

1 January 2007, N°41

CrisisWatch:

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

CrisisWatch is compiled by Crisis Group's Brussels Research Unit, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of our nearly 120 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 50 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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Lebanon



Conflict Resolution Opportunities

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Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

- Burundi Implementation of September 2006 ceasefire between Palipehutu-FNL rebel group and government remained stalled. Government and FNL leaders met in Dar es Salaam 14-15 December but no formal agreement reached and FNL still excluded from amnesty provisions. Public hearing of alleged August coup plot trial started 13 December; Attorney-General claimed key Ugandan, Rwandan and Burundian figures tried to overthrow government to help Laurent Nkunda, renegade Congolese commander, conquer DR Congo from Burundi. Defence Minister Niyoyankana publicly questioned existence of plot. Prosecutor requested 3-years imprisonment for 3 journalists on charges of either questioning government's involvement in staging coup or violating judicial secrecy. UN peacekeeping mission (ONUB) replaced with civilian UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) 1 January.
- "Situation in Burundi 'fragile,' Annan warns as UN troops prepare to leave", UN News, 22 Dec. 2006.
 - "Prosecutor seeks three-year prison sentences for three journalists", allAfrica.com, 19 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°120, *Burundi: Democracy and Peace at Risk*, 30 Nov. 2006.

- Central African Republic Security situation deteriorated further. Hundreds of civilians near northern town of Birao fled toward Sudan 1 December after air strikes by French jet fighters against rebels. Army allegedly burned scores of villages in north-central CAR to destroy rebel safe havens, leaving thousands displaced. French-backed government forces reportedly regained control of northeast from UFDR rebels with bloodless takeover of Ouadda-Djalle 11 December.
- "Tens of thousands of villagers on the run", IRIN, 19 Dec. 2006.
 - "Army recaptures last rebel-held town", IRIN, 11 Dec. 2006.

- Democratic Republic of Congo Joseph Kabila sworn in as President 6 December. Second-placed Jean-Pierre Bemba announced intention to lead opposition by running for Kinshasa senate seat. Third-placed Antoine Gizenga, head of PALU party, named PM by Kabila 30 December. Fighting continued in east between renegade General Laurent Nkunda and MONUC. UN reported 150 of Nkunda's forces killed, up to 15,000 Congolese displaced to Uganda 5 December; further fighting reported 16 and 28 December. Chief of staff General Kisempia rejected Nkunda's proposed conditional surrender on grounds it should be unconditional. Clashes between Front of Nationalists and Integrationalists and army 100 km north of Bunia began 23 December; 19 killed, 14 government soldiers kidnapped. MONUC reported progress with rebel disarmament and reintegration in Ituri and South Kivu.
- "Kabila appoints DR Congo premier", BBC, 30 Dec. 2006.
 - "Congo militia chief defies call to free hostages", IRIN, 29 Dec. 2006.
 - "More militiamen, dissident soldiers surrender - MONUC", AlertNet, 21 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°42, *Securing Congo's Elections: Lessons from the Kinshasa Showdown*, 2 Oct. 2006.

- Rwanda French court issued arrest warrants for Kagame associates in connection with April 1994 plane crash that killed President Habyarimana and set off genocide. President Kagame expelled French Ambassador in response; claimed French military supported Hutu extremists who allegedly shot down plane. PM Makuza joined leaders from DR Congo, Kenya, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia to sign 15 December peace and development pact in Nairobi.
- "African leaders sign Great Lakes peace pact", AlertNet, 15 Dec. 2006.
 - "France pours scorn on Rwanda rape accusations", AlertNet, 14 Dec. 2006.

- ⚡ Uganda Prospects for peace improved as Government and LRA signed renewed cessation of hostilities agreement 16 December: new 16 January assembly deadline, truce through end February 2007, talks to resume in January. Independent monitors found both sides violated earlier truce. Alternative communication channels between LRA leadership and government saw President Museveni speak with LRA deputy leader Vincent Otti and Acholi leaders travel to DR Congo to meet leader Kony. Museveni also arranged meeting between Kony and his estranged mother who reportedly called on Kony to give up armed struggle. International Criminal Court Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo requested UN peacekeepers based in DRC and Sudan help arrest Kony, while Museveni reiterated possibility of recourse to Ugandan justice system. Former Mozambique President Joaquim Chissano appointed UN envoy for LRA-affected areas. Human Rights Watch reported UPDF used "indiscriminate and excessive force" to disarm Karamojong in northeast. UNICEF reported 150 civilians killed by fighting between UPDF and Karmojong and 1,000 civilians displaced since clashes began in May.
- "World court seeks UN help to arrest Ugandan rebel Kony", AlertNet, 23 Dec. 2006.
 - "Museveni offers LRA's Kony way out", *New Vision*, 19 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°41, *Peace in Northern Uganda?*, 13 Sept. 2006.

HORN OF AFRICA

- Chad Heavy fighting continued. Temporary capture of Abeche late November/early December by Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD) rebels marked largest rebel victory to date. Major battle reported 9 December between government and UFDD near eastern town of Biltine: rebels claimed 300 government troops and 50 rebels killed; government denied significant casualties. United Front for Democratic Change (FUC) leader Mahamat Nour Abdelkarim broke with other rebel groups to sign peace deal with President Idriss Deby 24 December. Pact to be implemented over 3 months, reportedly gives amnesty to FUC members, integration into military, facilitation of refugee return and gives other groups 1 month to sign on. Remaining rebel groups including UFDD dismissed talks and promised further attacks. Sudan-based Janjaweed militia blamed by government for attacking 2 villages in east 19 December; 40 killed including 20 civilians.
- "Darfur: Genocide without borders", *Independent*, 20 Dec. 2006.
 - "Janjaweed blamed for Chad attack", BBC, 19 Dec. 2006.
 - "Fierce battle erupts in east Chad", BBC, 9 Dec. 2006.

- ↳ Ethiopia Addis Ababa rejected Somalia's Council of Somali Islamic Courts (CSIC) 19 December deadline to withdraw all troops from Somalia; full-scale conflict followed (see Somalia).
 - ["Neighbouring countries must stay out of Somalia fighting, Annan says"](#), UN News, 27 Dec. 2006.
 - ["Ethiopia must quit Somalia before any talks-Islamist"](#), AlertNet, 14 Dec. 2006.

- ↳ Ethiopia/Eritrea In response to November rejection of boundary commission proposals and Eritrean "humiliating impediments" UNSG Annan outlined 4 proposals for UNMEE reduction to UNSC 15 December; Annan supports option of reducing peacekeepers to 1,700 personnel (from 2,300) but maintaining current posts while sides use boundary commission-endorsed 12 months to reach agreement on emplacement of boundary pillars. Conflict in Somalia exacerbated by Ethiopian troops acting in support of Transitional Federal Government and Eritrean supply of arms and training for Islamists (see Somalia).
 - ["Faced with intransigence, Annan suggests cuts to UN Ethiopian-Eritrean peace mission"](#), UN News, 27 Dec. 2006.
 - ["Eritrea-Ethiopia tension fuelling Somalia's crisis"](#), *East African*, 27 Dec. 2006.
 - ["Ethiopian 'defectors' in Eritrea"](#), BBC, 7 Dec. 2006.

- ↳ Somalia Full-scale conflict erupted between Council of Somali Islamic Courts (CSIC) and Ethiopian-backed Transitional Federal Government (TFG) after CSIC gave Ethiopia 7-day ultimatum 12 December to withdraw troops. Heavy fighting initially reported around southern Daynuunay region 19 December. Islamist advances against TFG/Ethiopian positions around Baidoa met by Ethiopian ground and air offensive. Ethiopia admitted launching "self-defensive measures" against CSIC 24 December. Ethiopian and TFG forces, with heavy artillery and air support, made rapid advance through CSIC-held territory to force Islamist retreat from Mogadishu 28 December after 6 months in control of capital. Order quickly collapsed as rival militias rushed to rearm ahead of TFG return and faction leaders returned to take control of their fiefdoms. CSIC grouped in southern stronghold of Kismaayo before retreating 31 December towards Kenyan border after further clashes with TFG/Ethiopian troops and reportedly after local clan elders withdrew support. CSIC leaders threatened to wage "long war" against Ethiopian presence. Fighting along 400km front left death toll estimated in hundreds; UN estimates 30,000 displaced.
 - ["Somalia's prime minister says Islamic fighters scattered and major fighting likely over"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 1 Jan. 2007.
 - ["Forced to go to war – Premier"](#), *Ethiopian Herald*, 27 Dec. 2006.
 - Comment by Matt Bryden (Crisis Group), ["Storm clouds over Somalia as rivals prepare for battle"](#), *Nation*, 8 Dec. 2006.
 - For most recent Crisis Group report, see Africa Report N°116, ["Can the Somali Crisis Be Contained?"](#), 10 Aug. 2006.

- ↳ Somaliland (Somalia) Somaliland troops reportedly joined Somali Transitional Federal Government in fight against Islamist CSIC in clashes around Gaalkacyo.
 - ["MP urges support for Somaliland"](#), *Globe & Mail*, 29 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°110, ["Somaliland: Time for African Union Leadership"](#), 23 May 2006.

- ↳ Sudan Humanitarian and security situation deteriorated in Darfur while negotiations continued over deployment of strengthened peacekeeping force. In 23 December letter to UNSG Annan, President Omar al-Bashir stated acceptance of AU/UN 3-phase plan as "viable framework for peaceful settlement" to conflict in Darfur and called for "immediate" implementation. First phase - deployment of new staff and equipment to AU force - began 28 December, to be followed by larger support package. Uncertainty remains over third phase with al-Bashir saying size and command of new force should be determined by both AU and UN, and actual deployment by Tripartite Committee (AU, UN, Khartoum) effectively giving Sudan a veto. Earlier UK PM Blair gave support for sanctions, and enforced no-fly zone, should Khartoum reject 3-phase plan. Aid agencies warned attacks by armed militias in Darfur had destabilised region further and forced evacuation of up to 400 staff in December. AU Ceasefire Commission reported re-emergence of "re-supplied and rearmed" Janjaweed. UNSG Annan appointed former Swedish foreign minister Jan Eliasson as special envoy; UN Human Rights Council agreed to send team to investigate abuses. Situation stabilised in Malakal early December after late November clashes between SPLA and army.
 - ["Darfur conflict engulfs towns, threatens aid operation"](#), AlertNet, 31 Dec. 2006.
 - ["Sudan has accepted plan leading to hybrid UN-African Union mission in Darfur: Annan"](#), UN News, 27 Dec. 2006.
 - ["AU reports Janjaweed come-back, identifies ceasefire breaches"](#), *Monitor*, 18 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°43, ["Getting the UN into Darfur"](#), 12 Oct. 2006.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

- ↳ Angola Government announced new delay in forthcoming elections, citing difficulties of voter registration process: legislative round now due 2008, presidential 2009. Limited voter registration began in November; due to end by June. Delay likely to increase tension with opposition parties, including UNITA, as dos Santos had in 2004 promised 2006 elections.
 - ["New delay for Angolan elections"](#), BBC News, 21 Dec. 2006.
 - ["Angola elections face 'difficult' path"](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 20 Dec. 2006.

- ↳ Comoros Islands President Ahmed Sambi deployed 19 troops to Anjouan island, sealed off air and sea arrivals and called for international support 20 December after internal security talks between CI's 3 islands fell apart over demands by Anjouan representatives for armed security forces.
 - ["Comoros asks world for help with security crisis"](#), AlertNet, 20 Dec. 2006.

- ↳ Madagascar Incumbent Marc Ravalomanana re-elected to presidency with 55% of peaceful 3 December vote. Alleged leader of November coup attempt, General Fidy, arrested.
 - ["Madagascar 'coup general' caught"](#), BBC, 13 Dec. 2006.

- ↳ Zimbabwe Much anticipated ZANU-PF party conference 15-17 December failed to fully approve motion to delay 2008 presidential elections by 2 years to coincide with previously scheduled legislative elections. Proponents publicly cited need to save money; delay would effectively extend President Mugabe's rule. Delegates referred measure to central

committee, where measure could stall amidst continuing succession battle within party. Opposition MDC and civic groups vowed to fight the motion but have little chance of parliament blocking passage if it passes party review.

- [“Mugabe’s party resists bid to extend his rule”](#), *Observer*, 31 Dec. 2006.
- [“Mugabe succession race turns into public brawl”](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 8 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°117, *Zimbabwe: An Opposition Strategy*, 24 Aug. 2006.

WEST AFRICA

➤ Burkina Faso 21 December standoff between police and army in Ouagadougou after death of soldier in brawl led to 5 deaths and cancellation of ECOWAS regional economic summit due to be held in conjunction with West African Economic and Monetary Union.

- [“Fragile democracy being tested”](#), IRIN, 27 Dec. 2006.
- [“Burkina police and army in truce”](#), BBC, 27 Dec. 2006.

➤ Côte d’Ivoire President Laurent Gbagbo presented own peace plan 19 December in response to UN Security Council’s 1 November resolution backing AU plan (and PM Konan Banny) to prolong transition period for further year. Gbagbo plan includes direct talks with Forces Nouvelles (FN), end to north-south buffer zone, new amnesty law and elections in July 2007. FN leader Guillaume Soro rejected Gbagbo plan in favour of UN plan 1 January. UNSC issued statement 21 December reiterating support for Banny, insisting he must be able to freely exercise his power. Army announced it foiled coup plot including plan to kill president, with help from “foreign military force”, implying French involvement. Violence prompted by Gbagbo’s November decree to reinstate officials suspended by PM and late November appointment of new directors of public media continued; 2 killed in demonstrations held 5-6 December in 5 southern towns. Curfew declared in western Duekoue region where inter-ethnic clashes claimed 6.

- [“Ivorian rebels snub Gbagbo bid to bypass peace plan”](#), AlertNet, 1 Jan. 2007.
- [“Ivory Coast rebels deny coup attempt”](#), AP, 13 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°40, *Côte d’Ivoire: Stepping Up the Pressure*, 7 Sept. 2006.

➤ Guinea Representatives of pro-Conté parties, opposition and administration reached consensus on conditions for organising legislative elections in June 2007. 4 draft laws on legal status of opposition political parties, creation and role of independent electoral commission, public funding of political parties, and changes to electoral code to be presented for adoption by parliament. EU resumed development aid after 3-year pause in response to political and economic reforms.

- [“EU resumes development aid to Guinea after reforms”](#), AlertNet, 25 Dec. 2006.
- [“Ellen, Kabbah, Conteh discuss security, economy”](#), *Analyst*, 15 Dec. 2006.

➤ Liberia UNSG Annan report cited serious flaws in police deployment and criminal justice system but welcomed progress in consolidating peace, promoting national reconciliation and stimulating economic recovery. Charles Taylor Jr, son of former President Taylor, indicted by U.S. Federal Grand Jury 6 December on charges of torture and conspiracy to torture, allegedly committed while head of repressive Anti-Terrorist Unit.

- [“Injustice reigns in Liberia, says Kofi Annan’s report, blames weak rule of law structures”](#), *Analyst*, 18 Dec. 2006.
- [“Speaking out about Taylor’s son”](#), IRIN, 13 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°107, *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*, 6 Apr. 2006.

➤ Nigeria Political feuding continued in courts with President Olusegun Obasanjo seeking ruling on whether Vice President Atiku Abubakar’s defection to opposition Action Congress party amounts to resignation as VP. Leading opposition parties, Action Congress and All Nigeria Peoples Party signed agreement 14 December to present single list of candidates in 2007 polls; but selected their presidential candidates, Abubakar and retired General Muhammadu Buhari, respectively. Ruling Peoples Democratic Party convention selected Umaru Musa Yar’Adua, little-known governor of Katsina state but Obasanjo’s hand-picked successor; Yar’Adua in turn chose Bayelsa state governor, Goodluck Jonathan, as running mate to pacify Niger Delta. Courts annulled controversial impeachments of Oyo and Anambra state governors 7 and 28 December. Violence continued in Niger Delta: campaign headquarters of Jonathan bombed, 4 foreign oil workers kidnapped 7 December, 3 guards killed in raid on Obagi pumping station 21 December. Commander of anti-riot arm of Nigeria Police Force killed by gang in Abuja 5 December.

- [“Nigerian president and VP take feud to court”](#), Reuters, 28 Dec. 2006.
- [“Will Nigeria’s old soldiers keep big men in power?”](#), *Business Day*, 27 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°118, *Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis*, 28 Sept. 2006; and Crisis Group Africa Report N°119, *Nigeria’s Faltering Federal Experiment*, 25 Oct. 2006.

➤ Senegal Despite November talks with Casamance elders aimed at peace deal with Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) rebels, sporadic violence near Ziguinchor killed 5, including Oumar Lamine Badji, leading member of ruling Democratic Party, 30 December. Violence raised concerns of divisions within MFDC leadership.

- [“Attackers slit throat of Senegal party official”](#), AlertNet, 31 Dec. 2006.
- [“Attacks in Casamance despite peace move”](#), IRIN, 5 Dec. 2006.

➤ Sierra Leone UNSG Annan’s 28 November report raised concern over prospect for peaceful 2007 elections. Report highlights culture of political intolerance and failure of main parties to articulate clear political platform. Parties accused ruling Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) of denying opposition fair election. UN Peacebuilding Commission announced plans to deliver initial contribution of \$25 million by January 2007 to ensure SL begins tackling short-term priorities for youth unemployment plus justice and security sector reforms. UNSC unanimously extended mandate of United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) for 1 year to July 2007 elections. 90% of SL debt, worth about \$1.6bn, to be cancelled in series of deals with creditors including World Bank.

- [“UN Peacebuilding Commission unveils plans for first grants to Burundi, Sierra Leone”](#), UN News, 13 Dec. 2006.
- [“Sierra Leone in debt relief deal”](#), BBC, 19 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 Dec. 2004.

Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

- Kazakhstan Presidential party Otan absorbed Civic and Agrarian parties, changing name to Nur-Otan. After merger party claimed 90% of parliament seats. Supreme Court upheld guilty verdicts of 10 men sentenced for February 2006 killing of opposition leader Altynbek Sarsenbayev; his family to appeal, alleging official cover-up. Riots in town of Shelek near Almaty after ethnic Kazakh and Uyghur youth clash. Authorities bulldozed houses in Hindu Hare Krishna commune near Almaty, saying land not registered. OSCE delayed to 2007 decision on Kazakhstan's bid to chair organisation in 2009.

 - "Ruling party gets even bigger", RFE/RL, 22 Dec. 2006.
 - "Kazak OSCE bid decision delayed", IWPR, 15 Dec. 2006.

- Kyrgyzstan Agreement between President Bakiyev and parliament over compromise November constitution short-lived, as sides resumed political wrangling. PM Feliks Kulov and cabinet offered resignation to Bakiyev 19 December in effort to break impasse between government and legislature by ushering in early parliamentary elections. Bakiyev accepted resignation but called on government to remain until new one formed. Parliament amended constitution to reinstate some presidential powers 30 December after Bakiyev threatened to dissolve assembly. Opposition "For Reforms!" movement threatened renewed street protests in January and February 2007 against changes to new constitution and entry into World Bank debt reduction program. U.S. guard shot dead Kyrgyz citizen at gates of U.S. Ganci airbase 6 December; parliament called on government to review 2001 base agreement after U.S. refused to lift soldier's immunity.

 - "Kyrgyz lawmakers amend new constitution", RFE/RL, 30 Dec. 2006.
 - "Kyrgyzstan Cabinet resigns office", BBC, 19 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°55, *Kyrgyzstan on the Edge*, 9 Nov. 2006.

- Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmonov made several changes to cabinet and other senior government posts to consolidate power after November electoral victory. Former opposition no longer represented in cabinet.

 - "Tajik president creates opposition-free government", RFE/RL, 6 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, *Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?*, 19 May 2004.

- Turkmenistan Authoritarian president Saparmurat Niyazov died suddenly 21 December of natural causes after 21 years of rule, creating uncertainty over country's future and fears of destabilising power struggle. Deputy PM and Health Minister Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov declared interim head of state. Exiled opposition figures signalled plans to return to country, but denied permission by interim government. Opposition figure Nurberdy Nurmammedov, unregistered presidential candidate of Union of Democratic Forces, reported missing since 23 December. National Council convened 26 December: set presidential election for 11 February 2007, endorsed 15-year residency requirement for candidates, effectively

excluding all exiled opposition leaders, and identified 6 candidates, including Berdimuhammedov.

- "Turkmen exile leader urges a vote", *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Dec. 2006.
 - "Turkmen lawmakers back caretaker as new president", AlertNet, 26 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°85, *Repression and Regression in Turkmenistan: A New International Strategy*, 4 Nov. 2004.
-
- Uzbekistan EU delegation visited 11-15 December to investigate May 2005 Andijon events, but only spent 4 hours in town. Meetings with civil society representatives cancelled due to time constraints. Rights activists elsewhere said authorities placed them under house arrest to block contact. Tashkent court sentenced 2 men to 7-9 years for suspected membership in Wahhabi movement; rights activists criticised trial.
 - "Cotton crackdown in Andijan", IWPR, 15 Dec. 2006.
 - "Uzbek rights campaigners under house arrest", RFE/RL, 14 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°54, *Uzbekistan: Europe's Sanctions Matter*, 6 Nov. 2006.

SOUTH ASIA

- Afghanistan Local support for NATO seemed increasingly in jeopardy after more reports of NATO attacks on civilians, including reports that British soldiers indiscriminately shot at bystanders to suicide bombing in Kandahar 3 December. In Kandahar speech 12 December, Karzai for first time claimed Pakistani official backing for Taliban as month saw spike in suicide attacks. Pakistan President Musharraf announced plans for fence and landmines planted along common border but Karzai dismissed as impractical. France announced withdrawal of its 250 special forces. ISAF renewed military push in Kandahar to flush out Taliban militants, while Taliban spokesman confirmed death of Akhtar Mohammad Osmani in U.S. airstrike 19 December, most senior Taliban leader killed since fall of Taliban regime in 2001.
 - "Dark days ahead for Kabul", *Guardian*, 20 Dec. 2006.
 - "Pakistan's support for militants threatens region, Karzai says", *New York Times*, 13 Dec. 2006.
 - "Taliban truce in district of Afghanistan sets off debate", *New York Times*, 2 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°123, *Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency: No Quick Fixes*, 2 Nov. 2006.
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- Bangladesh Continued uncertainty as violence escalated ahead of 22 January elections. Street violence rocked Dhaka and other parts of the country with at least 45 killed in 6 weeks of protests and series of strikes called by opposition alliance Awami League (AL) in protest of alleged bias of interim caretaker administration. President Iajuddin Ahmed deployed army 10 December to help quell violence. Prospects for functional all-party polls improved 24 December when AL stepped back from planned boycott after interim government agreed to scrap flawed voter list and send election commissioner SM Zakaria on leave. But AL leader Sheikh Hasina continued to demand ouster of Ahmed and promised further protests 7-8 January, threatening possibility of boycott renewal. AL also signed controversial agreement with radical Islamic party Khelafat Majlish party 24 December, saying it would legalise fatwas.

- [“Bangladesh steps into New Year amid political uncertainties”](#), *Hindu*, 31 Dec. 2006.
- [“Bangladesh parties in poll U-turn”](#), BBC, 24 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°121, [Bangladesh Today](#), 23 Oct. 2006.

➤ India (non-Kashmir) Leader of NSCN-IM Nagaland separatist movement arrived in Delhi 20 December for peace negotiations, but no major progress expected. PM Manmohan Singh said ready to restart peace talks with ULFA separatists on condition that it cut ties with ISI, while ULFA-suspected violence continued, including 2 blasts in Assam state 21 December.

- [“What ails Naga peace talks?”](#), *Telegraph* (Calcutta), 4 Dec. 2006.
- [“Ulfa in the grip of ISI, says Manmohan”](#), *Times of India*, 30 Nov. 2006.

➤ Kashmir Pakistan President Musharraf mooted plan for autonomous Kashmir in exchange for Indian concessions. Plan would see Pakistan give up territorial claim and referendum demand if India accepted granting region autonomy within existing territorial borders, joint phased military withdrawal allowing "soft border" with free movement across Line of Control, and "joint supervisory mechanism" to govern cross-border issues. Musharraf ruled out full independence. PM Singh responded indirectly with messages of peace, but Delhi appears reluctant to move forward without Pakistani efforts to halt cross-border terrorist attacks. U.S. President Bush signed law 18 December allowing U.S. nuclear sales to India; no sales allowed to Pakistan.

- [“Pak: Will give up Kashmir claim if four point formula accepted”](#), NDTV, 5 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°51, [India, Pakistan and Kashmir: Stabilising a Cold Peace](#), 15 June 2006.

➤ Nepal Interim constitution finalised by Maoists and Seven Party Alliance 16 December, depriving king of all state authority and making PM head of both state and government. Draft document not yet published; will take effect after UN arms monitors begin work. Government said it might take 2 months to fully assemble monitoring team. Cooperation with Maoists remained tenuous: after government appointed new ambassadors without consulting Maoists 19 December, leader Prachandra initially called for strike and issued 10-day ultimatum to publish constitution; later retracted after agreement with government. Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights harshly criticised Nepal Army for lack of cooperation in investigating 2004 torture and killing case.

- [“Nepal Maoists call nationwide strike over envoys”](#), AlertNet, 19 Dec. 2006.
- [“Nepal agrees interim constitution”](#), *Financial Times*, 17 Dec. 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°126, [Nepal's Peace Agreement: Making it Work](#), 15 December 2006. Nepal's comprehensive peace agreement offers the best chance for ending the conflict, but lasting peace still faces hurdles. The agreement broadly endorses the framework the seven-party alliance and the Maoists outlined before the toppling of King Gyanendra in April but the 1 December target for forming an interim government was missed. There are serious questions whether free and fair constituent assembly elections can take place by June 2007...



...Managing successful elections and delivering a stable, long-term settlement through the constituent assembly are vital to the agreement's success.

➤ Pakistan Supreme Court blocked for second time attempt by North West Frontier Province (NWFP) legislature to pass Hisba (accountability) law enforcing "Islamic morality". President Musharraf has both times petitioned court to reject law; NWFP government will defend it in January hearing. Islamabad announced plan to build fence and plant landmines along disputed Durand Line border with Afghanistan in effort to stem tide of militants launching cross-border attacks; Afghan President Karzai criticised plan as impractical.

- [“Pakistan plans to reinforce long Afghan border”](#), *New York Times*, 27 Dec. 2006.
- [“‘Taleban law’ blocked in Pakistan”](#), BBC, 15 Dec. 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°125, [Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants](#), 11 December 2006. Appeasement of Taliban sympathisers has resulted in a base in the Pashtun-majority Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that militants are using to stoke instability at home and in Afghanistan. President Musharraf has been reluctant to take more consequential action because his government depends upon support from radical religious groups. However, it needs to institute broad political and economic measures to curb extremism, beginning by integrating FATA into the Northwest Frontier Province. It should disarm militants and open FATA to the media and human rights monitors. Without real democratic change, extremism may take over the entire region.



➤ Sri Lanka Heavy fighting continued in east, displacing growing number of civilians. Army launched coordinated campaign against LTTE rebels near eastern port of Vaharai, seeking to seize wedge between LTTE strongholds in Batticaloa and Trincomalee. UN representative noted that indiscriminate fighting there by both sides violated "all fundamental rights" as attacks on civilians continued. Colombo stopped short of banning LTTE but reintroduced strict anti-terror measures dropped in 2002 peace talks, including detention without trial for up to 6 months and sharp curbs on press and assembly freedoms. Chief LTTE negotiator Anton Balasingham, perceived moderate with close links to rebel leader Prabhakaran, died of cancer 14 December in new blow to prospects for successful negotiation.

- [“Flush us out at your peril, Sri Lanka rebels warn army”](#), AlertNet, 18 Dec. 2006.
- [“Brain behind the Tigers' brawn”](#), BBC, 14 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°124, [Sri Lanka: The Failure of the Peace Process](#), 28 Nov. 2006.

NORTH EAST ASIA

➤ North Korea 6-Party Talks reconvened in Beijing 18-22 December after 13-month hiatus, but no concrete results. U.S. envoy Christopher Hill offered package of aid and security incentives in exchange for end to plutonium production, but North Korean envoy Kim Kye-gwan refused to discuss any steps towards nuclear dismantlement until U.S. dropped all financial sanctions. Talks expected to resume in early 2007.

- [“North Korea talks end fruitlessly”](#), *Financial Times*, 22 Dec. 2006.
- [“Talks between U.S. and North Korea hit obstacle”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 21 Dec. 2006.

- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°56, *North Korea's Nuclear Test: The Fallout*, 13 Nov. 2006.

- ↳ Taiwan Strait Beijing issued biennial defence white paper 29 December, calling for increase in military spending and citing Taiwan among major security threats. Report stated official PRC 2006 defence expenditure \$36bn. Chinese President Hu Jintao separately called for major upgrade in naval power. Taipei legislature voted for first time 29 December to refer \$192m in funding for U.S. weapons purchases for initial review after opposition agreed to stop blocking bill. Chinese New Year charter flights to mainland approved again for 2007.
 - "China warning on Taiwan 'threat'", BBC, 29 Dec. 2006.
 - "Youthful enthusiasm", *Economist*, 7 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°42, *China and Taiwan: Uneasy Détente*, 21 Sept. 2005.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

- ↳ Indonesia Surprise victory in 11 December Aceh gubernatorial elections for GAM leader Irwandi Yusuf, with 38% of vote. President Yudhoyono and other Jakarta officials accepted results. Constitutional Court struck down 2004 law on establishing Truth and Reconciliation Commission, criticised by victims groups and rights advocates for amnesty provisions and tying reparations to victims' formal exoneration of perpetrators. Supreme Court overturned terrorism conviction of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, former amir of Jemaah Islamiyah, 21 December after flimsy evidence presented by prosecutor. Free Papua Movement (OPM) rebels suspected in killing of 2 officers near Mulia 8 December.
 - "Irwandi named new Aceh governor", *Jakarta Post*, 30 Dec. 2006.
 - Comment by Sidney Jones (Crisis Group), "Priorities for a GAM-led government in Aceh", *Jakarta Post*, 29 Dec. 2006.
 - "The alternative to war", *Economist*, 13 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°57, *Aceh's Local Elections: The Role of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM)*, 29 Nov. 2006.
- ↳ Myanmar/Burma Junta minister Soe Tha warned UN Security Council (UNSC) against interference 17 December in apparent rebuke to U.S. interest in non-punitive resolution on Myanmar. Proposed U.S. resolution failed to gather sufficient momentum in December, but U.S. said will push for UNSC action in early 2007. Red Cross allowed to re-open 5 field offices the junta ordered shut in October, but ban on prison visits remains. India announced exploring joint military exercises with Myanmar after offer of military assistance in November.
 - "Burma junta demands UN respect", *Bangkok Post*, 18 Dec. 2006.
 - "India, Myanmar discuss possible joint army exercises", *International Herald Tribune*, 8 Dec. 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°58, *Myanmar: New Threats to Humanitarian Aid*, 8 December 2006. With growing signs of a humanitarian crisis in-the-making, the international community needs to transcend debates about the highly repressive political system. Recent restrictions on humanitarian agencies threaten efforts to prevent a humanitarian disaster that could shatter social stability. The aid community needs to counter further moves by the government to limit access to vulnerable populations and abuse humanitarian programs for political...



...gain. The support of donors, headquarters and critics is required to engage with the authorities in order to rebuild trust and refocus on the country's very real needs.

- ↳ Philippines December ASEAN summit in Cebu postponed to January 2007, reportedly amid fears of terrorist attack after botched series of raids on Abu Sayyaf strongholds end November. Government announced head of Abu Sayyaf Khaddafy Janjalani, country's most wanted man, may have been killed in September fighting in Jolo; DNA test pending. Talks with MILF rebels remained stalled. Lawmakers allied to President Arroyo called off special legislative session due to discuss switch to parliamentary system, postponement of May 2007 elections and end to term limits, after strong opposition by Catholic Bishops group.
 - "It takes two to cha-cha", *Economist*, 13 Dec. 2006.
 - "Philippine Congress postpones reform meet", *Financial Times*, 12 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°110, *Philippines Terrorism: The Role of Militant Islamic Converts*, 19 Dec. 2005.
- ↳ Thailand Possible new sign of instability as series of explosions in Bangkok 31 December killed 3. No group immediately claimed responsibility; PM Surayud quickly pointed blame at supporters of deposed PM Thaksin, but others saw link to southern separatist violence more likely. Despite continued surge in violence in south, PM Surayud resisted taking hard line in month, but said will review conciliatory approach if no results by March. Month saw further steps by Council on National Security (CNS) toward return to democratic rule. Selection process began for 100 members of Constitution Drafting Assembly, due to begin work in January; CNS retained ultimate control over selections.
 - "Thaksin supporters blamed for bombings", *Financial Times*, 1 Jan. 2007.
 - "Drafters will get free hand: Sonthi", *Nation*, 21 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°105, *Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution*, 18 Nov. 2005.
- ↳ Timor-Leste Low-level gang violence continued in Dili. Army rebel Alfredo Reinado, in hiding since August jailbreak, met armed forces chief Taur Matan Rauk in Dili 21 December for reconciliation talks before retreating to jungle hideout. New UN envoy Atul Khare arrived in country; pledged to make security sector reform his priority.
 - "Timor renegade holds talks with army chief", AlertNet, 21 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°120, *Resolving Timor-Leste's Crisis*, 10 Oct. 2006.

PACIFIC

- ↳ Fiji Military commander Frank Bainimarama deposed PM Laisenia Qarase in bloodless 5 December coup. Move came after months of escalating tension between 2 leaders. Army regime struggled to garner legitimacy after customary body Great Council of Chiefs proved reluctant to appoint new president to swear in regime; Bainimarama then banned Council from further meetings. Commonwealth announced Fiji's suspension 11 December, and Pacific Island states imposed sanctions.
 - "Fiji military in '50 year' threat", BBC, 14 Dec. 2006.
 - "Cloud coup-coup land", *Economist*, 7 Dec. 2006.

➤ Tonga Government extended state of emergency to mid-January 15 December. Over 700 reported arrested since 16 November riots.

- ["Security woes leads to Tonga's state of emergency extension"](#), Radio New Zealand, 15 Dec. 2006.



Europe

BALKANS

➤ Albania PM Berisha proposed local elections delay to 18 February after opposition Socialist Party announced boycott of January poll. Constitutional Court ruled parliamentary inquiry into Chief Prosecutor Theodhori Sollaku's conduct and alleged organised crime links unconstitutional.


- ["Albania's political climate blocking essential reforms, Council of Europe says"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 14 Dec. 2006.
- For most recent report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°153, ["Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?"](#), 25 Feb. 2004.

➤ Bosnia & Herzegovina EU agreed to reduce size of EU Stabilization Force in 2007, citing improved security conditions; final decision due February. After final round of technical talks on EU Stabilisation and Association Agreement 14 December, EU said deal would only be ratified once reforms delivered. Former tripartite presidency-member Dragan Covic released on bail after receiving 5-year sentence in November for abuse of powers. Federation and state-level governments still not formed.

- ["Holding Bosnian presidents accountable"](#), ISN, 21 Dec. 2006.
- ["EU foreign ministers in tentative agreement on major cuts to Bosnia peacekeeping force"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 11 Dec. 2006.
- For most recent Crisis Group report, see Europe Report N°164, ["Bosnia's Stalled Police Reform: No Progress, No EU"](#), 6 Sept. 2005.

➤ Kosovo Largest political force, Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), bitterly divided after acrimonious convention saw violence between supporters of Nexhat Daci and President Sejdiu. Sejdiu elected leader with 189 votes against 160, but claim by Sejdiu supporter's that his general council also approved challenged by Daci camp. President Sejdiu, in keeping with rules on presidency, suspended his party leadership 28 December; unclear who will succeed. Small-scale incidents in west, centre and south: masked gunmen set up road checkpoint in Gjakova region 4 December, railway serving train transporting Kosovo Serbs blown up near Vushtrri 8 December, bus carrying Serbs stoned near Ferizaj 9 December. 3 men, including senior adviser to Labour Ministry Naim Bazaj arrested after discovery of large arms cache in Drenica 20 December. Serbia's Kosovo coordinator Sanda Raskovic-Ivic maintained UN special envoy Martti Ahtisaari's draft solution should be followed by further negotiations. UN Security Council 13 December meeting saw UN SRSG Rucker appeal for no further delay on status; Russia criticised him for exceeding his mandate.

- ["Large weapons cache seized in Kosovo, officials arrested"](#), *Southeast European Times*, 22 Dec. 2006.
- ["LDK leadership fight endangers Kosovo government"](#), IWPR, 14 Dec. 2006.

Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°45,  ["Kosovo's Status: Difficult Months Ahead"](#), 20 December 2006. With Russia's position hardening and Serbia as obstinate as ever, EU unity is vital to keep the final status process on track. A botched process would have grave consequences. When UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari presents his proposals in January 2007, the international community must respond quickly with strong support so that this process is completed within the next 6 months. The precarious situation in Kosovo makes it essential that its elite, institutions and society use 2007 to move away from threats of crisis toward sustainable self-governance.

➤ Macedonia 4 main political parties met to discuss reform process 13 December. Parliament rejected Democratic Union for Integration motion to sack Education Minister Sulejman Rushiti on grounds his Tetovo university appointments were politicised. Around 100 former Albanian National Liberation Army members rallied in Tetovo, demanding authorities address their pension and aid status.

- ["Macedonian trial upcoming"](#), IWPR, 15 Dec. 2006.
- For most recent Crisis Group report, see Europe Briefing N°41, ["Macedonia: Wobbling toward Europe"](#), 12 Jan. 2006.

➤ Serbia Supreme Court overturned war crime conviction of 14 men for 1991 Vukovar massacre, ordering retrial: all 3 domestic convictions for war crimes have now been overturned. Former head of state security said 1999 killing of journalist Slavko Curuvija probably ordered by state. 4 Presevo Valley Albanian parties announced end to 10-year boycott of Serbian politics, with coalition for 21 January elections, but 2 later withdrew, citing presence of Serbian security forces in valley. NATO opened liaison office in Belgrade 18 December, week after Partnership for Peace program accession. Hague trial of Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj began in his absence; Seselj ended hunger strike 8 December.

- ["Serbia's special prosecutor: State likely behind 1999 killing of prominent journalist"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 8 Dec. 2006.
- ["Albanians end boycott in Serbia"](#), BBC, 6 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°44, ["Serbia's New Constitution: Democracy Going Backwards"](#), 8 Nov. 2006.

CAUCASUS

➤ Armenia Prominent Nagorno-Karabakh war veteran Zhirayr Sefilian and opposition Honor & Fatherland Party (HFP) figure Vartan Malkhasian arrested and charged with plotting to violently overthrow government during spring 2007 elections. Several opposition parties condemned arrests as politically motivated; HFP threatened armed resistance to further arrests.

- ["Authorities press coup charges against war veteran"](#), *Armenia Liberty*, 12 Dec. 2006.
- ["Climate of self-censorship"](#), IWPR, 7 Dec. 2006.

➤ Azerbaijan Largest TV and radio broadcaster ANS went back on air 12 December after 18-day ban by regulatory body for alleged violations of broadcasting rules. Regulators seemed to bow to international pressure, but warned station would have to bid for 2007 licence in January. Azadliq journalist Nicat Huseynov beaten by unknown assailants in Baku 25 December.

- ["Fragmented opposition ponders options"](#), RFE/RL, 19 Dec. 2006.

- [“Authorities in Azerbaijan lift ban on independent broadcaster”](#), Eurasia Insight, 11 Dec. 2006.
- For most recent Crisis Group report, see Europe Briefing N°40, [Azerbaijan’s 2005 Elections: Lost Opportunity](#), 21 Nov. 2005.

- Chechnya (Russia) Soldier killed after bomb hit Russian military vehicle outside Grozny 7 December. Another wounded 11 December by suspected militants in Shatoi. Russian court began hearing case brought by 40 villagers alleging abuses by Russian security forces during June 2005 raid on village of Borozdinovskaya. Russian state Duma confirmed postponement of trial-by-jury in Chechnya until 2010.
 - [“Court begins hearing unprecedented Chechen lawsuit”](#), RFE/RL, 18 Dec. 2006.
 - [“Separate attacks in troubled southern Russian provinces kill 4, wound 11”](#), AP, 8 Dec. 2006.

- North Caucasus (non-Chechnya) Following publication of UN humanitarian regional plan, Russian officials dismissed claims of lawlessness in region and condemned UN/NGO focus on those not in need of assistance. President Putin separately accused NGOs of anti-Russian bias and as operating as cover for foreign spies. Militant attacks on police and government officials continued: 3 police officers wounded in simultaneous shootings in Troitskaya and Nazran, Ingushetia, 7 December, and 2 officials killed in separate attacks in Untsukul, Dagestan, 2 and 19 December. Police killed 2 suspected militants in 25 December raids in Karachayev-Cherkessia. Authorities claimed 470 militants surrendered since July amnesty offer, due to expire 15 January 2007.
 - [“Inter-Agency transitional workplan for the North Caucasus 2007”](#), ReliefWeb, 12 Dec. 2006.
 - [“Aid groups shelter spies, Russia says”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 19 Dec. 2006.

- Georgia In South Ossetia, pro-Tbilisi “alternative” president Sanakoev inaugurated 1 December, appointing ministers to parallel government. In Abkhazia, 2 police killed in mine explosion 25 December and another found dead 26 December; separatist authorities alleged Tbilisi involvement. Around 40,000 people rallied in Sukhumi for international recognition 6 December, same day Russian parliament stated international community should note Abkhaz and South Ossetian independence aspirations. Russian troops handed over their Tbilisi military headquarters to Georgia 23 December ahead of agreed schedule.
 - [“Policeman found dead in breakaway Georgian region, 3rd death in 24 hours”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 26 Dec. 2006.
 - [“Russian troops quit Georgian HQ”](#), BBC, 25 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°178, [Georgia’s Armenian and Azeri Minorities](#), 22 Nov. 2006.

- Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) De facto authorities held constitutional referendum 10 December; turnout at 87% with 99% in favour of constitution. Azerbaijan dismissed poll as illegitimate; EU, OSCE also critical. Armenian President Kocharian warned no “active negotiations” between presidents until after spring 2007 elections in Armenia; FM Oskanian said negotiations to continue at ministerial level.
 - [“Karabakh defends new constitution”](#), IWPR, 14 Dec. 2006.
 - Comment by Sabine Frazier (Crisis Group), [“Nagorno-Karabakh: Between vote and reality”](#), OpenDemocracy.net, 14 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°167, [Nagorno-Karabakh: A Plan for Peace](#), 11 Oct. 2005.

EASTERN EUROPE

- Belarus Jailed opposition leader Alexander Kazulin ended 54-day hunger-strike 12 December. Around 20 pro-Kazulin demonstrators detained; Russia blocked U.S. proposal to discuss hunger-strike in UN Security Council. Parliament passed bill for prevention and combat of extremism; KGB said necessary ahead of “events” planned by opposition. U.S. Congress passed law for stronger sanctions and aid for opposition. EU said suspending preferential trade tariffs if no improvement in labour rights.
 - [“Belarus dissidents get foreign help”](#), BBC, 19 Dec. 2006.
 - [“Russia harshly criticizes United States for raising Belarus at U.N. Security Council”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 13 Dec. 2006.
- Moldova Transnistrian separatist authorities declared Igor Smirnov, de facto leader since 1991, winner of region’s 10 December ‘presidential elections’ with 82.4% of vote; election not recognised internationally. EU announced doubling of aid to Moldova, calling for more progress on rights and reform.
 - [“EU to double aid to Moldova over next 4 years”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 12 Dec. 2006.
 - [“Trans-Dniester re-elects leader”](#), BBC, 11 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°175, [Moldova’s Uncertain Future](#), 17 Aug. 2006.

- Ukraine Power struggle between President Yushchenko and PM Yanukovich continued to disrupt government work. Foreign Minister Tarasyuk, dismissed by parliament 1 December, reappointed by presidential decree and Kiev court decision 5 December, but ministers barred Tarasyuk from cabinet meetings. After initial veto, Yushchenko approved 2007 government budget; in turn, parliament accepted Yushchenko’s motion to dismiss security service chief Ihor Drzhchany. Around 700 anti-NATO protestors held rally in Crimean port Sevastopol; local Communist party set up unofficial “polling booths” in region for referendum on NATO membership 16 December; Central Election Commission announced petition calling for referendum on issue had sufficient signatures.
 - [“Ukrainian president says relations with PM worsening, calls for compromise”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 14 Dec. 2006.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

- Basque Country (Spain) Government suspended plans for dialogue with ETA after group claimed responsibility for 30 December bomb attack on Madrid Airport; 2 missing, 26 injured. Protest in Madrid demanded complete end to peace process. Earlier in month, government had refused to confirm or deny media reports of first round of direct talks.
 - [“Spanish PM suspends Eta dialogue”](#), BBC, 30 Dec. 2006.
 - [“ETA peace process in ‘preliminary’ phase”](#), CNN, 20 Dec. 2006.
- Cyprus Dispute over opening of Turkish ports to Republic of Cyprus traffic led to EU suspension of 8 of 35 EU accession negotiating chapters with Turkey (see Turkey). UN Security Council extended UNFICYP mission to June 2007 but urged sides to resume settlement talks. European Court of Human Rights 7 December ruling failed to resolve whether new Turkish Cypriot property compensation commission is adequate domestic recourse for Greek Cypriot claims: court ordered Turkey to pay claimant Myra Xenides Arestis

€885,000 but also noted new commission had, in principle, satisfied court requirements, signalling possible transfer of 1,360 applications to commission.

- [“Security Council calls on Greek and Turkish Cypriots to put aside mistrust and resume talks”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 15 Dec. 2006.
- [“Europe diary: Cypriot wounds”](#), BBC, 14 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°171, [The Cyprus Stalemate: What Next?](#), 8 Mar. 2006.

➡ Northern Ireland (UK) Sinn Fein executive voted to hold special party conference on whether to support police service (PSNI). Conference, expected in January, is crucial for any Sinn Fein compromise on policing. Earlier, 6-member cross-party Stormont sub-group tasked with breaking deadlock on issue by 3 January.

- [“Sinn Fein backs police conference”](#), BBC, 29 Dec. 2006.
- [“New group bids to resolve Ulster policing impasse”](#), *Guardian*, 8 Dec. 2006.

➡ Turkey In compromise between EU member states, EU suspended 8 of 35 accession negotiating chapters with Turkey over failure to open ports to Republic of Cyprus traffic. Move came after Finnish presidency failed attempt to broker deal over opening of Turkish ports to RoC in return for EU moves to end Turkish Cypriot isolation, and RoC rejected last-minute Turkish offer to open port and airport in return for direct traffic to Turkish Cypriot port and airport. Violence in south east continued as at least 4 soldiers and 2 civilians killed by mine explosions and soldier killed in bomb attack on helicopter in Bingol. Army said 5 rebels killed in clashes in south east 5 December.

- [“Down but not out, Turk generals warily eye polls”](#), AlertNet, 13 Dec. 2006.
- [“Turkey’s EU membership bid stalls”](#), BBC, 11 Dec. 2006.

Latin America / Caribbean

➡ Bolivia Political divisions deepened between President Evo Morales and pro-autonomy opposition and showed signs of fostering violence. Hundreds of thousands marched on capitals of 4 of Bolivia’s 9 departments 15 December, demanding greater respect for regional autonomy provisions passed in 2 July referendum and change in voting rules for Constituent Assembly to reflect original law establishing body. Santa Cruz saw largest protest, where 50 reported injured in clashes between protesters and government supporters, while raids on ruling MAS party headquarters and government buildings were recorded throughout month.

- [“Bolivians on march in east-west struggle”](#), *Financial Times*, 15 Dec. 2006.
- [“Morales the bountiful”](#), *Economist*, 13 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°18, [Bolivia’s Rocky Road to Reforms](#), 3 July 2006.

➡ Colombia Investigations into members of congress’ support of paramilitaries continued and accusations of President Uribe’s support in 90s examined. Salvatore Mancuso became first paramilitary leader to testify before special tribunal on paramilitary involvement in civilian deaths 19 December, despite reported death threats. 4 demobilised paramilitaries also due to testify assassinated. Army suffered further losses in

fighting with FARC: 17 killed in attack 1 December in Norte de Santander, and 15 killed in Meta province attack 24 December. After government signalled possible resumption of talks, FARC demanded troop withdrawal from Florida and Pradera, areas government deems arms and drug trafficking routes.

- [“Los paramilitares colombianos denuncian su exterminio”](#), *El País*, 30 Dec. 2006.
- [“Paramilitary ties implicate Colombia’s political elite”](#), *Washington Post*, 19 Dec. 2006.
- [“Colombia fighter gives testimony”](#), BBC, 19 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°11, [Tougher Challenges Ahead for Colombia’s Uribe](#), 20 Oct. 2006.

➡ Ecuador Quito recalled ambassador to Bogota after Colombia resumed spraying herbicide on coca crops near border.

- [“Un conflicto de 640 kilómetros”](#), *El País*, 20 Dec. 2006.

➡ Haiti 9 killed and up to 30 wounded in Cité Soleil clashes after UN launched government-approved anti-gang raid 22 December. Several violent incidents recorded around country on 3 December during local elections. UN launched anti-kidnapping operations in response to alarming November increase in child kidnappings. PM Alexis drew link between recent violence and criminals deported from U.S.; claimed Washington threatened to cut aid and revoke officials’ visas unless he accepted increase in deportees, denied by U.S. UN called for \$98 million to help stabilise country.

- [“At least nine killed in Haitian slum raid”](#), AlertNet, 22 Dec. 2006.
- [“U.S. lawmaker says deportees not fueling crime in Haiti”](#), AP, 11 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°12, [Haiti: Security and the Reintegration of the State](#), 30 Oct. 2006.

➡ Peru Lima placed southeastern province of Abancay under 30-day state of emergency 6 December after thousands protested governor’s transfer of funds.

- [“Perú declara el estado de excepción en una provincia tras los violentos enfrentamientos”](#), *El País*, 6 Dec. 2006.

➡ Venezuela Incumbent Hugo Chávez re-elected to presidency in landslide victory 3 December. Chávez claimed victory for “socialist project” but also pledged to reopen concrete dialogue with U.S. in early new year; move welcomed by U.S. ambassador.

- [“Venezuela y EE UU liman asperezas”](#), *El País*, 16 Dec. 2006.
- [“Chávez wins easily in Venezuela”](#), *New York Times*, 4 Dec. 2006.

Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

➡ Israel/Occupied Territories Amid extreme tension between Hamas and Fatah over formation of unity government, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas attempted to break deadlock with 17 December call for early elections. Hamas declared any new election would be “coup” attempt and unconstitutional. Ensuing clashes, seen as worst in decade, between armed factions of Hamas and Fatah left 17

dead before 19 December ceasefire. Assassinations and killings in Gaza included shooting deaths of 3 young sons of Gaza intelligence chief linked to Fatah and judge linked to Hamas. Israel announced plans for first new West Bank settlement since 1992 at Maskiot, northern Jordan valley; met with international criticism and came despite positive meeting between Olmert and Abbas 23 December where Olmert agreed to release \$100m of Palestinian funds. Olmert ordered "pinpoint" action against rockets launched from Gaza but insisted 26 November truce still holds. Israeli operations continued in West Bank: 2 Islamic Jihad militants killed 20 December; girl mistakenly killed in Tulkarm 19 December.

- "Israel approves new West Bank settlement", *International Herald Tribune*, 27 Dec. 2006.
- "Rival Palestinian forces withdraw from Gaza streets", AlertNet, 20 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°58, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: To Reach a Lasting Peace*, 5 October 2006; and Crisis Group Middle East Initiative, "Global Leaders Call for Action on Arab-Israeli Settlement", 4 Oct. 2006.

Lebanon Political crisis continued. Hizbollah supporters held mass protests throughout month to demand 1/3 of cabinet positions and early elections to reconstitute cabinet, while PM Fouad Siniora and his Cabinet continued rejecting Hizbollah demands. Maronite Christian leader General Michel Aoun gave public backing to Hizbollah in move seen as bid for presidency. Sides agreed to allow Arab League to mediate dispute: Secretary-General Amr Moussa held meetings with all political leaders in attempt to end political stand-off; reported progress but no breakthrough. 1 killed and several injured in sectarian violence throughout month. Police seized explosives and arrested 4 members of pro-Syrian Lebanese party, Syrian Social Nationalist Party, in northern Koura province 21 December.

- "Lebanon conflict overlaps with Mideast turmoil", AlertNet, 28 Dec. 2006.
- "Who's running Lebanon?", *Independent*, 15 Dec. 2006.

Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°20, *Lebanon at a Tripwire*, 21 December 2006. Lebanon is at risk of collapse unless domestic and international actors abandon their zero-sum struggle and seek compromise. Any viable solution must reflect a broad consensual deal: a joint majority/opposition commission to review and amend the international tribunal statutes to guarantee independence and non-politicisation; simultaneous parliamentary approval of those statutes, a unity government and a new electoral law; and early elections. Lebanon must also address domestic problems that encourage outside interference. Immediate U.S. re-engagement with Syria is required for sustainable peace.



Syria International delegations, including U.S. senators, visited Damascus urging greater Syrian role in helping to solve region's problems. Israeli PM Olmert rejected suggestion of bilateral negotiations with Damascus.

- "New contexts for Syria's peace call", *Gulf News*, 22 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°39, *Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria*, 12 Apr. 2005.

GULF

Bahrain Jawad Oraied appointed as country's first Shiite deputy PM, but main Shiite opposition group, Al-Wafiq, given only 1 cabinet position out of 24 despite winning close to half of parliamentary seats in November polls.

- "In Bahrain, democracy in action or just divide and rule?", *Daily Star*, 15 Dec. 2006.
- "Bahrain names Shia deputy premier", BBC, 12 Dec. 2006.

Iran UN Security Council voted unanimously 23 December to impose sanctions on Iran's continued uranium enrichment program. Resolution 1737 bans import and export of nuclear-related material, freezes assets of 10 companies and 12 individuals and threatens further non-military sanctions. Tehran rejected resolution and passed bill 27 December obliging government to review co-operation with IAEA. Tensions further increased as 2 Iranian diplomats detained 21 December by U.S. forces in Iraq on suspicion of planning attacks on Iraqi security forces, U.S. and UK increased naval presence in Persian Gulf; diplomats later released. In elections for Assembly of Experts and municipal councils, moderate conservatives and reformists beat conservative hardliners affiliated with President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad. Ahmadi-Nejad also faced first main public agitations against his presidency at Amir Kabir University in Tehran 11 December.

- "Iran to revise IAEA co-operation", BBC, 27 Dec. 2006.
- "Iran rejects a demagogue", *International Herald Tribune*, 20 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°51, *Iran: Is There a Way Out of the Nuclear Impasse?*, 23 Feb. 2006.

Iraq Former President Saddam Hussein executed 30 December. Sentence carried out after appeals court upheld death sentence for crimes against humanity in Dujail case. Execution's sectarian overtones threatened to further deepen ongoing civil war. U.S. forces suffered highest monthly death toll since November 2004 with 109, bringing total to 3,000 since March 2003. Reconciliation conference convened by PM Nouri al-Maliki 16-17 December but key actors such as supporters of radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, most insurgent groups and Iyad Allawi's secular alliance boycotted event. In reversal of U.S.'s ill-fated May 2003 dismantlement of army, al-Maliki announced senior officers of former army allowed to return to armed services or receive pension. Shiite leaders began talks in Najaf with prominent Shiite cleric, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, to seek approval for new governing coalition and persuade al-Sadr to rein in his Mehdi Army militia and rejoin political process. New U.S. Defence Sec. Robert Gates met al-Maliki for talks 21 December. Baker/Hamilton Iraq Study Group report released 6 December, highlighting need for new strategy based on regional diplomatic engagement, and strengthening internal governance and national army to enable substantial U.S. troop withdrawal by early 2008. U.S. President Bush convened senior advisers to discuss new strategy.

- "Bloody end of the year in Iraq", AP, 31 Dec. 2006.
- "Iraqi reconciliation conference fails to deliver", ISN, 21 Dec. 2006.
- "Top Shiite cleric seeks shift in Iraqi political power", *International Herald Tribune*, 20 Dec. 2006.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°60, *After Baker-Hamilton: What to Do in Iraq*, 19 December 2006. The rethinking of U.S. Iraq policy represented by the Baker-Hamilton report is an important start but insufficiently radical if Iraq's collapse and a regional war are to be avoided. A new multinational effort to achieve a new political compact between all relevant Iraqi players is essential. All Iraqi actors involved in the internecine violence must be brought to the negotiating table and pressed to accept compromises. That requires a concerted effort by all Iraq's neighbours and will only be possible if their interests are reflected in the final outcome.



- ↳ Saudi Arabia 2 security force members died in 7 December clashes with gunmen outside Jeddah prison. 136 Islamic militant suspects have been arrested since 12 September.
 - "Saudi police die in Jeddah clash", BBC, 7 Dec. 2006.
 - "Troubles in the House of Saud?", *Time*, 15 Dec. 2006.

NORTH AFRICA

- ↳ Algeria Bomb attack on buses carrying foreign workers of U.S.-Algerian oil company near Algiers killed 1, injured 9 on 12 December; Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) claimed responsibility.
 - "Algeria plays down Islamic militant attacks", AlertNet, 27 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°29, *Islamism, Violence and Reform in Algeria: Turning the Page*, 30 July 2004.
- ↳ Egypt Authorities stepped up clamp down on Muslim Brothers. Massive wave of arrests following release from prison of 2 leading members brought number detained since March to

over 1,000. 17 senior members, including deputy leader Khairat el-Shatir, and over 140 students detained after military/martial arts-style display at 10 December Al-Azhar University demonstration. Islamic press also targeted as 5 businessmen arrested, 4 Islamic publishing houses sealed and 20 employees detained 24 December. Officials reportedly brought fresh allegations, including defamation of the president, against former opposition presidential candidate Ayman Nour. President Mubarak asked parliament to amend constitution in 2007.

- "Pres. Mubarak says new laws in 2007 will improve democracy in Egypt", *International Herald Tribune*, 26 Dec. 2006.
- "Egypt cracks down on Brotherhood", BBC, 14 Dec. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°46, *Reforming Egypt: In Search of a Strategy*, 4 Oct. 2005.

- ↳ Mauritania Second round of legislative and municipal elections held 3 December. No party gained overall majority: parties opposed to ousted former President Sid'Ahmed Ould Taya won 41 seats, while independents, including sympathisers of former president, won 39 seats.
 - "No majority after Mauritania poll", BBC News, 5 Dec. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°53, *Political Transition in Mauritania: Results and Prospects*, 24 Apr. 2006.

- ↳ Western Sahara Moroccan advisory council issued plan for Western Saharan autonomy, rejecting possibility of independence.
 - "Activists say Moroccan police in Western Sahara attack human rights demonstrators", *International Herald Tribune*, 10 Dec. 2006.
 - "Morocco body drafts W. Sahara autonomy plan", Reuters, 6 Dec. 2006.

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Richard Holbrooke, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, 2 August 2005

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