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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 our 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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January 2008 Trends



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DR Congo (p.2)



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February 2008 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alerts

Chad Lebanon
Kenya Pakistan



Conflict Resolution Opportunities

Kenya Uganda

Crisis Group

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Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

➡ **Burundi** High-level contacts to relaunch dialogue between government, South African facilitation and PALIPEHUTU-FNL intensified prior to AU summit in Addis Ababa 31 Jan-2 Feb. FNL spokesperson Pasteur Habimana said in 25 Jan interview 7 Sept 2006 ceasefire agreement “rubbish” and imposed by facilitation. Growing insecurity in Bubanza province and some districts of Bujumbura: reported FNL targeting state and elected officials in provinces; intelligence service setting up death squads from demobilised CNDD-FDD and presumed FNL dissidents to target FNL members or sympathisers. 5 FNL fighters killed in clash with government forces in western Musigati region, 9 Jan. Trial of former leader of ruling CNDD-FDD Hussein Radjabu on charges of encouraging instability continued.

- [“Joachim Chissano calls on FNL to resume talks with the government”](#), *Burundi Réalités*, 31 Jan. 2008.
- [“FNL rebels agree to rejoin Dar peace process”](#), *East African*, 28 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°131, *Burundi: Finalising Peace with the FNL*, 28 Aug. 2007.

➡ **Central African Republic** EU peacekeeping (EUFOR) deployment due early Feb. PM Elie Dote and government resigned 18 Jan ahead of parliamentary censure vote and during general strike. Unions launched strike 2 Jan to demand payment of 7-month arrears in civil servant salaries. President François Bozizé appointed university professor Faustin Archange Touadera PM, by decree, 22 Jan; new cabinet includes Bozizé family members. Bozizé threatened to confront unions with “all means available”.

- [“Central African leader names son in new government”](#), Reuters, 28 Jan. 2008.
- [“Beyond a failed state”](#), *Economist*, 24 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°136, *Central African Republic: Anatomy of a Phantom State*, 13 Dec. 2007.

➡ **Democratic Republic of Congo** Cautious optimism after “Goma agreement” signed 23 Jan, following negotiations between government, renegade general Laurent Nkunda and Mai Mai militias. Deal includes ceasefire, troop withdrawal from key areas and creation of UN “buffer zone”; gives militia fighters amnesty for insurgency or acts of war, but not for war crimes or crimes against humanity. Hutu FDLR not invited to talks; government pledged to forcibly disarm rebels by mid-March if they remain active. Task Force of Joint Monitoring Group to implement Nov 2007 Nairobi Communiqué also convened in Goma 11 Jan; no significant progress. Sporadic fighting continued: 10 FPRI rebels killed by army in Ituri 29 Jan. Over 40 civilians killed in fighting between Nkunda’s CNDP and Mai Mai group PARECO 17 Jan north west of Goma. Bas Congo clashes between ethnic-based political and religious movement Bundu dia Kongo and police 5 Jan resulted in 6 deaths.

- [“Peace at last?”](#), *Economist*, 31 Jan. 2008.
- [“Cautious welcome for Kivu peace deal”](#), IRIN, 29 Jan. 2008.

- [“Army kills 10 rebels in Ituri”](#), IRIN, 29 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°133, *Congo: Bringing Peace to North Kivu*, 31 Oct. 2007.

➡ **Rwanda** No progress made on disarmament and repatriation of FDLR rebels from DRC. President Paul Kagame-directed redistribution of land started 22 Jan in Nyagatare District. MPs deployed to schools around country 28 Jan for 1-week anti-genocide ideology campaign. French FM Bernard Kouchner met with President Kagame 26 Jan to initiate restoration of diplomatic ties between Rwanda and France.

- [“Former land owners welcome re-distribution exercise”](#), *New Times*, 28 Jan. 2008.
- [“MPs launch anti-genocide ideology campaign in schools”](#), *New Times*, 29 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Uganda** Government and LRA resumed talks 31 Jan after 6-month hiatus. Sept 2007 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement extended by 1 month and government reportedly pushing for agreement within month. Kony admitted killing deputy Vincent Otti in radio interview; announced reshuffle of negotiating team including replacing top negotiator Martin Ojul with David Nyekorach Matsanga. 3 former LRA commanders given amnesty, 20 Jan, following Dec surrender to UN forces. Army launched crackdown on suspected collaborators with rebel Allied Democratic Forces, active in west since 1990s.

- [“Government, rebel delegations resume talks in Juba”](#), IRIN, 31 Jan. 2008.
- [“Ugandan rebel leader tells local radio station he killed his deputy”](#), AP, 23 Jan. 2008.
- 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** Situation escalated ahead of early Feb deployment of EU (EUFOR) peacekeepers. 300 rebel vehicles advanced towards N’Djamena end month under apparent unified command after earlier taking control of central town Oum Hadjer. National army (ANT) troops approached rebel column as *CrisisWatch* went to press. EU military staff agreed to deploy Irish-led force 11 Jan after France, Belgium, Poland supplied additional equipment. Concern about how 2 UN missions will work together: MINURCAT – mandated to train police, reinforce judicial infrastructure, deploy inside camps for Darfur refugees and eastern sites for displaced Chadians, offer police escorts for aid agencies; EUFOR – authorised to use military force and prevent incursions into area. EU Commissioner Louis Michel stated 21 Jan “EU will not refuse to be a mediator if it is asked to do so”. Chadian air force bombed rebel positions close to West Darfur capital El Geneina 6 Jan. N’Djamena stated intention 8 Jan to carry out further bombings against Chadian rebels in Sudan. Rebel group Alliance for National Resistance claimed shot down army helicopter gunship which attacked positions in east near village of Beda.

- [“France sends extra troops to Chad”](#), BBC, 1 Feb. 2008.
- [“Chad rebels ‘heading for capital’”](#), BBC, 31 Jan. 2008.
- [“Chad govt harassing journalists over war – Amnesty”](#), Reuters, 21 Jan. 2008.
- [“Dual peacekeeping mission seeks to dispel confusion”](#), IRIN, 11 Jan. 2008.

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

➡ **Ethiopia** Government reported “many” U.S. and European citizens of Ethiopian Somali origin arrested, accused of assisting Ogaden rebels. Splits continued to widen in main opposition party, CUD.

- “Ethiopia says detains Westerners for aiding rebels”, Reuters, 18 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Ethiopia/Eritrea** Eritrea reiterated acceptance of 2002 “virtual demarcation” of border by Hague boundary commission 15 Jan, called for removal of Ethiopian troops from land awarded to Asmara. Ethiopia rejected demarcation saying no validity in international law. UNSC renewed UNMEE mandate for 6 months 30 Jan, despite UNSG Ban Ki-moon’s recommendation for 1-month extension due to fuel block by Eritrea.

- “U.N. extends Ethiopia-Eritrea force mandate 6 months”, Reuters, 30 Jan. 2008.
- “Eritrea accepts ‘virtual’ border with Ethiopia”, Reuters, 16 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°48, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Stopping the Slide to War*, 5 Nov. 2007.

➡ **Kenya** Violence worsened in post-election stand-off between supporters of President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga, increasingly along ethnic lines, while mediation efforts gathered momentum. Political conflict reinforcing and fuelled by longstanding land disputes and economic disparity. Over 900 reported killed and 250,000 displaced since 27 Dec poll. Kibaki announced 17 ministers of new cabinet 8 Jan after 5 Jan offer of government of national unity rejected by opposition. Opposition candidate elected speaker of assembly 15 Jan. Human Rights Watch reported 24 Jan on opposition officials helping organise ethnic violence in Rift Valley. Mungiki sect involved in revenge killings against non-Kikuyus. Widespread opposition protests including in Kisumu, Eldoret and Nairobi resulted in deadly confrontations with police. Former UNSG Kofi Annan arrived 22 Jan to mediate dispute after AU Chair John Kufuor pushed both sides to work with African panel headed by Annan. Kibaki met Odinga for first time since Dec poll 24 Jan and negotiations under Annan mediation began 29 Jan but violence continued, particularly in Rift Valley capital Nakuru and Naivasha. Opposition Orange Democratic Movement member of parliament David Kimutai Too shot dead 31 Jan in Eldoret – led to increased unrest; followed earlier Nairobi killing of ODM parliamentarian, Mugabe Were. U.S. Assistant Sec. for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer 30 Jan said “ethnic cleansing” taking place in Rift Valley. Cyril Ramaphosa, leading ANC figure and South African businessman, due 1 Feb to join mediation efforts at request of Annan. UNSG Ban Ki-moon also to support mediation effort in Nairobi.

- “Riots follow killing of second Kenyan lawmaker”, *International Herald Tribune*, 31 Jan. 2008.
- “More mayhem than mediation”, *Economist*, 31 Jan. 2008.
- “Kenya vows tougher action to stop killings”, Reuters, 30 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Somalia** Fighting intensified in Mogadishu mid-month while Islamist-led insurgency spread beyond capital. Divisions deepened between al-Shabaab and Asmara-based Alliance

for Re-Liberation of Somalia making opposition representation in any future political process more problematic. New PM Nur Hassan Hussein arrived in Mogadishu first time 20 Jan. Mortars fired at his accommodation in president’s house (President Yusuf remained in UK undergoing medical treatment). Hussein’s new 18-member cabinet, down from 31, ratified 10 Jan – 3 ministers yet to be named. Further Burundian soldiers joined Ugandan AU contingent 20 Jan, contribution totalling 850. AU Commission Chair Konaré’s 18 Jan report called for 6-month extension to AMISOM peacekeeping force; criticised states’ failure to honour pledges (some 3,300 of requested 8,000 now deployed); warned anti-government activities spreading to previously peaceful areas. Strategic Assessment Mission on possibilities of deploying UN force and DPKO fact-finding mission continued. Harassment of press continued, several journalists arrested or attacked in capital and Puntland. 3 Médecins Sans Frontières staff killed in Kismayo by roadside bomb, 28 Jan; 2 others also killed in attack.

- “Kismayo’s only hospital closes as aid workers killed”, IRIN, 29 Jan. 2008.
- “Anti-government activities spreading, warns AU”, IRIN, 21 Jan. 2008.
- “Mortars fired as new Somali PM arrives in Mogadishu”, Reuters, 20 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°45, *Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*, 26 Jan. 2007.

➡ **Somaliland (Somalia)** Puntland reported at least 10 killed in 12-13 Jan clashes near Las Anod, in disputed Sool region, between militias allied to rival Somaliland and Puntland administrations. Soldiers reportedly fired on opposition demonstrators at pro-Somaliland independence protests in Hargeisa and Berbera.

- “Independence rallies in Somaliland, soldiers fire on crowd”, Garowe Online, 17 Jan. 2008.
- “Ten killed in enclave border clashes in Somalila”, Reuters, 14 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Sudan** Security in West Darfur worsened with Chadian army conducting air raids inside Sudanese territory and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) threatening capital El Geneina. Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) attacked UN/AU (UNAMID) convoy 7 Jan near Tine. Khartoum continued to obstruct UNAMID deployment while appointing Musa Hilal, leader of Janjaweed militias, special adviser to Ministry of Federal Affairs. UN and AU Darfur envoys, Salim Salim and Jan Eliasson, 19 Jan stressed deteriorating relations between Chad and Sudan but said preparation underway for another round of Darfur pre-negotiations among rebels in next 6 weeks. SLM-Unity led by Abdallah Yahya, and newly formed United Resistance Front (URF) agreed to take part; Abdelshafi in Juba declined, preferring further SPLM initiative; Abdel Wahid and Khalil Ibrahim of JEM conditioned participation. SAF moved out of south Sudan’s oil-producing areas 9 Jan, according to new agreement between SPLM and National Congress Party (NCP), although SPLM claims not all redeployment achieved. AU summit in Addis Ababa 25 Jan-2 Feb. Sudan initially submitted request to head AU despite failed bid in 2006 and 2007, but withdrew it 29 Jan.

- “Unkept promises in Darfur”, *New York Times*, 27 Jan. 2008.
- “Once again, Sudan shows its scorn for the world”, *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Jan. 2008.

- [“Rebel positions bombed in West Darfur”](#), IRIN, 16 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°134, [Darfur’s New Security Reality](#), 26 Nov. 2007.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

➡ **Lesotho** Maseru government claimed uncovered opposition plot to kill ministers and businesspeople 18 Jan. Tension with opposition has continued since Feb 2007 snap elections.

- [“Lesotho claims to uncover plot to kill ministers”](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 18 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Zimbabwe** Mediation efforts between government and opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) collapsed, after President Mugabe announced 29 Mar date for polls, despite their calls for postponement until a new constitution adopted. MDC called elections “farce” but stopped short of boycott. Collapse came despite 17 Jan visit by mediator South African President Mbeki. MDC faction leader Tsvangirai briefly detained 23 Jan before Harare rally dispersed with tear gas. Independent monitoring group Zimbabwe Election Support Network reported problems with voter registration and education.

- [“Mugabe blows hole in quiet diplomacy”](#), AFP, 31 Jan. 2008.
- [“Zim election observers report problems”](#), AP, 10 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°132, [Zimbabwe: A Regional Solution?](#), 18 Sept. 2007.

WEST AFRICA

➡ **Cameroon** 10 killed in ongoing ethnic clashes in Akwaya border region of disputed Bakassi peninsula 18-19 Jan involving tribesmen from Oliti community in Cameroon and rivals from Nigerian Yive community. Pro-Nigeria Bakassi group, Southern Cameroons Peoples Organisation (SCAPO) threatened armed struggle if self-determination denied. President Paul Biya declared intention to amend constitution and run for third term.

- [“Bakassi 10 die in country, Cameroon clash”](#), *Leadership*, 19 Jan. 2008.
- [“Bakassi – group writes Yar’Adua, threatens armed struggle”](#), *This Day*, 14 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Côte d’Ivoire** 10 arrested, including French journalist, charged with plotting coup. Accused allegedly linked to former rebel leader “IB” Ibrahim Coulibaly. He rejected accusations from exile; said planning to contest proposed June 2008 presidential poll. UNSC renewed UNOCI mandate 15 Jan; extended to 30 July to help with election organisation. Army head, Maj. Gen. Philippe Mangou, announced 24 Jan withdrawal of 12,000 loyalist soldiers from frontlines and regrouping in barracks completed.

- [“2e reunion du cpc, hier, à Ouagadougou : Le communiqué de la rencontre”](#), *Nouveau Réveil*, 25 Jan. 2008.
- [“Ivorian denies coup plot charges”](#), BBC, 21 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°127, [Côte d’Ivoire: Can the Ouagadougou Agreement Bring Peace?](#), 27 June 2007.

➡ **Guinea** National strike called for early Jan, postponed to 31 Mar pending outcome of talks on President Lansana Conté’s backtracking on reforms agreed after Jan 2007 violence. Conté accused of retaking control of key functions

from consensus PM Lansana Kouyaté, including sacking of communications minister Justin Morel 4 Jan.

- [“Threat of backslide one year after civilian uprisings”](#), IRIN, 22 Jan. 2008.
- [“Support for civil protests wavering”](#), IRIN, 9 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°49, [Guinea: Change on Hold](#), 8 Nov. 2007.

➡ **Guinea-Bissau** Head of UN’s Peacebuilding Commission configuration for G-B, Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, arrived in country 21 Jan on assessment mission. Bissau on alert after extraditing al-Qaeda suspects to Mauritania 12 Jan in connection with December 2007 murders of French tourists.

- [“UN Peacebuilding Commission representative heads to country”](#), UN News, 21 Jan. 2008.
- [“Bissau fears al Qaeda retaliation after arrests”](#), Reuters, 19 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Liberia** Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) opened, Monrovia, 8 Jan; heard testimony of former rebel leader Joshua Blahyi who admitted responsibility for 20,000 deaths including human sacrifices. Supreme Court ruled 14 Jan President Johnson-Sirleaf can temporarily appoint local mayors, due to insufficient funds for local elections. Final phase of rehabilitation and reintegration of estimated 9,000 ex-combatants launched 18 Jan, Monrovia.

- [“Liberian ex-rebel leader confesses to killing thousands”](#), AP, 21 Jan. 2008.
- [“Liberia cannot afford local polls”](#), BBC, 14 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°107, [Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System](#), 6 Apr. 2006.

➡ **Mali** According to government sources 4 national soldiers held by rebels were freed 23 Jan.

- [“Militaires pris en otage: un nouveau groupe libéré”](#), *L’Essor*, 24 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Niger** Niger Movement for Justice (MNJ) claimed responsibility for 21 Jan attack on south eastern town Tanout: 3 killed and several abducted – including most senior government official in Tanout. Landmine blast in Niamey 9 Jan killed 1. Government and MNJ exchanged accusations over incident.

- [“Rebels raid town in south east”](#), IRIN, 22 Jan. 2008.
- [“Niger blames desert rebels for mine death in capital”](#), Reuters, 9 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Nigeria** Amid efforts to revive talks with government, Niger Delta rebel groups continued sporadic attacks on oil installations and shipping. Tribunal in south eastern state of Enugu cancelled election of Governor Sullivan Chime and deputy on grounds of gross electoral malpractice and non-compliance with Electoral Act; sixth decision against ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) since April 2007 poll. Southern Cameroons Peoples Organisation warned 11 Jan of armed struggle if Nigerian government eventually gives up Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon.

- [“Democracy by court order”](#), *Economist*, 24 Jan. 2008.
- [“Sixth Nigerian state election overturned for fraud”](#), Reuters, 18 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°135, [Nigeria: Ending Unrest in the Niger Delta](#), 5 Dec. 2007.

- **Sierra Leone** People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) claimed pre-election alliance agreement with President Ernest Bai Koroma's All People's Congress (APC) not being respected. Clashes between alleged supporters of APC and ruling Sierra Leone People's Party in Port Loko resulted in 4 deaths and 11 houses burned 14 Jan. Port Loko District land ownership dispute 17 Jan led to burning of 10 houses.
- "Respect police, President Koroma calls", *Concord Times*, 14 Jan. 2008.
 - "PMDC not behind APC victory, says minister", *Concord Times*, 11 Jan. 2008.
 - 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, Rakhmat Aliiev, sentenced in absentia 15 Jan to 20 years on multiple charges, including corruption and kidnapping. Trial of 15 on terrorism charges began Shymkent 16 Jan.
- "Terrorism trial opens in southern Kazakhstan", RFE/RL, 17 Jan. 2008.
 - "President's former son-in-law sentenced to 20 years in jail", RFE/RL, 16 Jan. 2008.
- **Kyrgyzstan** New parliament sworn in 10 Jan following controversial 16 Dec elections marred by alleged vote-rigging. Supreme Court rejected election challenge by opposition Ata Meken 3 Jan. Opposition continued to protest results. "For Justice" movement – new coalition of over 30 groups, including Ata Meken and Ar-Namys parties – formed 14 Jan; said "People's Parliament" to be established in Feb. Leader of opposition Asaba party Azimbek Beknazarov announced formation of "revolutionary body" to coordinate protest campaigns and force President Bakiyev's resignation. Ar-Namys party asked to vacate offices 18 Jan; claimed move "politically motivated". Prosecutor-General Elmurza Satbaldiv declared restrictions on public demonstrations to be upheld, sparking rallies in Bishkek 24 Jan. Officials said 9 Jan radioactive substances seized from train travelling to Iran from Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyz police arrested alleged Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan-linked militant Abdulkhai Yuldashev, accused of involvement in 2006 border attacks.
- "Kyrgyz authorities arrest alleged member of al-Qaida linked regional Islamic group", AP, 31 Jan. 2008.
 - "Kyrgyz opposition forms new bloc", RFE/RL, 15 Jan. 2008.
 - "A new year and a new government, but lingering hints of political rancor", EurasiaNet, 10 Jan. 2008.
- **Tajikistan** Further religious restrictions introduced at Islamic University 11 Jan following earlier ban on women wearing hijabs. Russia shifted position on Indian fighter jet deployment to Tajik air base; now opposed. Widespread power shortages expected as Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan cut supplies. Senior Islamic Renaissance Party member Shamsuddin Shamsuddinov reportedly died of cancer in prison 31 Jan.
- "Senior member of Islamic party dies in jail", RFE/RL, 30 Jan. 2008.

- "Tajikistan in power supply crisis", AP, 29 Jan. 2008.
- "Russian-Indian row over Tajik base suggests Moscow caught in diplomatic vicious cycle", EurasiaNet, 11 Jan. 2008.

- **Turkmenistan** President Berdymukhammedov met EU delegation 16 Jan to discuss energy ties. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan signed decree 12 Jan establishing inter-governmental cooperation commission: deal follows 18 Dec negotiations on coordinating energy price increases. Turkmenistan defended 1 Jan gas supply cut to Iran, citing technical faults and payment failure; Tehran's media said Turkmenistan had sought to double price.
- "Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan play energy games while Central Asia shivers", EurasiaNet, 15 Jan. 2008.
 - "Turkmenistan warns Iran over gas", BBC, 13 Jan. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°60, *Turkmenistan after Niyazov*, 12 Feb. 2007.

- **Uzbekistan** President Karimov sworn in 16 Jan following flawed 23 Dec election contravening constitutional bar on third term. Head of U.S. Central Command Admiral William Fallon met Karimov 24 Jan: first visit by senior U.S. official in over 2 years. Gas supplies to Tajikistan reduced in payment delays dispute 24 Jan. 2 major UK retailers announced boycott of clothing made from Uzbek cotton.
- "Tajik energy crisis deepens as Uzbekistan cuts down natural gas supplies", AP, 24 Jan. 2008.
 - "Uzbek leader sworn in for third term after highly-criticized vote", VOA, 16 Jan. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°67, *Uzbekistan: Stagnation and Uncertainty*, 22 Aug. 2007.

NORTH EAST ASIA

- **North Korea** U.S. gave Pyongyang new end-Feb deadline for full nuclear declaration; made removal from state sponsors of terrorism list contingent on dismantlement progress. South Korea President-elect Lee said 16 Jan unification, foreign ministries should merge to "streamline" government; inter-Korean cooperation should be linked to DPRK denuclearisation. Pyongyang postponed talks on cross-border rail ties due to "time constraints" 21 Jan. U.S. Senate committee criticised former UNDP operations in North for poor management but rejected allegations UNDP funds diverted to DPRK officials. DPRK head Kim Jong-il told Chinese diplomat 30 Jan commitment to disarmament unchanged.
- "N Korea 'stands by nuclear deal'", BBC, 31 Jan. 2008.
 - "North Korea terrorism tag stays during nuclear talks, U.S. says", Bloomberg, 24. Jan 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°62, *After the North Korea Nuclear Breakthrough: Compliance or Confrontation?*, 30 Apr. 2007.
- **Taiwan Strait** KMT opposition party won 72% of 12 Jan parliamentary vote (81 of 113 seats); seen as rejection of President Chen Shui-bian's staunchly anti-China policies. Chen resigned as chairman of ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Malawi said broke ties with Taiwan, set up relations with China. 23 countries now recognise Taiwan.
- "Malawi cuts diplomatic ties with Taiwan", *New York Times*, 15 Jan. 2008.
 - "Opposition wins Taiwan parliamentary election", *International Herald Tribune*, 13 Jan. 2008.

SOUTH ASIA

➡ **Afghanistan** 8 killed in multiple suicide attacks on Kabul's Serena Hotel 14 Jan during visit by Norwegian FM; Taliban claimed responsibility. Former Bosnia High Representative Lord Ashdown withdrew from nomination process for UN representative role 27 Jan after Kabul turned against appointment. President Karzai had earlier criticised UK efforts in Helmand amid rising opposition to international actions in state-run media. U.S. announced 3,200 further marines to temporarily deploy in south. High-level panel on Canadian engagement recommended continued Kandahar deployment past 2009, contingent on 1,000-strong contribution from elsewhere. 9 Afghan police killed in firefight with U.S. troops in Ghazni raid, prompting local protests 25 Jan; U.S. said "misunderstanding". Helmand deputy governor and 5 others killed in 31 Jan attack on Lashkar Gah mosque. Former Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Salaam named Musa Qala governor.

- "10 die in mistaken Afghan firefight", *New York Times*, 25 Jan. 2008.
- "Canada weighs exit from Afghanistan", *Financial Times*, 23 Jan. 2008.
- "Making Musa Qala work", IWPR, 17 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°138, *Reforming Afghanistan's Police*, 30 Aug. 2007.

➡ **Bangladesh** Supreme Court allowed extortion trial of former PM Sheikh Hasina 24 Jan. Former communications minister Salahuddin Ahmed sentenced 7 years for corruption 10 Jan. 4 teachers accused of inciting students in Aug 2007 protests acquitted 21 Jan, not released as second case pending. 7 Jamatul Mujahedein Bangladesh militants sentenced to life imprisonment for 5 bombs in 2005. Border security tightened in attempt to stop Myanmar refugee influx 29 Jan.

- "Bangladesh court jails Islamic militants", AP, 31 Jan. 2008.
- "Bangladesh court gives green light for Hasina trial", Reuters, 24 Jan. 2008.

➡ **India (non-Kashmir)** Nagaland government sacked by Delhi and state brought under federal rule 3 Jan. 15 injured in Guwahati, Assam state, in suspected United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) separatist bombing 14 Jan.

- "India sacks government in troubled Nagaland state", Reuters, 3 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Kashmir** Babir Ahmad, top commander of Huji militant group, killed by security forces in Indian-administered Kashmir; wanted for Nov 2007 Uttar Pradesh bombings. Pakistan President Musharraf said peace talks with India "now on track" 24 Jan; expects progress after Feb Pakistan elections.

- "Top militant killed in Kashmir", BBC, 25 Jan. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°131, *Discord in Pakistan's Northern Areas*, 2 Apr. 2007.

➡ **Nepal** Constituent Assembly elections rescheduled for 10 Apr. Situation fragile despite momentum from government commitment. Campaigning started around country, but marred by explosions at Kathmandu party rallies 14 and 30 Jan, injuring 8, 55. Tarai Army rebel group claimed responsibility for 18 Jan bus attack that killed 7, days after government offered peace talks with rebel groups from south; several killings in month in Tarai as Madhesi groups continued joint protest. UNMIN mandate extended 6 months.

- "Nepali rebels claim bus attack that kills 7", Reuters, 18 Jan. 2008.
- "Eight hurt at Nepal rally blast", BBC, 14 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°72, *Nepal: Peace Postponed*, 18 Dec. 2007.

➡ **Pakistan** Fighting between government forces and militants in tribal belt continued, notably in South Waziristan; hundreds killed. U.S. denied claims it launched late-month missile strike that killed 13 militants in North Waziristan, and may have killed senior al-Qaeda leader Abu Laith al-Libi. Rare suicide bombing in Lahore 10 Jan targeted police, killing 20. U.S. Defence Secretary Gates said U.S. willing to send troops to support Pakistani army in domestic operations; President Musharraf reportedly rejected U.S. military presence. U.S. also said building coordination centres on Pakistan-Afghanistan border staffed with troops from 3 countries to tackle cross-border insurgency. Elections postponed until 18 Feb; Musharraf faced falling approval rates as former generals urged him to step down. PPP lobbied UN to launch independent probe into Benazir Bhutto's assassination; Scotland Yard provided assistance to Pakistani probe.

- "U.S. troops 'ready' to aid Pakistan", *Washington Post*, 25 Jan. 2008.
- "Frontier insurgency spills into Peshawar", *New York Times*, 18 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°74, *After Bhutto's Murder: A Way Forward for Pakistan*, 2 Jan. 2008.


➡ **Sri Lanka** LTTE-government ceasefire formally ended 16 Jan; military operations intensified with heavy losses. Minister for nation building killed in mine attack 8 Jan near Colombo. 27 killed in 16 Jan ambush bus attack in south east blamed on Tigers, many shot while fleeing explosion; 17 killed in 29 Jan attack for which Tigers blamed army. SL's biggest donor Japan said reviewing aid after ceasefire lapse. All Party Representative Committee, appointed by president in 2006, released interim devolution proposals 24 Jan calling for implementation of existing constitutional arrangements for provincial autonomy. Plan greeted with heavy scepticism; Colombo widely seen as intent on military solution.

- "Sri Lanka urged to devolve power", BBC, 24 Jan. 2008.
- "Sri Lanka unveils peace plan; analysts lukewarm", Reuters, 24 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°141, *Sri Lanka: Sinhala Nationalism and the Elusive Southern Consensus*, 7 Nov. 2007.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

➡ **Indonesia** Angry demonstrations brought South Sulawesi capital Makassar to standstill 17-20 Jan after Supreme Court overturned gubernatorial election result. Trial of Papuan human rights lawyer Iwanggin Sabar Olif for incitement began 7 Jan. Failure by Jakarta to release \$45m in reintegration funds by end 2007 threw Aceh Reintegration Agency into further disarray. Former President Soeharto died 27 Jan, 10 years after end to 32-year rule.

- "Military chief says nation not ready for democracy", *Jakarta Post*, 25 Jan. 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°75,  [Indonesia: Tackling Radicalism in Poso](#), 22 Jan. 2008. One year after police operations in Poso, Central Sulawesi, there is cautious optimism that jihadi violence has ended, but justice, accountability and corruption problems must be resolved. The Jan 2007 operations that led to the death, arrest or flight of key extremists, also brought several deradicalisation initiatives. Despite remaining questions about the death toll, the operations must be seen as a net gain for peace. If corruption can be controlled and the deradicalisation initiatives take hold, then the residents of Poso may have reason for hope.

➡ **Myanmar/Burma** Foreign Minister U Nyan Win met Indian PM Singh and FM Mukherjee in 3 Jan Delhi talks; India reportedly stressed internal reform and reconciliation. Aung San Suu Kyi met minister Aung Kyi 11 Jan in first disclosed meeting since 19 Nov. 4 explosions reported around country beginning with 11 Jan blast at Naypyidaw train station; state media blamed ethnic Karen “terrorists” and alleged foreign involvement. UNSC issued press statement 17 Jan criticising Myanmar for slow reforms. 10 of reported 700 activists detained after August protests charged with making illegal statements. UN negotiating earlier return for Special Envoy Gambari.

- [“Burma activists charged over demo”](#), BBC, 29 Jan. 2008.
- [“India and Myanmar hold talks”](#), *Hindu*, 3 Jan. 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°144, [Burma/ Myanmar: After the Crackdown](#), 31 Jan. 2008. A 3-level approach, split between the UN, the country’s neighbours and the wider international community, is needed to promote change. At the core, Special Envoy Gambari plays a vital role. A working group encompassing China and key ASEAN members should engage the government on issues affecting regional stability and development. In parallel, a support group from the wider international community must keep human rights issues at the forefront.

➡ **Philippines** New People’s Army (NPA) rebels rejected renewed government offer for ceasefire as step towards talks 24 Jan, demanding instead no preconditions. Clashes that followed NPA attack on army in Davao Oriental 30 Jan killed 5. Large rallies in Mindanao cities urged Manila and MILF to resume talks early month; government said drafting new proposal. U.S. said it would upgrade joint *Balikatan* military exercises near Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) strongholds.

- [“Philippines renews truce offer to Maoist rebels”](#), Reuters, 24 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Thailand** Violence surged again in south after Dec elections; government admitted little headway made in quelling insurgency. 2007 reported deadliest in 4-year wave of violence, with 2,300 killed or wounded. New 6-party coalition government led by People’s Power Party announced 19 Jan. CNS military council disbanded next day, promising no more coups while warning politicians not to meddle in military affairs.

- [“Thai army council cedes power to Thaksin”](#), *Financial Times*, 23 Jan. 2008.
- [“Buddhist Thai govt says fails to win Muslims’ hearts”](#), Reuters, 18 Jan. 2008.

- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°140, [Southern Thailand: The Problem with Paramilitaries](#), 23 Oct. 2007.

➡ **Timor-Leste** Rebel leader Alfredo Reinado accused PM Gusmao of masterminding 2006 crisis in video released early Jan. Gusmao refused to respond to allegations. Former PM Alkatiri called for his resignation. President Ramos-Horta met with Reinado 13 Jan in Maubisse; declared May 2008 deadline for addressing his and petitioners’ grievances. 8 houses burnt in village in Covalima district by neighbouring villagers 4 Jan. Joint UN and local police operations targeted illegal immigration, drugs, and possible human trafficking.

- Comment by Neil Campbell (Crisis Group), [“Timor-Leste: a state of insecurity”](#), openDemocracy, 1 Feb. 2008.
- [“100,000 IDPs still displaced nearly two years on”](#), IRIN, 1 Feb. 2008.
- [“Gusmao should quit, says E Timor’s ex-PM”](#), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 Jan. 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°143, [Timor-Leste: Security Sector Reform](#), 17 Jan. 2008. Timor-Leste’s government and the UN must revitalise efforts to reform the police and army or risk relapsing violent civil conflict. Fundamental changes are needed in national and international approaches to reforming key security institutions. The government must move forward with a comprehensive security review, as the UNSC recommended, but steps can immediately be taken, including establishing internal complaints mechanisms, addressing legislative gaps and improving disciplinary procedures. Without commitment to reform, the security forces are likely to remain politicised and volatile.



Europe

BALKANS

➡ **Albania** Ruling Democratic Party ally Human Rights Union Party vowed 13 Jan to leave government unless reshuffle undertaken.

- [“Albanian ruling party’s main ally threatens to leave government”](#), SEE Times, 14 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Bosnia & Herzegovina** Office of High Representative (OHR) deputy head Raffi Gregorian expressed concern 10 Jan at curbs on media and rule of law in Republika Srpska (RS); RS PM Dodik dismissed as attempt by OHR to justify continued presence. All 6 Croat parties called 11 Jan for re-formation of Bosnia as federal state with 3 ethnic entities. Dodik proposed 22 Jan for army to be abolished and security left to international forces; 27 Jan urged creation of multi-entity federation. State budget still not adopted. RS police seized passports of alleged war criminal Radovan Karadzic’s family 10 Jan at request of OHR head Miroslav Lajcak. Slovenian PM Jansa said Bosnia “serious” threat to regional stability 7 Jan. Car bomb killed 2 in Pale 30 Jan; circumstances unclear.

- [“Bosnian Serb PM: ‘Abolish army’”](#), BalkanInsight, 23 Jan. 2008.
- [“Police take passports of Karadzic family”](#), *New York Times*, 11 Jan. 2008.

- **Kosovo** Parliament approved new coalition government 9 Jan led by PM Thaci (Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK); reappointed President Sejdiu (Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK): PDK senior partner to LDK. Government still not fully formed month-end. Media speculation grew regarding date of independence declaration. Following visit to Brussels, Thaci said declaration “matter of days” 24 Jan, but indicated longer time frame 31 Jan, saying constitution, state symbols to be ready for first day of independence. Public debate on constitution initiated, draft not yet published. U.S., UK, France, Germany said would recognise quickly, but first await 3 Feb Serbian presidential election; Spain urged delay until 9 Mar Spanish election. EU still seeking decision mechanism to deploy 1,800-strong mission for post-UNMIK period; Serbia, Russia again claimed deployment illegal without UNSC endorsement. UNSC met 16 Jan to discuss UNMIK; UNSG Ban Ki-moon “noted” EU willingness to deploy mission. UNMIK deployed extra police into Serb-dominated north 31 Jan.
- “Date of Kosovo split hinges on poll”, *Financial Times*, 29 Jan. 2008.
 - “Kosovo’s rival parties strike deal to form coalition government”, AP, 7 Jan. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°188, *Kosovo Countdown: A Blueprint for Transition*, 6 Dec. 2007.

- **Macedonia** Macedonia proposed mutual friendship declaration with Greece after fresh talks on name issue began 21 Jan. NATO Secretary-General de Hoop Scheffer 23 Jan said further internal reforms required to gain NATO membership. EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn said EU membership talks start date to be agreed 2008; benchmarks for priority reforms to be set March. Deputy Interior Minister Refet Elmazi resigned for “personal reasons”.
- “Macedonia friendship offer to Greece”, *BalkanInsight*, 21 Jan. 2008.

- **Serbia** Serbian Radical Party (SRS) candidate Tomislav Nikolic ahead of incumbent Boris Tadic (Democratic Party, DS) in presidential race with 39.99% to Tadic’s 35.39% in first round vote held 20 Jan. 61% turnout unusually high. Second round set for 3 Feb. PM Vojislav Kostunica said 26 Jan Serbia would nullify any Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) if EU approved Kosovo mission; Tadic responded Kosovo and SAA unconnected. EU FMs meeting 28 Jan resolved to offer interim political pact to be signed 7 Feb, relaxing visa requirements and increasing trade, educational cooperation. Netherlands opposed signing full SAA before handover of war crimes fugitives to ICTY. Belgrade approved action plan to “protect Serbia’s sovereignty” in event of Kosovo independence 14 Jan. FM Vuk Jeremic warned same day Kosovo could be partitioned. But officials backtracked from threats of chaos and embargo, suggesting extension of “parallel” municipal authorities. Belgrade signed agreement with Russia 22 Jan to sell state-owned oil industry to Gazprom and construct portion of South Stream pipeline.
- “EU offers Serbia interim deal ahead of decisive elections”, *EUObserver*, 29 Jan. 2008.
 - “Serbia set for ‘referendum’ on Europe ties”, *Financial Times*, 22 Jan. 2008.
 - “Serbia’s presidential election: the best-laid plans...”, *openDemocracy*, 21 Jan. 2008.

CAUCASUS

- **Armenia** Campaigning for 19 Feb presidential election started 24 Jan after official registration of 9 candidates 18 Jan. Yerevan municipal authorities 16 Jan called on political parties to avoid staging support marches citing need to prevent traffic jams. Tax and law enforcement agencies reportedly intimidated supporters of opposition candidate Levon Ter-Petrosian, confiscating campaign material and barring TV access. Armenian Prosecutor-General’s Office established election fraud task forces 23 Jan to investigate possible irregularities.
- “Mutual animosity, mistrust overshadow presidential election”, *RFE/RL*, 18 Jan. 2008.
 - “Presidential ambitions”, *Transitions Online*, 14 Jan. 2008.
- **Azerbaijan** Azerbaijan claimed 1 Armenian and 2 Azeri soldiers killed in border clashes 21, 27 Jan. Guard killed 17 Jan by unidentified gunman at Iran border. Journalist Musfig Huseinov of newspaper *Bizim yol* sentenced to 6 years for bribery 21 Jan. Court rejected *Gundelik Azerbaijan* and *Realny Azerbaijan* editor Eynulla Fatullayev’s appeal against 8-year sentence, 16 Jan. EU welcomed 28 Dec amnesty for 119 prisoners but called for release of journalists still in prison.
- “Azerbaijan and Armenia soldiers die during violation of ceasefire agreement”, *Trend News*, 22 Jan. 2008.
- **Chechnya (Russia)** Clashes between security forces and rebels continued: 4 rebels shot dead in police operation 15 Jan; 2 soldiers killed by gunmen in eastern Chechnya near Niki-Khita village 21 Jan; 1 policeman killed in explosion and fire attack 24 Jan; Russian artillery shelled village of Gekhi 28 Jan after serviceman shot dead in nearby Bamut. European Parliament 19 Jan announced plans for “Association of European Parliamentarians for the Right of the Chechen People to Self-Determination” to reach political solution to conflict after London talks with separatist exile PM Zakayev.
- “Russia’s reach unnerves Chechens”, *BBC*, 16 Jan. 2008.
- **North Caucasus (non-Chechnya)** Police cracked down on anti-government rally in Nazran 25 Jan: journalists and NGO workers allegedly beaten and over 50 briefly detained. Further protest planned for 23 Feb. Violence in Dagestan continued: 10 rebels killed in Russian special forces operations in 8-14 Jan; 3 others reportedly killed in clash with security forces 24 Jan. In Ingushetia, gunmen killed 1 soldier, wounded 3 in attack on minibus. Interior Ministry official Movsar Martazanov shot dead in Karabulak 16 Jan.
- “Inside Dagestan’s counter-terror sweep”, *IWPR*, 30 Jan. 2008.
 - “Clashes erupt at Ingushetia rally”, *BBC*, 26 Jan. 2008.
- **Georgia** Saakashvili re-elected with 53% of vote in first round of early presidential elections 5 Jan; sworn in 20 Jan. United Opposition candidate Levan Gachechiladze came second with 25%. Opposition rejected results claiming fraud. Most opposition and NGO complaints to courts and election commissions dismissed on procedural grounds. 50,000 rallied 13 Jan in Tbilisi to protest elections. OSCE observer mission endorsed elections but noted “significant challenges”. New PM Lado Gurgenidze announced cabinet reshuffle 24 Jan: former Conflict Resolution Minister David Bakradze appointed FM. Presidential candidate and businessman Badri Patarkatsishvili charged with terrorism and conspiracy

to overthrow government 11 Jan; assets frozen 25 Jan. Licence of Patarkatsishvili-backed Imedi TV station again to be reviewed 15 Feb. Saakashvili and Russian PM Lavrov met 20 Jan to "improve ties". Relations with separatist regions remain tense: UN says Georgian media's inaccurate reports on situation in Abkhazia's Gali region fuel tension. Border protection service rejected Abkhaz claims of opening fire at Georgian ship 24 Jan. Separatist president Bagapsh ruled out resumption of talks with Tbilisi 14 Jan. De facto South Ossetia leader Eduard Kokoity called on OSCE and Russia 23 Jan to arrange direct talks with Saakashvili.

- "Inaccurate media reports fuel alarm in Gali" – UN Abkhaz report", Civil Georgia, 26 Jan. 2008.
- "Georgia leader starts second term", BBC, 20 Jan. 2008.
- "Thousands protest in Georgia after Saakashvili's supporters claim victory", AP, 6 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°189, *Georgia: Sliding towards Authoritarianism?*, 19 Dec. 2007.

➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** OSCE Minsk Group met with Azeri FM Mammadyarov and President Aliyev in Baku 14 Jan to begin negotiations based on Nov 2007 draft "basic principles". Aliyev ruled out independence for contested region in New Year's speech. De facto President Bako Sahakyan called 16 Jan for inclusion of NK representatives in talks.

- "Frozen conflict' is a pressing challenge", *Financial Times*, 25 Jan. 2008.
- "Contribution of peaceful settling of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to be reflected in EU report", Trend News, 19 Jan. 2008.

EASTERN EUROPE

➡ **Belarus** 4,000 protested small business regulations 10, 21 Jan; 42 detained before released 25 Jan. 10 youth activists arrested and jailed 17 Jan after demonstration in solidarity with political prisoners. Leader of liberal United Civil Party Anatoly Lebedko banned from travel after Dec meeting with U.S. President Bush; youth activist Barys Haretski also denied outward travel. Former deputy editor of newspaper *Zhoda* Alyaksandr Zdzvishkou sentenced 3 years for Feb 2006 publication of controversial Danish "Muhammad" cartoons. Popular Front activist Dzmitry Zhalezniczenka hospitalised 28 Jan following 3-day hunger strike protesting expulsion from university and army draft.

- "Belarus protest dispersed by police", Reuters, 21 Jan. 2008.
- "EU condemns Belarus arrests", VOA, 11 Jan. 2008.
- "Belarus turns the screw on opposition, US objects", Reuters, 4 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Moldova** President Vladimir Voronin called for "strategic partnership" with Russia during 22 Jan visit to Moscow. 2 Romanian priests banned from entry to Moldova, 2 others face expulsion.

- "Moldovan president wants 'strategic partnership' with Russia", RFE/RL Newline, 24 Jan. 2008.
- "Romanian priests barred, expelled from Moldova", RFE/RL Newline, 7 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Ukraine** President Yushchenko urged abolition of parliamentary immunity 22 Jan. PM Yulia Tymoshenko and Verkhovna Rada Speaker Arseniy Yatsenyuk sent letter to NATO 15 Jan requesting Membership Action Plan.

Tymoshenko announced plan 29 Jan to renegotiate energy agreement with Moscow.

- "It's time for Ukraine to get started", *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Jan. 2008.
- "Rice says NATO must leave door open to Ukraine", Reuters, 23 Jan. 2008.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➡ **Basque Country (Spain)** Further ETA arrests: 2 detained 6 Jan for carrying out fatal Dec 2006 car park bombing at Madrid Airport; 3 extradited from UK for alleged involvement in Feb 2006 bomb attack in Motrico. French police arrested leading ETA member Ainhoa Adin Jaurehuy 29 Jan. 10 others detained for ETA-linked urban attacks during month. Government authorised action 25 Jan to outlaw 2 Basque parties linked to banned separatist Batasuna party.

- "Eight arrests in crackdown on Basque nationalists: ministry", AFP, 23 Jan. 2008.
- "Spanish PM rules out more talks with ETA rebels", Reuters, 14 Jan. 2008.
- "Eta' bomb cache found in N Spain", BBC, 8 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Cyprus** Campaigning continued for first round of Greek Cypriot presidential elections 17 Feb. None of 3 candidates likely to win before run-off vote 24 Feb. Incumbent President Papadopoulos just ahead, followed by nominally communist AKEL leader Dimitris Christofias and ex-FM and Euro-parliamentarian Ioannis Kasoulides. Turkish President Gul visited UNSG Ban Ki-moon 9 Jan; restated support for post-election push for UN-mediated Cyprus talks. Greek PM Karamanlis visited Ankara 23 Jan – first official trip by a Greek premier since 1959; said Cyprus solution required to clear path to EU.

- "Talks herald new era in Turkish-Greek relations", *Financial Times*, 24 Jan. 2008.
- "Cypriot president urges resumption of talks on reunification", SEE Times, 7 Jan. 2008.

Crisis Group Europe Report N°190, *Cyprus: Reversing the Drift to Partition*,



10 Jan. 2008. All concerned should make a new effort in 2008 to comprehensively settle the Cyprus problem, which blocks more dynamic EU foreign policy and poisons its important relations with Turkey. The Feb Greek Cypriot presidential election ends a regional voting cycle and may offer a chance for the island's Greek and Turkish communities to re-engage in meaningful negotiations. Restarting UN-mediated talks is in the best interests of all Cypriots, would improve EU effectiveness and enhance Turkey-EU convergence.

➡ **Turkey** Turkish warplanes bombed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) bases in northern Iraq 15 Jan. Fourth wave of cross-border aerial attacks since 16 Dec. Bomb explosion targeting military vehicle south east Turkey killed 7, including 5 school pupils, 3 Jan; PKK apologised. PM Erdogan 10 Jan announced plan to discuss EU bid with German Chancellor Merkel, French President Sarkozy early 2008. Ultranationalist gang members, including lawyer Kemal Kerincsiz, arrested 26 Jan: reportedly sign of government determination to address crimes against Christians, intellectuals who challenge official line on WWI atrocities. Blast in unlicensed factory killed 19. Ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) agreed 28 Jan

to lift ban on woman in university wearing headscarfs.

- [“Turkey again bombs Kurdish rebels in Iraq”](#), AP, 15 Jan. 2008.
- [“Turkey set for EU talks with Merkel and Sarkozy”](#), EUObserver, 11 Jan. 2008.
- [“Bush endorses Turkey’s bid to join EU”](#), AP, 8 Jan. 2008.



Latin America / Caribbean

- ⇒ **Bolivia** President Morales met provincial governors in La Paz 7 Jan to defuse political tension: discussed eastern provinces’ autonomy statutes and new pension bill cutting provinces’ share of gas revenues. No agreement but committee set up to address constitutional concerns; Morales later imposed revenue cut, angering opposition. Also condemned alleged collaboration of Western governments with opposition against his “irreversible” reforms. Protesters in Chuquisaca began drive to become fifth province to declare autonomy.
- [“Bolivia’s Morales throws unity talks into disarray”](#), Reuters, 18 Jan. 2008.
 - [“Bolivian leaders agree on unity”](#), BBC, 9 Jan. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°23, [Bolivia’s New Constitution: Avoiding Violent Confrontation](#), 31 Aug. 2007.

- ⇒ **Colombia** FARC freed hostages Clara Rojas and Consuelo Gonzalez 11 Jan after Dec liberation attempt failed when third “hostage”, Rojas’s son Emmanuel, found in foster care in Bogotá. Venezuelan President Chávez helped broker release, called on removal of FARC, National Liberation Army (ELN) from terrorist lists: rejected by Colombian government, EU and U.S. Uribe ordered military prepare for blockade of FARC hostage camps. FARC kidnapped 6 on Pacific coast 14 Jan. U.S. court sentenced Ricardo Palmera, most senior FARC leader extradited to U.S., to 60 years in prison 28 Jan. Security forces captured ELN commander Carlos “Pablito” Marin 8 Jan, fierce opponent of peace process, and leader of “Aguilas Negras” armed group 12 Jan. 4 police killed in FARC assassination attempt on Arauquita mayor 26 Jan in first such political attack in 2008.
- [“Colombia orders blockade of rebel hostage camps”](#), Reuters, 26 Jan. 2008.
 - [“Colombian rebels free hostages”](#), *Guardian*, 10 Jan. 2008.
 - [“Colombia captures chief ELN rebel opposed to peace”](#), Reuters, 8 Jan. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°16, [Colombia: Moving Forward with the ELN?](#), 11 Oct. 2007.

- ⇒ **Ecuador** Opposition leader Noboa lost Constituent Assembly (CA) seat 14 Jan for CA rules breach. Guayaquil Mayor Jaime Nebot led thousands in anti-constitutional-reform rally 24 Jan. 60 of 100 congresspersons held session at Quito hotel 3 Jan in defiance of Nov 2007 CA ruling closing congress; CA leader Acosta said any Congressional decisions would be ignored, while Constitutional Tribunal (TC) granted the CA “plenipotentiary” powers.
- [“Huge rally against Ecuador reform”](#), BBC, 25 Jan. 2008.
 - [“Ecuador assembly to expel opposition leader Noboa”](#), Reuters, 13 Jan. 2008.

- ⇒ **Haiti** Director general of electoral council Jacques Bernard resigned 25 Jan, raising fears of further senate elections delay and possible stalemate between president and parliament. President Préval, opposition agreed 10 senators due for re-election could remain until earlier of electoral law vote or May. MINUSTAH head Hedi Annabi cautioned against early troop withdrawal, said country needs at least 6,000 more police officers to maintain minimum level of security.
- [“UN envoy warns against early Haiti troop withdrawal”](#), Reuters, 21 Jan. 2008.
 - For latest report, see Crisis Group Latin American/Caribbean Report N°24, [Peacebuilding in Haiti: Including Haitians from Abroad](#), 14 Dec. 2007.

- ⇒ **Venezuela** President Chávez stepped up harsh rhetoric against Colombia in aftermath of hostage liberation (see Colombia) accusing Colombian and U.S. governments of preparing military intervention. In mid-month visit to Colombia, U.S. officials had criticised Chávez for failing to stem cocaine trafficking and cautioned against Venezuela’s arms purchases. 1,200 troops sent to Colombian border to prevent food smuggling from country 22 Jan.
- [“Chávez acusa a Colombia de fraguar provocación bélica”](#), *Nuevo Herald*, 25 Jan. 2008.
 - [“U.S. drug czar points finger at Chavez”](#), *Los Angeles Times*, 21 Jan. 2008.
 - 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** Under tight blockade, Palestinians destroyed large sections of Gaza-Egypt border wall 23 Jan. Hundreds of thousands crossed to buy food, supplies. Egypt working with Hamas to restore order (see Egypt); held talks in Cairo with Palestinian President Abbas 30 Jan and Hamas 31 Jan; both want role in border control. Breach followed 17 Jan Israeli closure of crossings; 20 Jan shutdown of Gaza power plant; continued rocket firing into Israel and Israeli attacks on militants – some 65 Gazans, including son of senior Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar, killed in first 3 weeks of month. U.S. President Bush in Jerusalem, West Bank for separate talks with Israeli PM Ehud Olmert and Abbas 9-10 Jan; called for “end to occupation”, criticised recent settlement plans. Israeli and Palestinian Authority negotiators began talks 14 Jan. Israeli raids/rockets killed Islamic Jihad leader Walid Obeidi in West Bank 16 Jan; at least 4 Hamas fighters in Rafah 24-25 Jan. Israeli policeman killed at East Jerusalem checkpoint 24 Jan. Abbas, Olmert met 27 Jan. Hardline party Israel Our Home left coalition government 16 Jan; religious Shas party threatened same 27 Jan. Final report of Winograd Commission investigating 2006 Lebanon conflict released 30 Jan; found “serious failings” but refrained from holding Olmert personally responsible.
- Comment by Robert Malley (Crisis Group), [“Defusing the Gaza Time Bomb”](#), *Boston Globe*, 20 Jan. 2008.
 - Comment by Hussein Agha and Robert Malley (Crisis Group), [“Middle East Triangle”](#), *Washington Post*, 17 Jan. 2008.

- “Probe says Israel didn’t win Lebanon war”, AP, 30 Jan. 2008.
- “Gaza crisis talks start, Hamas seeks say over border”, Reuters, 30 Jan. 2008.
- “Busting the blockade”, *Economist*, 24 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°71, *Inside Gaza: The Challenge of Clans and Families*, 20 Dec. 2007.


 **Lebanon** Risk of violent confrontation in and over Lebanon heightened. Car bomb 25 Jan killed Capt. Wissam Eid, investigator of string of political assassinations following 2005 murder of PM Rafiq Hariri. Bodyguard and 3 passersby killed; 37 wounded. Clashes 28 Jan between army and Shia protestors in southern Beirut left at least 7 dead, including opposition Hizbollah and Amal officials. Presidency vacant since Nov; parliamentary vote again postponed, now due 11 Feb. Arab League FMs 6 Jan endorsed plan to resolve deadlock: Gen. Michel Suliman as president, national unity government and new electoral law. SG Amre Moussa held talks with rival factions in Beirut, visited Damascus, mid-month: no breakthrough. Explosion apparently targeting U.S. embassy vehicle 15 Jan killed 3. Rockets fired from Lebanon into Israel 8 Jan: no responsibility claimed. Troops fired on Israeli planes over Lebanese territory 21 Jan. Roadside bomb 8 Jan struck UNIFIL patrol: 2 injured.

- “Army drawn into Lebanese crisis”, BBC, 28 Jan. 2008.
- “Bomb kills Lebanese intelligence officer”, *International Herald Tribune*, 25 Jan. 2008.
- “Arab mediator brokers Lebanese rivals’ meeting”, Reuters, 17 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°69, *Hizbollah and the Lebanese Crisis*, 10 Oct. 2007.


 **Syria** FM Walid al-Moallem said 2 Jan Syria “to stop cooperation” with France to solve Lebanese crisis. Move came in response to French year-end decision to halt contact over alleged obstruction. Arab League SG Amre Moussa said 19 Jan talks in Damascus “totally positive” but no breakthrough. Iraqi Red Crescent Organization reported some 46,000 of estimated 1.5m Iraqi refugees in Syria had returned home in last 3.5 months of 2007.

- Comment by Robert Malley and Peter Harling (Crisis Group), “France-Syrie, l’heure de vérité”, *Le Monde*, 21 Dec. 2007.
- “Arab League chief in Syria over Lebanon crisis”, Reuters, 19 Jan. 2008.
- “46,000 Iraqis have left Syria”, *Washington Post*, 5 Jan. 2008.
- “Syria halts cooperation over Lebanon”, Reuters, 2 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°63, *Restarting Israeli-Syrian Negotiations*, 10 Apr. 2007.

GULF


 **Bahrain** Human Rights Watch called for investigation into alleged police abuse of individuals detained following demonstrations in Dec 2007.

- “Investigate alleged torture of activists”, Human Rights Watch, 21 Jan. 2008.
- “Bahrain king cements army control”, BBC, 7 Jan. 2008.


 **Iran** After months of negotiations, UNSC P5 – U.S., UK, France, Russia, China – plus Germany agreed 24 Jan on elements for draft resolution on third set of sanctions.

Proposed measures include travel bans on certain individuals; further limits on supply, sale or transfer of dual-use items. Also requirement states “exercise vigilance” regarding export credits and activities of Iranian banks, and inspect cargoes of suspicious goods. Verifiable suspension of enrichment activities specified as prerequisite for direct talks; more sanctions threatened for non-compliance. IAEA head Mohamed ElBaradei received pledge from Tehran to clarify outstanding questions on past activities “within a month”. 13 Jan U.S. President Bush accused Iran of being threat to global security in speech to Gulf states same day; statement followed 6 Jan incident in Persian Gulf – U.S. accused Iranian boats of threatening warships.

- “Has Iran won?”, *Economist*, 31 Jan. 2008.
- “Powers agree on UN Iran sanctions”, BBC, 25 Jan. 2008.
- “Bush says Iran threat to world security”, Reuters, 13 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°51, *Iran: Is There a Way Out of the Nuclear Impasse?*, 23 Feb. 2006.

 **Iraq** Parliament passed “Accountability and Justice Law” 12 Jan allowing former Baath party officials to return to public life. Measure faced criticism it sends even more Baath members into early retirement. PM Nouri Maliki announced start of major offensive against al-Qaeda militants in northern city of Mosul after security deterioration; over 30 died in 23 Jan blast. Clashes erupted in south between government forces and Shiite “Soldiers of Heaven” cult group in Nasiriya and Basra 18 Jan. Spate of suicide attacks occurred around country over Shiite Ashura festival. Radical Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr warned 6-month ceasefire by his Mahdi Army militia due to expire in Feb. End month saw attacks on remaining UK troops in Basra and 2 bombs in Baghdad 1 Feb killing some 70. Turkish air force bombed Kurdish PKK rebels based in northern Iraq 15 Jan (see Turkey).

- “At least 68 dead in Baghdad market bombs”, AP, 1 Feb. 2008.
- “Violence again flares in Baghdad and Basra”, AP, 31 Jan. 2008.
- “Choices at the end of the surge”, *Washington Post*, 30 Jan. 2008.
- “Iraq: the politics of the local”, openDemocracy, 25 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°70, *Shiite Politics in Iraq: The Role of the Supreme Council*, 15 Nov. 2007.

 **Yemen** June 2007 ceasefire between government and Al-Houthi Shiite rebels in ruins after 30 killed in clashes in northern Saada province 9-10 Jan. State of emergency declared. 3 protestors, 1 police killed during demonstration for greater rights in southern city of Aden, 13 Jan. Protest coincided with Forum for Reconciliation and Forgiveness aimed at reducing north-south tension. 3 killed, including 2 Belgian tourists, as convoy attacked Wadi Dawan desert valley, 18 Jan: government alleged al-Qaeda involvement.

- “Calls for humanitarian aid as hundreds are displaced by clashes”, IRIN, 20 Jan. 2008.
- “Belgians killed in Yemen attack”, BBC, 19 Jan. 2008.
- “Protesters killed at Yemen rally”, Al Jazeera, 13 Jan. 2008.

NORTH AFRICA

- ➡ **Algeria** UN claimed government failed to respond to repeated requests for enhanced security prior to 11 Dec bombing of UN buildings. UNSG Ban Ki-moon appointed independent panel to review staff security; PM Belkhadem said unilateral UN review “unwelcome”. Terrorist attacks continued: roadside bomb killed 4 soldiers conducting sweep for terrorist cells south of Tizi Ouzou, 9 Jan; at least 3 killed after police shot at explosive-filled vehicle heading towards police station in northern Algeria, 29 Jan.
- “Algerian minister blasts UN over bomb probe plan”, Reuters, 17 Jan. 2008.
 - “U.N. says Algeria ignored security requests before bombing”, *New York Times*, 17 Jan. 2008.
- ➡ **Egypt** Over 800 Muslim Brotherhood members rounded up after countrywide pro-Gaza rallies 21-25 Jan; arrests included senior figures. Round-up followed recent targeted raids against Brotherhood members preparing for municipal elections. Palestinians allowed to enter limited area of Sinai after border wall destroyed 23 Jan (see Israel/OPT); at least 300 detained for carrying weapons or during clashes with border guards. Israel urged Egypt to close border. Egypt working with Hamas to restore order; said wants Palestinian Authority to coordinate Palestinian side; but held separate talks with both end month.
- “Egypt wants Abbas to take control of breached border”, *International Herald Tribune*, 28 Jan. 2008.

- “Egypt begins to control masses flowing from Gaza”, AP, 24 Jan. 2008.
- “Egypt cracks down on Gaza protest”, BBC, 23 Jan. 2008.

- ➡ **Mauritania** 2 alleged Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb members extradited from Guinea-Bissau in connection with 24 Dec murder of 4 French tourists in southern Mauritania – believed to be 2 of 3 gunmen. 4 others charged for abetting killers 20 January. Paris-Dakar Rally cancelled because of terrorism threat. Gunmen fired at Israeli embassy in Nouakchott 1 Feb; attack followed opposition calls for President Abdallahi to sever ties with Israel amid Gaza blockades.
- “Gunmen attack Israeli embassy In Mauritania”, *New York Times*, 1 Feb. 2008.
 - “Mauritania charges 4 after French deaths”, *Washington Post*, 20 Jan. 2008.

- ➡ **Morocco** Close royal adviser Fouad Ali al-Himma launched “Movement for all democrats” 17 Jan – move widely seen as preliminary to creation of new political party.
- “Fouad Ali El Himma crée les conditions de lancement d’un nouveau parti politique”, *Aujourd’hui le Maroc*, 20 Jan. 2008.

- ➡ **Western Sahara** Third round of peace talks between Polisario Front and Morocco 8-9 Jan in Manhasset, New York ended in stalemate; parties agreed to hold further talks 11-13 Mar.
- “Western Sahara peace talks stall”, AP, 10 Jan. 2008.

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