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CrisisWatch:

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

CrisisWatch is compiled by Crisis Group's Brussels Research Unit, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of 145 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 60 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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October 2007 Trends



Deteriorated Situations

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Improved Situations

None



Unchanged Situations

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November 2007 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alerts

Ethiopia/Eritrea
Pakistan



Conflict Resolution Opportunities

Israel/occupied Territories

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Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

- Burundi Peace process remained on hold as rebel Palipehutu-FNL refused to attend talks mediated by Charles Nqakula and internal FNL clashes continued. Truce Monitoring Commission resumed activities 20 October; FNL denounced meeting as “meaningless”. FNL attacks on dissidents opposed to Agathon Rwaswa included killing of 3 in Bujumbura 13 October and at least 11 south of Bujumbura 21 October. Government troops moved in to separate factions 25 October. Consultations between President Pierre Nkurunziza’s governing CNDD-FDD and opposition FRODEBU and UPRONA toward power-sharing agreement continued.
- [“Villagers flee as rebel fighters attack splinter group’s position”](#), IRIN, 25 Oct. 2007.
 - [“Burundi leader engages in fresh talks”](#), AFP, 24 Oct. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°131, [Burundi: Finalising Peace with the FNL](#), 28 Aug. 2007.

- Central African Republic President Francois Bozize presented new development strategy to EU and UN in Brussels 26 October: called for \$1.6 billion for projects, including military reform.
- [“CAR president admits rights abuses by gov’t forces”](#), Reuters, 28 Oct. 2007.

- Democratic Republic of Congo Fighting continued in North Kivu between insurgents loyal to Gen. Laurent Nkunda and government troops supported by Mai Mai and FDLR militias. Nkunda declared September ceasefire “abandoned”, and launched new offensive 8 October. Government forces routed rebels 10 October leading to renewed Nkunda call for ceasefire. President Kabila launched military action ahead of 15 October deadline, later extended, for rebels to disarm: announced plan 17 October to disarm Hutu militias allied to government. Mai Mai militia given 48-hour deadline to end campaign 21 October: leader Kasereka Kabamba surrendered 27 October, followed by 80 of his fighters. Nkunda declared plan 24 October to send 200 troops to UN army integration centre at Kilolirwe; soldiers yet to arrive. Former leader of Forces for Patriotic Resistance, Germain Katanga, sent to The Hague 18 October to face ICC charges of murder, sexual enslavement and forcing children to fight as soldiers in Ituri. Kabila visited US, 26 October; discussed possible role for US advisers in DRC security sector reform. UNSG Ban Ki-moon decided to dispatch Haile Menkerios, Asst. SG for Political Affairs, on special mission to region.
- [“DR Congo army battles rebels, now put at 3,000 men”](#), AFP, 31 Oct. 2007.
 - [“Alarm drums”](#), *Economist*, 25 Oct. 2007.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°133, [Congo: Bringing Peace to North Kivu](#), 31 October 2007. Unless Kinshasa pursues a comprehensive political approach to settle the crisis in North Kivu province, the violence could again escalate and destabilise central Africa. A new approach is needed to address the root causes of violence, desist from pursuing a purely military solution...



...and avoid an escalation that could easily draw in Rwanda and Uganda. The international community should encourage President Kabila to maintain the suspension of offensive operations and launch a comprehensive peace initiative to de-escalate the conflict and generally improve, before addressing core issues related to restoring state authority.

- Republic of Congo Tension over rebel chief Frédéric Bitsangou’s (aka Pasteur Ntumi) September failure to take up government post continued. Hardliners in presidential circles reportedly preparing military offensive against him. President Sassou Nguesso set 31 December deadline for Ntumi and followers to disarm and assemble in Brazzaville.
- [“Ntumi: l’armée prête pour l’assaut final”](#), Mwindi, 27 Oct. 2007.
- Rwanda President Paul Kagame’s special envoy to Great Lakes region, Dr Sezibera, claimed DRC military arming FDLR. DRC-based rebels fired into Rwandan territory 30 September, second attack in 6 months. Rwandan genocide suspect Dominique Ntawukuriyayo arrested in France 18 October; to be transferred to ICTR in Arusha. Kigali announced inquiry into April 1994 plane crash that killed former President Juvenal Habyarimana: 2006 French investigation accused President Paul Kagame of involvement.
- [“Rwanda Accuses DR Congo of Backing Rwandan Hutu Rebels”](#), VOA, 26 Oct. 2007.
 - [“Rwanda suspect caught in France”](#), BBC, 19 Oct. 2007.
- Uganda “Consultation” process underway as LRA representatives visited Kampala 29 October to lay groundwork for higher-level meetings. Talks between government and LRA in Juba remain stalled as transitional justice issues unresolved. ICC Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo insisted 11 October that LRA leaders be arrested; LRA accused Moreno-Ocampo of “undermining” mediation efforts. Ugandan reports of dispute between LRA leaders Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti denounced as “government propaganda” by rebels. UN officials in DRC announced LRA commander Opiyo Makasi in custody 23 October.
- [“Rebel leaders visit expected to boost peace process”](#), IRIN, 31 Oct. 2007.
 - [“Ugandan LRA rebels deny a split”](#), BBC, 23 Oct. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°46, [Northern Uganda Peace Process: The Need to Maintain Momentum](#), 14 Sept. 2007.

HORN OF AFRICA

- Chad Mixed fortunes in month with simultaneous peace agreement and escalation of violence. Four rebel groups - Movement for Resistance and Change, National Accord of Chad and 2 factions of Front for United Forces for Development and Democracy - signed agreement with government 26 October, including immediate ceasefire, amnesty and release of all prisoners. Earlier in month: state of emergency called in eastern and northern regions after ethnic clashes; another rebel group, United Front for Democratic Change, fought government soldiers along Sudan border despite earlier peace deal.
- [“Chadian rebel groups sign final peace deal with government”](#), AP, 25 Oct. 2007.
 - [“Chad rebels battle army in east”](#), BBC, 19 Oct. 2007.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°111, *Chad: Back towards War?*, 1 June 2006.

➔ Ethiopia Ogaden National Liberation Front claimed 250 Ethiopian troops killed in clashes in Wardher region 20-21 October. Government denied number but admitted local government-aligned militia may have been involved. PM Meles Zenawi accused opposition of collaborating with insurgent Oromo Liberation Front, after Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement leader Bulcha Demeksa complained about government arrests and harassment in region.

- ["Ethiopia PM in opposition warning"](#), BBC, 23 Oct. 2007.
- ["Ethiopian rebels claim to have killed 250 government troops"](#), AP, 23 Oct. 2007.

➔ ➔ Ethiopia/Eritrea Risk of escalated conflict across border as end-November Boundary Commission deadline means border will be "automatically demarcated" if parties' positions unchanged. Eritrea accused Ethiopia 20 October of plot to invade: claim rejected. Ethiopian President Girma Woldegiorgis called 8 October for military build-up to counter possible Eritrean aggression.

- ["Ethiopia denies plot to attack Eritrea"](#), Reuters, 29 Oct. 2007.
- ["UN move on Eritrea-Ethiopia border issue raises fears of stalemate collapse"](#), VOA, 26 Oct. 2007.

➔ Somalia Violence flared again in Mogadishu at month end with clashes between Ethiopian/Somali troops and Islamist rebels. At least 20 killed, over 30,000 reportedly fled city. PM Ali Geedi resigned 29 October after continued rift with President Abdullahi Yusuf and speculation of imminent vote of no confidence. Yusuf appointed interim successor - Salim Aliyow Ibro - from Digil-Mirifle clan. Ugandan peacekeepers attacked with mortars while guarding Mogadishu port 24 October, same day 8 died when bus hit landmine; gun battles erupted 16 October. Aid temporarily halted after UN's WFP head in Mogadishu arrested, then released 23 October. Attacks on journalists increased including assassination of acting head of Radio Shabelle 19 October.

- ["Warning of Somali 'catastrophe'"](#), BBC, 31 Oct. 2007.
- ["Country more dangerous than ever for journalists"](#), *Nation*, 28 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°45, *Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*, 26 Jan. 2007.

➔ Somaliland (Somalia) Forces loyal to Somaliland administration took control of capital of disputed Sool region, Las Anod, 15 October. At least 10 killed in heavy fighting. Puntland authorities said takeover led to estimated 20,000 internally displaced and potential humanitarian disaster. Somaliland dismissed claims. Disputed Sool and Sanag regions increasingly tense with local clans co-opted by both sides.

- ["Tensions in Somaliland, Puntland"](#), ISN, 25 Oct. 2007.
- ["Puntland warns of looming humanitarian crisis"](#), IRIN, 25 Oct. 2007.

➔ Sudan SPLM announced temporary suspension of participation in Government of National Unity (GNU) 11 October due to delays in CPA implementation. Issues include Abyei, oil revenue distribution, SAF's full withdrawal from South and demarcation of N/S border. SPLM to rejoin GNU only when demands begin to be implemented - gave 9 January 2008 deadline. Move pulled international attention back to N/S issues ahead of 27 October Darfur peace talks in Sirte, Libya.

Government announced unilateral ceasefire as talks began but main rebel factions JEM and SLA-Unity not among 6 groups represented. Talks adjourned 30 October to allow further consultations between mediators and rebel groups in Darfur before actual negotiations start. JEM attacked Chinese-run oil facility at Difra in Kordofan (Abyei) 25 October. AU and UN investigated reports government troops and allied militias killed over 30 civilians in Muhagiriya, southern Darfur 8 October. UN reported hundreds forced out of refugee camp in Nyala, South Darfur by Sudanese soldiers and police 29 October. Khartoum said would not accept any Europeans in hybrid AU/UN Darfur force 27 October. UNSC extended mandate of UNMIS by 6 months, 31 October.

- ["Struggle to salvage Darfur talks"](#), BBC, 29 Oct. 2007.
- ["Pity the people of Darfur, pity the peacemakers too"](#), *Economist*, 25 Oct. 2007.
- ["Reports of new massacre surface in Southern Darfur"](#), *New York Times*, 17 Oct. 2007.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°47, *Sudan: Breaking the Abyei Deadlock*, 12 October 2007. The 11 October SPLM decision to suspend its participation in the Government of National Unity demonstrates the need for the international community to re-engage on implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Mounting tensions and increasing force numbers in the oil-rich Abyei region threaten to reignite war. The CPA's guarantors must send a strong, coordinated message to the ruling National Congress Party that it is legally bound by the Abyei Boundary Commission report. The UN Mission in Sudan should work with the parties to establish a demilitarised zone in Abyei.



SOUTHERN AFRICA

➔ Comoros Islands AU Peace and Security Committee voted 10 October to impose 45-day sanctions on leadership of Anjouan island, including travel ban, asset freeze. Standoff between Anjouan President Bacar and federal government continued over Bacar's refusal to organise new elections.

- ["Sanctions de l'Union africaine contre Anjouan"](#), RFI, 12 Oct. 2007.

➔ Zimbabwe Reported deal between negotiators from ZANU-PF and opposition MDC marked by signing of draft constitution under South African mediation 30 September. Draft must now be approved by respective parties. Ahead of December ZANU-PF party congress, newspaper reported President Mugabe named 4 potential successors: Emmerson Mnangagwa, Sydney Sekeramayi, John Nkomo and Simba Makoni. MDC said government crackdown escalating, met with home affairs minister to lodge complaint. Government reportedly stepping up drive to expel 600 remaining white farmers after expiry of 30 September deadline for leaving country.

- ["Harare intensifies drive to expel white farmers"](#), *ZimOnline*, 22 Oct. 2007.
- ["Mugabe has named potential successors, says report"](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 19 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°132, *Zimbabwe: A Regional Solution?*, 18 Sept. 2007.

WEST AFRICA

➔ Côte d'Ivoire UNSG Ban Ki-moon reported "slackening of momentum" in peace process 1 October; 19 October UN

report claimed reduced cooperation in arms monitoring – in particular by Republican Guard units. UNSC adopted resolution for one-year extension of sanctions 29 October.

- [“UN agrees one-year extension of sanctions on Ivory Coast”](#), AFP, 29 Oct. 2007.
- [“Government, former rebels thwarting arms inspections, UN says”](#), IRIN, 25 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°127, *Côte d’Ivoire: Can the Ouagadougou Agreement Bring Peace?*, 27 June 2007.

➤ Guinea First National Assembly address by PM Kouyaté 11 October set out program ahead of elections now likely first quarter 2008; met political party leaders 12 October to discuss electoral preparations. Still no functioning electoral commission after opposition delays in agreeing common list of candidates.

- [“Youths chase staff from state electricity offices, protesting power cuts”](#), IRIN, 24 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°121, *Guinea: Change or Chaos*, 14 Feb. 2007.

➤ Liberia Withdrawal of 2,450 UNMIL troops started, despite UNSC recognition peace remains fragile. In public broadcast, President Johnson Sirleaf claimed “enemies of state” undermining government; opposition leaders said this constituted threat to their security. Alleged coup-plot trial continued: defence moved for dismissal 16 October claiming state failed to produce weapons allegedly used to commit murder, and to name individuals believed murdered.

- [“Bush promises more help for Liberia”](#), VOA, 18 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°107, *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*, 6 Apr. 2006.

➤ Mali Situation remained tense despite 18 September truce between government and Ibrahima Bahanga’s Tuareg splinter group. Government troop build-up in remote north continued. Pro-government Tuareg leaders met Bahanga 17 October, in new bid to secure release of remaining hostages.

- [“Analyst says Mali troop buildup raises risk for renewed violence”](#), VOA, 22 Oct. 2007.

➤ Niger Niger Movement for Justice (MNJ) promised return to violence after Ramadan truce; refused to engage in dialogue without government recognition of rebellion. MNJ claimed killed 12 soldiers in north 27 October. Government ordered NGO Médecins sans Frontières to leave north 23 October, after MSF trucks hijacked. State of emergency remained in force for Agadez region; media repression continued. 200 journalists protested in Niamey against arrests and media restrictions 20 October.

- [“Niger rebels say kill 12 soldiers in ambush”](#), Reuters, 27 Oct. 2007.
- [“Journalists march in Niger to protest arrests”](#), Reuters, 20 Oct. 2007.

➤ Nigeria Separate electoral courts nullified elections of 3 ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) governors in Kogi, Kebbi and Rivers states. Human Rights Watch released report dismissing April elections as “farce”. Court handling opposition petitions against President Yar’Adua merged petitions of main parties in move that acknowledges previous hearings excessively delayed. Leaderships of federal legislative houses continued to battle corruption allegations. Brawl between members of lower house led to death of MP 17 October: continued impasse in lower house, corruption accusations and

blackmail in senate eroding public confidence in legislature. Niger Delta remained unstable despite military presence and curfews. Kidnappings escalated after MEND ceasefire ended September. Colombian oil worker killed during attack 10 October, 1 naval officer 31 October. VP Goodluck Jonathan announced delayed Niger Delta peace and development summit to be held November. Ijaw leaders support initiative; other Delta ethnic groups less positive.

- [“6 oil workers kidnapped in Nigeria”](#), AP, 26 Oct. 2007.
- [“Nigeria’s speaker will step aside”](#), BBC, 25 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°126, *Nigeria: Failed Elections, Failing State?*, 30 May 2007.

➤ Sierra Leone President Koroma addressed new parliament, 5 October; pledged to implement recommendations of Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Former leaders of pro-government Civil Defense Force, Moinina Fofana and Allieu Kondewa, sentenced by Special Court 9 October, to 6 and 8 years respectively; denounced by prosecution as too lenient.

- [“Sierra Leone has made great strides, UN peacebuilding official says”](#), UN News, 16 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°129, *Sierra Leone: The Election Opportunity*, 12 July 2007.

Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

➤ Kazakhstan Former son-in-law of President Nazarbayev, Rakhat Aliev, accused him of ordering 2006 murder of opposition leader Sarsenbayev. Earlier in month officials suggested remains of 1 of 2 missing Nurbank executives, over which Aliev implicated, found. OSCE ministers due to decide 29-30 November on Kazakhstan bid for chairmanship.

- [“President accused of ordering opposition leader’s murder”](#), RFE/RL, 26 Oct. 2007.
- [“Kazakhs say body could be that of missing banker”](#), RFE/RL, 17 Oct. 2007.

➤ Kyrgyzstan President Bakiyev dissolved parliament 22 October, day after constitutional amendments broadening parliamentary powers, increasing presidential prerogatives and altering electoral system approved by 75% of registered voters in referendum. OSCE received numerous local observer reports of procedural violations, including ballot-stuffing. Parliamentary elections under new party list system set 16 December. New pro-presidential Ak Jol Eldik party founded and registered 15 October; Bakiyev suspended active chairmanship shortly after. Uzbek-language newspaper editor Alisher Saipov, vocal critic of Uzbek government, shot dead in Osh by unknown gunman 24 October. Interior ministry alleged Saipov had “close ties” to Islamist groups; activists and politicians suggested ministry under pressure from Uzbekistan. Bishkek military court gave former prosecutor Kudaibergenov and former provincial police chief 5-year suspended sentences for involvement in 2002 Akysy protestor shootings; former minister Dubanaev acquitted.

- [“Friends cry foul as authorities link slain journalist to Islamists”](#), RFE/RL, 31 Oct. 2007.
- [“New party may dominate Kyrgyz parliament”](#), IWPR, 26 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°55, *Kyrgyzstan on the Edge*, 9 Nov. 2006.


- Tajikistan Khatlon regional authorities instructed imams to stop students from attending mosque prayers, citing school absence. Culture ministry ordered 3-month suspension of Jehovah's Witness and 2 other Christian organisations' activities, citing rejection of military service.
 - "Tajik region bans youths from attending prayers", RFE/RL, 10 Oct. 2007.
- Turkmenistan Latest amnesty saw release of 8,853 prisoners, but excluded most government opponents and former officials. President Berdimuhammedov dismissed National Security Minister Ashirmukhammedov and Interior Minister Annagurbanov 8 October; criminal cases reportedly launched against both.
 - "New president still bound to clans, nepotism", RFE/RL, 10 Oct. 2007.
 - "Turkmenistan frees 9,000 inmates, but many high-profile political prisoners still jailed", RFE/RL, 9 Oct. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°60, *Turkmenistan after Niyazov*, 12 Feb. 2007.
- Uzbekistan EU suspended travel ban on officials involved in 2005 Andijon massacre 15 October; agreed to review human right situation April 2008 to decide whether to re-impose or end restrictions. Pressure on journalists and opposition continued, including 23 October arrest of rights activist Karim Bozorboyev. Uzbek-language newspaper editor in Kyrgyzstan Alisher Saipov shot dead 24 October (see Kyrgyzstan). Bukhara court sentenced 8 men 3-10 years for Hizb ut-Tahrir membership.
 - "Kyrgyz official points at Uzbekistan over murder", Reuters, 29 Oct. 2007.
 - "EU's easing of Uzbek sanctions 'absurd'", IWPR, 23 Oct. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°67, *Uzbekistan: Stagnation and Uncertainty*, 22 Aug. 2007.

SOUTH ASIA

- Afghanistan Following President Karzai's stated openness to talks, some Taliban commanders in Helmand reportedly submitted demands for control of 10 southern provinces, timetable for foreign troop withdrawal and release of all Taliban prisoners; agreement on any unlikely. Death of key southern figure Mullah Naqib 11 October raised possibility of power struggle within Alokozai tribe leaving outskirts of Kandahar vulnerable to Taliban attack or infiltration; fighting between Canadian ISAF troops and Taliban moved closer to city 30 October. At meeting of NATO defence ministers 24-26 October, ISAF commander McNeill and others called for greater troop burden-sharing among member nations, but few substantial commitments made. 2 further suicide attacks in Kabul in first week of month marked 6-year anniversary of U.S. invasion. UNDSS reported violent incidents had risen 30% from 2006 levels.
 - "Taliban fighters move in near Kandahar for first time since 2001", *New York Times*, 31 Oct. 2007.
 - "Overhaul of Afghan police is new priority", *New York Times*, 18 Oct. 2007.
 - "Taliban sets out demands to Afghan president", *Guardian*, 15 Oct. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°138, *Reforming Afghanistan's Police*, 30 Aug. 2007.

- Bangladesh Dhaka University reopened peacefully after 2-month shutdown following August's bloody student protests against military. Government's crackdown on corruption continues. Former PM Khaleda Zia still in jail after Supreme Court reversed lower court's decision to release, but anti-corruption commission cleared her on 2 counts 26 October. Government planning truth commission on corruption that could provide conditional amnesty to businesspeople. Election commission said polls as early as October 2008 if voter list finished by July; substantial challenges remain.
 - "Bangladesh ex-PM Khaleda cleared of two charges", Reuters, 26 Oct. 2007.
 - "Bangladesh elections could be next October", AFP, 10 Oct. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°121, *Bangladesh Today*, 23 Oct. 2006.
- India (non-Kashmir) Security forces in Punjab raised alert 14 October after apparent "terrorist attack" killed 6 in Ludhiana city cinema; police blamed Sikh militants. 3 days earlier, small blast at Muslim shrine in neighbouring Rajasthan killed 3 on eve of Eid celebrations; no claim of responsibility. Attack by Naxalites on cultural festival in Jharkhand 27 October killed 17.
 - "Many dead in India Maoist attack", BBC, 27 Oct. 2007.
 - "Punjab cinema blast kills six", *Guardian*, 15 Oct. 2007.
- Kashmir In step towards normalisation, commercial lorries crossed India-Pakistan border for first time since partition at Punjab's Wagah border post 1 October. Pakistan President Musharraf announced political and administrative reforms for Northern Areas 23 October, giving regional assembly greater say in regional administration; move rejected in Northern Areas as attempt to bypass real political reform.
 - "Lawyers protest Northern Areas reform package", *Daily Times*, 24 Oct. 2007.
 - "Constitutional package for N. Areas", *Dawn*, 23 Oct. 2007.
 - "Goods vehicles cross India-Pakistan border for first time", *Guardian*, 1 Oct. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°131, *Discord in Pakistan's Northern Areas*, 2 April 2007.
- Maldives President Gayoom announced strict measures to curb Islamic extremism after September Malé bombing. 16 October decree bans entry of foreign clerics without explicit permission, outlaws full covering for women and promotes moderate Islam in schools. Opposition MDP said move would exacerbate extremism.
 - "Maldives militant move condemned", BBC, 18 Oct. 2007.
- Nepal Constituent Assembly polls postponed indefinitely after crisis talks 5 October failed to bring Maoists back into government. Deadlock persists over Maoist demands to vote on republic prior to elections and shift to full proportional representation.
 - "Nepal parliament puts off crisis vote to month-end", Reuters, 16 Oct. 2007.
 - "Nepal election postponed after political deadlock", *Guardian*, 5 Oct. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°68, *Nepal's Fragile Peace Process*, 28 Sept. 2007.

- ↓ ↘ Pakistan Army stepped up offensive against militants in Tribal Areas in response to 6 October ambush near Mir Ali in North Waziristan; 9 October raids included heavy air attacks. Fighting also surged in Swat valley, NWFP, after army deployed over 2,000 troops 23 October to fight militants linked to pro-Taliban cleric Maulana Fazlullah. 21 soldiers killed in attack on army convoy in Mingora 25 October; heavy casualties and many displaced as fighting followed. Temporary ceasefire reported 29 October by Fazlullah's illegal radio broadcast, but fighting resumed quickly. Bloody attack on participants in 18 October Karachi rally to mark PPP leader Benazir Bhutto's return from exile killed 140, injured more than 500; Bhutto unhurt. Her allegations 2 chief ministers and agency officials involved led to strained relations with Musharraf government. Other deadly suicide attacks followed at Rawalpindi police checkpoint near Musharraf's army HQ 30 October and on air force bus in Sarghoda 1 November. Musharraf re-elected president 6 October by standing assemblies (PPP boycotted; all other opposition parties resigned from assemblies) but Supreme Court must still rule on his eligibility. Caretaker government due to take over 15 November.
- "Bhutto's return brings Pakistani politics to a boil", *New York Times*, 30 Oct. 2007.
 - "Bomb kills 21 in Pakistani army convoy", *LA Times*, 26 Oct. 2007.
 - "The war heats up", *Economist*, 11 Oct. 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°69,  [Pakistan: The Forgotten Conflict in Balochistan](#), 22 October 2007. The insurgency in Balochistan will only subside when free and fair elections establish a legitimate government to replace Pakistan's current military dictatorship. The federal government must return power to democratic institutions to stem growing Baloch alienation and regional instability. It should cease all military operations, release political prisoners and accept the Supreme Court's directive to end the disappearances of political opponents. The government should also ensure freedom of speech, movement, association and assembly and remove all restrictions on Baloch nationalist parties.


- ↓ ↘ Sri Lanka Heavy losses incurred at Anuradhapura air base in 22 October LTTE combined air and ground raid; 20 rebel suicide cadres and 13 soldiers killed; at least 8 aircraft damaged or destroyed. 3 unusual LTTE attacks in south east, including ambush near Yala wildlife park, left 7 soldiers dead. Heavy fighting continued in north, especially near Vavuniya. UN human rights commissioner Louise Arbour called for monitoring mission after 5-day visit 15 October; government rejected. UN torture rapporteur raised alarm that torture "prone to become routine" in government's counter-terrorism operations.
- "Rebels attack Sri Lanka air base", BBC, 22 Oct. 2007.
 - "Sri Lanka spurns calls for UN mission", *Financial Times*, 15 Oct. 2007.
 - "Fighting escalates in Sri Lanka", *Christian Science Monitor*, 4 Oct. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°135, [Sri Lanka's Human Rights Crisis](#), 14 June 2007.

NORTH EAST ASIA

- ↘ North Korea Beijing issued 6-party joint statement 3 October confirming capitals had approved 30 September agreements: DPRK will submit complete declaration of nuclear programs, disable nuclear reactor, reprocessing plant and fuel fabrication plant at Yongbyon complex by year end. U.S. envoy Christopher Hill suggested declaration could come mid-November. Pyongyang inter-Korean summit 2-4 October produced pledge toward formal peace and enhancement of economic and cultural ties. China suspended rail links into the DPRK 11 October, "critically affecting" WFP food distribution.
- "Envoy warns of N. Korea deal fallout", *Washington Post*, 26 Oct. 2007.
 - "China halts rail freight to N Korea", *Financial Times*, 18 Oct. 2007.
 - "North and South Korea pledge end to war", *Financial Times*, 4 Oct. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°62, [After the North Korea Nuclear Breakthrough: Compliance or Confrontation?](#), 30 Apr. 2007.
- ↘ Taiwan Strait Taiwan held first National Day military parade in 16 years 10 October at which President Chen Shui-bian criticised mainland's "relentless military build-up". Chen agreed to return as leader of Democratic Progressive Party: first said independence to be centre of campaign for March 2008 presidential elections, later clarified referendum on UN membership not step toward independence but opposition to unification. PRC President Hu Jintao called for official peace agreement with Taiwan at CPC Congress 15 October opening but said would never compromise on independence.
- "Taiwan's Chen says UN referendum not move toward independence", AP, 29 Oct. 2007.
 - "Taiwan shows off military might", BBC, 10 Oct. 2007.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

- ↘ Indonesia Tribal clash in mid-October between Dani and Amungme tribes in Mimika, Papua; 8 reported killed. Crackdown on illegal weapons in Aceh after several high-profile armed robberies and murders by GAM members.
- "Tribal violence kills eight in Papua", *Jakarta Post*, 18 Oct. 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°139, [Aceh: Post-conflict Complications](#), 4 October  2007. Poor governance, criminal activities of ex-rebels and a dysfunctional reintegration program are problematic but the long-term threat to peace in Aceh is the unresolved issue of its authority vis-à-vis the central government in Jakarta. Since the victory of Free Aceh Movement candidates in the December 2006 local elections, a new elite has formed, but it has also created new divisions between well-funded commanders and many rank-and-file who feel they have not received their fair share. GAM leaders need to deliver tangible benefits and keep their supporters under control. The central government needs to keep its intelligence agencies in check.

Myanmar/Burma Ruling junta continued to suppress dissent in crackdown that began 26 September and saw possibly hundreds killed, some 3,000 arrested (official death toll 10). Yangon curfew lifted 20 October but troops redeployed 26 October, arrests continue. Monks returned 31 October to Pakokku streets, where demonstrations accelerated early September. UNSC issued first-ever statement on situation in Myanmar 11 October: "strongly deplored" violent repression of demonstrators and called for prisoners' release. Statement followed Yangon visit by UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari, who returns to Myanmar early November after visiting neighbouring countries. EU, U.S. expanded targeted sanctions, while Chinese, Russian and Indian FMs, in 24 October trilateral, urged junta to cooperate with Gambari mission. After refusing talks with junta 9 October, opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi met Gen. Aung Kyi 25 October; outcome of talks unknown. Junta announced formation of 54-member committee on new constitution 19 October as part of "road map" to democracy; no opposition figures included.

- "Burmese monks stage first protest since uprising", *Guardian*, 1 Nov. 2007.
- "Soldiers back on Rangoon streets", BBC, 26 Oct. 2007.
- "The power behind the robe", *Irrawaddy*, 5 Oct. 2007.

Philippines Government said 23-24 October talks with MILF representatives in Kuala Lumpur yielded agreement on long-contentious ancestral domain issue; details sketchy but exploratory talks to resume 14 November. Former president Joseph Estrada given presidential pardon 25 October, 2 weeks after conviction on plunder charges led to life sentence. 19 October explosion at Manila mall killed 11; police downplayed claim by small Muslim group and suggested gas leak possible cause.

- "MILF says it got more territory in talks", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 1 Nov. 2007.
- "Ceasefire won't last if talks remain stalled, MILF warns", *GMA News*, 22 Oct. 2007.
- "Blast puts Manila on high alert", *Financial Times*, 19 Oct. 2007.

Thailand First coordinated bombings in South since government sweep operations began in June hit parts of Narthiwat 1 October. In Bangkok, new army chief Gen. Anupong Paochinda ordered military reshuffle 4 October. Cabinet endorsed watered down version of national security bill 16 October; bill still gives sweeping search and detention powers to Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), but with PM at head not armed forces chief.

- "Bomb blasts in Thailand's restive south kills 1, wounds 12", *AP*, 1 Oct. 2007.
- "Thai generals' security bill a power play before vote", *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 Sept. 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°140, **International Crisis Group** WORKING TO PREVENT CONFLICT WORLDWIDE
Southern Thailand: The Problem with Paramilitaries, 23 October 2007. Thailand's increasing reliance on poorly trained and loosely supervised paramilitary rangers and village volunteer militias is complicating its efforts to tackle the insurgency in the South. The government should review the use of irregular forces and crack down on private sectarian vigilante groups. The inability of police and military to tackle the insurgency suggests the government cannot be expected to abandon the militias immediately, but they should be consolidated, and the police and military professionalised.

Timor-Leste Former soldier Vicente Conceicao (aka Railos) arrested 3 October for role in 2006 violence, specifically for 9 deaths in Taci Tolu/Tibar 24 May 2006. Court of Appeal ordered re-trials in 2 high-profile cases of politically-related violence: May 2006 attack on house of army commander Taur Matan Ruak, and murder of CNRT supporter during June parliamentary elections. Timorese man shot dead by Indonesian border troops, 26 October, after allegedly attacking soldiers when confronted. Parliament approved government's transitional budget 9 October.

- "Defence denies bashing of East Timor men", *The Age*, 23 Oct. 2007.
- "More than 100,000 Timorese remain in refugee camps", *VOA*, 11 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°65, *Timor-Leste's Parliamentary Elections*, 12 June 2007.

PACIFIC

Fiji Coup leader Frank Bainimarama committed to March 2009 deadline for free elections to replace military government at Pacific Islands Forum in Tonga 18 October; quoted in press reports day later saying deposed PM Laisenia Qarase would be barred from standing.

- "Fiji commits to election timetable", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 Oct. 2007.

Europe

BALKANS

Albania Parliament began procedure to strip immunity of FM Lulzim Basha over investigation into corruption allegations. EU granted Tirana €200m for economic, political and judicial reform 18 October.

- "Albania hosts NATO military exercise", *SEE Times*, 25 Oct. 2007.
- "Majority in Albanian parliament to support bill limiting lawmakers' immunity", *SEE Times*, 23 Oct. 2007.

Bosnia & Herzegovina Serious deterioration in political situation after ongoing police reform dispute eclipsed by Bosnian Serb reactions to High Representative Lajcak's 19 October proposals to counter obstructionism in state-level government and legislative processes. PM Spiric resigned 1 November following similar threats from Republika Srpska (RS) PM Dodik and other leading Serb officials. Rallies against changes held throughout RS 29 October; RS assembly rejected proposals and called for elimination of Lajcak's Bonn powers 30 October. Russian Deputy FM Titov called for closure of Office of High Representative. Serbian PM Kostunica accused Lajcak of trying to destroy RS and, for first time, linked Dayton Accord with Kosovo status process. UK, U.S., France, Germany and Italy issued demarche to Belgrade 30 October. Peace Implementation Council, meeting 31 October, noted "utmost concern" over deterioration; laid responsibility with political leaders from both entities blocking progress. 6 governing party chiefs agreed to EU police reform principles 27 October after Lajcak's rejection of September Bosniak-Serb "deal"; details to be formulated in parliament.

- [“Powers back Bosnia envoy, Russia faults timing”](#), Reuters, 31 Oct. 2007.
- [“Bosnia leaders agree to unblock police reform”](#), Reuters, 28 Oct. 2007.
- [“Five countries seal agreement on deploying European Gendarmerie in BiH”](#), SEE Times, 19 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°180, [Ensuring Bosnia's Future: A New International Engagement Strategy](#), 15 Feb. 2007.

➡ Kosovo Status talks continued in Vienna: U.S.-EU-Russia troika proposed 14-point agenda to govern post-status Kosovo-Serbia relations, modelled on East-West Germany agreement of 1972, avoiding mention of independence, 22, 29 October. Belgrade objected because independence not ruled out. EU agreed additional preparations for 2,000-strong post-status missions 2 October. Kosovo parliamentary, mayoral and municipal assembly elections due 17 November. Concerns raised over Kosovo Serb participation as Belgrade ordered boycott. Serbia PM Kostunica linked Kosovo status process with Bosnia's Republika Srpska for first time 25 October (see Bosnia above), while FM Jeremic stated planned EU mission would need UNSC approval 29 October. Deputy PM Djelic claim Belgrade wanted Kosovo to take over its share of debt repayment refuted by Minister for Kosovo Samardzic. Local media showed footage 4 October of self-proclaimed Albanian National Army members threatening violent struggle; Serb equivalent, Tsar Lazar Guard militia, prevented from entering Kosovo 14 October. Kosovo police arrested Milazim Bytyqi, suspected of killing 14 Serb civilians in July 1999.

- [“Serbia rejects German model for Kosovo”](#), BIRN, 31 Oct. 2007.
- [“Armed group of ethnic Albanians tries nerves”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 7 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°185, [Breaking the Kosovo Stalemate: Europe's Responsibility](#), 21 Aug. 2007.

➡ Macedonia Constitutional Court President Jusufi and judge Polozani resigned over court ruling restricting display of Albanian flag on public buildings 30 October. EU expressed concern over reform process during PM Crvenkoski's visit to Brussels 3-5 October. Policeman killed in car attack in Tanusevci near border with Kosovo 25 October. UN-hosted talks with Greece on name due 1 November after Athens threatened to veto Skopje's NATO accession; suspended financial aid 17 October. 5,000 rallied in Tetevo 19 October for Kosovo independence. New centrist Party of Free Democrats formed around former parliamentary speaker Ljupco Jordanovski.

- [“Macedonia's constitutional court president resigns”](#), BIRN, 30 Oct. 2007.
- [“EU won't propose starting Macedonia entry talks”](#), Reuters, 30 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°41, [Macedonia: Wobbling toward Europe](#), 12 Jan. 2006.

➡ Serbia EU postponed signature of Stabilisation and Association Agreement after ICTY Chief Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte gave critical assessment of Serbia's cooperation 15 October. Del Ponte visited Belgrade 25-27 October to prepare final report on cooperation with tribunal. Split in Serbia's Islamic community widened as Belgrade-backed clergy attempted to oust Mufti Zukorlic with support from Novi Pazar Mayor Ugljanin. 4 former members of paramilitary group “Scorpions”

arrested in Sremska Mitrovica 19 October. 56 neo-Nazis detained in Novi Sad 8 October after clashes with antifascist counter demonstrators.

- [“Serbia assured that Kosovo process won't be linked to EU accession”](#), SEE Times, 19 Oct. 2007.
- [“Del Ponte: Mladic Obstacle to Serbia's EU Progress”](#), IWPR, 19 Oct. 2007.

Crisis Group Europe Report N°186, [Serbia: Maintaining Peace in the Presevo Valley](#), 16 October 2007. Albanian politicians, Belgrade and the international community need to ensure that Kosovo's anticipated independence does not destabilise the neighbouring Presevo Valley. There have been no major incidents in southern Serbia for over three years, but tensions linger. Belgrade should improve the effectiveness of the Coordination Body supervising the Konculj Agreement, which ended the 2000-2001 ethnic Albanian insurrection; better control its security forces' actions; and stop discriminatory employment and investment practices. Albanian politicians in the valley should end their CB boycott and participate in Serbian political life.



CAUCASUS

➡ Armenia Former president Levon Ter Petrosian announced presidential candidacy at mass rally in Yerevan; repeated strong criticism of current government and Nagorno-Karabakh policy. President Kocharian relieved judge Ohanian of duties on Council of Justice advice: series of irregularities in some 20 court cases cited, but supporters said punished for his acquittal of 2 businessmen who alleged high-level customs corruption.

- [“Ter-Petrosian declares presidential bid in Yerevan rally”](#), Armenia Liberty, 26 Oct. 2007.

➡ Azerbaijan Baku trial of 16 accused of Northern Mahdi Army membership, seeking to impose Sharia and espionage for Iran, began 8 October. Court for Grave Crimes sentenced newspaper editor Eynulla Fatullayev 8.5 years for article alleging Baku could support U.S. operation against Iran. Security Ministry announced had thwarted major attack on U.S. and government targets in 27 October operation on unnamed Wahhabi group near Baku; 1 suspect killed, several arrested. Former Economic Minister Farhad Aliyev sentenced 10 years for corruption 31 October. Presidential administration announced formation of state council to assist NGOs 17 October; activists fear measure aimed at controlling work.

- [“Azerbaijan editor jailed over article”](#), AP, 31 Oct. 2007.
- [“Azerbaijan says it thwarts terrorist plot in Baku”](#), AP, 29 Oct. 2007.

➡ Chechnya (Russia) Separatist leader Doku Umarov declared all those forces fighting Muslims in world legitimate targets. Rebel ambush on interior ministry servicemen convoy left 4 Russian policemen dead 7 October.

- [“Four policemen killed, 10 wounded in Chechnya”](#), Reuters, 8 Oct. 2007.

➡ North Caucasus (non-Chechnya) Violence continued in Ingushetia and Dagestan. In Ingushetia, 3 ethnic Russians shot dead by gunmen in Karabulak. In Dagestan, 2 bomb attacks 23 October on minibus and taxi killed 1 suicide bomber; police officer and militant reported killed in 25 October clash in Khasavyurt Raion. President Putin said security situation alarming but controllable.

- [“Second blast in troubled Russian region”](#), Reuters, 23 Oct. 2007.
- [“Gunmen kill 3 Russians in Ingushetia –police”](#), Reuters, 14 Oct. 2007.

➤ Georgia Georgia-Russia relations tense after 30 October incident at Georgian youth camp in Georgian-controlled area of Abkhazia. Tbilisi accused Russian peacekeepers of detaining several policemen; President Saakashvili declared peacekeeping force commander Sergey Chaban persona non grata. UNSC extended UN Observer Mission 6 months, expressed concern over recent clashes, called on sides to ensure freedom of movement for observers and peacekeepers, and reaffirmed right of refugee and IDP return 15 October. 1 man killed in 17 October incident: Sukhumi said customs guard shot by Georgian guards; Tbilisi said returned fire on man trying to board stolen vehicle. Conflict resolution minister Davit Bakradze met de facto Abkhaz foreign minister Sergey Shamba in Sukhumi 25 October; agreed to release 7 Abkhaz militiamen captured in 20 September clash and resume weekly quadripartite talks on local security near ceasefire line, suspended since November 2006. Situation also remained tense in South Ossetia with continuation of shooting incidents and ongoing construction of bypass road connecting Georgian-administered enclaves. Joint Control Commission met in Tbilisi 23-4 October for first time since August 2006; no agreement, but security, freedom of movement and OSCE-led rehabilitation discussed. Major opposition rally due in Tbilisi 2 November following series of anti-government protests.

- [“Georgia ends agreement for peacekeepers in Abkhazia”](#), EurasiaNet, 31 Oct. 2007.
- [“Talks between Georgia and rebel region break down”](#), Reuters, 24 Oct. 2007.
- [“Abkhazian customs official killed in clash with Georgian border guards”](#), AP, 18 Oct. 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 conducted shuttle diplomacy between Baku and Yerevan 24-27 October, meeting with Armenian President Kocharian and Azerbaijani President Aliiev. U.S. co-chair Matthew Bryza quoted in local media saying framework agreement might be reached by sides by spring of 2008.

- [“Azeri-Armenian framework on rebel region soon-U.S.”](#), Reuters, 26 Oct. 2007.

EASTERN EUROPE

➤ Belarus At least 8 opposition activists arrested before 14 October European March for Freedom in Minsk; 6,000 held peaceful pro-EU rally. Ministry of Justice and Supreme Court denied registration of opposition group Youth Front, women’s party Hope and Milinkevich’s Movement for Freedom.

- [“Belarus allows rare pro-EU rally”](#), BBC, 14 Oct. 2007.

➤ Moldova Transdniestrian de facto court sentenced 2 men to 9-10 years for making bomb which exploded on Tiraspol bus in July 2006.

- [“Two men sentenced in separatist Moldovan province bus explosion”](#), AP, 25 Oct. 2007.

➤ Ukraine Yulia Tymoshenko bloc (BYuT) and Our Ukraine-People’s Self-Defense bloc (NUNS) signed coalition

agreement after Central Election Commission issued final results of 30 September parliamentary elections. In new assembly Party of Regions will have 175 seats, BYuT 156 seats, NUNS 72 seats, Communist Party 27 seats, and Lytvyn Bloc 20 seats. Turnout officially confirmed at 62%.

- [“The power of a second chance”](#), RFE/RL, 19 Oct. 2007.
- [“Orange’ coalition deal initialed, but have lessons of past been learned?”](#), RFE/RL, 16 Oct. 2007.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➤ Basque Country (Spain) Police arrested 25 leading members of banned separatist Batasuna party 2, 4 October; provisionally charged 17 with membership of armed group. ETA suspected in car bomb attack on bodyguard of local counsellor in Bilbao 9 October. PM Zapatero rejected Basque regional president Ibarretxe’s proposals for a 2008 referendum on region’s future relationship with Spain. Basque Country judge ruled Ibarretxe and 2 Socialist Party members must stand trial for meeting Batasuna leaders in 2006, early 2007.

- [“Spanish court orders trial for Basque president over talks with ETA wing”](#), AP, 30 Oct. 2007.
- [“Spanish premier rejects Basque leader’s plan for referendum on region’s future”](#), AP, 16 Oct. 2007.
- [“Spanish police arrest leading Basque separatists”](#), *Guardian*, 5 Oct. 2007.

➤ Cyprus Cypriot and Greek governments protested strategic partnership agreement signed by British and Turkish PMs Brown and Erdogan 23 October; said document’s call to promote direct commercial, political and economic ties with Turkish Cypriots and reference to TRNC (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) promoted partition. London reaffirmed support for unity of island and UN settlement efforts. Turkish Cypriot leader Talat met UNSG Ban Ki-moon 16 October; urged more active UN support for negotiations restart.

- [“Greece summons British ambassador to complain over Britain-Turkey agreement”](#), AP, 25 Oct. 2007.
- [“Turk Cypriots seek greater U.N. role to start talks”](#), Reuters, 16 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°171, [The Cyprus Stalemate: What Next?](#), 8 Mar. 2006.

➤ Northern Ireland (UK) Decision by Social Development Minister Ritchie to cut Conflict Transformation Initiative funding to Ulster Defence Association (UDA) on ground that group still involved in violence, condemned by protestant colleague Finance Minister Robinson. Exchange came week after UDA failed to meet 9 October deadline to start weapons decommissioning. 20 October fatal assault on truck driver suspected of cross-border fuel smuggling linked by family to IRA; claim rejected by local Sinn Fein leaders.

- [“IRA men ‘beat our son to death’”](#), BBC, 22 Oct. 2007.
- [“Split in Northern Ireland govt. over Catholic move to cut funds to Protestant extremists”](#), AP, 16 Oct. 2007.

➤ Turkey Tense month as Ankara stepped up threats to launch major anti-PKK offensive into Iraq unless action taken against group by Iraqi regional and national authorities and U.S.; parliament gave government 1-year authorisation for cross-border action 17 October. FM Babacan communicated 6 demands in Baghdad for “concrete action” against PKK. After initial hardline comments by Iraq President Talabani, Iraqi officials pledged cooperation in flurry of bilateral ministerial

meetings; Iraqi PM al-Maliki called for halt to PKK presence on Iraqi soil and FM Zebari pledged checkpoints to stop supplies to PKK. Turkey rejected as inadequate offer by visiting Iraqi officials of new coalition bases near mountain ranges used by PKK. Tensions rose further after 12 soldiers killed, 8 abducted by PKK 21 October. Mass protests against Kurdish separatism held throughout country and in Turkish diaspora; pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party buildings attacked by protestors; some 20 violent incidents in all. Army stepped up operations and massed troops in border region, shelling Northern Iraq villages and mounting air strikes on border mountain passes; said over 80 PKK rebels and 34 soldiers killed on Turkish territory over month. PM Erdogan and U.S. President Bush due to meet 5 November; U.S. Sec. State Rice to visit Ankara 2 November and Turkey to host Iraq neighbours meeting in Istanbul 2-3 November. Ankara recalled ambassador to Washington in protest of 10 October U.S. congressional committee vote condemning Armenian genocide; full House of Representatives vote postponed. EU Turkey accession progress report due 6 November.

- [“Turkey calls action against Kurdish rebels in Iraq ‘unavoidable’”](#), AP, 30 Oct. 2007.
- [“Turkey pounds rebel positions, Iraq pushes diplomacy”](#), Reuters, 26 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°184, [Turkey and Europe: The Way Ahead](#), 17 Aug. 2007.

Latin America / Caribbean

↳ Bolivia Renewed tension in eastern departments: protestors stormed Santa Cruz airport 18 October and clashed with 300 government soldiers in corruption dispute. After Venezuelan President Chávez pledged military force to suppress any potential coup against Bolivia's Morales, protestors in Santa Cruz launched dynamite attacks 22 October on Venezuelan consulate and house of Cuban doctors. Despite efforts to get Constituent Assembly back on track, Sucre representatives rejected political council compromise of locating Electoral Court, some legislative sessions in the city, blocking resumption of proceedings 25 October.

- [“Sucre rechaza oferta y se aleja salvación de Constituyente”](#), *Los Tiempos*, 25 Oct. 2007.
- [“Venezuelan, Cuban offices attacked in Bolivia”](#), AP, 22 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°23, [Bolivia's New Constitution: Avoiding Violent Confrontation](#), 31 Aug. 2007.

↳ Colombia President Alvaro Uribe's cousin Mario Uribe resigned from Congress 5 October to avoid Supreme Court investigations into “parapolitics” scandal. Supreme Court accused Uribe of obstructing justice in case by alleging bribery of paramilitary witnesses testifying against him. Violence before 28 October local elections killed 4 in 22-24 October attacks. Senior FARC commander ‘Martin Caballero’ killed along with at least 18 other rebels in fighting with armed forces 24 October. Meetings between FARC and Venezuela President Chávez postponed due to “logistics”. Regional elections carried out with relative calm 28 October despite warnings by ombudsman of threat of violence.

- [“Muere en un bombardeo Martín Caballero, un “mito de las FARC”](#), *El País*, 26 Oct. 2007.

- [“Colombian high court accuses Uribe of obstruction”](#), Reuters, 9 Oct. 2007.
- [“Uribe ally quits Colombia Senate”](#), BBC, 5 Oct. 2007.

Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°16, [Colombia: Moving Forward with the ELN?](#), 11 October 2007. The peace process between the government and the National Liberation Army (ELN) risks failure unless both establish the trust needed to overcome substantive bottlenecks. A ceasefire is essential but only one step. The ELN should release kidnap victims, de-mine some areas, make more information available and propose a model for ceasefire implementation and verification. The Uribe administration should be more flexible on a complete cessation of hostilities and the concentration and identification of ELN troops in a ceasefire. Norway, Spain and Switzerland should consider offering expertise on ceasefires and related matters.

↳ Ecuador Acuerdo País coalition, leader in unofficial count from September Constituent Assembly elections, said it would move to dissolve Congress in favour of a legislative commission. President Correa decreed that state entitled to 99% of oil companies' windfall profits.

- [“A. País insiste en disolver el Congreso”](#), *El Comercio*, 26 Oct. 2007.
- [“Ecuador's Correa won assembly vote-official count”](#), Reuters, 4 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°22, [Ecuador: Overcoming Instability?](#), 7 Aug. 2007.

↳ Guatemala Aide to presidential candidate Otto Perez Molina killed by gunmen in suspected political attack in Guatemala City 8 October. Rival Alvaro Colom later accused Perez Molina of threatening his life.

- [“Guatemala candidate accuses rival of death threats”](#), Reuters, 17 Oct. 2007.

↳ Haiti Government announced indefinite postponement of November legislative elections pending investigation of corruption, criminal allegations against electoral council. UN Security Council renewed MINUSTAH peacekeeping force for 1 year 15 October; mandate includes reorganisation of troops to strengthen borders against drugs and arms smuggling.

- [“UN force in Haiti to target arms, drugs smuggling”](#), Reuters, 15 Oct. 2007.
- [“Haiti delays Senate elections amid infighting on electoral council”](#), AP, 10 Oct. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Report N°21, [Consolidating Stability in Haiti](#), 18 July 2007.

↳ Venezuela National Assembly added 25 further amendments to President Hugo Chávez's sweeping constitutional changes 16 October, including suspension of due process protections during state of emergencies. Police fired tear gas on thousands of student demonstrators in Caracas 23 October as Congress entered final debate ahead of expected December referendum on changes.

- [“Venezuelan students clash with police in protests”](#), Reuters, 23 Oct. 2007.
- [“Chavez reforms go to parliament”](#), BBC, 17 Oct. 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 Diplomatic preparations intensified for Annapolis peace conference due “before end of year”, but with widespread scepticism any breakthrough achievable. U.S. Sec. State Condoleezza Rice pushed for regional support: Palestinian Authority to attend only if key issues discussed, including final status of Jerusalem, borders of future state and right of return for refugees. Israeli PM Olmert appointed FM Tzipi Livni as chief negotiator. Conflict along Gaza-Israel border saw 2 Israeli soldiers and up to 6 Hamas militants killed, while Israel’s troop presence in West Bank increased. Army’s September order expropriating land within Jerusalem settlement project revived Palestinian fears peace process could serve as smokescreen for land grab. Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak’s authorisation of cutting power to Gaza in response to continued missile fire blocked by attorney general 30 October, though reductions in fuel deliveries started. Deadlock within Palestinian political system continued. Hamas consolidated grip on Gaza Strip, while in West Bank security forces controlled by presidency and Fayyad government continued campaign to pressure Islamists. Hamas attempts to exert authority over Fatah-aligned clans in Gaza, and other factional clashes from 18 October, killed 7.
- [“Israel restricts Gaza crossing as firing persists”](#), *New York Times*, 29 Oct. 2007.
 - [“Israel plays down Mideast conference”](#), AP, 25 Oct. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°68, [After Gaza](#), 2 Aug. 2007.

- ➔ Lebanon Parliamentary session to select new president postponed again to 12 November. Hizbollah-aligned parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri and anti-Syrian March 14 coalition leader Raad Hariri met 19 October to discuss possible successors to pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud. Rival Christian leaders Amin Gemayel and Michel Aoun also held talks 21 October. First Israeli-Hizbollah prisoner exchange since 2006 war 15 October: Israeli civilian’s body swapped for Hizbollah prisoner and bodies of 2 militants. UN began returning displaced Palestinians to Nahr al-Bared refugee camp 10 October.
- [“Berri puts off day of decision in Beirut until November 12”](#), *Daily Star*, 23 Oct. 2007.
 - [“Israeli-Hizbollah swap sparks speculation about further exchanges”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 Oct. 2007.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°69, [Hizbollah and the Lebanese Crisis](#), 10 October 2007. Amid political deadlock, all parties and their external allies need to put aside maximalist demands and agree a deal that accepts for now Hizbollah’s armed status while constraining how its weapons can be used. The movement appears in search of a solution that defuses sectarian tensions and reflects its more defensive military posture, but it is not likely to compromise at any price. Lebanon’s future is intricately tied to the regional confrontation that brought it to the brink of renewed civil war. At best, one can try to immunise the country from that confrontation’s most destabilising and costly effects.



- ➔ Syria President Bashar Assad 1 October stated Israeli 6 September airstrike hit unused military building; denied widespread speculation it was nuclear site under development with North Korean assistance. Syria continued to refuse to attend Annapolis peace conference (see Israel/OTs) unless Golan Heights on agenda. Damascus ended suspension of new visa rules for Iraqis 1 October.
- [“A mystery unsolved”](#), *Economist*, 18 Oct. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°63, [Restarting Israeli-Syrian Negotiations](#), 10 Apr. 2007.

GULF

- ➔ Bahrain Leader of Islamist al-Wifaq, main Shiite group in national assembly threatened to resign 8 October, to compel government to offer better rewards for al-Wifaq’s involvement in parliament. Group joined 16 October opening of second term of parliament.
- [“Anti-riot police clash with Bahrainis protesting restricted access to tiny islands”](#), AP, 15 Oct. 2007.
 - [“Internal politics of parliamentary bloc comes under close scrutiny”](#), *Gulfnews*, 10 Oct. 2007.
- ➔ Iran Tensions increased as Washington announced further financial sanctions 25 October targeting Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) for being “proliferator of weapons of mass destruction”, elite Quds Force for support of terrorism, and 3 banks and several IRGC-owned companies. Tehran labelled sanctions “ineffective”. IAEA head Mohamed ElBaradei said 28 October “no concrete evidence” Iran intended to build nuclear weapon; due to report on uranium enrichment 22 November. Nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani resigned after reported disagreements with President Ahmadi-Nejad; move followed meeting between Russian President Putin and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei where Putin reportedly presented new proposals. Larijani replaced by deputy FM Saeed Jalili, former member of IRGC and ally of Ahmadi-Nejad. Jalili held “constructive” talks with EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana in Rome 23 October accompanied by Larijani amid speculation of tension on issue within leadership.
- [“Options on Iran offer no big dose of optimism”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Oct. 2007.
 - [“Who’s the boss in Iran?”](#), *Economist*, 24 Oct. 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 Widespread violence persisted but civilian deaths continued to decline and security in Baghdad improved. Radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, head of Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, agreed 6 October to end fighting between groups. Sadr also reiterated August suspension of Mahdi army’s activities for 6 months. U.S. operation against suspected senior leaders of al-Qaeda in Iraq in Lake Tharthar region, north of Baghdad led to 34 deaths including 15 civilians, 11 October; 5 October operations against suspected factional Shiite militia in Baquba killed 25. Turkey threatened major cross-border incursion against PKK guerrillas based in northern Iraq (see Turkey) citing reluctance by U.S. and Iraqi Kurd and Iraqi leadership to act. Turkish military amassed troops, conducted airstrikes in border area.
- [“US administration considers options for dealing with Kurdish rebels; military moves under way”](#), AP, 1 Nov. 2007.
 - [“Official quits over Iraq security”](#), BBC, 24 Oct. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°67, [Where Is Iraq Heading? Lessons from Basra](#), 25 June 2007.

NORTH AFRICA

Algeria Authorities confirmed September surrender of “repentant” Hassan Hattab, former founding leader of Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb deputy chief Hareg Zoheir reportedly killed with 2 other rebels in clash at eastern checkpoint 7 October. Army reported to have killed 15 suspected militants and captured 7 in east during operations against al-Qaeda-aligned groups. Police said 11 arrested for suspected involvement in September suicide attack targeting President Bouteflika.

- “Terror in Algeria”, Economist Intelligence Unit, 11 Oct. 2007.
- “Algeria ex-rebel boss surrenders, worries linger”, Reuters, 7 Oct. 2007.

Egypt Tensions between Bedouin tribes and security forces in Sinai continued; rioters, reportedly protesting police failure to halt inter-tribal violence, destroyed al-Arish office of ruling National Democratic Party 7 October. Several independent and opposition newspapers held press strike 7 October to protest official intimidation, including series of pending court cases against journalists; trial of editor Ibrahim Issa postponed to 14 November. President of liberal Wafd party and 2 party newspaper journalists sentenced 1-month 29 October, pending appeal. Court ordered release of senior Muslim Brother Essam el-Erian and 9 others detained in August; 13 students affiliated with Brotherhood arrested after alleged clashes with Ain Shams University security personnel 22 October.

- “Egypt press protests ‘harassment’”, BBC, 8 Oct. 2007.
- “Egypt police clash with Sinai Bedouin, 3 injured”, Reuters, 7 Oct. 2007.

- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°61, *Egypt’s Sinai Question*, 30 Jan. 2007.

Morocco New government announced 15 October: alliance between conservative Istiqlal, centre-right RNI, Socialist Union of Popular Forces and leftist PPS. King Mohammed used prerogative to appoint interior, foreign, defence, religious and finance portfolios. PM El Fassi presented program to parliament 24 October. Largest opposition party, Islamist PJD, appointed hardliner Mustafa Ramid parliament group head, promising more forceful role.

- “Morocco chooses new all-secular cabinet”, AP, 15 Oct. 2007.

Mauritania In ongoing operation against militants linked to al-Qaeda in the Maghreb 10 detained; 3 charged with membership and aiding of extremist organisation.

- “Mauritania releases 2 men arrested in sweep against al-Qaeda-linked group”, AP, 18 Oct. 2007.

Western Sahara Report of UNSG Ban Ki-moon welcomed recent engagement of both sides in face-to-face talks, but highlighted lack of genuine negotiations between parties on major issues. UNSC extended UN peacekeeping mission (MINURSO) mandate to April 2008.

- “UN Security Council extends peacekeepers mandate in Western Sahara, urges negotiations”, AP, 31 Oct. 2007.
- “Risk of protracted status quo and negotiations - Ban Ki-Moon”, UN News, 23 Oct. 2007.

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