

A monthly bulletin by **Crisis Group** on current and potential conflicts around the world

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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 some 135 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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Bolivia



Conflict Resolution Opportunities

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Crisis Group is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with 135 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict. Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, Crisis Group produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers, and backed up with high-level advocacy. Crisis Group is co-chaired by former European Commissioner for External Relations Lord Patten of Barnes and former U.S. Ambassador and Boeing Vice President, International Relations, Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering, and its President and Chief Executive is former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.



CENTRAL AFRICA

➡ **Burundi** No progress in negotiations between govt and Palipehutu-FNL to revive failing ceasefire implementation; both sides allege violations. Reports of daily attacks: sports ministry director Ferdinand Ntabihari assassinated in 25 Sept grenade attack on home; 3 civilians killed 15 Sept by grenade in north east, FNL suspected. Renewed FNL racketeering reported in rural areas. Civil society groups 5 Sept condemned rise in govt harassment amid further clampdowns on media, civil society: Net Press director jailed 11 Sept for defamation; justice workers union head Juvénal Rududura arrested 15 Sept for false statements implying govt corruption; Radio Publique Africaine threatened with “sanctions” 23 Sept over Jan story alleging plot against Nkurunziza govt.

- Comment by François Grignon (Crisis Group), “[Burundi: Arusha Spirit Must Prevail](#)”, *East African*, 31 Aug. 2008.
- “[Worries over poll chaos in 2010](#)”, *East African*, 13 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°53, [Restarting Political Dialogue](#), 19 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Central African Republic** Talks between govt and rebel group APRD resumed 15 Sept in Libreville, Gabon, after govt revised controversial amnesty law that prompted APRD pullout in Aug; parliament adopted new amnesty law 30 Sept – rebel groups reviewing. New coalition party approved 5 Sept incorporating opposition FPP, MESAN and PATRIE, demanded participation in national dialogue process. Further reports and accusations of peace process violations. Defence ministry 3 Sept denounced rights groups’ silence on APRD crimes in north west, APRD denied. Ahead of March 2009 EUFOR withdrawal, UNSC 24 Sept extended UN mission (MINURCAT) mandate until March 2009, but postponed decision on UNSG’s request for increased troop strength (see Chad).

- “[CAR, rebels move closer to peace deal](#)”, *Mail & Guardian*, 16 Sept. 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** Jan peace deal in tatters after further serious clashes between army and General Nkunda’s CNDP rebels in North Kivu following resumption of hostilities on 28 Aug. Fighting spread over month as army struggled to repel CNDP advances from ceasefire positions, with clashes approaching Sake, 25km from Goma, 20-21 Sept. Both sides report heavy casualties, while UN reported 100,000 displaced since late Aug. Reports of FDLR, Mai Mai rebel assaults on CNDP in Masisi, 15 Sept. CNDP cited evidence FDLR fighting alongside army. UN vehicles attacked in 3 Sept protests against MONUC efforts to hold back fighting; demonstrators called for forceful army response to rebels. Further rallies held 20-21 Sept over poor army conditions. AU, MONUC, EU and govt met for emergency talks in Goma 14 Sept, urged CNDP to return to negotiations. PM and PALU party head Gizenga resigned 25 Sept citing health, but amid

growing tensions with President Kabila; resignation likely to result in PALU’s withdrawal from governing coalition. Govt early month began deploying some 1,100 troops near Ugandan LRA bases in north; Kampala 10 Sept called on Kinshasa to attack rebels in line with June cooperation agreement. UN said at least 17,000 displaced, 90 children abducted after alleged LRA raids on DRC villages mid-month (see Uganda).

- “[U.N. struggles to halt worsening Congo fighting](#)”, Reuters, 21 Sept. 2008.
- “[Anti-MONUC protest in Rutshuru turns violent](#)”, IRIN, 3 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°140, [Congo: Four Priorities for Sustainable Peace in Ituri](#), 13 May 2008.

➡ **Rwanda** Coalition led by ruling RPF won landslide victory after peaceful 15-18 Sept legislative polls. Elections endorsed by international observers; dismissed by exiled opposition as “smokescreen” for President Kagame’s control over democratic process. Kagame 6 Sept threatened to issue arrest warrants against French officials allegedly implicated in 1994 genocide.

- “[RPF wins landslide](#)”, *New Times*, 17 Sept. 2008.
- “[Report on assassination of President Habyarimana to be ready November](#)”, Hironnelle News Agency, 3 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Uganda** LRA continued to evade signature of final peace deal, on hold since April. Early month, Kinshasa with UN mission (MONUC) support began deploying hundreds of troops near LRA bases in north DRC, while Kampala 10 Sept called on DRC for stronger action in line with June cooperation agreement. In statements 11, 13 Sept, LRA said recent DRC build-up posed new barrier to LRA leader Joseph Kony signing final deal; promised resistance, ruled out disarmament until issue of ICC arrest warrants against LRA leadership “resolved”. Food supplies to LRA suspended since May. Head of Ugandan war crimes court, formed in May, stated govt forces (UPDF) cannot be tried before court under terms of Juba peace deal.

- “[Uganda rebels accused of attacks in Sudan, Congo](#)”, Reuters, 19 Sept. 2008.
- “[Justice dilemma haunts Uganda](#)”, BBC, 8 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°46, [Northern Uganda Peace Process: The Need to Maintain Momentum](#).

HORN OF AFRICA

➡ **Chad** After Dakar agreement contact group meeting in Asmara, Chad and Sudan 16 Sept agreed to exchange ambassadors, set up joint peacekeeping force on border. UNSC 24 Sept extended MINURCAT mandate until March 2009 expiry of EUFOR’s mandate, announced intention to authorise UN military component to replace EUFOR – decision on revised MINURCAT mandate, size, structure scheduled mid-Dec. World Bank 9 Sept announced end of involvement in Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline project due to govt failure to allocate oil revenues to poverty reduction. 14 alleged victims filed complaints with Senegalese prosecutor against former President Habré; charges include crimes against humanity, torture.

- “[Security council defers decision on UN troops for Chad, Central African Republic](#)”, UN News, 24 Sept. 2008.
- “[Chad, Sudan to renew diplomatic ties, create peacekeeping force](#)”, AFP, 16 Sept. 2008.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°144,
Chad: A New Conflict Resolution



Framework, 24 September 2008. Power in Chad has been monopolised by President Idriss Deby and the Zaghawa military clan since 1990, leading to increased violence in political and social relations, ethnic tensions and distribution of the spoils of government on the basis of clan favouritism. With the support of the international community, Chadians must urgently adopt a new and inclusive approach toward national reconciliation aiming at establishing a genuine, permanent ceasefire; integrating rebel forces; and creating a regional conflict resolution mechanism to address longstanding disputes.

- **Djibouti/Eritrea** UN 17 Sept encouraged Eritrea to engage in dialogue following early-Aug fact-finding mission, rejected by Eritrea, to investigate June border clashes. Mission report expressed concern over ongoing border tensions and called for demilitarisation of border zone, normalisation of relations; concluded that in case of continued Eritrean rebuff of UNSG offer of good offices, issue should be referred to UNSC.
 - “Djibouti-Eritrea border tension could escalate, warns UN team”, UN News, 18 Sept. 2008.
- **Ethiopia** 28 Sept bomb explosion in capital of Somali region killed 4, wounded 22; ONLF accused by govt, denied responsibility. 2 foreign aid workers kidnapped in Ogaden 22 Sept; ONLF also denied. U.S. expressed concern 18 Sept over draft law regulating NGO activities, said trying to influence govt to reconsider. Unity for Democracy and Justice party granted official recognition to contest 2010 elections. Govt reported over 50 Oromo rebels surrendered in Oromia early month.
 - “Ethiopia police blame Islamist group for weekend blast”, AFP, 28 Sept. 2008.
- **Ethiopia/Eritrea** Ethiopia 25 Sept again accused Eritrea of attempting to destabilise it through new anti-Ethiopian media broadcasts in local languages.
 - “Ethiopia alleges Eritrea ‘blocking’ peace process”, Africa en ligne, 25 Sept. 2008
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°141, *Beyond the Fragile Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Averting New War*, 17 June 2008.
- **Kenya** After 6-month investigation, commission led by South African retired judge Johann Kriegler investigating post-election violence 17 Sept presented report concluding Dec 2007 election deeply flawed; called for changes to electoral system to avoid future unrest, including reformed Electoral Commission, greater transparency. During Kenya visit, Kofi Annan 22 Sept called on govt to implement recommendations. Some 19 killed, hundreds displaced in 12-18 Sept clashes between herders over water in drought-stricken northern districts of Mandera, Isiolo, Samburu. Govt tightened security along Somali border following early month incursions by Somali raiders. South Sudan apologised 9 Sept for Aug attacks by armed raiders in northern Kenya.
 - “Ex-UN chief demands Kenyan electoral reforms”, *International Herald Tribune*, 19 Sept. 2008.
 - “Hundreds displaced in ‘drought’ clashes”, IRIN, 18 Sept. 2008
- **Somalia** Devastating violence continued between Islamists and AU, Ethiopian troops with scores killed, including 2 peacekeepers 14-15 Sept; 30 civilians 22 Sept in Bakara

market. UNHCR reported thousands fleeing Mogadishu. Ethiopian troops 5 Sept shot some 20 civilians in Bardale, prompting TFG district commissioner to switch allegiance to Islamists. Al-Shabaab 16 Sept warned all flights to Mogadishu airport must cease; 19 Sept attacked landing AU supply plane. MP assassinated 9 Sept. Reports 7 Sept of Somali soldiers, Ethiopian officer switching allegiance to militants. International Contact Group for Somalia met 16 Sept in Djibouti seeking diplomatic, financial support for peace process. Djibouti negotiations between govt and opposition Alliance for Re-liberation of Somalia on implementation of 18 Aug agreement disrupted 21 Sept by dispute over Ethiopian troop withdrawal. UNSC stated 4 Sept would consider peacekeeping force subject to improved security situation, political progress; asked UNSG Ban to report back with contingency plan in 60 days. Ethiopian PM Meles 21 Sept said troops will remain in Somalia to support TFG. Rift opened 23 Sept between President Yusuf and parliament over latter’s rejection of Yusuf call for reinstatement of resigned cabinet ministers. In Islamist-controlled Kismayo, key Islamic Courts movement figure 5 Sept rejected new local administration as not sufficiently inclusive of local clans. Further incidents of piracy reported, including 25 Sept seizure of Ukrainian ship carrying 33 tanks.

- “Somalia crisis deepened by Ethiopia”, AP, 24 Sept. 2008.
- “Djibouti: Somalia peace conference ends in dispute”, Garowe Online, 21 Sept. 2008.

➤ **Sudan** Continued fighting in Darfur, particularly in north, including govt aerial attacks on rebels. Govt denied attacks, UNAMID confirmed fighting. Rebels claimed 21 govt soldiers killed in 17 Sept battle. UNAMID reported 2 attacks on their aircraft due to rebel confusion with Sudanese army aircraft, now also painted white in condemned practice. ICC judges 19 Sept issued order for 1 Oct closed meeting with Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo on July request for President Bashir arrest warrant. France, UK indicated possible support for UNSC deferral of prosecution under Article 16 of Rome Statute if Khartoum changes policies, pursues Darfur peace; rebel SLM 25 Sept voiced opposition. AU 22 Sept reiterated support for UNSC deferral; said domestic courts should investigate crimes, Khartoum to involve AU/Arab League (AL) lawyers to give “required credibility”. AL Ministerial Council formed 9 Sept to resolve Darfur crisis, co-chaired by Qatar, AU, AL. Some Darfur rebels and opposition Umma leader dismissed initiative. UN 7 Sept threatened to suspend some Darfur humanitarian assistance after 3 Sept attack on WFP convoy, one of over 100 in 2008. NCP and former rebel SLM-Minawi 17 Sept discussed implementation of 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement, recent govt attacks against SLM-Minawi. At UN 26 Sept, Sudan elected head of “Group of 77” developing countries.

- “Sudan lobbies against Bashir case”, BBC, 23 Sept. 2008.
- “Darfur rebels dismiss Arab League initiative to resolve crisis”, *Sudan Tribune*, 9 Sept. 2008.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

➤ **Angola** Ruling MPLA won landslide victory in 5 Aug legislative elections; gained 82 per cent of vote and two-thirds parliamentary majority (needed to amend constitution). Opposition UNITA, with 10 per cent, conceded defeat. EU observers said vote an “advance for democracy” but fell

short of international standards, citing disorganised polling in Luanda and govt monopoly over state media, institutions.

- [“The people have their say”](#), *Economist*, 11 Sept. 2008.
- [“With governing party’s landslide win, a new era for Angola?”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 10 Sept. 2008.

↳ **Swaziland** Massive pro-democracy protests surrounded 19 Sept polls, accompanied by series of bombings. Over 10,000 marched 3-4 Sept in capital Mbabane and Manzini, calling for end to ban on political parties and abolition of monarchy. Police blocked roads, arrested several in 18 Sept demonstrations near South African border posts. Explosion near royal palace 21 Sept killed 2 suspected bombers; 2 smaller blasts reported in Mbabane 4 Sep. Govt blamed opposition People’s United Democratic Movement, dismissed scale of unrest.

- [“Africa’s other Zimbabwe”](#), *Guardian*, 30 Sept. 2008.

↳ **Zimbabwe** Power-sharing deal between rival party leaders signed 15 Sept following 7 weeks of stop-start talks to resolve crisis. Agreement offers best chance to loosen Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party’s 30-year grip on power, but many observers cautious, citing uncertainty over where power lies and implementation. In deal: executive powers divided between ZANU-PF leader Mugabe, retaining presidency, and MDC leader Tsvangirai, as new PM; each to lead cabinet bodies; combined MDC (incl MDC Mutambara faction) given slim majority of cabinet posts; inclusive, 18-month process established for constitutional reform. But distribution of key ministries still unresolved after talks hit impasse 18 Sept. Continuation of Thabo Mbeki’s role as chief mediator uncertain following his late month resignation as president of South Africa; SADC judgment expected early Oct. International response to deal muted: U.S., UK, EU leaders said aid and removal of targeted sanctions contingent on delivery of reforms. Authorities continued to obstruct urgent aid operations, with new requirements imposed on aid agencies 2 Sept; 26 Sept authorised trading in foreign currency in effort to ease economic crisis. UN estimated at least \$5bn in foreign aid needed to fund economic recovery over next 5 years.

- Comment by Don Steinberg and Sydney Masamvu (Crisis Group), [“Making the Most of the Deal”](#), allAfrica.com, 30 Sept. 2008.
- [“Cautious optimism returns to Zimbabwe”](#), *Guardian*, 20 Sept. 2008.
- [“A deal, but no clarity, in Zimbabwe”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 12 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°51, [“Negotiating Zimbabwe’s Transition”](#), 21 May 2008.

WEST AFRICA

↳ **Côte d’Ivoire** Discussion over feasibility of 30 Nov presidential election date intensified amid severe delays in voter identification and disarmament processes; ruling party VP 5 Sept highlighted risk of botched elections if not postponed, contradicting govt assurances, while opposition called for fresh inter-party talks if date pushed beyond 2008. Registration drive started 15 Sept but with limited capacity. Communal tensions spiked: 10 killed, over 20 injured 5 Sept in inter-ethnic clashes in Bondoukou district.

- [“Ivory Coast parties spar over likely election delay”](#), Reuters, 5 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°139, [“Côte d’Ivoire: Ensuring Credible Elections”](#), 22 Apr. 2008.

↳ **Ghana** Civil society leaders expressed concerns over potential for instability ahead of Dec presidential elections, after 3 killed in 31 Aug clashes between ruling National Democratic Congress and opposition New Patriotic Party supporters, in Northern Region. Govt announced curfew in region and stepped up policing.

- [“Pre-election violence escalates”](#), IRIN, 9 Sept. 2008.

↳ **Guinea** Social unrest increased: youths protested repeated electricity cuts in Conakry early month; vehicles torched in unemployment protests near disputed mining project near Simandou, 5 Sept; hospitals ground to halt after 10-day health workers’ strike. Following intense political debate over govt mining contracts in Aug, Finance Minister Ousmane Dore 8 Sept vowed to speed up sector review started after early 2007 violent anti-govt protests. 3 senior officials arrested over large cocaine load intercepted in Boke 4 Sept; authorities allege series of recent plane deliveries.

- [“Reputation for corruption worsens”](#), IRIN, 24 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°52, [“Guinea: Ensuring Democratic Reforms”](#), 24 June 2008.

↳ **Guinea-Bissau** Controversy over potential military involvement in drug smuggling continued, with reports army officials sought to block investigation into July cocaine seizure at Bissau airport. EU evaluation mission 18 Sept said conditions ahead of 16 Nov legislative elections positive, despite fears for political stability following opposition PAIGC’s July withdrawal from consensus govt.

- Comment by Emmanuelle Bernard (Crisis Group), [“Drug Boom, Lost Hope”](#), openDemocracy, 13 Sept. 2008.
- [“EU pre-election mission visits Guinea Bissau”](#), APA, 19 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°142, [“Guinea-Bissau: In Need of a State”](#), 2 July 2008.

↳ **Liberia** UN Special Representative Løj 3 Sept announced second stage of UNMIL drawdown, to 12,000 troops, to begin Oct. Anti-Corruption Commission officially approved 12 Sept, but marred by controversy after opposition, civil society opposed appointment of commission head, claiming links to president. Son of former President Charles Taylor began trial in Miami late Sept for atrocities during father’s rule, in landmark U.S. case into torture committed overseas.

- [“Under pressure, Liberian government appoints special corruption commission”](#), VoA, 2 Sept. 2008.

↳ **Mali** Govt and Tuareg rebel group ATNMC released prisoners/ hostages in early month peace gesture following July ceasefire agreement. 4 Tuareg found shot dead 2 Sept near Niger border; govt 19 Sept blamed anti-Tuareg militia Ganda Izo, later announced 32 arrested, including leader, and 2 killed in operations against Ganda Izo bases.

- [“Civil society cautiously optimistic about prisoner release”](#), IRIN, 10 Sept. 2008.

↳ **Nigeria** Niger Delta violence surged, after dominant militant group MEND 13 Sept vowed “oil war” against security forces and oil companies, citing retaliation for increased army attacks. Some 100 thought dead after series of assaults on Shell, Chevron sites in Rivers State from 13 Sept; oil production cut by at least 115,000bpd. MEND declared ceasefire 21 Sept, citing appeals from local leaders, but threatened to step up violence if provoked. Fears disparate militant groups uniting. Army played down MEND operation, 1 Oct claimed 400

militants arrested in Port Harcourt; militant groups said arrests indiscriminate. New ministry for Niger Delta announced early month; Delta leaders applauded but sceptics dismiss govt's commitment to region's development. President Yar'Adua returned home 6 Sept after 17-day medical treatment in Saudi Arabia, 8 Sept sacked govt secretary and rumoured rival in further reassertion of executive control after Aug military sackings. Supreme Court 25 Sept ruled hearings to start 23 Oct on legitimacy of Yar'Adua's election, contested by 2007 presidential opponents Muhammadu Buhari and Atiku Abubakar.

- "Risky toughness", *Economist*, 18 Sept. 2008.
- "Nigeria militants threaten broader 'oil war' in delta", Reuters, 17 Sept. 2008.

Africa Briefing N°54, *Nigeria: Ogoni Land after Shell*, 18 September 2008.



The peace process in Ogoni land – a major test for efforts to bring stability to the oil-rich Niger Delta – is likely to fail if the Nigerian government refuses to consult local communities about new oil operations. The federal government should take the lead in negotiating a tripartite agreement with the new oil companies and the Ogoni representatives on the benchmarks that must be met before operations begin.

➔ **Sierra Leone** Govt took steps to deliver 2007 election pledges: President Koroma 1 Sept declared assets under new anti-corruption law requirements for public officials; proposal for return of property seized under former President Strasser's 1992-1996 rule announced 10 Sept.

- "S Leone president declares assets", BBC, 13 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°143, *Sierra Leone: A New Era of Reform?*, 31 July 2008.



Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

➔ **Kazakhstan** Energy cooperation, Georgia-Russia conflict discussed at annual EU-Kazakh meeting in Brussels mid-month. Kazakh, Russian presidents met 22 Sept to discuss security, trade. Overlapping with Russian visit, Kazakhstan and NATO conducted joint military exercises. Govt 22 Sept cancelled planned investment in Georgian port of Poti; Russia 22 Sept announced \$1bn investment in Kazakh mining sector.

- "EU, Central Asia partnership unlikely to be more than marriage of convenience", RFE/RL, 19 Sept. 2008.

➔ **Kyrgyzstan** Opposition Revolutionary Committee leader 16 Sept criticised President Bakiyev for undemocratic activities. Police 17 Sept raided opposition party Kyrgyzstan's Fatherland regional office, seized computers, anti-govt leaflets. Opposition parties 26 Sept reported head of Central Election Commission in hiding following pressure from president's son to disrupt opposition campaign ahead of 5 Oct local elections. Independent newspaper editor detained 9 Sept for 2 days; rights activists said charges politically motivated,

arrest condemned by opposition For Justice movement. Govt stopped energy exports 1 Sept due to shortages.

- "Energy crisis challenges Bakiev's presidency", Ferghana.ru, 10 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°79, *Kyrgyzstan: A Deceptive Calm*, 14 Aug. 2008.

➔ **Tajikistan** Interior Ministry 23 Sept issued arrest warrant for exiled opposition leader; charges include insulting president. Russian electricity company RAO UES 2 Sept confirmed will build 3 hydropower plants in Tajikistan, following Aug announcements of planned Chinese investment in the sector. Govt 2 Sept announced resumption of power rationing due to shortages.

- "Tajik prosecutors charge opposition leader", AP, 23 Sept. 2008.
- "Russia succeeds in securing Central Asia as its political and energy stronghold", Ferghana.ru, 4 Sept. 2008.

➔ **Turkmenistan** Heavy gun battle 13 Sept in Ashgabat, 9-20 police killed. Initially reported as fighting between radical Islamists and security forces; later as between drug-trafficking gang and security forces; also reports of infighting within security forces between clans in drugs trade. New constitution adopted 26 Sept; observers noted democratic and authoritarian elements. UN rapporteur on religion 12 Sept reported improved situation; rights group 8 Sept reported media freedom nonexistent in spite of govt reform claims. UN Human Rights Council rejected proposal to appoint special rapporteur for Turkmenistan.

- "Gunfight in Turkmen capital remains shrouded in secrecy", RFE/RL, 16 Sept. 2008.

➔ **Uzbekistan** FM 16 Sept called for end to temporarily suspended EU visa ban and lifting of sanctions imposed after 2005 Andijon massacre, prior to scheduled Oct EU FM's review. Former intelligence officer claiming President Karimov ordered massacres sought asylum in UK 1 Sept. Parliament 12 Sept amended criminal code to allow only officially sanctioned lawyers to participate as defence attorneys in trials. Russian PM Putin during visit 2 Sept announced new gas pipeline linked to Russia and Turkmenistan.

- "Uzbekistan presses EU to end sanctions", RFE/RL, 16 Sept. 2008.

NORTH EAST ASIA

➔ **North Korea** Increasing setbacks to hard-won June agreement on dismantlement: IAEA 24 Sept announced NK had banned inspectors from Yongbyon reprocessing plant, planned to resume reprocessing activities within week. Govt 26 Aug announced would soon consider steps to restore Yongbyon nuclear facilities. Moves may mark attempt by Pyongyang to gain greater bargaining position given continued U.S. inaction on removing NK from state sponsors of terrorism list, but increasingly threaten progress in Six-Party Talks. U.S. envoy Christopher Hill visited Pyongyang 1 Oct for talks to rescue agreement. Pyongyang confirmed NK leader Kim Jong-Il suffered stroke early in month but said "recovering". WFP 2 Sept announced \$500mn operation for NK, received first permission to include Korean-speaking monitors.

- "Far-reaching U.S. plan impaired N. Korea deal", *Washington Post*, 26 Sept. 2008.

- [“North Koreans bar inspectors at nuclear site”](#), *New York Times*, 24 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°62, [After the North Korea Nuclear Breakthrough: Compliance or Confrontation?](#), 30 Apr. 2007.

SOUTH ASIA

➡ **Afghanistan** Total number of security incidents down on previous month, in customary Ramadan lull, despite several high-profile incidents. Taliban claimed targeted attack 28 Sept that killed renowned Kandahar female police officer Malalai Kakar. Suicide bomber launched rare attack on UN convoy in Spin Boldak 14 Sept, killing driver, 2 doctors; attack could significantly impact humanitarian activities in south. Logar province governor assassinated 13 Sept. After new video evidence U.S. military 7 Sept announced it would open further inquiry into Aug coalition airstrikes in western Afghanistan which govt, UN claim killed 90 civilians. President Karzai attended swearing-in of Pakistan counterpart Asif Zardari 9 Sept, met in margins of UNGA. U.S. armed forces chief Mike Mullen said “holistic approach” to Afghan-Pakistan border needed, called on coalition countries to fund expansion of military effort. Afghan Defence Minister Wardak suggested joint border patrol force. Karzai once again appealed to Taliban for peace talks, Taliban leadership once again publicly rejected.

- Comment by Nick Grono and Joanna Nathan (Crisis Group), [“The Guests at Kabul’s Garden Parties”](#), *Boston Globe*, 7 Sept. 2008.
- [“Afghanistan is in its worst shape since 2001, European diplomat says”](#), *New York Times*, 14 Sept. 2008.
- [“Afghan deaths probe seeks to end UN dispute”](#), *Financial Times*, 9 Sept. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°158, [Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words?](#), 24 July 2008.

➡ **Bangladesh** Head of caretaker govt Fakhruddin Ahmed announced 18 Dec date for parliamentary elections. Local polls will follow on 24, 28 Dec. Emergency provisions will be relaxed during polls, including freedom of assembly, but details unclear. Former PM Khaleda Zia and her son both released on bail early Sept. Former PM Sheikh Hasina, in U.S. for medical treatment on parole, still seeking bail. If granted, both women one step closer to legally standing in Dec poll.

- [“Officials in Bangladesh set December elections”](#), AP, 20 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°151, [Restoring Democracy in Bangladesh](#), 28 April 2008.

➡ **India (non-Kashmir)** Series of 5 bombs detonated 13 Sept in crowded areas of New Delhi killed 24, injured over 100. Shadowy Indian Mujahideen group claimed responsibility. Police in Delhi 19 Sept shot dead 2 young Muslim men they claimed were behind bombings, but doubts remain regarding culpability despite further arrests. Smaller Delhi market blast 27 Sept killed 2.

- [“Indian police accused of using undue force on terror suspects”](#), *Washington Post*, 29 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Kashmir** Communal violence in India-administered Kashmir subsided somewhat after Indian govt temporarily restored disputed land near Hindu Amarnath shrine to Shrine Board. But clashes resumed around 19-20 Sept Srinagar strike by Muslim protesters. In 20 Sept address to parliament, new

Pakistan President Asif Zardari pledged peace with India, increased cooperation. Limited exchange of fire across Line of Control (LOC) reported 22 Sept. Zardari and Indian PM Singh agreed to launch new round of Composite Dialogue talks by year’s end, begin cross-LOC trade, open land route for trade between New Delhi and Kabul, and, guided by Indus Water treaty, resolve water disputes.

- [“35 hurt in clashes over Kashmir strike”](#), Reuters, 20 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Nepal** PM Prachanda made first official visit to India 14-18 Sept, hailed “new era” in relations, but few concrete agreements. Prachanda and (Maoist) Defence Minister Badal held first formal meeting with Nepal Army 12 Sept. Discussion between parties over constitution-drafting procedures for Constituent Assembly continued to stall.

- [“Nepal Maoists reach out to army”](#), BBC, 19 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°156, [Nepal’s New Political Landscape](#), 3 July 2008.

➡ **Pakistan** Powerful bomb exploded at Islamabad Marriott hotel 20 Sept, killing at least 53, including Czech ambassador and 2 U.S. marines, and injuring hundreds. Attack came hours after President Asif Zardari’s first address to parliament, in which he stressed parliamentary sovereignty through revisions to 17th Amendment and renewed commitment to fighting extremism in tribal belt through 3-pronged strategy: negotiations with militants who renounce violence, economic and political reform, and use of force against those challenging state’s writ. Zardari, leader of PPP, elected by national, regional assemblies 6 Sept. First U.S. cross-border commando raid 3 Sept in North Waziristan killed 15 people, first publicly admitted U.S. ground operation in Pakistan. Drone missile attacks 8 Sept killed further 16 people, leading to sharp rebukes from Pakistan govt. Air incursions and U.S. missile drone attacks continued throughout month. 25 Sept cross-border exchange of fire between U.S. and Pakistan troops.

- [“US air attack could shake Zardari regime”](#), *Financial Times*, 8 Sept. 2008.
- [“Reported US attack pushes Afghanistan war into Pakistan”](#), *Guardian*, 3 Sept. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°157, [Reforming Pakistan’s Police](#), 14 July 2008.

➡ **Sri Lanka** More than 200,000 displaced in northern Vanni region, as intense battles continued and military won back territory from LTTE. Govt 5 Sept called for withdrawal of all humanitarian agencies from Vanni, raising concern for civilian casualties. UN and other agencies now operating from Vavuniya, 50km south; only ICRC maintained right to operate in Vanni, though WFP 29 Sept said received permission to deliver food. Grenade attack 29 Sept on home of Transparency International country head after report criticising country. Govt ordered census of all Colombo residents arriving from northern districts in past 5 years, effectively targeting Tamils.

- [“Military harassment threatens Sri Lanka’s oasis of peace”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 Sept. 2008.
- [“UN to relocate Sri Lanka staff”](#), BBC, 9 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°146, [Sri Lanka’s Return to War: Limiting the Damage](#), 20 Feb. 2008.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

- Indonesia Tensions in Aceh continued to mount ahead of Apr 2009 national parliamentary elections (see report below), including two grenade attacks, one on the home of former GAM military commander Muzakkir Manaf 9 Sept, the other targeting Partai Aceh 17 Sept.
- [“Indonesian police arrest 18 over Papuan flag”](#), Reuters, 23 Sept. 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°81, [Indonesia: Pre-Election Anxieties in Aceh](#), 9 Sept. 2008. Three years after the Helsinki agreement between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) to end a 30-year conflict, Aceh is tense in the lead-up to elections in 2009. The immediate goal should be to ensure that the campaign is violence-free, but sustained international attention to Aceh is needed to ensure that the peace holds in the long term.



- Myanmar/Burma Govt 23 Sept freed country's longest-serving political prisoner, Win Tin, after 19-year imprisonment, along with at least 6 other political prisoners, including 3 elected MPs. Opposition NLD party received news of release with caution, noted significant number of political prisoners remaining. Following 11 Sept UNSC briefing by envoy Ibrahim Gambari on Aug mission to country, UNSG Ban said he shared general frustration over lack of political progress in Myanmar. Group of Friends 27 Sept reiterated support for Gambari's good offices mission. Refugees International 5 Sept noted marked improvements in post-cyclone Nargis humanitarian access.
- [“Regime frees longest-serving political prisoner, Win Tin”](#), *Irrawaddy*, 23 Sept. 2008.
 - [“UN envoy defies call to scrap Burma mission”](#), *Financial Times*, 13 Sept. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°144, [Burma/Myanmar: After the Crackdown](#), 31 Jan. 2008.

- Philippines Fighting continued in Mindanao as govt dismantled peace process with MILF rebels. Manila early Sept dissolved peace panel, the mechanism for peace talks, and said would directly engage with local communities instead. MILF rejected mid-month offer of talks by Manila, conditioned on handover of 3 rogue commanders known as Umbra Kato, Bravo and Pangalian. More than 250,000 now displaced in fighting across central Mindanao. Military operations mean Malaysia-led monitors unable to deploy.
- [“In Philippines, abandoned deal reignites rebel war”](#), *Washington Post*, 14 Sept. 2008.
 - [“Philippines to scrap peace panel”](#), BBC, 3 Sept. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°152, [The Philippines: Counter-insurgency vs. Counter-terrorism in Mindanao](#), 14 May 2008.

- Thailand PM Samak forced out of office 9 Sept by Constitutional Court finding he had violated constitution, which came after weeks of protests by People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) calling for his resignation. Samak had declared state of emergency 2 Sept after pro- and anti-govt forces clashed, killing 1, injuring over 40. Court ruling concerned payments he accepted for hosting TV cookery

show while in office. PPP candidate Somchai Wongsawat elected PM 17 Sept; PAD views him as proxy for former PM Thaksin, protests continue. “Peace talks” for south reportedly held 20-21 Sept in Indonesia, with mediation by Indonesian VP Kalla, but Thai govt said not involved and unclear whether Muslim representatives control current insurgents.

- [“Thai MPs elect new prime minister”](#), BBC, 17 Sept. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°80, [Thailand: Political Turmoil and the Southern Insurgency](#), 28 Aug. 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°82, [Thailand: Calming the Political Turmoil](#), 22 Sept. 2008. Deep political polarisation is tearing Thailand apart. Clashes have left one dead and dozens injured, and there are fears of a coup or other undemocratic moves against the government. The rule of law and the authority of the elected government need to be restored for the sake of Thailand's stability and democracy. The international community, especially ASEAN countries, should convey a clear message that another coup would be unacceptable.



- Timor-Leste PM Gusmão clarified earlier comments on withdrawal of International Stabilisation Force, saying troops needed for “at least 1 more year”. Timorese Court of Appeal refused petition presented by parliamentarians, human rights groups against president's amnesty law, pardoning 94 implicated in 2006 crisis.
- [“East Timor court rejects petition against president”](#), ABC Radio, 8 Sept. 2008.
 - For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°148, [Timor-Leste's Displacement Crisis](#), 31 March 2008.



BALKANS

- Albania Key witness in 15 March arms depot explosion investigation killed early Sept. Thousands of opposition Socialist Party supporters rallied in response in Tirana 10 Sept, demanding resignation of PM Sali Berisha and cabinet.
- [“Outrage in Albania over murder of witness”](#), SEE Times, 19 Sept. 2008.
- Bosnia Office of High Representative (OHR), EU and others criticised Republika Srpska (RS) move to abandon joint state electricity operator – key precondition to join European power grid and electricity market. ICTY prosecutors 23 Sept filed revised indictment against former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic; 15 Sept sentenced former Bosnian Muslim army chief Rasim Delic to 3 years for allowing torture of Bosnian Serbs during 1992-95 conflict. In action by Srebrenica survivors, Dutch court 10 Sept ruled Netherlands not responsible for troops' failure to protect enclave in 1995. Campaigning for 5 Oct local elections began 5 Sept.
- [“Bosnian Serb leaders risk 'conflict' with West”](#), Balkan Insight, 15 Sept. 2008.
 - [“EU must demonstrate 'leadership' in Bosnia”](#), *EU Observer*, 9 Sept. 2008.

- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°180, *Ensuring Bosnia's Future: A New International Engagement Strategy*, 15 Feb. 2007.

➡ **Kosovo** UNMIK and Serbian govt 12 Sept continued talks on practical areas, agreed reopening of north Mitrovica court using UNMIK law and judiciary. Belgrade continued to cite lack of UN mandate for EULEX, which plans to deploy by end-2008 including north of River Ibar, but signalled openness to negotiated UNSC-approved formula. Kosovo Serb Assembly convened in June by hardliners held second session 13 Sept to condemn EULEX; only 26 of 45 delegates attended. Pristina govt 3 Sept ruled out violence to secure Serb north, said assertion of authority needs time. In far south, scuffle broke out 1 Sept between rival Kosovo and parallel Serb municipal authority officials contesting Strpce municipal offices; 2 arrested. Kosovo govt 11 Sept announced decentralisation plans for Serb areas south of Ibar, aiming to sideline recently established Serb parallel municipal authorities. Serbian President Tadic 23 Sept addressed UNGA seeking support to request ICJ advisory opinion on legality of Kosovo independence; vote scheduled for 8 Oct.

- ["Kosovo's man in Brussels sets out priorities"](#), *EU Observer*, 23 Sept. 2008.
- ["Life in a Kosovo Serb municipality: blackouts and an uncertain future"](#), *SEE Times*, 15 Sept. 2008.

Crisis Group Europe Report N°196, [Kosovo's Fragile Transition](#), 25 Sept.



2008. Kosovo has taken its first steps in state building, but the calm is deceptive; divisions between Albanian and Serb areas have widened. International supporters including the EU and UN must meet their commitments, overcome insufficient political will and weak coordination, and guarantee EULEX full deployment by 1 December.

➡ **Macedonia** UN envoy Nimetz 12 Sept offered Macedonia and Greece further ideas to resolve name row at New York meetings; FMs briefly discussed 18 Sept. Main opposition Social Democratic Alliance party 18 Sept elected Zoran Zaev as interim leader until outgoing President Branko Crvenkovski takes over May 2009. Ethnic Albanian DPA continued parliamentary boycott; 5 Sept split as respected VP Ymer Selmani quit and 16 Sept launched new centre right Albanian party New Democracy. EU Enlargement Commissioner Rehn 4 Sept said more reforms, especially on elections, needed before accession talks start. PM Gruevski proposed constitutional change regarding election of president, scrapping current threshold of 51% turnout.

- ["EU envoy to Macedonia queries PM's claims"](#), *Balkan Insight*, 12 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Serbia** Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) ratified 9 Sept; 139 deputies for, 26 against. Serbian Radical Party (SRS) deputy leader Nikolic, who supported ratification amidst divisions within SRS, resigned from party 5 Sept and with 18 others founded new Serb Progressive Party. EU 15 Sept failed to reach consensus on unfreezing pre-membership interim trade deal with Serbia; blocked by Dutch on grounds of lack of full ICTY cooperation. Ruling coalition 19 Sept published draft bill confirming Vojvodina as autonomous province; opposed by SRS and other nationalist parties.

- ["Nikolic at center of Serbia's nationalist meltdown"](#), *RFE/RL*, 22 Sept. 2008.
- ["Serbia disappointed over 'unjust' EU move"](#), *Balkan Insight*, 16 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°49, [Will the Real Serbia Please Stand Up?](#), 23 Apr. 2008.

CAUCASUS

➡ **Armenia** In further move to normalise relations, Turkish President Gul 6 Sept attended Armenian-Turkish soccer match in Yerevan – first-ever visit by Turkish head of state. Parliament speaker Tigran Torosian resigned 16 Sept, left ruling Republican Party, citing "irreconcilable differences". Hovik Abrahamian elected new speaker 29 Sept.

- Comment by Hugh Pope (Crisis Group), ["Turkey and Armenia Inch Forward"](#), *Los Angeles Times*, 16 Sept. 2008.
- ["In wake of Georgia war, Armenia faces Hobson's choice"](#), *EurasiaNet*, 10 Sept. 2008
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°48, [Armenia: Picking up the Pieces](#), 8 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Azerbaijan** Campaigning for 15 Oct presidential elections started 17 Sept. Authorities cracked down on Salafi groups following 17 Aug Baku mosque attack: 3 Dagestani "Forest Brothers" held responsible for attack killed in special operation 6 Sept (see North Caucasus (non-Chechnya)). Azeri state-oil company SOCAR 25 Sept announced oil exports to Russia and Iran, commenced after Aug Georgia war, to continue, despite Georgian pipeline return to pre-war functioning. U.S. VP Cheney in 3 Sept Baku visit discussed Nabucco pipeline project.

- ["Azerbaijanis ponder: To vote or not to vote?"](#), *EurasiaNet*, 24 Sept. 2008.
- ["VP Cheney was reportedly less than diplomatic in Baku"](#), *EurasiaNet*, 8 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°191, [Azerbaijan: Independent Islam and the State](#), 25 Mar. 2008.

➡ **Chechnya (Russia)** Ruslan Yamadayev, rival of pro-Kremlin president Kadyrov, shot dead 24 Sept in Moscow. 3 soldiers killed in separate rebel attacks 12, 18 Sept in Grozny.

- ["Kadyrov's last rival dead"](#), *ISN Security Watch*, 29 Sept. 2008.

➡ **North Caucasus (non-Chechnya)** Situation deteriorating in Ingushetia following Aug killing of opposition website owner Magomed Yevloyev in police custody: family publicly declared blood vengeance against President Zyazikov and senior police; security services broke up 2 Sept 1,000-strong protest during Yevloyev's funeral in Nazran. Interior Minister Medov survived suicide bomber attack 30 Sept, 1 bystander killed. Increasingly violent anti-insurgency operations saw 10 security forces, 9 rebels killed – raising concerns of widespread militant backlash. In Dagestan, TV reporter Telman Alishaev fatally shot 2 Sept by 2 gunmen in Makhachkala; bomb 27 Sept killed 1 woman. Series of clashes between security forces, militants saw at least 3 officers, some 22 militants killed including Ilgar Mollachiyev, held responsible for Aug Baku mosque bombing (see Azerbaijan). In Kabardino-Balkaria, opposition newspaper editor Miloslav Bitokov attacked outside his house 3 Sept. In North Ossetia capital Vladikavkaz, police head Cheldiyev and son killed in car attack.

- “Ingushetia abuses ‘may spark war’”, BBC, 23 Sept. 2008.
- “Murder as problem solver”, *Economist*, 4 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°192, *Russia’s Dagestan: Conflict Causes*, 3 June 2008.

➡ **Georgia** Security situation remains fragile with continued Russian military presence amid growing internal political struggles. French President Sarkozy negotiated modified ceasefire comprising Russian withdrawal excluding breakaway regions Abkhazia, South Ossetia (SO), deployment of 200 EU monitors and no-use-of-force agreement. EU monitoring mission started patrolling “buffer zones” around conflict zones 1 Oct. Talks over further OSCE monitors deadlocked after Russia refused access of intl observers to conflict regions. Russia 17 Sept signed friendship treaties with regions including military assistance, establishment of army bases, after Russian President Medvedev announced 7,600 troops to remain in Abkhazia, SO. Tense situation in areas around conflict zones saw 3 Georgian policemen shot dead. Tbilisi 22 Sept claimed downing of Russian spy plane – Moscow denied. At UN, Russia proposed arms embargo on Georgia. NATO ambassadors held first session of NATO-Georgia commission during 15-16 Sept visit to Georgia. ICJ 8 Sept concluded public hearings on Georgian charges of ethnic cleansing against Russia. In wake of growing opposition pressure, President Saakashvili announced “second Rose Revolution” with “wave of new democratic reforms” in parliamentary speech 16 Sept, again in 23 Sept UN address. 3 member parties of United Opposition 17 Sept called for early elections. Parliament 25 Sept established commission to investigate Aug events. Public defender Sozar Subari 30 Sept set up “Public Movement for Freedom and Justice” following strong 25 Sept statement accusing govt of authoritarianism.

- Comment by Lawrence Sheets (Crisis Group), “Georgia: Flaunting Impunity in Russia’s ‘Security Zone’”, *International Herald Tribune*, 11 Sept. 2008
- “Opposition takes on Saakashvili in Tbilisi”, EurasiaNet, 23 Sept. 2008.
- “International observer missions face uncertain future”, EurasiaNet, 19 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°195; *Russia vs Georgia: The Fallout*, 22 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Increased engagement outside OSCE Minsk Group negotiation forum, with Turkish FM Babacan in joint meeting with Armenian, Azeri FMs on UNGA sidelines 26 Sept; Russian President Medvedev in separate meetings with Armenian, Azeri presidents. Baku hinted at possible inclusion of Armenia in Nabucco pipeline project if Yerevan modifies demands for independence of enclave.

- “Are Russia and Turkey trying to alter the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process format?”, EurasiaNet, 26 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°187, *Nagorno-Karabakh: Risking War*, 14 Nov. 2007.

EASTERN EUROPE

➡ **Belarus** 28 Sept parliamentary elections saw all seats won by pro-govt candidates – opposition claimed fraud, staged peaceful 500-strong protest. OSCE 29 Sept said elections fell short of OSCE standards despite minor improvements. U.S. announced further dialogue with regime, suspended sanctions against 2 joint-stock companies for 6 months; EU FMs 30 Sept

discussed easing of visa bans. President Lukashenko 20 Sept warned Belarus will cease dialogue with West if elections not recognised.

- “EU watching as Belarus vote shuts out opposition”, *EU Observer*, 29 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Moldova** 25 Sept talks with Transdniester separatists cancelled, despite renewed efforts for solution: OSCE 8 Sept announced plans for renewed “5+2” talks; Russian President Medvedev restated commitment to peaceful solution in meeting with separatist leader Igor Smirnov 3 Sept.

- “Georgia crisis raises hopes in Moldovan rebel region”, Reuters, 3 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Ukraine** Ruling coalition collapsed 16 Sept after leaders’ feud over Georgia crisis, relations with Russia; PM Tymoshenko 26 Sept suggested early parliamentary, presidential elections. 9 Sept EU-Ukraine summit promised closer ties but no membership perspective. In ongoing debate about NATO membership Moscow accused Kiev of “unfriendly” policy; U.S. VP Cheney supported membership in 5 Sept Kiev visit.

- “Ukraine’s European future”, *Guardian*, 24 Sept. 2008.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➡ **Basque Country (Spain)** Suspected ETA attacks on security forces: explosion at Santano military residence killed 1 soldier 22 Sept, after 2 bombs 21 Sept outside Onderroa police station and at bank in Vittoria wounded 10 – UNSG Ban Ki-moon, UNSC strongly condemned. Spanish Supreme Court 16 Sept banned Basque ANV party, citing links to armed ETA activists. French police arrested 27 ETA suspects 22-24 Sept.

- “Two car bombs hit Basque region”, BBC, 22 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Cyprus** Full-fledged reunification talks between Cypriot leaders Christofias and Talat formally started 3 Sept, in earnest 11 Sept – to resume in Oct on governance and power-sharing issues. Christofias 30 Sept called for demilitarisation of island. Turkish President Gul in 23 Sept UN address expressed full support for establishment of new “state composed of 2 constituent states of equal status”.

- “Cyprus leader in new peace move”, BBC, 30 Sept. 2008.
- “Cyprus rivals in ‘fruitful’ talks”, BBC, 11 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°194, *Reunifying Cyprus: The Best Chance Yet*, 23 June 2008.

➡ **Turkey** Ruling AKP and govt remain under pressure due to stalling EU reform process, financial scandal. Approval of national program on EU integration delayed after cabinet sent draft to NGOs, opposition “for consultations”; EU Enlargement Commissioner Rehn urged govt to speed up reforms of party laws. PM Erdogan called for boycott of Dogan media group outlet after newspapers reported AKP members were beneficiaries in fraud case involving German-based charity Lighthouse. President Gul presented planned Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform at UN 23 Sept. In ongoing investigation against ultra-nationalist Ergenekon network, 10 arrested including journalist Tuncay Ozkan. PKK-army clashes left 12 soldiers, village guards and at least 10 PKK dead over month.

- Comment by Hugh Pope (Crisis Group), “Turkey and Armenia Inch Forward”, *Los Angeles Times*, 16 Sept. 2008.

- "Caucasus crisis leaves Ankara torn between US and Russia", EurasiaNet, 11 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°184, *Turkey and Europe: The Way Ahead*, 17 Aug. 2007.



Latin America / Caribbean

☐ ☐ ☐ **Bolivia** Violent demonstrations over constitutional referendum intensified, but late month govt-opposition talks present opportunity to ease political crisis. At least 30 killed in Pando department clashes early month; govt deployed troops, 12 Sept imposed martial law in Pando, 16 Sept arrested prefect Leopoldo Fernández. Anti-govt protesters in opposition departments occupied govt buildings, natural gas fields, continued blockade of transport routes throughout month. UNASUR heads of state 15 Sept declared support for President Morales, called for dialogue. OAS-, UN-observed govt-opposition talks from 17 Sept prompted lull in violence; negotiations opened over modifications to new constitution, departmental autonomy, tax revenues. Both sides 29 Sept agreed to postpone further talks until 5 Oct. Morales 11 Sept expelled US ambassador, accused of supporting opposition. Venezuela President Chávez 11 Sept said will intervene if Morales "toppled or killed".

- "Evo y prefectos aplazan cita para afinar acuerdo", *Los Tiempos*, 29 Sept. 2008.
- "Now put it back together", *Economist*, 18 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°18, *Bolivia: Rescuing the New Constitution and Democratic Stability*, 19 June 2008.

☐ **Colombia** Army 22 Sept killed 8 FARC rebels, including influential commander Aicardo "El Paisa" Agudelo. 5 killed, 26 wounded in 1 Sept Cali bombing, govt blamed FARC; raised fears over increased FARC attacks on urban centres as several other minor explosions during month. 3mn signatures submitted 10 Sept supporting constitutional amendment to allow President Uribe second re-election in 2010; Uribe 11 Sept hinted will not stand, yet to make definite statement.

- "El Ejército colombiano mata a 'El Paisa'", *El País*, 23 Sept. 2008.
- "Colombia's Uribe signals he will not run in 2010", Reuters, 11 Sept. 2008.

☐ **Ecuador** President Correa 29 Sept declared victory in constitutional referendum after new charter ratified with 64% of vote. Opposition leader Jaime Nebot immediately accepted result. Correa 24 Sept ordered troops to seize Brazilian Odebrecht company's assets following dispute over San Francisco dam.

- "La derrota en Guayaquil ensombrece el triunfo del referéndum constitucional", *El País*, 29 Sept. 2008.

☐ **Haiti** New PM Michèle Pierre-Louis took office after Senate 5 Sept ratified her nomination. Devastating storms killed hundreds, destroyed crop reserves throughout month, prompting fears over new food crisis.

- "Haiti finally gets a new government", Reuters, 5 Sept. 2008.

Crisis Group Latin America/ Caribbean Report N°28, *Reforming Haiti's Security Sector*, 18 Sept. 2008. Operations led by the UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH) largely disbanded armed gangs in the slums of Haiti's cities, but progress has been undermined by persisting crime, political instability and natural disasters. Decisive security and justice sector reforms are a vital part of any durable solution to Haiti's political and security problems. Haiti urgently needs a professional police force if the new government is to move the country toward stability.



☐ **Venezuela** Relations with U.S. further deteriorated after President Chávez 11 Sept expelled U.S. ambassador "in solidarity with President Morales" (see Bolivia), threatened to cut off oil exports. Chávez strengthened military, economic ties to Russia: 2 Russian nuclear bombers in Venezuela for military exercise mid-month; leaders announced joint Russia-Venezuela Caribbean naval manoeuvres for Nov; Russia 26 Sept granted \$1bn loan for arms purchases. Govt 19 Sept expelled 2 HRW activists after report criticising Chávez's civil liberties record.

- "Venezuela expels U.S. rights group for criticism", Reuters, 19 Sept. 2008.
- "Back on his old hobby-horse", *Economist*, 18 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°27, *Venezuela: Political Reform or Regime Demise?*, 23 July 2008.



Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

☐ **Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories** FM Livni elected leader of ruling Kadima party 18 Sept, beating Shaul Mofaz by narrow margin. Following PM Olmert's formal resignation 21 Sept, President Shimon Peres asked Livni to form govt – coalition talks continuing. Olmert to stay on as caretaker PM until govt formed, unless indicted in ongoing corruption probe. Palestinian Authority President Abbas at UN 26 Sept pledged to continue peace efforts but denounced Israeli settlement expansion. Hamas forces 15-16 Sept stormed Gaza City compound of criminal- and militant-linked Dughmush clan; at least 12 killed in fighting. Egypt 20 Sept opened Rafah crossing for students, pilgrims, medical cases. Explosion in Gaza-Egypt tunnel 24 Sept killed 5 Palestinians. Israeli settler attacks against Palestinians increasing: 13 Sept assault on villagers in West Bank denounced by Olmert as "pogrom"; 28 Sept shooting death under investigation. Report of Archbishop Desmond Tutu to UN Human Rights Council said 2006 Israeli shelling of Beit Hanoun in Gaza possibly war crime.

- "Radical settlers take on Israel", *New York Times*, 25 Sept. 2008.
- "Now the hard part", *Economist*, 22 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°71, *Inside Gaza: The Challenge of Clans and Families*, 20 Dec. 2007.

Crisis Group Middle East Briefing

N°24, *Round Two in Gaza*, 11 Sept.

2008. The most recent confrontation in the Gaza Strip has left Hamas in firmer control than ever and prospects for inter-Palestinian reconciliation and a sustainable peace process increasingly elusive. As both Fatah and Hamas consolidate their gains and the West Bank and Gaza grow further apart, prospects for a genuine and sustainable peace process are faint and getting weaker.



➡ **Lebanon** National reconciliation talks opened 16 Sept amid string of violent incidents. Leaders of 14 political factions agreed to discuss national defence strategy, resume dialogue 5 Nov with bilateral talks in interim. Parliament approved new election law 29 Sept. Saleh Aridi – pro-Syrian opposition politician and adviser to Druze leader Talal Arslan – killed when his car exploded 11 Sept. Clash between rival Christian groups in Bsarma in north 17 Sept left 2 dead, 3 wounded. Tensions between Sunnis and Alawites in Tripoli eased with 8 Sept agreement to end recent sectarian fighting, but car bomb 29 Sept targeting army bus killed 7. Syrian troop deployment near northern border to combat smuggling reported 22 Sept. Violence continued in Ein al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp with 2 dead in explosion 23 Sept, shooting 15 Sept. UNIFIL peacekeeper killed in explosion 3 Sept while clearing munitions from 2006 war with Israel.

- [“Rival Lebanese factions begin reconciliation talks”](#), AP, 16 Sept. 2008.
- [“Lebanese parties vow to work past Aridi murder”](#), *Daily Star*, 12 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°78, [The New Lebanese Equation: The Christians’ Central Role](#), 15 July 2008.

➡ **Syria** Continued diplomacy overshadowed by deadliest attack since mid-1980s, as car bomb south of capital 27 Sept killed 17, wounded dozens; official news agency 30 Sept said suspected Islamist suicide bomber. French President Sarkozy in Damascus visit 3-4 Sept; discussed Syrian role in addressing Iranian nuclear issue, potential direct peace talks with Israel. Sarkozy, President Bashar al-Assad met with leaders of Turkey, Qatar at 4 Sept summit; Assad said awaiting Israeli response to 6-point outline regarding withdrawal from Golan Heights. Fifth round Turkey-mediated indirect talks delayed at Israel’s request, amid leadership changes there (see Israel/OPT). Preliminary results of IAEA probe said to contradict allegation of nuclear reactor at Al Kibar site.

- [“Lebanon, Syria blame bombings on Islamic militants”](#), *Los Angeles Times*, 30 Sept. 2008.
- [“Syria sends peace proposal to Israel”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 4 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°63, [Restarting Israeli-Syrian Negotiations](#), 10 April 2007.

GULF

➡ **Iran** UNSC resolution 27 Sept reaffirmed existing sanctions, called on Tehran to comply with past resolutions and IAEA nuclear program inquiry, following latest IAEA report 15 Sept. Russia blocked U.S., European moves for more sanctions. President Ahmadi-Nejad 24 Sept in UNGA address said supported dialogue but would resist pressure from “bullying powers”. U.S. announced further sanctions against Iranian

shipping companies and criminal prosecution related to Dubai-based companies allegedly supplying weapons technology. Ahmadi-Nejad 18 Sept defended senior official over comments Iran was friend of Israeli people; supreme leader Khamenei 19 Sept said comments “illogical” but gave strong backing to Ahmadi-Nejad. Gulf Cooperation Council states 3 Sept condemned Iran for opening offices on Abu Musa island disputed with UAE. Tehran 16 Sept said Revolutionary Guards Corps in charge of defending territorial Gulf waters, amid continued tensions with U.S., Israel.

- [“UN approves new Iran resolution”](#), BBC, 28 Sept. 2008.
- [“Watchdog reaches Iran ‘dead end’”](#), *Financial Times*, 16 Sept. 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 broke deadlock over provincial elections 24 Sept, passing new bill that would require polls by 31 Jan 2009. Kirkuk issue sidestepped – new committee to recommend power-sharing mechanism by 31 March; special electoral law to follow. Christians in Mosul 28 Sept protested elimination of quotas for religious minorities. Continued Iraqi army offensive in Diyala province led to standoff with Kurdish forces in mostly Kurdish Khanaqin subdistrict, ending in mutual stand-down. Arab-Kurd tensions further increased with shooting of Kurdish politician by police 27 Sept. Explosions continued, with at least 28 killed in suicide attack at Dujail police station 12 Sept, 22 in suicide blast in Diyala 13 Sept and 32 in blasts in Baghdad Shiite neighbourhoods 28 Sept. U.S. airstrike near Tikrit 19 Sept killed 7 including 3 civilians. Gunmen killed at least 35 in Diyala 25 Sept. PKK 26 Sept said Turkish planes bombed villages, killing 3. Iraq ranked third most corrupt country by Transparency International.

- [“Al-Sadr supports quotas for minorities”](#), AP, 30 Sept. 2008.
- [“Iraq parliament paves way for provincial elections”](#), AP, 24 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°75, [Iraq after the Surge II: The Need for a New Political Strategy](#), 30 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Yemen** Double car bomb attack on U.S. embassy in Sanaa 17 Sept killed at least 16, including 6 attackers and 1 U.S. citizen. Al-Qaeda-linked Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility, threatened attacks on UK, UAE, Saudi embassies unless imprisoned militants released. Govt reported some 30 suspects arrested. 12 opposition politicians detained after Apr protests released 11 Sept. In north, security reportedly relatively calm but humanitarian situation dire; govt and al-Houthi Shiite rebels traded accusations over ceasefire breaches. Civil society organisations welcomed govt initiative to release detained Houthi loyalists, including journalist Al-Khawi.ani.

- [“Humanitarian situation continues to worsen”](#), *Yemen Times*, 21 Sept. 2008.
- [“Suspects held over Yemen blasts”](#), BBC, 18 Sept. 2008.

NORTH AFRICA

➡ **Algeria** 3 killed in suicide bombing in Dellys, near Algiers, 28 Sept – assailants unknown; followed bloody wave of attacks in Aug claimed by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Some 15,000 troops deployed in east; govt said several key leaders killed and cells dismantled. PM Ouyahia 18 Sept urged

president Bouteflika to stand for third term ahead of April 2009 elections; constitutional amendment required.

- [“Algeria suicide attack kills three”](#), Reuters, 29 Sept. 2008.
- [“In Tunisia and Algeria, Rice asks for cooperation”](#), *Washington Post*, 7 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Egypt** In rare abduction, 19 hostages, including 11 tourists, seized 19 Sept in southern Gilf-al-Kebir region by unidentified gunmen; reportedly freed 29 Sept after 6 kidnappers killed at border by Sudanese authorities. Egypt claimed attackers criminal, while Sudan blamed Darfur rebel group SLA-Unity. Social tensions continued to simmer, focused on cessation of relief effort for 6 Sept Cairo landslide, which killed over 100, and subsequent arrest of protesting families.

- [“Egyptian and foreign hostages are freed in desert raid”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Sept. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°76, [Egypt’s Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration?](#), 18 June 2008.

➡ **Mauritania** 22-member transitional govt created 1 Sept after military junta seized power in Aug coup; 4 ministers from deposed President Abdallahi’s govt retained posts. Parliament 14 Sept approved 12-14 month schedule for new elections, but vote widely boycotted by legislators; crucial issue of coup leader Abdel Aziz’s eligibility to stand unclear. Judges appointed 2 Sept to try Abdallahi, still under house arrest, on charges including undermining parliament. Newly installed PM Laghdaf 30 Sept vowed to ban all protests. U.S., EU, AU rejected govt’s legitimacy, threatened sanctions and, with

World Bank, aid cuts amounting to over \$500mn. 12 soldiers killed 15 Sept in Tourine by suspected Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb militants; group 22 Sept called for “holy war” in North Africa.

- [“Latest al Qaeda attack ratchets up Mauritania risk”](#), Reuters, 17 Sept. 2008.
- [“Mauritanian junta unveils cabinet”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 1 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Morocco** New political grouping Authenticity and Modernity Party, led by royal aide al-Himma, won 3 seats at 19-20 Sept by-elections, fuelling opposition accusations of unfair state backing. Conviction of blogger early month for criticising monarchy condemned by rights groups; 18 Sept acquitted on appeal.

- [“Morocco holds legislative by-elections”](#), African Press Association, 19 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Western Sahara** Former U.S. diplomat Christopher Ross expected to replace Peter van Walsum as UN Special Envoy after latter forced out in Aug over Polisario Front (PF) complaints of favouritism toward Morocco. No movement in deadlock over disputed territory.

- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°65, [Western Sahara: The Cost of the Conflict](#), 11 June 2007; and N°66, [Western Sahara: Out of the Impasse](#), 11 June 2007.

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