

1 October 2007, N°50

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 some 130 staff members across five continents, who already report on nearly 60 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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October 2007 Watchlist



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Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

↓ Burundi Insecurity increased as rebel group Palipehutu-FNL refused to resume dialogue with government and internal FNL fighting killed 22. Group accused South African mediator Charles Nqakula of pro-government bias 9 September and boycotted 16 September Dar es Salaam talks. FNL also clamped down on "deserters" in Bujumbura 2, 4 September and in Bubanza province 25 September: rebels allied with leader Agathon Rwaswa battled factions opposed to July withdrawal from ceasefire agreement. UN Peacebuilding Commission urged FNL to resume talks in 19 September report. AU set 31 December deadline for ceasefire implementation.

- "Burundi: ministerial cabinet amends disarmament project", *Burundi Réalités*, 24 Sept. 2007.
- "BURUNDI: Rebel activity displaces hundreds in Bubanza", IRIN, 10 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°131, *Burundi: Finalising Peace with the FNL*, 28 Aug. 2007.

↓ Central African Republic UN Security Council approved UN/EU force to provide security for refugees in CAR/Chad border areas 25 September. 300 UN police (MINURCAT) in Chad to be supported by up to 4,000 mainly French EU troops: not more than 200 in north east CAR (see Chad). Government forces killed 9 gunmen near Chadian border 14 September in operation targeting banditry. Human Rights Watch condemned atrocities by military since beginning of conflict in 2005, with specific mention of President François Bozize's personal guard.

- "France takes the lead on new UN-EU peacekeeping mission", IRIN, 26 Sept. 2007.
- "Central Africa army kills 9 gunmen after attack", Reuters, 14 Sept. 2007.
- "Tens of thousands uprooted by violence in northern Central African Republic", UN News, 14 Sept. 2007.

↓ Democratic Republic of Congo Fighting escalated in North Kivu between insurgents under Gen. Laurent Nkunda and government troops with support from Mai Mai militia and FDLR elements. Government used helicopter gunship 4 September "killing 80"; MONUC airlifted government troops to conflict zone. Truce called 6 September following MONUC mediation; broken 24 September: President Joseph Kabila gave Nkunda troops 21-day ultimatum 21 September to disarm and accept integration without negotiation or exceptions. 15-17 September meeting of Tripartite Plus Joint Commission called for increased MONUC mandate against "negative elements" in east. MONUC report accused government forces of human rights abuses, denounced culture of impunity. Lake Albert clashes killed 6 after Ugandan soldiers reportedly fired on Congolese vessel 24 September: tensions high despite 8 September accord on joint oil exploration and troop withdrawal from region.

- "Army calls on rebels to integrate", IRIN, 28 Sept. 2007.
- "Rebel 'breaks' DR Congo ceasefire", BBC, 24 Sept. 2007.
- "Will it blow up all over again?", *Economist*, 6 Sept. 2007.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°128, *Congo: Consolidating the Peace*, 5 July 2007.

↪ Republic of Congo Government forces and ex-Ninja rebels clashed when leader Frederic Bitsangou, due to begin role in charge of promotion of peace and post-conflict reconstruction, failed to appear in Brazzaville to fill post 10 September. Negotiations between Bitsangou and government continued despite unconfirmed reports of fatalities in clash.

- "Despite gunbattle, Republic of Congo wants ex-rebel leader to take up ministerial post", AP, 11 Sept. 2007.
- "Ninja return ends in Congo chaos", BBC, 11 Sept. 2007.

↪ Rwanda UN accused Kigali of arming rebel faction under Gen. Laurent Nkunda in neighbouring DRC. Government denied accusations, but President Kagame said Nkunda had "legitimate" grievances. FM Charles Murigande expressed Rwandan willingness to fight FDLR rebels in DRC; said any action would take place with Congolese agreement. Rwandan, French FMs met in New York 24 September: first since 2006.

- "Thaw in Franco-Rwandan relations", BBC, 24 Sept. 2007.
- "Rwanda blames DR Congo for violence", Al Jazeera, 20 Sept. 2007.
- "Rwanda in thinly veiled threat to send troops back into Congo", *Guardian*, 17 Sept. 2007.

↪ Uganda Juba talks between government and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) still on hold after July recess. LRA presumed hiding in north east DRC. Presidents of Uganda, DRC signed 8 September agreement guaranteeing cooperation to eradicate "negative forces", including LRA, by January 2008. LRA leaders denounced accord 12 September; threatened any attack would be "declaration of war". Uganda said LRA should no longer be in DRC territory under ceasefire agreement; LRA second-in-command Vincent Otti said fighters were in southern Sudan. MONUC announced willingness to aid any action to remove armed groups from east DRC 16 September. Lake Albert clashes between DRC, Ugandan troops killed 6, 24 September (see DRC).

- "Uganda: UN to help flush out LRA rebels", *New Vision*, 16 Sept. 2007.
- "Uganda says LRA rebels should have quit Congo", Reuters, 13 Sept. 2007.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°46, *Northern Uganda Peace Process: The Need to Maintain Momentum*, 14 September 2007. The international community must increase leverage to advance the Juba peace process. If a final deal is to be concluded by year's end, more pressure is necessary to create incentives for progress and disincentives for undermining a negotiated settlement. A two-track strategy is needed: negotiating away the LRA security threat and dealing with long-term redevelopment in northern Uganda.



HORN OF AFRICA

↪ Chad UN Security Council endorsed significant new UN/EU mission for Chad and CAR 25 September. "Multi-dimensional presence" to consist of 300 UN police (MINURCAT), primarily to train Chadian gendarmes, and EU force of up to 4,000 for protection. EU Council approved force 13 September: troops to be predominantly French – concerns raised over reluctance of other countries to contribute. Deployment not expected before

November. UNSG Ban Ki-moon met President Déby 8 September to discuss mission plans and seek direct support from N'Djamena for October Darfur peace talks in Libya. Preparatory meetings in N'Djamena to coordinate Darfur rebel positions postponed. Heavy rains in east caused damage in camps. Talks between Déby and armed opposition remained stalled.

- ["UN endorses sending peace force to Chad, CentrAfrica"](#), AFP, 25 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°111, [Chad: Back towards War?](#), 1 June 2006.

- ➡ Ethiopia Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) accused Ethiopian government of punishing civilians for rebel activity in troubled Ogaden region and alleged attempted genocide. Addis Ababa denied charge. UN 19 September report called for independent probe into accounts of serious human rights violations. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported humanitarian crisis in region: government denied claims MSF being blocked from working there. Authorities reportedly defused 2 unexploded bombs in Addis Ababa 15 September, arrested 3 suspects.
- ["UN calls for rights probe in Ethiopia's Ogaden"](#), Reuters, 20 Sept. 2007.
 - ["Ethiopian rebels accuse government of trying to commit genocide"](#), AP, 13 Sept. 2007.

- ➡ Ethiopia/Eritrea Risk increased of border dispute returning to full-fledged conflict. Ethiopian FM Seyoum Mesfin sent 25 September letter to Eritrea accusing it of breaching 2000 Algiers Agreement that ended 2-year war. Eritrea rejected claim as "irrelevant". Talks in The Hague broke down 8 September: Addis Ababa continued to argue for revision of 2002 UN ruling granting town of Badme to Eritrea; Asmara insists ruling is binding and promised to fulfil all requirements of UN boundary commission – including lifting restriction on UN peacekeepers and withdrawing its troops from buffer zone – if Ethiopia honours 2002 agreement. According to commission, 2002 border will be final if no breakthrough by November. U.S. Assistant Sec. State Jendayi Frazer warned 8 September U.S. to consider naming Eritrea state sponsor of terrorism, citing support for Somali Islamists.
- ["Risk grows of Horn of Africa conflict"](#), *Financial Times*, 26 Sept. 2007.
 - ["Eritrea: victim or newest rogue state?"](#), *Guardian*, 21 Sept. 2007.

- ➡ Somalia Violence continued in Mogadishu as Islamist-dominated opposition held conference in Asmara 6-13 September. Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) formed, with Islamic Courts Union leader, Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, elected chair; though divisions between Islamists and ex-MPs exist. Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki pledged support 14 September. Alliance gave 2-week ultimatum for Ethiopian troops to withdraw and said would target any on Somali soil. In symbol of Arab support, Saudi King Abdullah oversaw 16 September Jeddah signing of accord agreed at August National Reconciliation Conference in Mogadishu between several Somali factions and Transitional Federal Government (TFG) PM Gedi and President Yusuf called for Arab-African UN-monitored force to replace foreign troops supporting TFG. Regular clashes in Mogadishu in month: 7 killed first night of Ramadan, when curfew lifted for first time since June. Government security forces raided independent

Radio Shabelle compound 15 September. Unknown assailants killed local employee of UN World Health Organization 11 September in Galgadud, central Somalia. New UN SRSG, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, appointed 12 September; in first trip to Mogadishu 22 September, called humanitarian and human rights situation "worst on the continent".

- ["Somali violence amid sacking row"](#), BBC, 24 Sept. 2007.
- ["UN says Somali govt won't repeat media raid"](#), Reuters, 22 Sept. 2007.
- ["Somali leaders want Arab, African peacekeepers"](#), Reuters, 17 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°45, [Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead](#), 26 Jan. 2007.

- ➡ Somaliland (Somalia) Militias loyal to Somaliland and Puntland administrations clashed in contested border area 16-17 September, 5 reported killed. Clashes allegedly triggered by defection of Puntland militias to Somaliland. Further clashes reported 24 September and residents fled Las Anod town as pro-Somaliland militias arrived end month.

- ["Tensions rise in Northern Somalia"](#), AP, 29 Sept. 2007.
- ["Families flee violence in Sool region"](#), IRIN, 18 Sept. 2007.

- ➡ Sudan Situation deteriorated on both north/south and Darfur fronts. Serious setback of Darfur peace process possible due to 29 September attack on AMIS base at Haskanita: 10 peacekeepers killed, 10 wounded, dozens reported missing; vehicles, weapons looted. Haskanita village earlier attacked by government forces mid-month. Non- (DPA) signatories, Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) Unity faction and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) splinter accused of attack, no one claimed responsibility. Long-awaited negotiations between Khartoum and rebels due 27 October in Libya under AU/UN mediation in what is still seen as rare opportunity for progress, but prospects undermined by fighting between GoS and rebel groups, 29 September attack and divisions between rebel groups: Abdel Wahid continued to refuse to attend talks; JEM refused ceasefire before final agreement; SLA faction leader Ahmed Abdelshaafie asked for delay to better prepare. 2 rebel leaders also called for possible self-determination for Darfur. JEM and elements of Misseriya launched joint attack in Northern Kordofan earlier in month. DPKO planning for UNAMID deployment continued despite Khartoum's refusal of night flights and airstrip repairs. AU and Sudan insist on all-African force but UN claims different expertise/assets required. Relations between NCP and SPLM also worsened, pushing fragile CPA even closer to collapse. Incidents included temporary siege by government forces of SPLA contingent in Muglad; escalated war rhetoric between political leadership; and raids on 3 SPLM offices by security services in Khartoum. UNSG Ban Ki-moon focused on Darfur, fragile CPA during 4-day visit; appointed Ashraf Qazi new UNMIS SRSG 11 September.

- ["Aid officials fear Darfur raid may affect peacekeeping"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 1 Oct. 2007.
- ["UN will be 'vigilant' over Sudan's compliance on Darfur: Ban"](#), AFP, 20 Sept. 2007.
- ["Sudan in danger of reverting to north-south war"](#), Reuters, 13 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°130, [A Strategy for Comprehensive Peace in Sudan](#), 26 July 2007.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Comoros Islands Standoff between central government and renegade Anjouan island continued, as former insisted island hold new elections. AU ministers meeting in Cape Town 18 September threatened sanctions on Anjouan government, but none yet announced.

■ [“Comoros minister says AU members back rebel sanctions”](#), Reuters, 19 Sept. 2007.

Zimbabwe Parliament unanimously adopted constitutional amendments 20 September giving Mugabe role in choosing successor. Move followed surprise deal with opposition MDC to accept bill after limited government concessions; reached as Pretoria-mediated talks between ZANU-PF and MDC continued. Law passed 26 September will force foreign firms to sell majority stake to indigenous blacks; MDC boycotted parliament in protest. Vocal regime critic Bulawayo Archbishop Pius Ncube resigned 11 September over adultery scandal, later claimed charges were ploy by state.

■ [“Zimbabwe MPs back takeover of white firms”](#), *Guardian*, 28 Sept. 2007.

■ [“Change to constitution could let Mugabe pick successor”](#), *Guardian*, 19 Sept. 2007.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°132, [Zimbabwe: A Regional Solution?](#), 18



September 2007. The international community must support the SADC initiative to save Zimbabwe from complete collapse and prevent the destabilisation of southern Africa. SADC should extend an aid package and ask the West to lift sanctions if ZANU-PF cooperates fully and implements reforms that will allow free and fair elections in 2008. SADC should also enlist a panel of retired African presidents to help convince President Robert Mugabe to retire in 2008. The wider international community should prepare to support Zimbabwe's recovery if the mediation succeeds, but be ready to apply tougher sanctions if it collapses.

WEST AFRICA

Côte d'Ivoire National Election Commission said presidential elections may need to be postponed until October 2008 due to slow voter registration. Move followed August declaration by President Laurent Gbagbo country could vote by end 2007. Mobile courts began issuing replacement birth certificates to undocumented residents 25 September. Former President and opposition leader Henri Konan Bedie held peaceful rally 23 September. 10 people close to exiled former rebel leader “IB” Ibrahim Coulibaly reportedly arrested 19 September, accused of planning to destabilise PM Soro's Forces Nouvelles.

■ [“Ivory Coast restarts identity card program in step toward elections”](#), AP, 25 Sept. 2007.

■ [“No war, no peace five years after rebellion”](#), IRIN, 19 Sept. 2007.

■ For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°127, [Côte d'Ivoire: Can the Ouagadougou Agreement Bring Peace](#), 27 June 2006.

Guinea Government and political parties met 6 September to finalise details of new electoral commission, CENI. Entity to comprise all political parties, representatives of civil society and presidential nominees. Parliamentary elections due December

likely to be postponed to March because of delays in establishment of CENI and need for revision of electoral lists.

■ [“Vers les élections législatives: Revue à mis parcours du projet d'appui”](#), *Le Diplomate*, 16 Sept. 2007.

■ For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°121, [Guinea: Change or Chaos](#), 14 Feb. 2007.

Liberia Stability further consolidated. UN Security Council extended UNMIL mandate 1 year; will reduce troop numbers by 5,000, police by 500 over 3 years. Drawdown follows 8 August UNSG Ban Ki-moon's report citing security improvements. Demobilised soldiers built roadblocks 18 September in dispute over unpaid benefits; crowds dispersed by UNMIL forces and Liberian police. 6 further arrests over alleged coup plot, only 2 charged. Case appears increasingly thin; state witness alleged torture. Retd. Gen. Charles Julu and former Speaker of the House George Koukou among those awaiting trial. First diamonds exported since April lifting of UN ban, 6 September.

■ [“Liberia still faces challenges in promoting human rights, says UN expert”](#), UN News, 27 Sept. 2007.

■ [“Liberia: striking demobilized officers on rampage again, attempted road block”](#), *Analyst*, 18 Sept. 2007.

■ Comment by Carolyn Norris and Mark L. Schneider (Crisis Group), [“Liberia's small steps on reform”](#), *Boston Globe*, 13 Sept. 2007.

■ For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°107, [Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System](#), 6 Apr. 2006.

Mali Unrest continued in remote north as Tuareg splinter group led by Ibrahima Bahanga launched further attacks after short-lived truce. Rebels fired on U.S. supply plane for Malian military 12 September; reportedly laid siege to remote Malian base at Tin-Zaouantene 14 September; and ambushed government troops 16 September, killing 1. Truce called 18 September after intervention by former Tuareg rebel commander Iyad Ag Ghaly. Military hostages held by rebels freed in deal. International representatives issued statement 10 September emphasising peace process initiated through July 2006 Algiers Accord and March 2007 Kidal Forum.

■ [“Mali's Tuareg rebels agree truce”](#), BBC, 19 Sept. 2007.

■ [“Western diplomats warn about ‘deterioration’ in north”](#), IRIN, 11 Sept. 2007.

Niger Situation eased slightly after Nigerien Movement for Justice (MNJ) announced Ramadan truce. Government accused of using state of emergency to arrest critics. MNJ claimed government landmine killed 2 near Iférouane 2 September. MNJ had reportedly mined approaches to the town, cutting it off for 2 months. Tuareg-led rebels released 14 government soldiers to Libyan authorities 17 September in apparent Ramadan peace gesture mediated by Libyan leader Col. Gaddafi, who has been accused of supplying weapons to rebels.

■ [“Dozens arrested in north as critics targeted”](#), IRIN, 18 Sept. 2007.

■ [“A radioactive rebellion”](#), *Economist*, 13 Sept. 2007.

Nigeria Some results from April presidential elections still under review, including victory of Senate President David Mark, though challenge to President Yar'Adua's victory is faltering. ANPP accepted Yar'Adua's offer to participate in government of national unity; formally withdrew challenge, though party's candidate, Alhaji Muhammadu Buhari,

maintains his. MEND announced end to ceasefire 24 September after talks with government failed: response to arrest of leader, Henry Okah, in Angola, they claim orchestrated by Nigerian authorities. Gunmen claiming to be members of MEND kidnapped 11 members of ruling party in southern Ondo state 10 September, to protest against not receiving compensation for "helping the party rig the state governorship April elections". PDP denied agreement with group; 2 hostages released 12 September. Large army presence remained on streets of Port Harcourt. Fighting moved to surrounding districts, where clashes involving rival gangs and government troops continued.

- "Nigerian militants call off truce", BBC, 24 Sept. 2007.
- "N'delta crisis - FG restates commitment to early resolution", *This Day*, 21 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°126, *Nigeria: Failed Elections, Failing State?*, 30 May 2007.

Sierra Leone Opposition All People's Congress leader Ernest Bai Koroma sworn in as president 18 September, after winning 54.6% in run-off against Vice-President Solomon Berewa of ruling People's Party. National Electoral Commission concluded poll valid, despite limited unrest and fraud allegations, successfully completing first elections since 2005 departure of UN peacekeepers. Koroma pledged security for ousted government.

- "Weapons deadline in Sierra Leone", BBC, 27 Sept. 2007.
- Comment by Carolyn Norris (Crisis Group), "A Time for Cautious Optimism", *International Herald Tribune*, 13 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°129, *Sierra Leone: The Election Opportunity*, 12 July 2007.

Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

Kazakhstan New parliament, made up exclusively of presidential Nur Otan party members, unanimously re-endorsed PM Karim Masimov 2 September. President Nazarbaev told assembly country in new phase of democratic development 3 September. Visiting OSCE delegation members expressed concerns over implications of mono-party chamber; decision on Astana's OSCE chairmanship bid due November. Writer Nurlan Alimbekov reportedly underwent psychiatric evaluation in detention after August arrest by National Security Committee for emails allegedly slurring president.

- "OSCE remains divided over Kazakhstan's chairmanship bid", *Eurasianet*, 24 Sept. 2007.
- "Flawed polls enter equation over OSCE bid", RFE/RL, 4 Sept. 2007.

Kyrgyzstan Constitutional Court rejected November-December 2006 constitutional amendments, reinstating 2003 constitution and stipulating referendum required. Amid uncertainty over implications for all 2007 government appointments and parliament vote of no confidence against court, President Bakiev called referendum for 21 October. Parliamentary commission into 2003 shooting of protestors in Aksy called for President Bakiev and Supreme Court

chairman Osmonov to be stripped of immunity to face charges for involvement in killings alongside former president Akaev.

- "Court ruling restores 2003 constitution", RFE/RL, 17 Sept. 2007.
- "Kyrgyz president implicated in Aksy killings", RFE/RL, 14 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°55, *Kyrgyzstan on the Edge*, 9 Nov. 2006.

Turkmenistan Official commission to monitor human rights, meeting first time, drafted national human rights program 17 September. President Berdymukhammedov announced Ramadan amnesty for over 9,000 prisoners; during U.S. visit rejected suggestions of major human rights or press freedom violations.

- "President says press, NGOs operate freely", RFE/RL, 25 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°60, *Turkmenistan after Niyazov*, 12 Feb. 2007.

Uzbekistan Central Election Commission set presidential election for 23 December; several independents announced plans to run, but protested harassment and candidacy rules requiring personal details of supporters. Unclear whether President Karimov will seek further term despite ineligibility. Independent theatre director Mark Weil killed by unknown assailants 7 September. Unrest over rising prices in Ferghana valley saw small-scale protests in Otiaryq, Andijon and Namangan. EU decision on continuing sanctions due October.

- Comment by Alain Delétroz (Crisis Group), "Death of a director", *International Herald Tribune*, 21 Sept. 2007.
- "Presidential hopefuls emerge as election date announced", RFE/RL, 18 Sept. 2007.
- "Uzbekistan employing divide-and-rule tactics to keep radical Islam in check", *Eurasianet*, 17 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°67, *Uzbekistan: Stagnation and Uncertainty*, 22 Aug. 2007.

SOUTH ASIA

Afghanistan Heavy fighting continued in southern province Helmand while Taliban threatened new offensive there. 23 September high-level meeting in New York with 18 countries focused on rise in poppy cultivation and drug economy. President Hamid Karzai also spoke of dialogue with Taliban not allied to al-Qaeda; Taliban said withdrawal of all foreign troops a precondition for talks. In Ghazni U.S. forces claimed to have killed Taliban commander behind kidnapping of 23 Koreans in July; provincial governor dismissed over handling of incident. ISAF chief of planning said Afghan National Army (ANA) would reach goal of 70,000 troops early 2009. 29 September attack on ANA bus in Kabul killed 30. Government reported 500 Afghan National Police killed in 5 months.

- "Afghan president offers to meet Taliban leader", *LA Times*, 30 Sept. 2007.
- "Afghan hears foreign concerns on drugs and political dialogue", *New York Times*, 24 Sept. 2007.
- "Suicide attacks in Afghanistan (2001-2007)", UNAMA, 9 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°138, *Reforming Afghanistan's Police*, 30 Aug. 2007.

➡ Bangladesh 8-month ban on politics since January suspension of elections eased 11 September, with parties allowed to reopen offices but not meet publicly. Interim government promised return to elected government by end 2008. Former PM Khaleda Zia arrested 3 September on corruption charges; tens of other former officials arrested in ongoing "corruption crackdown". Charges also filed 26 September on Zia's son, Tarique Rahman and 2 family members.

- "Court issues arrest warrant against 23", *Daily Star*, 26 Sept. 2007.
- "The minus-two solution", *Economist*, 6 Sept. 2007.
- "Bangladesh parties reopen offices", BBC, 11 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°121, *Bangladesh Today*, 23 Oct. 2006.

➡ India (non-Kashmir) Fighting between Kuki Liberation Army and Nagaland separatists in Manipur killed 15 early in month, raising fears of broader conflict. Maoist violence continued in Bihar and Jharkhand, while new ULFA separatist attacks in northern Assam 30 September killed 6.

- "Six dead in Assam 'rebel attacks'", BBC, 1 Oct. 2007.
- "Killings spark ethnic tension in India's northeast", Reuters, 6 Sept. 2007.

➡ Kashmir Pakistan registered formal disapproval 17 September after India announced it would lead tourist expeditions on disputed Siachen glacier.

- "Pakistan angry at Kashmir tourism", BBC, 17 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°51, *India, Pakistan and Kashmir: Stabilising a Cold Peace*, 15 June 2006.

➡ Maldives Bomb exploded outside Malé mosque 29 September, wounding 12. 10 arrested but no clear motive.

- "Tranquillity of Maldives shattered by bomb blast", *Guardian*, 30 Sept. 2007.

➡ Nepal Tension rose in lead-up to 22 November Constituent Assembly elections. 4 Maoist ministers resigned from cabinet 18 September after PM Koirala rejected demands for pre-poll republic declaration and change to electoral system. Negotiations on new compromise continue; 25 September reunification of Nepali Congress Party and its adoption of federal republican agenda may make grounds for deal. 3 killed and over 20 wounded in 3 simultaneous bomb blasts in Kathmandu 2 September; Madhesi groups seeking Tarai autonomy claimed responsibility. Communal clashes in Kapilvastu district on Indian border 16 September killed over 20.

- "Flying the revolutionary flag again", *Economist*, 20 Sept. 2007.
- "Arrests after Nepal bomb blasts", BBC, 5 Sept. 2007.
- For background, Crisis Group Asia Report N°136, *Nepal's Troubled Tarai Region*, 9 July 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°68, *Nepal's Fragile Peace Process*, 28 September 2007. The Maoist walk-out from government means compromise, confidence-building and better performance from the mainstream parties are required to keep the peace process moving. The country must rebuild cross-party consensus to implement the 2006 peace agreement and hold free and fair Constituent Assembly elections on 22...



...November. If the Maoists do not participate, polls will be impossible, but their leaders need help winning over dissidents within their movement. The mainstream parties need to address reasonable Maoist concerns, hold firm to democratic principles and take sensible steps to engage critics of the Constituent Assembly.

➡ Pakistan Deadly fighting continued along tribal belt, with heavy army casualties in North Waziristan. 250 troops captured near Wana in South Waziristan by pro-Taliban militants late August still detained; negotiations ongoing for release. Powerful blasts in Rawalpindi 4 September killed 25 in targeted attack against security officials; no claims of responsibility. Osama bin Laden declared war against "infidel" President Musharraf in tape released 20 September, same day Election Commission announced 6 October presidential elections in standing national parliament and provincial assemblies. Musharraf cleared as candidate by supreme court 28 September despite dual-hat status as military chief; vowed to give up military post if elected president. Opposition protests grew on streets of Islamabad in response to his candidacy. U.S. issued rare criticism of string of opposition arrests that began mid-month; over 200 freed 27 September. Benazir Bhutto announced 18 October return from exile despite failure to secure public deal with Musharraf; fellow former PM Nawaz Sharif deported to Saudi Arabia within hours of return 10 September.

- "Bargain for troops' release ruled out", *Dawn*, 26 Sept. 2007.
- "US and EU criticise arrests", *Dawn*, 25 Sept. 2007.
- "Pakistani electoral process in disarray, observers warn", *Washington Post*, 24 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°137, *Elections, Democracy and Stability in Pakistan*, 31 July 2007.

➡ Sri Lanka Fighting continued in north and intensified, as defence secretary announced government determination to defeat LTTE militarily before any political solution. Casualty figures varied, but heavy losses on both sides reported in Jaffna, Mannar and near Vavuniya. IIGEP team of international observers issued report blasting government commission inquiry into human rights violations; said it would likely fail to complete any cases before November mandate expiry.

- "Heavy fighting rages in Sri Lanka", *Hindu*, 25 Sept. 2007.
- "Lanka abuse probe 'set to fail'", BBC, 19 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°135, *Sri Lanka's Human Rights Crisis*, 14 June 2007.

NORTH EAST ASIA

➡ North Korea New round of 6-party talks suspended 30 September for 2 days as parties conferred with their capitals on plan to disable nuclear reactor by end 2007. Key agreement reportedly reached on defining "disabling"; document will be made public 2 October if approved. 1m tonnes of heavy fuel oil pledged to Pyongyang in return; 50,000 tonnes already sent by China, South Korea. Agreement came despite claims mid-month NK exporting missile technology to Syria. Seoul PM Roh Moo-Hyun to meet Kim Jong Il in Seoul at Inter-Korean summit 2-4 October.

- "N Korea denuclearisation plan mullied", *Financial Times*, 30 Sept. 2007.

- "Denuclearising North Korea: Scherzo", *Economist*, 6 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°62, *After the North Korea Nuclear Breakthrough: Compliance or Confrontation?*, 30 Apr. 2007.

➡ Taiwan Strait Majority of countries voted to reject Taiwan's 15th consecutive UN bid at 62nd General Assembly 21 September. Senior Chinese official Jia Qinglin condemned President Chen Shui-bian's determination to proceed with March 2008 referendum on UN entry as threat to regional peace and security. But DPP party conference decided 30 September to take less radical stance on name-change issue in platform for 2008 elections.

- "UN bid puts Taiwan on skids with China", *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 Sept. 2007.
- "U.N. General Assembly thwarts Taiwan bid", AP, 21 Sept. 2007.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

➡ Indonesia 26 injured in clashes 1 September at swearing-in of new district chief in Southeast Aceh. Army Chief Djoko Santoso announced proposal to increase troop levels in Papua by adding 15,000-strong infantry division, a 100 per cent troop increase.

- "Swearing in of Aceh regent turns into clash", *Jakarta Post*, 2 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°63, *Indonesia: Jemaah Islamiyah's Current Status*, 3 May 2007.

➡ Myanmar/Burma Government responded with military force 26-27 September to peaceful protests that had swelled to scores of thousands marching on Yangon streets. Military fired over heads of monks in Pakkoku 5 September, provoking thousands more to join and delaying government response. Junta declared protests illegal 24 September and threatened crackdown; security services flooded Yangon streets 26 September, blocking access to shrines and monasteries. Over 10 reported killed after forces fired on crowds 27 September, number may be higher; scores arrested. UN sent envoy Ibrahim Gambari: met with detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi; and in Naypyidaw 1 October seeking meeting with junta leader Than Shwe. U.S., EU vowed expanded targeted sanctions. Major neighbours urged to apply influence: ASEAN strongest in expressing "revulsion"; China urged restraint, and diplomatically active, as crackdown loomed; India, after signing major gas deal 24 September, expressed hope for peaceful dialogue and more inclusion.

- "India pressed to take lead on democracy", *Financial Times*, 30 Sept. 2007.
- "On the brink", *Economist*, 27 Sept. 2007.
- Crisis Group media release, "Time for Urgent Action", 25 Sept. 2007.

➡ Philippines MILF rebels offered to vacate some bases in Basilan 16 September to provide space for army operations against Abu Sayyaf, but talks with Manila remain on hold. NPA communist rebels attacked police station in Cantilan, Mindanao: third attack in south in 3 months. 1,000 troops deployed to Manila 21 September; military claimed escalated coup threat. Supreme Court granted lower courts broader

powers to investigate extralegal killings targeting leftist activists.

- "Philippine courts get new powers to stop killings", Reuters, 25 Sept. 2007.
- "Manila beefs up troops in capital on coup rumours", Reuters, 21 Sept. 2007.

➡ Thailand 1 year after ousting former PM Thaksin, coup leader Gen. Sonthi retired from armed forces 30 September; expected to officially assume post of deputy prime minister in small cabinet reshuffle. Gen. Anupong Paochinda named new army chief. Steady violence continued in south. Government sweeps there have detained some 2000 suspects since late June.

- "Thai generals' security bill a power play before vote", *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°129, *Southern Thailand: The Impact of the Coup*, 15 Mar. 2007.

➡ Timor-Leste Sporadic arson attacks continued in Liquica, Ermera and Viqueque districts. Police (PNTL's rapid reaction unit) made 8 arrests (including 6 PNTL officers) 15, 16 September in Viqueque district in connection with August arson. Disturbances along Comoro river in Dili throughout month, with hundreds involved in rock fights. Government introduced new 5-year program in parliament 13 September; passed 14 September, 41 to 23 votes; Fretilin criticised lack of government priorities, no allocation of budget by sector. SRSG Atul Khare called 10 September for extension of UNMIT beyond current mandate of 26 February 2008; said mission would take 3-5 years. FM Zacarias da Costa requested UNSC consideration of UNMIT extension to 2012.

- "Five police arrested over E Timor arson attacks", ABC, 17 Sept. 2007.
- "East Timor's Gusmao vows to tackle security, poverty", Reuters, 13 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°65, *Timor-Leste's Parliamentary Elections*, 12 June 2007.

PACIFIC

➡ Fiji Military government reinstated martial law 7 September, citing coup threat from deposed PM Qarase. UN human rights commissioner Louise Arbour expressed grave concern. EU said it would not suspend current aid program but future aid deals compromised; later pledged to work with Fiji towards return to democracy and rule of law. Relations with Canberra soured further after PM Bainimarama claimed invasion planned before December coup; Australian FM Downer denied.

- "Future aid to Fiji under jeopardy: EU", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 Sept. 2007.
- "Fiji faces backlash over martial law", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 Sept. 2007.



BALKANS

➡ Bosnia & Herzegovina Last-minute deal on police reform reached by Bosniak presidency member Silajdzic and Republika Srpska (RS) PM Dodik 28 September. Agreement came after Office of High Representative

threatened to sanction political leaders, parties and EU set end-September deadline. 5 ethnic Croat parties agreed common platform 21 September calling for new constitutional structure to replace 2-entity model. Justice Minister Colak called for standardisation of war crimes prosecutions after hunger strike of 30 indictees requesting trial under former Yugoslav laws. RS President Jelic died after heart attack 30 September.

- ["Bosnia's political rivals agree on police reform 2 days before EU deadline set to expire"](#), AP, 28 Sept. 2007.
- ["Penchant for partition"](#), ISN, 25 Sept. 2007.
- ["Croatian parties endorse joint platform on future BiH constitution"](#), SEE Times, 23 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°180, [Ensuring Bosnia's Future: A New International Engagement Strategy](#), 15 Feb. 2007.

- ➡ Kosovo Pristina and Belgrade negotiators met in New York 28 September for first face-to-face talks in current negotiations round. No breakthrough, but sides agreed to meet 14 October in Brussels. Belgrade spokesman suggested use of force in case of Kosovo independence 5 September; but defence minister, army chief and other leaders gave reassurances after hail of international criticism. Still, PM Kostunica warned of "devastating consequences" 22 September. Belgrade also urged Kosovo Serbs to boycott November elections. Washington and several EU capitals signalled would recognise unilateral declaration of independence if no breakthrough by 10 December; Moscow warned any political recognition unacceptable. Bomb attack on Pristina café left 2 dead 24 September; UN police said investigating possible involvement of Kosovo police unit. Shots fired at Serb home, shop in east Kosovo villages Livoc, Klokot 20, 22 September. UNMIK deputy chief Schook announced under internal UN probe for alleged misconduct.
- ["UN probes Kosovo police role in bomb attack"](#), Reuters, 1 Oct. 2007.
 - ["No breakthrough on Kosovo status"](#), BBC, 28 Sept. 2007.
 - ["Serbia's Kostunica warns again against independence for Kosovo"](#), SEE Times, 23 Sept. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°185, [Breaking the Kosovo Stalemate: Europe's Responsibility](#), 21 Aug. 2007.

- ➡ Macedonia Clash during attempted arrest in Vaksince near Kosovo border 10 September left policeman, gunman, both ethnic Albanian, dead. Government submitted electoral code amendments to parliament extending voting rights to diaspora and increasing representation of ethnic Turks, Roma, Serbs, Bosniaks, Vlachs; opposition objected to submission prior to inter-party consensus. Subsequent brawl 25 September during parliamentary debate between ethnic Albanian parties Democratic Union of Integration and Party for Democratic Prosperity prompted police intervention. Greek PM Karamanlis said would veto Skopje's NATO membership if name dispute unresolved; President Crvenkovski threatened to withdraw from negotiations with Athens.
- ["Parliamentary dispute turns physical in Macedonia"](#), SEE Times, 27 Sept. 2007.
 - ["Fatal clash may point to rising tensions over Kosovo"](#), RFE/RL, 11 Sept. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°41, [Macedonia: Wobbling toward Europe](#), 12 Jan. 2006.

- ➡ Serbia PM Kostunica and President Tadic issued conflicting statements on foreign policy: Kostunica announced new "neutrality" policy excluding NATO membership and with neutral stance toward EU and other countries; Tadic declared Euro-Atlantic integration first priority. EU concluded negotiations on Stabilisation and Association Agreement; signature hinges on Belgrade's cooperation with Hague Tribunal. Chief prosecutor del Ponte to report following Belgrade 20-21 September visit.
- ["East-West dispute shakes Serb coalition"](#), Reuters, 16 Sept. 2007.
 - ["Serbia a step closer to pre-accession agreement with EU"](#), SEE Times, 11 Sept. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°46, [Serbia's New Government: Turning from Europe](#), 31 May 2007.

CAUCASUS

- ➡ Armenia Former President Ter-Petrosian signalled may run in 2008 presidential elections; criticised government's Nagorno-Karabakh policy and called regime corrupt and criminal.
- ["Ter-Petrosian will run for president, say allies"](#), Armenia Liberty, 26 Sept. 2007.
- ➡ Azerbaijan U.S. and Russian experts discussed possible joint use of Russian-operated Gabala radar base 18 September; Baku said would raise concerns for country, necessitating security guarantees. Opposition journalist Hakim Eldostu Mehdiyev arrested 23 September, allegedly for reporting on energy problems in Nakhichevan.
- ["Azerbaijan urged to release imprisoned journalist"](#), RFE/RL, 26 Sept. 2007.
 - ["U.S., Russian experts arrive for missile-defense talks"](#), RFE/RL, 17 Sept. 2007.
- ➡ Chechnya (Russia) Rebel commander Musa Mutiyev killed by security forces in Grozny 8 September. At least 7 security force officers reported dead in clashes with militants, including police officer during gunman attack on school in Gukhoi 4 September and 2 Russian servicemen in attack on vehicle in Grozny 10 September. Prominent activist Vagap Tutakov abducted by armed men 12 September, reportedly released 24 September. Former head of Achkhoy-Martanovsky district, Shamil Burayev, charged 13 September with assisting in October 2006 murder of journalist Anna Politkovskaya.
- ["Separatist activist 'abducted in Chechnya'"](#), RFE/RL, 21 Sept. 2007.
 - ["Chechen arrested on suspicion of ordering Politkovskaya hit"](#), RFE/RL, 15 Sept. 2007.
- ➡ North Caucasus (non-Chechnya) Violence mounted in Republic of Ingushetia as month saw escalated clashes between security forces and militants, and string of fatal shootings of civilians and officials. Attacks on security force targets left at least 14 dead: including 1 officer and 2 militants after attack on Russian Interior Ministry base in Maltobek 8 September, police chief in Sunzha district 18 September, and special forces lieutenant in Nazranovsky district 17 September. 1 militant killed in same district 21 September. Civilians increasingly targeted, including 3 members of Roma family in Sunzha district 11 September, ethnic Russian physician in Nazran 7 September, and 2 members of Korean family 6 September. Rally of at least 500 protesting abductions clashed

with police in Nazran 18 September. In Dagestan, militant leader Rappani Khalilov and aide reportedly killed in Novy Sulak after 17 September clash with security forces; 2 rebels, police officer killed during shootout 20 September.

- ["Increasing violence in Ingushetia prompts crackdown fears"](#), RFE/RL, 21 Sept. 2007.
- ["Rising violence in Russia's Ingushetia"](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 13 Sept. 2007.

➡ Georgia Former Defence Minister Okruashvili arrested on money laundering and abuse of power charges 27 September – days after accusing President Saakashvili of authoritarian rule; 28 September protest in Tbilisi drew thousands. Parliament approved proposal to increase troop levels from 28,000 to 32,000, and defence spending to \$765 million for 2007. Saakashvili criticised UNSG report on Abkhazia for recommending Georgian youth camp be moved away from Abkhaz ceasefire line 6 September; used speech at UN to slam Russia's role in conflict regions 26 September. Tbilisi reported its forces killed 2 separatist militants, captured several more 20 September; Sukhumi said were border guards training. In South Ossetia, Tskhinvali authorities held "independence day" civilian parade with military components 20 September. Georgian forces detained 2 North Ossetian peacekeepers in zone of conflict, on suspicion of criminal activity, 29 August. Protracted exchanges of fire took place south of Tskhinvali 27 September; 1 reported injured.

- ["Thousands rally in Georgia for detained ex-minister"](#), RFE/RL, 28 Sept. 2007.
- ["What is behind expansion of armed forces?"](#), RFE/RL, 19 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°183, [Georgia's South Ossetia Conflict: Make Haste Slowly](#), 7 June 2007.

➡ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs held separate talks with Azerbaijani FM Mammadyarov and Armenian FM Oskanian in Brussels 4 September; visited Yerevan, Baku and Stepanakert, meeting Presidents Kocharian and Aliyev and de facto NK authorities, 16-18 September. Presidents may meet 5 October on sidelines of CIS summit in Dushanbe. Bako Sahakian inaugurated new de facto NK president 7 September; parliament approved his appointment of Araik Harutyunian as new PM 14 September. Azerbaijani claims 3 Armenian, 2 Azeri soldiers killed in 2 shooting incidents in Fizuli and Agdam districts near NK 4 September denied by de facto NK authorities.

- ["Baku says 'no obstacle' to Aliyev-Kocharian meeting"](#), RFE/RL, 10 Sept. 2007.
- ["Azerbaijan says five killed in fighting near Karabakh"](#), RFE/RL, 5 Sept. 2007.

EASTERN EUROPE

➡ Belarus Leading opposition figure Andrey Klimau sentenced 2 years in prison for internet article critical of President Lukashenko. Wave of arrests ahead of planned 14 October European March for Freedom, including 2 deputy heads of opposition parties. At least 29 youth activists arrested after protesting court trials in Minsk and Baranovichi; further 19 detained to prevent festival marking historical battle in east 8 September.

- ["Turning the opposition into dissidents"](#), RFE/RL, 13 Sept. 2007.
- ["Belarusian opposition figure sentenced to 2 years in prison, wife told weeks later"](#), AP, 9 Sept. 2007.

➡ Ukraine Parliamentary elections held 30 September. Exit polls indicated tight race between Party of the Regions and Bloc Yulia Tymoshenko, with latter possibly able to form "orange" government with President Yushchenko's Our Ukraine bloc. Political wrangling ahead of polls saw parliament reconvene 4 and 20 September despite being officially disbanded. Party of the Regions had threatened boycott, citing sabotage of constituency election commission by Our Ukraine and "provocations" against supporters. Socialist Interior Minister Vasili Tsuschko said presidential secretariat poisoned him in May. Central Election Commission accused Yushchenko of violating neutrality after speech calling voters to back his party bloc. EU-Ukraine summit held in Kiev 14 September to open negotiations for enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Yushchenko accused Moscow of hindering investigation of his 2004 poisoning.

- ["Orange Ukraine eyes poll victory"](#), BBC, 1 Oct. 2007.
- ["Playing the populist card"](#), RFE/RL, 27 Sept. 2007.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➡ Basque Country (Spain) Arrests of suspected ETA members continued across French border: 4 detained in joint police operation in Cahors 1 September; 13 held 24 September over 2006 French hotel bombing. ETA statement 9 September claimed responsibility for series of attacks since July; vowed to continue. Minor explosions on highway 2 September and outside police station in Zarautz 25 September. ETA member Jose Maria Arregi Erstarbe sentenced 26 years for 1990 attempted murder of official.

- ["Eta warns violence will continue"](#), BBC, 9 Sept. 2007.
- ["Bomb plot foiled as key Eta members arrested"](#), *Guardian*, 3 Sept. 2007.

➡ Cyprus President Papadopoulos and Turkish Cypriot leader Talat met in buffer zone 5 September but failed to make progress in implementation of pre-negotiation mechanisms agreed at last meeting in July 2006. Turkish President Gul made first overseas trip to North 18-19 September. EU report on implementation of 2004 Green Line regulation indicated continuing obstacles limiting Turkish Cypriot trade to South.

- ["New Turkish president urges resolution of division of Cyprus"](#), VOA, 18 Sept. 2007.
- ["Cyprus rivals still far apart after rare talks"](#), AFP, 5 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°171, [The Cyprus Stalemate: What Next?](#), 8 Mar. 2006.

➡ Northern Ireland (UK) Republic of Ireland governing party Fianna Fail announced considering NI presence; Social Democratic and Labour Party welcomed move amid speculation of possible merger. Tensions between Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and breakaway faction in south Antrim saw suspected UDA bomb attack on house in Carrickfergus and retaliatory shootings 22, 24 September. Independent Monitoring Commission confirmed British troops cut to peacetime levels.

- ["Irish political party Fianna Fail starts recruitment drive in Northern Ireland universities"](#), AP, 25 Sept. 2007.
- ["Shooting linked to loyalist feud"](#), BBC, 24 Sept. 2007.

- ➡ Turkey Government continued drafting new "civilian" constitution to replace 1982 post-coup document; civil society groups criticised lack of transparency. PM Erdogan called for easing university headscarf ban, prompting opposition accusations constitutional changes cover for Islamist agenda. Clashes between armed forces and PKK continued in South East, including military operation in Sirnak, Hakkari and Siirt provinces in which 11 PKK militants reported dead 14-21 September and suicide attack on Tunceli gendarmerie station which killed 1 soldier 25 September. PKK minibus attack in Sirnak left 12 dead 29 September. Visiting Iraqi Interior Minister Bolani signed security agreement 28 September; provisions allowing Turkish troop cross-border "hot pursuit" dropped after sides unable to agree conditions.
- "Turkey, Iraq sign terrorism deal amid border row", Reuters, 28 Sept. 2007.
 - "Turkey PM wants headscarf ban eased", Al Jazeera, 19 Sept. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°184, *Turkey and Europe: The Way Ahead*, 17 Aug. 2007.

Latin America / Caribbean

- ➡ Bolivia Constituent Assembly (CA) ceased activities for 1 month 8 September due to ongoing dispute over future location of capital. Dialogue Committee created between pro-government and opposition political forces to avoid CA failure; but 48% of Bolivians polled believed constitution unlikely to emerge by December end to CA mandate. Noting increased Bolivian effort to thwart cocaine production, U.S. dropped threat of aid sanctions.
- "Bolivian parties agree on constitutional assembly", Reuters, 21 Sept. 2007.
 - "A tale of two (or rather three) cities", openDemocracy, 18 Sept. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°23, *Bolivia's New Constitution: Avoiding Violent Confrontation*, 31 Aug. 2007.
- ➡ Colombia 2 significant victories in war on drug cartels: 10 September arrest of Diego Montoya, leader of Norte del Valle cartel, after years of evading capture and 1 September killing of FARC commander "El Negro Acacio" in air raid. Venezuela President Chávez to meet FARC emissary Raul Reyes in Venezuela 8 October to advance hostage swap agenda; President Uribe ruled out use of Colombian territory for meeting.
- "Colombian drug lords toppled", *Christian Science Monitor*, 13 Sept. 2007.
 - "Can Chávez free FARC hostages?", *Christian Science Monitor*, 6 Sept. 2007.
 - Comment by Mark L. Schneider (Crisis Group), "Reintegrating Colombia's Killers", *Orlando Sentinel*, 9 Sept. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°20, *Colombia's New Armed Groups*, 10 May 2007.

- ➡ Ecuador Government's Acuerdo País list received 62.2% of vote in quick count following 30 September Constituent Assembly elections. OAS, EU and Carter Center missions had been deployed to observe. Correa administration

continues to demand complete cessation of aerial spraying along Colombia border.

- "El partido de Correa obtiene la mayoría en las elecciones a la Asamblea Constituyente en Ecuador", *El País*, 1 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°22, *Ecuador: Overcoming Instability?*, 7 Aug. 2007.

- ➡ Guatemala Run-off called for 4 November between hardline former general Otto Pérez Molina and centre-leftist Alvaro Colom after relatively peaceful presidential election 9 September. Molina campaigned on use of military force to fight crime. Election results expected to be very close with international observation vital.
- "Ex-general to face leftist in Guatemala runoff", Reuters, 10 Sept. 2007.

- ➡ Haiti Defence ministers from 9 UN troop-contributing Latin American countries met in Haiti 4-5 September; underlined support for renewal of mandate, which expires 15 October. Urban security situation stabilised after MINUSTAH anti-gang success in spring, but yet to be consolidated through increased vetted Haitian police presence in urban hot zones, as shown by spike in kidnappings and murders in August. U.S. construction start further delayed on promised Cité Soleil commissariat and police substations.
- "UN peacekeeper contributors visit Haiti, stress strengthening national police", UN News, 5 Sept. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Report N°21, *Consolidating Stability in Haiti*, 18 July 2007.

- ➡ Venezuela Constitutional changes proposed by President Hugo Chávez in August received second approval in national assembly; due for third approval October, referendum late November. Moves would axe presidential term limits, introduce 6-hour working day, and strengthen executive control including over appointment of regional authorities, central bank and private sector.
- "Assembly approves Chavez reforms", BBC, 12 Sept. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°19, *Venezuela: Hugo Chávez's Revolution*, 22 Feb. 2007.

Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

- ➡ Israel/Occupied Territories Israel continued siege and isolation of Gaza, prompting increased rocket fire into Israel including attack 11 September wounding over 60 soldiers. Israel declared Gaza "hostile entity" 19 September, threatened to sever electricity and fuel. Israeli operations left 1 soldier, 5 Palestinians dead 21 September: 40 Palestinians arrested including senior Hamas commander. 12 Palestinians killed in Israeli operations in Gaza strip 26-28 September. Defence Minister Barak stated Israel increasingly close to major military operation in Gaza Strip. Quartet met at UN 23 September in continued lead-up to U.S.-sponsored meeting scheduled November: "declaration of principles" to be agreed. U.S. said would invite key Arab nations, including Syria: Israel said would attend despite recent Israeli airstrike (see Syria). Israel released some 90

Palestinian prisoners in "gesture of goodwill" to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas 1 October.

- " Hamas warns of retaliation for Gaza killings", *Haaretz*, 28 Sept. 2007.
- "Mid-East summit to include Syria", BBC, 24 Sept. 2007.
- "The remarkable survival of Ehud Olmert", *Economist*, 20 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°68, *After Gaza*, 2 Aug. 2007.

Lebanon Critical parliamentary vote on new president delayed to 23 October as Hizbollah-led opposition boycotted 25 September session. Postponement in wake of 19 September assassination of Antoine Ghanim, member of pro-Western ruling coalition March 14. Ghanim is eighth anti-Syrian MP killed since 2005 and further radicalises March 14, reducing prospects for compromise presidential candidate after Pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud's term ends late November. Army took control of Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp, declared victory over Fatah al-Islam militants 2 September. Over 300 dead, including 164 soldiers, in 105-day siege. Lebanese said Israeli fighter jets violated airspace 18 September.

- "Who's for president?", *Economist*, 27 Sept. 2007.
- "Israeli warplanes raid Lebanon", BBC, 18 Sept. 2007.
- "Palestinian refugees of Nahr el-Bared anxious to return to devastated camp", AP, 12 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°20, *Lebanon at a Tripwire*, 21 Dec. 2006.

Syria Tensions rose as Israeli airstrike hit north Syria 6 September. Israel refused to comment, imposed wide-reaching military censorship; but Israeli opposition leader Binyamin Netanyahu congratulated PM Olmert on raid 20 September. Damascus denied and many analysts sceptical of reports that strike targeted nuclear weapons activity linked to North Korea. Syrian-Saudi relations further deteriorated as Kingdom rejected proposed visit by FM Walid Muallim. Straining under refugee flow, Damascus introduced visa restrictions for Iraqis 10 September; suspended during Ramadan. Aleppo cleric, Sheikh Mahmoud Abou al-Qaqa, accused of recruiting insurgents to fight U.S.-led forces in Iraq, shot dead 28 September.

- "Syria says Israeli air raid aimed at justifying attack", AFP, 29 Sept. 2007.
- "Israeli airstrike reignites debate on Syrian nuclear ambitions", *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°63, *Restarting Israeli-Syrian Negotiations*, 10 Apr. 2007.

GULF

Iran Last of 3 U.S.-Iranians in detention on security grounds released on bail; permission to leave Iran still required. Release came ahead of President Ahmadinejad's visit to New York to attend UN General Assembly. Shift in approach following August IAEA accord with French taking harder line. UN Security Council P5 and Germany agreed 28 September to delay decision on further sanctions until after November reports from IAEA and EU negotiator Javier Solana.

- "UN agrees to delay vote on further Iran sanctions", AP, 28 Sept. 2007.
- "Let's keep squeezing them harder", *Economist*, 20 Sept. 2007.

- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°51, *Iran: Is There a Way Out of the Nuclear Impasse?*, 23 Feb. 2006.

Iraq U.S. Commander General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker testified before U.S. Congress 10 September. Petraeus said surge had made progress in reducing violence but political reconciliation among warring factions remained elusive. President Bush announced withdrawal of 5,700 troops by December, 20,000 by summer 2008. Government reported drop in civilian deaths by 50% from August. Statistics collected by Iraqi Red Crescent Society and IOM suggest surge channelled displacement to new areas, as violence spread across Iraq's ethno-sectarian map. Iraqi vice-president and Sunni leader Tariq al-Hashemi held talks with Shiite leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani 27 September after publishing "Iraqi National Compact" reconciliation proposals. Delegation from ruling Shiite United Alliance met al-Sistani 23 September to discuss reuniting after bloc loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr broke away 15 September. Delayed legislation to regulate oil revenue sharing to be debated in parliament in October. Ministry of Interior suspended licence of private U.S. security firm Blackwater after 16 September incident in which 11 civilians died. Interior Ministry drafted legislation to end legal immunity for private security contractors; may affect up to 30,000 personnel.

- "Iraqi Sunni leader meets Sistani", BBC, 27 Sept. 2007.
- "Sharp drop in number of violence-related deaths", IRIN, 20 Sept. 2007.
- "Privateers under fire", *Economist*, 20 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°67, *Where is Iraq Heading? Lessons from Basra*, 25 June 2007.

Yemen Police and demonstrators clashed leaving 2 dead 2 September. Protests were over rise in price of goods. President Ali Abdullah Saleh told opposition leaders he wants to cut the presidential term from 7 to 5 years, reduce parliamentary term to 4 and reserve 15% of parliament seats for women.

- "Yemen's Saleh plans political reforms – officials", Reuters, 25 Sept. 2007.
- "Two Yemeni protesters killed, dozens injured in clashes with riot police", AP, 10 Sept. 2007.

NORTH AFRICA

Algeria Intensity and scope of attacks on civilian and official targets increased; leaving 75 dead. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility for many: including 6 September apparent assassination attempt on President Bouteflika in Batna, killing 20, and 8 September suicide car bombing in Dellys, killing 37 coastal guard officers. Group also claimed responsibility for 21 September attack on convoy of French company employees. Egyptian engineer held hostage since May freed in security operation 6 September. Peace rallies held in several cities 9 September.

- "Algeria violence death toll jumps in Sept-reports", Reuters, 1 Oct. 2007.
- "Algeria rebel attacks test govt security policy", Reuters, 23 Sept. 2007.
- "Al-Qaeda claims Algeria bombing", Al Jazeera, 21 Sept. 2007.

➤ Egypt Court sentenced 4 newspaper editors to 1-year prison for defamation of President Mubarak 13 September; 1 referred for additional trial for alleging Mubarak health poor. Further 3 journalists sentenced 2 years for damaging "image of justice" 24 September. Police detained 28 after clash between Christians and Muslims in Alexandria 21 September, allegedly over mixed couple. Ayman Hassan, co-defendant in recent trial against leading opposition figure Ayman Nour, found hanged in prison after complaining of mistreatment; as was Muslim Brother Said Abdullah, detained since 1992 without trial. Muslim Brotherhood annual Ramadan dinner blocked by authorities for first time in 20 years. Striking workers, reportedly 27,000, took control of state textile factory in Mahalla al-Kubra 23 September; ended action 29 September after government intervention met many demands.

- ["Egyptian workers occupy factory"](#), BBC, 25 Sept. 2007.
- ["Jittery Egypt renews government crackdown on dissent"](#), Reuters, 23 Sept. 2007.
- ["Nine injured, 25 held after Egypt sectarian brawl"](#), Reuters, 22 Sept. 2007.
- ["Witness in Egypt's Nour case found hanged in jail"](#), Reuters, 6 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°61, [Egypt's Sinai Question](#), 30 Jan. 2007.

➤ Morocco Parliamentary elections held 8 September with low turnout of 37%. Centre-right Istiqlal Party led with 52 seats in 325-seat lower assembly, closely followed by moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (46), People's Movement (41), National Rally of Independents (39) and Socialist Union of People's Forces (38). King Mohammed V appointed Istiqlal's Abbas El Fassi new PM 19 September. U.S. signed Millennium Challenge Corporation 5-year aid deal worth \$698m, largest amount under program, 31 August. Government cancelled bread price rise after violent protests in Sefou 23 September reportedly left around 300 injured.

- ["Maroc, régime hybride"](#), *Libération*, 27 Sept. 2007.
- ["Moroccan unrest over bread price"](#), AP, 25 Sept. 2007.
- ["Morocco awaits new government with attention on Islamists"](#), AFP, 20 Sept. 2007.

➤ Western Sahara Chinese General Zhao Jingmin became new commander of UN peacekeeping mission (MINURSO) 17 September.

- ["First Chinese UN peacekeeping force commander takes office"](#), Xinhua, 17 Sept. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°65, [Western Sahara: The Cost of the Conflict](#), 11 June 2007; and N°66, [Western Sahara: Out of the Impasse](#), 11 June 2007.

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