops deployed after Sri Lanka vote killings", AFP, 31 Mar. 2004.
- "A vote that could prove dangerous", *International Herald Tribune*, 30 Mar. 2004.
- "Sri Lanka Tiger rebels threaten breakaway leader", Reuters AlertNet, 26 Mar. 2004.
- "Peace broker Norway to keep out of crisis within Tamil Tigers", *South Asia Monitor*, 11 Mar. 2004.

NORTH EAST ASIA

↙ China (internal) Chinese government expressed anger at U.S. "meddling" in internal affairs after Washington officials met with Hong Kong opposition politician and democracy activist Martin Lee. Beijing to begin review of HK constitution 2 April.

- "China warns U.S. off Hong Kong", CNN, 5 Mar. 2004.

↙ North Korea After inconclusive February talks posturing resumed as Pyongyang threatened to expand its nuclear weapons program in response to annual U.S.-led military exercises in South Korea. Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing made first official visit for 4 years 24 March.

- "Losing time on North Korea", *International Herald Tribune*, 19 Mar. 2004.
- "Through a glass, darkly", *The Economist*, 11 Mar. 2004.
- "El Baradei - North Korea set a dangerous nuclear precedent", Reuters, 8 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°61, *North Korea: A Phased Negotiation Strategy*, 1 Aug. 2003.

↙ Taiwan Strait President Chen Shui-bian's narrow victory - by approximately 29,000 votes out of more than 13 million cast - in disputed 20 March presidential election looked increasingly secure after opposition Kuomintang party (KMT) dropped demand that military be given additional opportunity to vote. Opposition critics had said state of alert following shooting of Chen prevented many in military from voting: denied by authorities. Assassination attempt, in which both Chen and VP Annette Lu lightly wounded by gunfire, took place day before election. KMT leader Lien Chan said sympathy vote cost him presidency, and demanded recount: expected to go ahead in early April but unlikely to alter result.

- "Chen's prospects brighten as Taiwan tumult lessens", *International Herald Tribune*, 30 Mar. 2004.
- "Taiwan rocked by fresh protests", BBC, 27 Mar. 2004.
- "Devil may care", *The Economist*, 18 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°75, *Taiwan Strait IV: How an Ultimate Political Settlement Might Look*, 26 Feb. 2004.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

Indonesia Campaigning for 5 April national elections began 11 March amid security fears. Bomb exploded during training exercise of radical Islamic group in Jakarta 21 March. Police seized explosives (same as used in Bali and Marriott bombings), handgun and jihadist propaganda. Ten people arrested; 8 suspects still at large. Sentence of JI leader Abu Bakar Ba'asyir reduced after successful appeal to Supreme Court; to be freed within weeks. Acting head of JI Abu Rusdan sentenced to 3 1/2 years for sheltering Bali mastermind Ali Ghufron (Mukhlas). Police stabilisation force of 100 deployed to Poso 31 March after 3 shooting incidents, 2 dead. Machete attacks in Central Sulawesi by unknown assailants on predominantly Christian village in Donggala regency 11 March killed 1, injured 5. Fears that deadly Christian-Muslim fighting of 2000-2001 could be reignited. Four killed, 28 injured 11 March when villagers attacked police station in Manggarai regency in Flores; culmination of long-running dispute over illegal coffee plantations. Senior official of Free Papua Movement (OPM) killed by army in Sarmi district 12 March where military claims OPM rebels were planning election disruptions. Additional 5,500 police stationed in Aceh to guarantee stability during elections, while access restrictions tightened for foreign journalists.

- "Reinforcements arrive in Poso", *The Jakarta Post*, 1 Apr. 2004.
- "Warning on Indon elections threat", *The Australian*, 25 Mar. 2004.
- "Defiant and jovial, Bashir blasts U.S. from Jakarta jail", Reuters, 10 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°74, *Indonesia Backgrounder: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, 3 Feb. 2004.

East Timor East Timor welcomed proposals to form new foreign police unit to boost security after current UN mission is scaled down in May. Australia, U.S. and Britain suggested creation of 125-strong armed emergency response police unit. Prosecutors intensified push for arrest of former Indonesian Defense Forces (TNI) commander General Wiranto, citing evidence he failed to prevent crimes against humanity in 1999.

- "Prosecutors urge arrest of Wiranto", Laksamana Net, 23 Mar. 2004.
- "E Timor welcomes foreign police plan", ABC Online (AFP), 8 Mar. 2004.

Myanmar/Burma 'Cautious optimism' after 1-4 March efforts of UN Special Envoy Razali Ismail to broker advance for reconciliation and democratisation in Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi, still under house arrest, again indicated willingness to work with Myanmar's junta and their democracy 'roadmap'. Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt also indicated willingness to work with political opposition.

- "Keep sanctions on Burma", *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Mar. 2004.
- "Cautious optimism over UN brokering in Myanmar", *Daily Times* (AFP), 6 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Asia Report N°52, *Myanmar Backgrounder: Ethnic Minority Politics*, 7 May 2003.

Philippines Clashes on southern island of Jolo between marines and Abu Sayyaf guerrillas claimed at least 10 lives 7 March. Fernando Poe Jr to run in 10 May presidential elections after Supreme Court ruled him natural-born Filipino. Malaysian

ceasefire observers started inspections of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) bases as one of preconditions for resumption of formal peace talks. Malaysian observers arrived shortly after army troops shelled rebel positions in 1 area due for inspections. Shelling came after MILF rebels ambushed soldiers chasing gunmen who kidnapped and killed 4 farmers in western Mindanao. Ferry disaster 26 February left 119 people confirmed dead or missing. Four Abu Sayyaf members arrested 30 March, including man who claims responsibility for ferry explosion, and explosives seized; President Arroyo claimed her government had foiled "Madrid-level" terror attack in Manila.

- "Loose lips sink Manila bomb plot", *The Australian*, 31 Mar. 2004.
- "Don't let Philippines slip off the radar", *The Australian*, 25 Mar. 2004.
- "Malaysians arrive to oversee Philippine truce", Reuters AlertNet, 22 Mar. 2004.
- "Philippine communists flex muscle as polls near", Reuters AlertNet, 16 Mar. 2004.

Thailand Unrest in south continued. Security alert after theft of over 1000 kgs of explosives from quarry in Yala province 31 March. Two policemen and village headman killed week after arsonists set fire to more than 36 buildings in region. Government made plans to launch southern development infrastructure program in attempt to end violence. Prominent Muslim human rights lawyer Somchai Neelapaijit defending 5 Thai Muslims accused in January attacks disappeared 12 March. More than 50 people have died in 2 months of unrest.

- "Thailand on alert after explosives heist", *International Herald Tribune*, 31 Mar. 2004.
- "More killings in Thailand's south", BBC, 22 Mar. 2004.
- "Thailand: lawyer's disappearance darkens rights climate", Human Rights Watch, 18 Mar. 2004.

PACIFIC

Papua New Guinea Ombudsman Commission started legal action to force Somare government to recall parliament adjourned in January (to avoid vote of no confidence).

- "PNG ombudsman launches legal action to force recall of parliament", ABC Asia Pacific, 24 Mar. 2004.

Europe



BALKANS

Albania Opposition leader Sali Berisha promised new protests after February demonstrations. Controversy grew over attempted registration of Islamic party; religiously and ethnically based parties are illegal.

- "Albania: investors concerned at protests", IWPR, Balkan Crisis Report N°. 483, 4 Mar. 2004.
- "Will Albania have an Islamic party?", RFE/RL, 17 Mar. 2004.
- For background see ICG Europe Report N°153, *Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?* 25 February 2004.

Bosnia & Herzegovina First state-level defence minister finally selected 15 March. Nikola Radovanovic's

appointment paves way for Bosnia's membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace program. Month-long political crisis due to HDZ/SDA rift overcome. Massive opposition demonstrations in Republika Srpska 23 March protesting against government and recent events in Kosovo. Bosnia plans to send 36-strong demining team to Iraq by 1 September - first military mission comprising all 3 ethnic groups. High Rep. Lord Ashdown visited Mostar 15 March marking first day of city's reunification amid criticism from local politicians. NATO's Stabilisation Force (SFOR) raid to capture former Bosnian Serb president Radovan Karadzic 31 March failed. Two civilians seriously injured.

- "Karadzic eludes NATO raid", Reuters, 1 Apr. 2004.
- "Bosnia to send demining unit to Iraq", ISN, 11 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Balkans Reports N°150, *Building Bridges in Mostar*, 20 Nov. 2004 and N°146, *Bosnia's Nationalist Governments: Paddy Ashdown and the Paradoxes of State Building*, 22 Jul. 2003.

☐ ☐ Kosovo Worst inter-ethnic violence since 1999, 17-18 March. Across Kosovo Albanian mobs attacked Serb minority. UNMIK also targeted. Security forces overwhelmed and disorganised in face of 33 major riots in which 50,000 participated, some using firearms. Some 19 killed, 900 wounded. 800 houses and 30 churches and monasteries destroyed or damaged. Initial clashes in Mitrovica sparked by media reports that Serb youths caused 3 Albanian boys to drown. Near Pristina, mobs and security forces fought pitched battle at Caglavica village, where Serbs had blockaded highway south to Macedonia after 16 March shooting of young Serb. Riots seen as hysterical explosion of Albanians' frustrations – unresolved future, mass unemployment, blocked privatisation, apparent delegitimisation of liberation struggle, and fear that Belgrade being allowed to regain upper hand over them. Security forces arrested 200, but UN and Contact Group resumption of previous policies together with deteriorating relations between Kosovo Albanians and international personnel seen as possibly risking further, more violent explosion.

- "Kosovo flares up", *International Herald Tribune*, 30 Mar. 2004.
- "The UN and NATO are failing Kosovo", *International Herald Tribune*, 22 Mar. 2004.
- "Kosovo: Black Wednesday and Thursday", *Transitions Online*, 22 Mar. 2004.
- "Peace hopes go up in flames", *The Economist*, 19 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Europe Report N°148, *Two to Tango: An Agenda for the New Kosovo SRSG*, 3 Sept. 2003

☐ Macedonia Presidential elections scheduled for 14 April. Contest between candidates of 2 largest political parties, current PM Crvenkovski from ruling SDSM and Sasko Kedev of opposition VMRO-DPMNE, with Albanian minority likely to cast deciding vote. Campaign could be influenced by March events in Kosovo. Macedonia officially applied for EU membership 22 March.

- "Comment: Macedonia spared Kosovo illness", *IWPR, Balkan Crisis Report N°488*, 23 Mar. 2004.
- "The run to replace Trajkovski begins in Macedonia", *Transitions Online* (subscription), 15 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Europe Report N°149, *Macedonia: No Time for Complacency*, 23 Oct. 2003.

☐ Serbia Following Albanian ethnic cleansing of Serbs in Kosovo 17-19 March, demonstrations broke out across Serbia: 2 mosques burned. Two Serbian police officials sacked for

failure to respond properly. Serbia stepped up diplomatic efforts over Kosovo, PM Kostunica met NATO and EU officials. Kostunica's calls for 'cantonisation' of Kosovo reportedly rejected by EU and NATO. New government officially sworn in 3 March, with presidential elections planned for May or June. Milosevic's former minister of information appointed director of Radio-Television Serbia. Military police seized books from Helsinki Commission office alleging publication of state secrets. Democratic parties struggling to put forward presidential candidate against nationalist Radical Party leader Tomislav Nikolic. One year anniversary of assassination of former Prime Minister Djindjic 12 March. Trial of alleged killers overshadowed by murder of key witness. First Serbian war crimes trial started 9 March amid domestic and international scrutiny. Milosevic effectively refused to accept change of judge 25 March - remaining judges' decision on continuation of trial awaited and will be subject to UN confirmation. U.S. decertified Serbia and temporarily suspended \$26 million aid due to inadequate cooperation with The Hague tribunal.

- "U.S. suspends Serbia aid over war crimes cooperation", *Reuters AlertNet*, 31 Mar. 2004.
- "Milosevic defiant over judge swap", *BBC*, 25 Mar. 2004.
- "Flames engulf Belgrade mosque", *IWPR Balkan Crisis Report N°486*, 18 Mar. 2004.
- "Belgrade's new government should stay the course", *International Herald Tribune*, 12 Mar. 2004.

 ICG Europe Report N°154 *Serbia's U-Turn*, 26 March 2004. Stronger pressure on Belgrade is essential to stem the country's ultra-nationalist drift and further economic decline. Donors can no longer pretend that Serbia is somehow moving forward when it clearly is not. The extreme right is still a decisive factor in Serbian politics, the economy is in severe crisis, state institutions are weak, and the security services are used for political purposes. To become a stable state, two inter-related actions are needed. First, Serbia has to move from a Milosevic-era criminalised state to a more normal society. Secondly, it needs to transform into a democratic market economy. The second cannot happen until the first does. The EU and the U.S. have made key policy mistakes that have exacerbated Serbia's problems. Both should now adjust their policies to strengthen pro-Western elements.

CAUCASUS

☐ Azerbaijan Court ordered opposition newspaper *Yeni Musavat* to pay libel damages worth US\$150,000 to various political figures. Paper says fines are attempt to muzzle dissent.

- "Libel damages threaten to bankrupt Azerbaijani opposition paper", *RFE/RL*, 9 Mar. 2004.

☐ Georgia Standoff between Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili and leader of autonomous region of Ajara, Aslan Abashidze, ended 18 March after latter reportedly made key concessions, averting for moment feared civil conflict. After being denied entry to Ajara by armed supporters of Abashidze, Saakashvili had imposed economic blockade on region, demanding entry, release of opposition activists detained by Ajaran authorities, and promise that 28 March parliamentary elections would be conducted freely and fairly in Ajara. Deal ending standoff apparently mediated by Russia, which has military base in Ajara. International observers reported 28 March elections were most democratic in country's history, though

widespread irregularities reported in Ajara. Preliminary results indicated only 1 opposition party, New Rightists/Industrialists, reached controversial 7% threshold required to enter parliament. Tension between Saakashvili and Abashidze continues to pose risk of future violence.

- "President issues warning to Adjara as controversy looms over regional vote", RFE/RL, 30 Mar. 2004.
- Giorgi Gogia (ICG), "Georgia's woes are far from over", *The Observer*, 26 Mar. 2004.
- "Saakashvili strikes Adjara deal", IWPR, 18 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Europe Report N°151, *Georgia: What Now?*, 3 Dec. 2003.

➤ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Armenian and Azerbaijani officials resumed "did so, did not" debate over whether negotiators agreed on Nagorno-Karabakh settlement during 2001 Florida peace talks.

- "Azerbaijani president denies existence of agreements on Karabakh settlement", RFE/RL, 26 Mar. 2004.

EASTERN EUROPE

➤ Chechnya (Russia) Russian government said Vladimir Putin won 94% of votes in high turnout in Chechnya for presidential election, sharply contradicting reports from observers who noted mostly empty polling stations. Chechen separatist president Aslan Maskhadov severely weakened by recent loss of 2 most powerful allies: field commander Ruslan Gelaev killed by Russian border troops 28 February, while separatist defence minister Magomed Khambiev surrendered to pro-Moscow Chechen forces 8 March, reportedly after family taken hostage.

- "Putin landslide raises eyebrows", IWPR, 18 Mar. 2004.
- "Chechnya: Moscow strikes at Maskhadov", IWPR, 11 Mar. 2004.
- "War haunts youth of Chechnya", *International Herald Tribune*, 5 Mar. 2004.

➤ Moldova Year's first trainload of Russian arms to be evacuated from breakaway Transdnistria region departed for Russia 25 March. Talks with OSCE, Ukrainian and Russian mediators on conflict with Transdnistria may resume in April.

- "OSCE confirms departure of new trainload of Russian armaments from Transdnistria", RFE/RL, 26 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Europe Report N°147, *Moldova: No Quick Fix*, 12 Aug. 2003.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➤ Basque region (Spain) Authorities initially blamed Basque separatists ETA for Madrid bombings, who denied having any role. Generally accepted more likely to have been Islamist extremists. See 'Spain' below.

➤ 🇨🇵 Cyprus Turkish and Greek leaders joined Cypriot counterparts and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in Switzerland for final negotiations. Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash refused to attend. With a mandate to fill in gaps after parties failed to agree Annan presented final plan 31 March. Referendums to be held 24 April. Plan calls for loose confederation of 2 states. Revisions include reduction in number of Greek Cypriots allowed to return to northern Cyprus, reduction in size of Turkish Cypriot territory to 29% of Cyprus,

allowing some 120,000 Greek Cypriots back to their homes under Greek Cypriot administration, restrictions on property rights for Greek Cypriots in north until region approaches living standards of south, 24 seats for Turkish Cypriots in 48-seat Senate and the continued presence of Turkish troops in Northern Cyprus.

- "Cyprus peace plan set for vote", BBC, 1 Apr. 2004.
- "Cyprus unity talks enter make-or-break stage", *International Herald Tribune*, 31 Mar. 2004.

➤ Northern Ireland (UK) Ulster Unionist (UUP) leader David Trimble withdrew from Good Friday review 2 March over government's refusal to exclude Sinn Féin. Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist party (DUP) remained but refuses to talk directly to Sinn Féin. Prime ministers of Britain and Ireland met to discuss way ahead 23 March. Reported no progress after talks with province's divided leaders. Leadership challenge to Trimble 27 March failed.

- "N. Ireland talks end without deal", CNN (AP), 24 Mar. 2004.
- "Good Friday review hits the rocks", *The Guardian*, 8 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Europe Briefing, *Monitoring the Northern Ireland Ceasefires: Lessons from the Balkans*, 23 Jan. 2004.

➤ Spain Worst terrorist attack in modern Spanish history 11 March: 10 bombs exploded in 4 commuter trains in Madrid; 191 killed, 1,400 wounded. Authorities initially blamed Basque separatists ETA who denied having any role. Spain holding 18 suspects: 11 Moroccans, 3 Syrians, 2 Spaniards, 2 Indians. Interior Minister Angel Acebes told press 30 March Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group are 'priority' for investigations. Aznar's People's party voted out of office 15 March. Socialist leader José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero declared in victory speech would withdraw troops unless they are given UN mandate by 30 June.

- "Spain says bomb probe focusing on Moroccan group", Reuters AlertNet, 30 Mar. 2004.
- "Spain mourns terror victims", *International Herald Tribune*, 25 Mar. 2004.
- "An election bombshell", *The Economist*, 18 Mar. 2004.

Latin America /Caribbean

LATIN AMERICA

➤ Bolivia President Carlos Mesa announced series of public rallies at home and abroad calling for Chile to grant landlocked Bolivia corridor to sea. Parliamentarian and coca farmers' leader Evo Morales withdrew support from Mesa and called for demonstrations against government. Leading trade union called for national elections within 6 months. Miner blew himself up at National Congress building 30 March in protest over pension; 2 security guards also killed.

- "Bolivian Congress rocked by blast", BBC, 31 Mar. 2004.
- "Landlocked Bolivia wants to reclaim its spot on the beach", *The Boston Globe (LAT)*, 24 Mar. 2004.
- For background see "Indigenous movements and democracy in the Andean countries", *The Economist*, 19 Feb. 2004.



- Colombia At White House meeting 23 March, President Bush commended President Uribe for efforts against drug traffickers and terrorists, and called for Congress to increase U.S. military support for efforts. Coca production declined by 21% in 2003. AUC paramilitary group asked U.S. to join negotiations to disarm AUC fighters, seeking to get round U.S. extradition requests for its leaders - U.S. rejected.
 - "Bush, Uribe hail progress in Colombia drug fight", CNN (AP), 24 Mar. 2004.
 - "Colombia paramilitary seek US role in peace talks", VOA News, 23 Mar. 2004.
 - "Ingrid Betancourt and Colombia's government", *The Economist*, 18 Mar. 2004.
 - For background, see ICG Latin America Report N°6, *Colombia: President Uribe's Democratic Security Policy*, 13 Nov. 2003.

 Latin America Briefing, *Hostages for Prisoners: A Way to Peace in Colombia?*, 8 March 2004. The Uribe administration should engage the country's primary rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), in a humanitarian prisoner swap. By tackling this sensitive issue, the government could set the agenda for the political dimension of the struggle and perhaps take a first step to resolving the conflict. While caution is needed, a well-designed negotiation strategy could lead not only to freeing all those the FARC holds in the medium term, but also eventually to peace. Giving the FARC de facto recognition would not be easy for the government; however, engaging it on a swap can be justified if it leads to wider political negotiations, with the early release of all civilian kidnap victims as well as political and military hostages and an end to kidnapping being key elements in that process.

- Ecuador President Lucio Gutierrez met with President Uribe in Colombia to discuss measures to stem flow of drugs, arms and refugees across mutual border.
 - For background, see "Indigenous movements and democracy in the Andean countries", *The Economist*, 19 Feb. 2004.
- Guatemala Former dictator, Efraim Rios Montt, appeared in court 8 March on charges of manslaughter following death of journalist in July 2003 during protests in support of Montt's unsuccessful presidential campaign. Court appearance led to clashes between supporters and opponents of Montt, who is also under investigation for genocide allegedly committed under his rule in early 80s.
 - "Clash at Guatemala's ex-dictator's court appearance", CNN (Reuters), 8 Mar. 2004.
- Haiti Following departure from Haiti 29 February to Central African Republic, ex-President Aristide claimed was forcibly removed by U.S., and called for non-violent resistance to new regime. More than 3000 U.S., French, Canadian, Chilean and Brazilian troops deployed as part of UN authorised force to establish order. Disarmament remains critical task with only limited action so far. Pro-Aristide gunmen shot dead at least 7 demonstrators celebrating his departure 7 March. Former Chief Justice Boniface Alexandre sworn in as president 8 March. Interim prime minister Gérard Latortue appointed 9 March named interim 'technocratic' cabinet and talked about 2 year provisional government before elections. 15 nation Caribbean Community withheld recognition of interim government until

July at earliest. Aristide travelled to Jamaica 15 March, and granted permission to stay for 10 weeks - visit denounced as destabilising by Latortue.

- "Recognition withheld from Haiti's government", CNN (AP), 28 Mar. 2004.
- "Why is Haiti such a mess?", Slate, 24 Mar. 2004.
- "Aristide back in Caribbean heat", *The Washington Post*, 16 Mar. 2004.
- "Haiti's uphill path to normality", *The Economist*, 11 Mar. 2004.
- "Haiti after Aristide", *The Economist*, 4 Mar. 2004.

- Peru Government announced intention to dissolve its intelligence agency on grounds agency still had ties to former President Fujimori and his jailed spy chief Vladimiro Montesinos. Intelligence chief resigned early in month for allegedly plotting against government; successor resigned 2 days later after being investigated for corruption. Supporters of Fujimori launched new political party - though he faces numerous criminal charges if returns from exile in Japan.
 - "Fujimori supporters launch new party", CNN (AP), 22 Mar. 2004.
 - "Peru spy body scrapped", BBC, 23 Mar. 2004.

- Venezuela Increased tension over effort to hold referendum to recall President Chavez. Electoral council handed down official ruling 2 March that 1 million of 3.4 million signatures on recall petition needed to be reaffirmed, effectively preventing referendum. Ruling led to hundreds of thousands protesting, and some 14 deaths, several hundred wounded, 300 detained and charges of torture. Electoral Chamber of Supreme Court overruled Election Board, then Constitutional Chamber of Supreme Court purported to overrule Electoral Chamber decision 23 March - leading to standoff in Supreme Court and uncertainty over recall status. Matter now before Court's full 20-member plenary chamber for final decision. Decision against referendum likely to lead to renewed large scale protests and violence. Venezuelan ambassador to UN resigned to protest growing authoritarianism of government.
 - "Venezuela's recall brawl goes to top appeals body", Reuters, 29 Mar. 2004.
 - "Supreme Court splits on Chavez recall", CNN (AP), 24 Mar. 2004.
 - "Chavez wonders why Washington is opposed to him", *International Herald Tribune*, 18 Mar. 2004.
 - "Venezuelans march to protest denial of recall effort", CNN (AP), 7 Mar. 2004.

Middle East /North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

- Israel/Occupied Territories Israeli airstrike killed Hamas founder and spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin along with 7 others in Gaza 22 March, sparking fears of major escalation in violence. Attack sent hundreds of thousands of Palestinians into streets and drew international condemnation. Dr Abel Aziz Rantisi, one of Hamas's most combative figures, selected as new leader for Gaza Strip. Killing of Yassin came week after Israel launched series of raids into Gaza in response to 14 March twin suicide bombings in Israeli port Ashdod, which left 10 dead. Israeli assault on 2 Palestinian refugee camps in

Gaza 7 March killed 14, including 10 gunmen and 3 boys. Ariel Sharon said Likud party referendum would decide fate of Gaza pullout plan. Israeli chief prosecutor officially recommended indictment of Sharon; final decision to be made by attorney-general, likely in April.

- ["Draft indictment charges Sharon"](#), *The Washington Post*, 29 Mar. 2004.
- ["A wave of fury at Yassin's killing"](#), *The Economist*, 24 Mar. 2004.
- [" Hamas chooses new leader in Gaza"](#), BBC, 23 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Middle East Report N°21, ["Dealing With Hamas"](#), 26 Jan. 2004.

↳ Jordan King Abdullah held secret meeting with Ariel Sharon to discuss Israel's controversial security fence, which Jordan fears may lead to influx of Palestinian refugees. Group of parliamentarians in Amman expressed outrage at Jordanian participation in new research centre on Jordanian-Israeli border funded jointly from Jordan, Israel and U.S.

- ["Abdullah and Sharon meet secretly"](#), BBC, 19 Mar. 2004.
- Amy Hawthorne, ["Middle East democracy: Is civil society the answer?"](#), Carnegie Paper N°44, Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Middle East Briefing, ["The Challenge of Political Reform: Jordanian Democratisation and Regional Instability"](#), 8 Oct. 2003.

↳ Lebanon Hizbollah guerrillas launched attacks on Israeli military positions in Shebaa Farms area 22 March, drawing retaliatory strikes by Israeli forces. Attacks in response to Israel's killing of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Hizbollah vowed further revenge. Two Palestinians killed 23 March in Israeli airstrike in south Lebanon after allegedly firing missiles into Israel. Signs of unrest among students as 300 demonstrated in Beirut 12 March against Syrian presence in Lebanon.

- ["Two Palestinians killed in Israel strike on Lebanon"](#), Reuters AlertNet, 24 Mar. 2004.
- ["Lebanese riot police break up anti-Syria protest"](#), Reuters AlertNet, 12 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Middle East Briefing, ["Hizbollah: Rebel Without a Cause?"](#), 30 July 2003.

↳ Syria Anti-government protests by Kurdish minority rocked several cities in northern Syria in country's worst spate of violence in years. Violence broke out after 11 March football match between Kurdish and Arab teams. Security services opened fire on protesters, killing at least 25, and arrested hundreds. U.S. reportedly set to impose economic and possibly diplomatic sanctions on Syria in near future.

- ["Kurds vent deep anger with Syrians"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Mar. 2004.
- ["US poised to apply Syria sanctions"](#), BBC, 11 Mar. 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 February 2004.

GULF

↳ Iran International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors returned to Iran 27 March. Tehran had imposed indefinite freeze on inspections following 13 March IAEA resolution which "deplored" Iran's less than full accounting of its nuclear activities in October declaration.

- ["Iran blocks nuclear inspections"](#), BBC, 14 Mar. 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 Interim Governing Council signed provisional constitution after series of delays caused by objections from Shiite members and by bloody attacks on Shiite pilgrims, which left over 100 dead 2 March. Constitution to take effect upon U.S. handover of power to transitional administration 30 June. Influential Shiite cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani voiced opposition to document, saying it enshrines ethnic and religious differences, while other Shiites expressed concern over power given to Kurdish minority. Violence continued unabated, with attackers targeting Iraqis seen cooperating with Coalition. Blast at Mount Lebanon hotel 17 March killed 7; several other hotels targeted by rocket attacks. Four U.S. contractors killed in Fallujah 31 March; bodies hung from bridge by angry mob. Unease among U.S. allies as incoming Spanish PM Zapatero, in wake of deadly Madrid bombings, declared would withdraw troops unless they are given UN mandate by 30 June; and Polish president Kwasniewski said country was "misled" over WMD in Iraq. 350 Coalition soldiers, including 301 Americans, killed by hostile fire since declared end of combat operations on 1 May 2003.

- ["Sistani says Iraq constitution a 'dead end'"](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 Mar. 2004.
- ["Kurds and the constitution"](#), *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 18 Mar. 2004.
- ["Iraqis agree on new constitution"](#), BBC, 8 Mar. 2004.
- ["Fifteen people held for suicide attacks on Shiite pilgrims in Iraq"](#), *International Herald Tribune* (AP), 3 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Middle East Report N°20, ["Iraq: Building a New Security Structure"](#), 23 Dec. 2003.

↳ Saudi Arabia Authorities arrested 13 well-known liberal intellectuals after they signed petition calling for reform. Group had been at forefront of growing movement for political and economic liberalisation in kingdom. Seven of 13 were subsequently released.

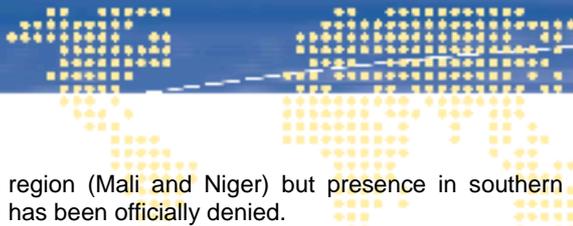
- ["Saudis 'arrest five reformists'"](#), BBC, 16 Mar. 2004.
- Khalid al-Dakhil, ["2003: Saudi Arabia's year of reform"](#), Arab Reform Bulletin, Mar. 2004.

↳ Yemen Police recaptured 2 militants accused of masterminding 2000 bombing of USS Cole; 2 had escaped custody in May 2003 prison break. Authorities also said several other militants arrested in remote mountain region.

- ["USS Cole bomb suspects recaptured"](#), BBC, 19 Mar. 2004.
- Francois Burgat, ["Yemen: Between the Sanaa declaration and the old formula of Arab politics"](#), Arab Reform Bulletin, Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Middle East Report N°8, ["Yemen: Coping with Terrorism and Violence in a Fragile State"](#), 8 Jan. 2003.

NORTH AFRICA

↳ Algeria Candidates began campaigning ahead of 8 April presidential election, which President Bouteflika favoured to win. Protesters in Kabylia region expected to go ahead with planned boycott of poll but part of Kabyle electorate likely to vote. Skirmishes between military and Islamist rebels continued. U.S. special forces reported to be active in Sahel



region (Mali and Niger) but presence in southern Algeria has been officially denied.

- "Algeria's presidential campaign starts", Reuters AlertNet, 18 Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Middle East/North Africa Report N°15, *Algeria: Unrest and Impasse in Kabylia*, 10 June 2003.

➤ Egypt Court convicted 26 people of membership in banned Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir. Human Rights Watch released report saying government continues to arrest and routinely torture homosexuals.

- "A million Yassins?", *Al Ahram Weekly*, 25 Mar. 2004.
- "Egypt jails Islamic group members", BBC, 25 Mar. 2004.
- "Egypt: Crackdown on homosexual conduct exposes torture crisis", Human Rights Watch press release, 1 Mar. 2004.
- Amy Hawthorne, "Middle East democracy: Is civil society the answer?", Carnegie Paper No.44, Mar. 2004.
- For background, see ICG Middle East Briefing, *The Challenge of Political Reform: Egypt After the Iraq War*, 30 Sept. 2003.

🏠 Libya High-level visits marked Libya's return to international fold: U.S. Assistant Secretary of State William Burns met with Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi 23 March, followed 2 days later by visit from UK PM Tony Blair. Earlier in month Libya signed nuclear protocol allowing snap inspections.

- "Blair visits Libya, continuing a thaw", *International Herald Tribune* (AP), 25 Mar. 2004.

➤ Morocco Police in Tangier searched home of Jamal Zougam, prime suspect in 11 March Madrid bombings. Zougam currently in Spanish custody.

- "Morocco's shock at Madrid bomb 'link'", BBC, 17 Mar. 2004.

➤ Western Sahara UN launched program to reunite families long separated by conflict in Western Sahara.

- "Western Sahara families reunited", BBC, 5 Mar. 2004.

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