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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 over 60 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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November 2008 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alerts

Democratic Republic of Congo



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CENTRAL AFRICA

➡ **Burundi** South African mediator Charles Nqakula arrived in Burundi 20 Oct in effort to broker agreement between govt and Palipehutu-FNL, without success. Talks stalled over FNL demand to transition to political party and contest 2010 elections with same name; govt cited constitutional bar on political appeals to ethnicity. Regional team including Nqakula, and South African, Ugandan, Tanzanian FMs expected to return to increase pressure. Muyinga province court 23 Oct sentenced 4 officers, 1 to death, for 2006 massacre of 30 civilians suspected of supporting FNL, in first case into Burundian military abuses. Govt 6 Oct tightened restrictions on political assembly, limiting to weekend hours and requiring presence of regional officials.

- [“Burundi peace mediator admits failure”](#), AFP, 21 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°53, [Restarting Political Dialogue](#), 19 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Central African Republic** President Bozizé 13 Oct approved revised amnesty law after previous version prompted rebel groups to abandon peace talks; requirement for rebels to disarm within 60 days or forfeit amnesty drew mixed reactions: APRD rejected deal, UFDR approved. UN mission in CAR (MINURCAT) 10 Oct said national army primarily responsible for rising human rights abuses.

- [“Promulgation de la loi d’amnistie controversée”](#), AFP, 14 Oct. 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** Violence escalated in east as army and MONUC forces failed to contain major advances by Laurent Nkunda’s CNDP rebels, while tensions mounted over Rwandan support for Congolese Tutsi Nkunda. As *CrisisWatch* went to press, fragile ceasefire holding but risks still high. After heavy assaults on N Kivu military bases, CNDP from 26 Oct took Rutshuru and moved to limits of regional capital Goma, declaring ceasefire 29 Oct. Tens of thousands fled as army abandoned positions southwards toward Bukavu, looting and raping civilians in and around Goma. IDP camps in Rutshuru reported razed 31 Oct. Hundreds rallied 27 Oct calling for stronger UN action, stoning UN vehicles. Kinshasa accused Kigali of incursions in support of CNDP, Kigali denied; UN confirmed FDLR and other Rwandan militia fighting alongside DRC troops (see Rwanda). U.S. diplomats, UK and French FMs arrived 30 Oct-1 Nov for talks with Kinshasa and Kigali; EU Commissioner Michel 31 Oct announced Presidents Kabila and Kagame agreed to participate in planned AU regional summit. UN SRSG Alan Doss 28 Oct called for reinforcements; UNSC 29 Oct urged end to attacks, deferred decision on increasing troop strength. In separate fighting in Ituri, suspected Ugandan LRA rebels continued attacks on north east villages, clashing with army – UN says up to 50,000 displaced since mid-Sept (see Uganda); new militia FPJC early month attacked military bases near Bunia. Kabila named Adolphe Muzito new PM following Gizenga’s Aug resignation, drawing from PALU party in line with

coalition terms. In ongoing uncertainty surrounding ICC case against former UPC militia leader Thomas Lubanga, appeals chamber 21 Oct confirmed stay of proceedings, remanded decision on release.

- [“Congo reignites”](#), *Financial Times*, 30 Oct. 2008.
- [“Congo rebels advance; protesters hurl rocks at U.N. compound”](#), *New York Times*, 27 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°140, [Congo: Four Priorities for Sustainable Peace in Ituri](#), 13 May 2008.

➡ **Rwanda** Relations with DRC intensified with reports Rwandan troops stationed at DRC border launched late-month cross-border incursions in support of CNDP rebels; UN 10 Oct confirmed DRC army colluding with Rwandan militia FDLR, FAR, including some perpetrators of 1994 genocide (see DRC). New RPF-led parliament sworn in 6 Oct following Sept legislative elections, with historic female majority. 4 former high-ranking ministers began trial before ICTR for genocide, crimes against humanity. ICTR 8 Oct refused to transfer cases to Rwanda justice system.

- [“Monuc confirms DRC army-FDLR alliance”](#), *New Times*, 10 Oct. 2008.
- [“Former Rwandan minister denies genocide charges: ICTR”](#), AFP, 10 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Uganda** Pressure mounted for military action against LRA rebels, but no progress towards concluding peace deal. Ban on aid deliveries to LRA strongholds in the north remained in place, prompting LRA leadership to claim govt renegeing on Apr pledges. South Sudan leader Salva Kiir 8 Oct demanded chief mediators Riek Machar and UN envoy Chissano provide timeframe for deal before “other options” pursued. Vicious attacks, abductions by reported LRA rebels from DRC bases continued: at least 6 killed in 18-19 Oct raids near Dungu, DRC mid-month; UN said up to 50,000 displaced, some 50 killed, scores abducted since mid-Sept. ICC renewed call for arrest of LRA leadership, questioned DRC efforts to execute warrants.

- [“Analysts fear Ugandan rebel chaos spreading”](#), AFP, 26 Oct. 2008.
- [“Feeding the killers: Uganda aid row begs tough questions”](#), Reuters, 3 Oct. 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** Chadian rebel groups met in Sudan mid-Oct, reportedly to form political and military alliance for new campaign against govt; from Khartoum went to El Geneina near border. EUFOR reports that rebels rearming. Chadian army ANT preparing for possible new attack, with mid-Oct deployments in Adré. Belgium took over command of EUFOR special forces 15 Oct. First contingent of UN-trained Chadian troops, *Détachement Intégré de Sécurité* (DIS), deployed to east 24 Oct. AU delegation met 11 Oct with UN Dep SRSG to assess humanitarian situation in east and peace process. President Deby met with Sudanese First VP Salva Kiir 13 Oct in further move to normalise relations. MSF suspended activities in east early Oct after bandit attacks.

- [“Chadian rebels plan new offensive”](#), Independent.ie, 20 Oct. 2008.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°144, *Chad: A New Conflict Resolution Framework*, 24 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Djibouti/Eritrea** Djibouti President Omar Guelleh 23 Oct told UNSC war only option unless UN takes action on border dispute with Eritrea. Asmara denied occupying Djibouti's territory; UNSC members appealed for negotiations.

- "UN Security Council urges Eritrea, Djibouti to resolve dispute", VoA, 23 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Ethiopia** U.S. and Human Rights Watch further criticised new NGO law. UK characterised Ethiopian govt's reaction to food crisis as "deny and delay". Aid workers in Somali region reported govt actively frustrating efforts to reach worst-affected.

- "British minister withholds aid as Ethiopia hides famine victims", *The Times*, 18 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Ethiopia/Eritrea** Last UNMEE peacekeeping contingent left border 15 Oct; UNSG Ban 13 Oct transmitted final report of Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) on border dispute to UNSC. EEBC concluded that since no action taken by parties to demarcate on ground, boundary demarcated by coordinates. Eritrea reiterated acceptance of EEBC's final ruling; Ethiopia did not respond.

- "Final border report on Ethiopia-Eritrea dispute sent to Security Council", UN News, 13 Oct. 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** Commission of inquiry into post-election violence, established as part of Feb 2008 power-sharing deal, 15 Oct reported to President Kibaki: found politicians on all sides stirred up violence, recommended creation of special tribunal to try those behind violence – charges may include crimes against humanity. Commission produced secret list of alleged high-level perpetrators, to be passed to tribunal or if no tribunal, International Criminal Court. List given to former UNSG Kofi Annan who strongly backed tribunal. Report said state security agencies failed to prepare for violence, police force in need of overhaul. Kibaki 20 Oct voiced support for amnesty in face of divisions within coalition govt parties on whether to implement tribunal, worries among some top ODM and PNU figures. Leaked draft of Kenya National Commission on Human Rights report into post-election violence named 219 individuals allegedly involved, including top officials. Parliament 23 Oct passed bill for truth, justice and reconciliation commission (TJRC). New inter-clan fighting mid-Oct killed up to 20 in Mandera in north east; at least 200 reportedly injured in brutal govt response. UN report 5 Oct said Kenya imported heavy weaponry without reporting to UN as stipulated in international agreements.

- "Kenya set to get truth commission", BBC, 24 Oct. 2008.
- "Spread the blame", *Economist*, 23 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°137, *Kenya in Crisis*, 21 Feb. 2008.

➡ **Somalia** Violence continued, with dozens killed in Mogadishu during month; Transitional Federal Govt (TFG) stronghold of Baidoa under Al-Shabaab attack; UN driver killed in southern port Merca 7 Oct. Some 450 Burundian AU peacekeepers arrived in Mogadishu by plane 11 Oct. Further reports of govt forces' defections to Islamic Courts. TFG and faction of Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) 26 Oct signed ceasefire

in Djibouti and agreed to national unity govt, dependent on Ethiopian troop withdrawal by early 2009 and AU/UN force. TFG given series of conditions to fulfil by Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) meeting in Nairobi 29 Oct; ARS representatives also in attendance. U.S. late Oct called for extension of TFG mandate, set to expire within 6 months. Ethiopia's opposition increased pressure on govt to withdraw troops from Somalia; calls rejected by PM Meles, but said would adhere to withdrawal schedule. Fighting reported between Islamic Courts and Al-Shabaab 19 Oct near Mogadishu. Kenya announced 9 Oct will train up to 10,000 Somali troops, drawing threat of attack from Somali Islamists. Stand-off continued between pirates of Ukrainian tank carrier and growing international naval presence. EU 2 Oct agreed to establish anti-piracy operation off Somali coast, to deploy Dec, planned to last a year. UNSC 7 Oct resolution called for states to combat piracy; NATO sent 7 warships mid-month. Woman stoned to death 27 Oct in Islamist-held Kismayo. Some 30 killed in near-simultaneous suicide car bombings in Bossaso (Puntland) and Hargeisa (Somaliland) 29 Oct (see Somaliland).

- "Igad gives Somalia nine months to act", *Daily Nation*, 30 Oct. 2008.
- "UN council calls for action against Somalia piracy", Reuters, 7 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Somaliland (Somalia)** Over 25 killed, scores injured in coordinated suicide car bombings in Hargeisa 29 Oct, targeting Ethiopian embassy, UN offices and presidential palace; foreign workers being evacuated. Same-day car bombings believed to be connected hit security services in Bossaso, Puntland, killing at least 3. U.S. suggested al-Qaeda responsible, operating through Al-Shabaab; Muslim cleric arrested 30 Oct in Bossaso. 1 killed, 1 wounded 25 Oct after police fired on crowd in Borama during voter registration for March 2009 general elections; registration halted following 29 Oct attacks.

- "Suicide bombers strike Bossaso, Hargeisa, killing dozens", IRIN, 29 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Sudan** Govt 16 Oct announced new "Sudan Peace Initiative" for Darfur; rebel groups, opposition parties boycotted. JEM 8 Oct still undecided on participation in Qatar peace talks, insisted on UN and AU involvement, said no ceasefire prior to peace deal. SLM and Sudan National Liberation Movement (SNLM) 15 Oct announced reunification, emphasising Darfuri rebel unity. UN 18 Oct said Sept violence displaced 50,000 in northern Darfur. 2 UNAMID peacekeepers killed 6 and 30 Oct; UNSG Ban said further UNAMID deployment delayed due to security situation. ICC pre-trial chamber held first meeting with ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo 1 Oct on application for President Bashir arrest warrant; later asked Moreno-Ocampo for additional information by 17 Nov. Sudanese official 12 Oct said militia commander Ali Kushayb, wanted by ICC, was in custody; domestic investigation completed but unclear whether would stand trial. Moreno-Ocampo 17 Oct announced imminent request for ICC indictment against Darfur rebel commanders for attacking AU peacekeepers. UNSG Ban 28 Oct called for more UNMIS peacekeepers for South Sudan. Fears that Khartoum and Govt of South Sudan (GoSS) rearming in violation of CPA, with Kenya and GoSS denying reports that arms on pirated Ukrainian ship (see Somalia) destined for GoSS via Kenya. 9 Chinese oil workers taken hostage 19 Oct in South Kordofan region; 5 killed, 2 missing, 2 escaped.

- [“UN wants more troops in disputed Sudan oil region”](#), Reuters, 28 Oct. 2008.
- [“War crimes investigations are mere ‘window dressing’”](#), Human Rights Watch, 20 Oct. 2008.
- [“Darfuris say Sudan initiative dead in water”](#), *Sudan Tribune*, 16 Oct. 2008.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°145,
[Sudan’s Southern Kordofan Problem:](#)



[The Next Darfur?](#), 21 Oct. 2008. In Southern Kordofan state, the Khartoum government must act to resolve disputes along the North-South border, while urgent steps must be taken to accelerate integration of the state government and combatants within the Joint Integrated Units. Reconciliation among the state’s tribes is paramount.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

➡ **Swaziland** King Mswati III reappointed ally Barnabas Dlamini as PM, brother Guduza Dlamini as parliamentary speaker following Sept’s controversial parliamentary elections, which saw widespread protests against country’s absolute monarchy. PM’s swearing-in 10 Oct briefly halted after MP pledged allegiance to “Swazi nation”, in rebuke to King. International civil society conferences in Manzini opened 16 Oct after High Court ruled against govt ban on political meetings; King Mswati same day promised to “strangle” political dissidents.

- [“Govt fails to stop ‘terrorist’ meeting”](#), IRIN, 20 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Zimbabwe** Stalemate over ministerial appointments intensified and 15 Sept power-sharing deal with MDC party leaders threatened to unravel after ZANU-PF party leader President Mugabe 11 Oct unilaterally claimed all key posts. MDC head Tsvangirai 12 Oct vowed to withdraw unless received home affairs ministry, which confers control over ZANU-PF dominated police. 4-day rescue talks overseen by lead mediator Mbeki and 27 Oct regional SADC summit failed to broker compromise; SADC troika talks earlier postponed after ZANU-PF-dominated authorities failed to issue Tsvangirai passport. Parliament forced to adjourn late month due to insufficient funds. Police brutally suppressed 200-strong 14 Oct student protests outside parliament, arrested further 47 activists calling for political settlement. Rights group 31 Oct said humanitarian crisis, food shortages intensifying. Tsvangirai and independent watchdog ZESN condemned electoral commission plans to hold by-elections for 6 vacant seats, citing provisions of 15 Sept deal and need for pause after severe election violence in Apr-June. EU, U.S. threatening to extend targeted sanctions against ZANU-PF hardliners if Mugabe reneges on Sept pledge.

- [“Deadlock in Zimbabwe”](#), *Guardian*, 17 Oct. 2008.
- [“Zimbabwe Generals’ Fears of Prosecution Threaten Deal”](#), *New York Times*, 15 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°51, [Negotiating Zimbabwe’s Transition](#), 21 May 2008.

WEST AFRICA

➡ **Côte d’Ivoire** Electoral officials said 30 Nov presidential elections “impossible” due to major delays in voter identification and disarmament. UN SRSG Choi called for momentum to be maintained, while UNSC 29 Oct renewed arms embargo and

targeted sanctions, promising to review after poll. Registration process suspended 23-24 Oct after attacks on electoral offices. Inter-party talks on deal to supplement March 2007 Ouagadougou peace agreement started 14 Oct, focusing on status of ex-rebel FN fighters and stalled military reform program.

- [“Election jitters”](#), *Economist*, 30 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°139, [Côte d’Ivoire: Ensuring Credible Elections](#), 22 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Guinea** First parliamentary elections since independence, set for Dec, again postponed; voter registration yet to begin. Opposition UFR accused govt of stalling to retain control amid waning support. President Conté replaced finance and security ministers in further summary dismissals following May sacking of PM Kouyaté. In Conakry, 2 shot dead by police during 10 Oct protests against foreign bauxite firm’s alleged failure to deliver promised public services. 1 killed in reported spate of attacks along Sierra Leone border by armed militiamen. UN anti-narcotics chief warned country surpassing Guinea-Bissau as region’s trafficking hub.

- [“Opposition slams delay to Guinea’s first free vote”](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 24 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°52, [Guinea: Ensuring Democratic Reforms](#), 24 June 2008.

➡ **Guinea-Bissau** UN USG Pascoe reported “uneasy calm” ahead of 16 Nov elections, while UNSC statement issued 15 Oct focused on threat posed by thriving drugs trade to future security. UNSG Ban earlier called for UN panel to consider targeted sanctions. Complaints of numerous omissions on voter rolls.

- [“G Bissau drugs sanctions threat”](#), BBC, 3 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°142, [Guinea-Bissau: In Need of a State](#), 2 July 2008.

➡ **Liberia** Truth and Reconciliation Commission 13 Oct survey stressed threat of return to civil war posed by rising land tensions, also governance failures and unemployment. Followed 6 Oct armed stand-off between communities locked in year-long land dispute, Voinjama district. Son of Charles Taylor and U.S. citizen Chuckie Taylor convicted in Miami for torture during involvement in Liberia’s 1999-2004 civil war.

- [“Liberia report warns of threat to peace”](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 24 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Mali** Independent panel 13 Oct submitted report to govt with recommendations for improving democratic conditions and electoral practices. 2 Austrian hostages held by suspected Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb militants since March freed late month.

- [“EU opens ‘job centre’ in Africa”](#), BBC, 6 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Niger** Govt issued ban on public protests following 19 Oct mass demonstrations in Niamey calling for release of ex-PM Amadou, detained since June on corruption charges. Amadou and supporters accuse President Tandja of seeking to remove rival. Low-level insurgency by Tuareg rebel group MNJ continued in uranium-rich north; 4 soldiers abducted, 3 killed in 8 Oct assault on convoy. Radio journalist Kaka released 7 Oct after year-long detention over alleged MNJ links; trial on reduced charges expected. MSF late month announced plan to pull out of country due to govt’s continued ban on activities, imposed July.

- [“Niger says 3 soldiers, 1 rebel killed in shootout”](#), AP, 9 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Nigeria** Violence in oil-producing Niger Delta dropped from Sept peak, following late Sept military crackdown and increased pressure from regional elders, but deadly attacks frequent. 17 killed in 8 and 16 Oct clashes between Joint Task Force troops and masked gunmen in Rivers State; 98 crew kidnapped when 8 oil vessels hijacked in Bayelsa State waters 13 Oct amid wave of abductions targeting oil workers, politicians. President Yar'Adua 29 Oct sacked 20 ministers in first phrase of long-awaited cabinet reshuffle. Suspicion over Yar'Adua's commitment to anti-corruption drive grew after Economic and Financial Crimes Commission head 23 Oct said no files relating to previous allegations against ex-President Obasanjo and former governors exist, overshadowing series of high-level arrests and investigations throughout Oct. Supreme Court 23 Oct deferred verdict on prolonged trial over legitimacy of President Yar'Adua's 2007 election. Signs of post-handover instability in Bakassai Peninsula: Bakassi Freedom Fighters gunmen reportedly attacked off-shore oil vessels, kidnapping crew 31 Oct.

- Comment by Donald Steinberg and Nnamdi Obasi (Crisis Group), ["Rewarding Non-Violence in the Niger Delta"](#), AIIAfrica, 3 Oct. 2008.
- ["Nigeria court defers ruling on presidential vote"](#), Reuters, 23 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°54, [Nigeria: Ogoni Land after Shell](#), 18 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Sierra Leone** President Koroma 14 Oct announced inquiry into corruption in previous administration; opposition SLPP claim govt will use for "witch-hunt" against opposition.

- ["SLPP welcomes APC Commission of Inquiry but..."](#), *Concord Times*, 23 Oct. 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** Defence Minister Danial Akhmetov, following 15 Oct meeting with NATO SG Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, signalled possible greater involvement in ISAF mission in Afghanistan. 30-strong Kazakh military unit in Iraq pulled out 21 Oct after 5-year operation. U.S. Sec State Rice in Almaty early Oct for talks on energy, security. Kazakh state-owned oil and gas company suggested closer coordination with Iran.

- ["Kazakhstan set to increase energy cooperation with Iran"](#), RFE/RL, 16 Oct. 2008.
- ["Kazakh electors pick fresh crop of senators"](#), RFE/RL, 4 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Kyrgyzstan** Local elections 5 Oct saw opposition and NGO allegations that results falsified to ensure Ak Zhol party victory and 30 Sept disappearance of opposition MP. Head of security council resigned mid-month after publicly criticising President Bakiyev administration. Bakiyev in Germany late Oct for medical treatment. Some 1,000 protested in southern town Noorkat 1 Oct, over official insensitivity to Muslim needs. Russian President Medvedev in Bishkek 9 Oct for energy

and security talks, including agreement on sale of 75% of state-owned natural gas company to Russian Gazprom. Central Asian countries meeting in Bishkek 18 Oct agreed to coordinate use of water and energy over winter.

- ["Kyrgyz political elite hit by infighting"](#), Journal of Turkish Weekly, 24 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°79, [Kyrgyzstan: A Deceptive Calm](#), 14 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Tajikistan** President Rakhmon engineered removal of powerful renegade chief of local organised crime department Col. Mirzokhoja Akhmadov, implicated in Feb shooting of special police unit (OMON) commander in Garm. UN appeal for emergency assistance, over possibly severe winter food shortages, so far met limited response.

- ["Almost one-third of the population is in danger of going hungry this winter"](#), EurasiaNet, 7 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Turkmenistan** Independent audit confirmed South Tolotan-Osman oil and gas fields in Amy Darya basin possibly 4th or 5th largest in world; news tempered by concerns over energy infrastructure and conditions for foreign investors. Reformist dissident Gulgeldy Annaniyazov 7 Oct sentenced 11 years in prison.

- ["Turkmen gas riches revive pipe dreams"](#), RFE/RL, 15 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°133, [Central Asia's Energy Risks](#), 24 May 2007.

➡ **Uzbekistan** EU FMs 13 Oct voted to allow Nov expiration of post-2005 Andijon massacre travel ban on 8 officials, citing "improving" human rights record and "encouragement" for future; arms embargo to continue. Security chief Rustam Inoyatov in Germany late Oct; visit condemned by rights groups. Govt media liberalisation forum 2-3 Oct widely criticised as empty exercise; 2 rights activists jailed in month. Govt announced plans to reduce cotton exports and growing area.

- Comment by Andrew Stroehlein (Crisis Group), ["Witness to Absurdity"](#), Transitions Online, 16 Oct 2008.
- ["Critics question EU laxity as Uzbek problems persist"](#), RFE/RL, 17 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°76, [Political Murder in Central Asia: No Time to End Uzbekistan's Isolation](#), 14 Feb. 2008.

NORTH EAST ASIA

➡ **China (internal)** Dalai Lama envoys headed to Beijing 30 Oct to resume talks held in July; China said only willing to discuss return of Dalai Lama, Tibetans want broader talks including future status of Tibet.

- ["Negotiations on Tibet to resume in Beijing"](#), *New York Times*, 30 Oct. 2008.

➡ **North Korea** After DPRK accepted proposed protocol for verification of disablement, Washington 11 Oct removed from "state sponsors of terrorism" list. Protocol covers both plutonium and uranium activity; critics note mutual consent needed for visits to undeclared sites. Move followed 1-3 Oct Pyongyang visit by chief U.S. envoy Christopher Hill. DPRK resumed disablement work 14 Oct. North-South relations remain chilly; South Korea called premature end to 2 Oct bilateral military talks.

- ["N Korea to dismantle reactor again"](#), *Financial Times*, 12 Oct. 2008.

- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°62, [After the North Korea Nuclear Breakthrough: Compliance or Confrontation?](#), 30 Apr. 2007.

➡ **Taiwan Strait** U.S. 3 Oct announced it would proceed with long-delayed \$6b arms sale -- half the original proposed amount and excludes technologies Taiwan does not already possess. Beijing protested decision and said 7 Oct would forego some cross-strait high-level visits and military-to-military cooperation. Taiwan President Ma vowed 21 Oct no cross-strait war in coming 4 years. Taipei sharply condemned 21 Oct attack on senior Chinese envoy visiting Taiwan.

- ["Taiwan arms deal sours U.S.-China relations"](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 6 Oct. 2008.

SOUTH ASIA

➡ **Afghanistan** Series of ambitious attacks by hundreds of Taliban on positions in Lashkar Gah in Helmand thwarted. Taliban claimed mid-month beheading of some 30 men, allegedly soldiers, taken off buses on the Kandahar highway; families said were migrant workers headed to Iran. Kabul repeatedly targeted: including shooting of female Christian aid worker 20 Oct, suicide attack on information ministry 30 Oct killing 5, high-profile kidnappings. Parliament confirmed cabinet reshuffle 20 Oct; Hanif Atmar appointed new interior minister (formerly education minister). 9 Afghan soldiers reported killed 22 Oct by U.S. airstrike. Suicide bombing in Baghlan police station 27 Oct killed 2 U.S. soldiers, 1 child. U.S. Senate 2 Oct confirmed dual-hatting of ISAF commander Gen McKiernan over U.S. OEF-Afghanistan forces; special forces and oversight of detainees kept under separate reporting lines. Gen Petraeus took over U.S. CENTCOM regional command 31 Oct charged with leading rethink of international effort.

- ["US air strike blunder kills nine Afghan soldiers"](#), *Guardian*, 22 Oct. 2008.
- ["Aid worker killed in Afghan capital"](#), *New York Times*, 20 Oct. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°158, [Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words?](#), 24 July 2008.

➡ **Bangladesh** Awami League (AL) 15 Oct filed registration papers ahead of 18 Dec national polls; Jamaat-e-Islami and BNP followed suit on 20 Oct deadline. Parties continue to call for end to state of emergency. AL head Sheikh Hasina denied bail 30 Oct, which could bar her from polls, but vowed to stand; BNP head Khaleda Zia charged election commission with bias, called on all officials to resign. Legal challenges to gov't's redrawing of constituency boundaries threatened to delay announcement of detailed schedule for polls, required 45 days before poll date.

- ["Delay over constituency writ to spoil polls fixture"](#), *Daily Star*, 30 Oct. 2008.
- ["Bangladesh party in election move"](#), BBC, 15 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°151, [Restoring Democracy in Bangladesh](#), 28 April 2008.

➡ **India (non-Kashmir)** In Assam, some 13 explosions 30 Oct killed over 60, injured some 300 in Guwahati and elsewhere; no immediate claims of responsibility. Clashes there between military and United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) rebels 25-26 Oct saw 5 rebels killed. Separate inter-communal violence between Bodo tribes and Muslim settlers in state 3-7 Oct killed 53, displaced tens of thousands; worst violence in 25 years.

Elsewhere, 14 killed in 21 Oct bombing in Imphal, Manipur state; officials blamed Myanmar-based People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), stated need to seal border. In Tripura state, 1 Oct bomb blasts killed 2.

- ["Dozens die in bomb attacks in northeast India"](#), *New York Times*, 31 Oct. 2008.
- ["Bodo count"](#), *Economist*, 9 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Kashmir** Further political progress between Islamabad and New Delhi, but few improvements on ground. India praised remarks by Pakistan President Zardari that India posed no threat, Kashmir militants represented "terrorists". National security advisers met in New Delhi 14 Oct, agreed to prepare joint counter-terrorism strategy. Trade across Line of Control began 21 Oct along Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road; crossings limited to 1 day per week. Indian gov't 19 Oct announced state polls in Jammu & Kashmir in 7 phases between 17 Nov-24 Dec; All Parties Hurriyat Conference and Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front to boycott.

- ["Kashmir trade route reopens after 60 years"](#), *Guardian*, 22 Oct. 2008.
- ["India praises Zardari over Kashmir policy shift"](#), *Financial Times*, 6 Oct. 2008.

🏠 **Maldives** First multiparty polls 8 and 28 Oct saw 87% turnout, unseated President Maumoon Gayoom after 30 years of one-leader rule. President-elect Mohamed Nasheed, who won 54% of run-off, and Gayoom pledged peaceful transition.

- ["Ex-prisoner wins Maldives election"](#), Al Jazeera, 29 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Nepal** 3 small bombings in south east, as low-level unrest continued in Tarai: 14 Oct bombing in Chandranigahapur market killed 3. Gov't 28 Oct announced long-awaited formation of multiparty committee to oversee integration/rehabilitation of Maoist combatants; first major step towards decision on combatants' future. UNSG's 24 Oct report noted UNMIN's aim to finish operations by Jan 2009 end of mandate dependent on progress towards resolving combatant issue; UNSG Ban urged progress in 1 Nov visit.

- ["UN urges Nepal to move quickly on Maoist ex-fighters"](#), Reuters, 1 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°156, [Nepal's New Political Landscape](#), 3 July 2008.

➡ **Pakistan** Parliament in 22 Oct joint session passed unanimous resolution calling extremism, militancy and terrorism grave threat to country's stability and stressing territory would not be used for attacks on other countries. Resolution called on military to end operations in north west. Chief of Frontier Corps 25 Oct said operations underway in Bajaur might last over a year; later changed assessment to end Nov 2008, after widespread criticism. Foreign ministry lodged formal protest 29 Oct calling on U.S. to stop missile attacks in Pakistan; drone in S Waziristan 27 Oct killed 20, 31 Oct killed 21. Gov't 26 Oct announced roadmap for resolution of conflict in Balochistan centred on rebuilding institutions and redistributing natural resource revenues through constitutional changes. Magnitude 6.4 earthquake near Quetta, Balochistan 29 Oct killed over 200.

- ["Roadmap to resolve Balochistan tangle unveiled"](#), *Dawn*, 26 Oct. 2008.
- ["U.S. takes to air to hit militants inside Pakistan"](#), *New York Times*, 26 Oct. 2008.

- [“Pakistan revives tribal militias but risks backlash”](#), Reuters, 24 Oct. 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°160, [Reforming the Judiciary in Pakistan](#), 16 Oct. 2008. Return to civilian rule in Pakistan offers an opportunity to restore the rule of law and reverse state-driven Islamisation. The country’s stability would be best served by a constitutional amendment package focusing on judicial reform, and an agreement on repealing discriminatory religious laws that restrict fundamental rights and fuel extremism.



➡ **Sri Lanka** Fighting in Vanni yielded limited gains for govt forces as monsoon rains hindered advances on de facto LTTE capital Kilinochchi. Only 2 UN-sponsored convoys allowed into region since international NGOs and UN forced to withdraw in Sept; some other supplies channelled through govt, but conditions for 200,000 displaced remain dire. Strong statements from New Delhi called for greater protection of civilians, active pursuit of political solution. India 27 Oct announced 800 tonnes of food aid to north. Tensions between TMVP leaders Karuna and Pillayan intensified after Karuna joined parliament 7 Oct; related clashes broke out between their factions in east. LTTE launched 2 air attacks 29 Oct on oil tanks near Colombo, military base near Mannar; little damage reported.

- [“Sri Lanka pushes war ahead despite Indian pressure”](#), Reuters, 21 Oct. 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°159, [Sri Lanka’s Eastern Province: Land, Development, Conflict](#), 15 Oct. 2008. The government must address the security needs and land-related grievances of all ethnic communities in Eastern Province. It should devolve real power to the new Provincial Council, end impunity for rights violations and reach a lasting consensus on land, security and power sharing with representatives of all communities.



SOUTH EAST ASIA

➡ **Indonesia** GAM founder Hasan di Tiro made return visit to Aceh 11 Oct for first time in 30 years amid heightened tensions between Indonesian military and GAM. 2 British MPs established “International Parliamentarians for West Papua” 15 Oct; pro-independence demonstrations followed in Papua, several arrested. Terror group arrested 21 Oct, reportedly planning to bomb Jakarta oil depot.

- [“Thousands welcome exiled rebel in Indonesia’s Aceh”](#), Reuters, 11 Oct. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°81, [Indonesia: Pre-Election Anxieties in Aceh](#), 9 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Myanmar/Burma** UNSG Ban 7 Oct suggested follow-up visit to Myanmar would only be possible if UN given signals it would produce tangible results, including progress towards national reconciliation and release of political prisoners. In 30 Oct New Delhi speech, Ban suggested greater Indian involvement in efforts to resolve conflict in Myanmar. Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Beijing 25 Oct issued joint statement calling for “inclusive political process” including lifting of restrictions on political parties.

- [“Post-cyclone aid divides Myanmar between the helped and the helpless”](#), *New York Times*, 20 Oct. 2008.

- [“UN’s Ban says frustrated by Myanmar inaction”](#), Reuters, 20 Oct. 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°161, [Burma/Myanmar After Nargis: Time to Normalise Aid Relations](#), 20 Oct. 2008. The international community should build on the unprecedented cooperation between the government and humanitarian agencies following cyclone Nargis and reverse longstanding, counterproductive aid policies. The current opening should be used to build confidence and create a more effective aid structure.



➡ **Philippines** Further blow to Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on Moro Muslim ancestral domain after Supreme Court 14 Oct declared it unconstitutional. Philippine army operations continued against rogue MILF rebels in Mindanao: 300 now reported killed in 2 months of fighting since Court’s halting of MoA. 14 Oct decision criticised govt negotiator’s failure to undertake broader consultations, after petition filed by Catholic politicians challenged the agreement.

- [“Philippine army says open for truce with rebels”](#), Reuters, 23 Oct. 2008.
- [“Top Philippine court says deal with rebels illegal”](#), Reuters, 14 Oct. 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°83, [The Philippines: The Collapse of Peace in Mindanao](#), 23 Oct. 2008. A new Supreme Court ruling has ended hope of a peaceful resolution in the near future to the conflict between the MILF and the government, making any return to peace talks much more difficult. The immediate task is to prevent escalation of fighting and discourage the government and local officials from arming civilians.



➡ **Thailand** Political crisis deepened as bitter anti-govt demonstrations continued, and turned deadly 7 Oct. Demonstrators led by People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) have blockaded newly elected PM Somchai’s office, calling on him to dissolve govt. Protests peaked 7 Oct when demonstrators sought to block opening session of parliament; violent clashes with police killed 2, injured some 400. Queen Sirikit presided over dead protestor’s funeral. Army chief Gen. Anupong called on Somchai to resign 16 Oct; Somchai continues to attract protests. Ousted PM Thaksin found guilty in absentia 21 Oct for abuse of office, sentenced to 2 years imprisonment. 15 Oct gun battle on Cambodian border killed 2 as dispute over Preah Vihear temple intensified.

- [“Ousted Thai premier guilty of abusing power”](#), *Washington Post*, 22 Oct. 2008.
- [“Hundreds injured in Thai protests”](#), *New York Times*, 7 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°82, [Thailand: Calming the Political Turmoil](#), 22 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Timor-Leste** Australian defence minister announced 100 of 750 Australian members of the international stabilisation force would return home early next year.

- [“Australia to cut troop numbers in East Timor”](#), Reuters, 21 Oct. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°148, [Timor-Leste’s Displacement Crisis](#), 31 March 2008.



BALKANS

➡ **Bosnia** Republika Srpska (RS) assembly in special session 15 Oct considered RS status within Bosnia; move condemned by High Representative Lajcak and others. 5 Oct local election results: in RS largely dominated by RS PM Milorad Dodik's Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD); in Federation mainly Bosniak Party of Democratic Action (SDA). Bosnian Serb ex-policeman Vaso Todorovic found guilty by Bosnian court of aiding and abetting executions and forcible transfer of Bosniak civilians from Srebrenica, sentenced to 6 years after plea bargain. Small bomb at Vitez supermarket 9 Oct killed 1, injured 3.

- Comment by Paddy Ashdown and Richard Holbrooke (Crisis Group), "A Bosnian Powder Keg", *Guardian*, 22 Oct. 2008.
- "Bosnians vote along ethnic lines in local polls", Reuters, 6 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Kosovo** Serbian President Tadic 21 Oct called for "compromise" for Kosovo resolution, said Serbia has no problem with EULEX mission provided it: operates under UN mandate, does not apply Ahtisaari plan and is status-neutral. EU Special Representative Peter Feith 15 Oct said EULEX could receive some form of UN approval. EU said mission will be operational in Dec; UNMIK announced handover of head office in Pristina; U.S. and EU 22 Oct agreed on U.S. participation in mission. UN General Assembly 8 Oct approved Serbian request for ICJ advisory opinion on Kosovo's independence: 77 supported, 6 opposed, 74 abstained. ICJ 21 Oct gave UN member states 6 months to submit views. Macedonia and Montenegro recognised Kosovo 9 Oct, provoking violent anti-Kosovo rallies in latter. UNMIK 3 Oct reopened north Mitrovica court after March violence. 5 injured 30 Oct after clash between Kosovo Serbs and Albanians in north Mitrovica.

- Comment by Sabine Freizer (Crisis Group), "Eyes on the Ball", *Transitions Online*, 14 Oct. 2008.
- "EULEX deployment agreement possible, Tadic says", *SEE Times*, 20 Oct. 2008.
- "Getting on with big brother", *Economist*, 9 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N° 196, *Kosovo's Fragile Transition*, 25 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Macedonia** UN mediator Matthew Nimetz suggested new name options at 7-8 Oct joint meeting with Greek and Macedonian representatives in New York, including "Republic of Northern Macedonia", after Greece again rejected dual-name solution; proposals later rejected by both countries. Political parties agreed on March 2009 schedule for presidential and local elections, electoral and constitutional reforms, including voter turnout threshold cut from 50 to 40%; unanimously adopted by parliament 22 Oct. 9 jailed, including former commander of rebel ethnic Albanian fighters, for role in June election violence.

- "Macedonia unlikely to start EU talks this year", *EU Observer*, 20 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Serbia** Govt 16 Oct decided to start implementing EU Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) reforms in Jan

2009, in spite of deal being frozen by EU in Sept. Dutch FM said Netherlands would continue to block SAA until Mladic arrest. Interior Minister Ivica Dacic 1 Nov called on Mladic, Hadzic to surrender to police. Serbia expelled Montenegrin and Macedonian ambassadors following countries' early Oct recognition of Kosovo. Govt 1 Oct signed "security agreement" with NATO, precondition for Partnership for Peace membership in 2009.

- "EU weighs progress of Western Balkans", *BalkanInsight*, 30 Oct. 2008.
- "Serbia goes it alone with EU deal", *BalkanInsight*, 16 Oct. 2008.

CAUCASUS

➡ **Armenia** Russian President Medvedev made first Yerevan visit 20-21 Oct. Opposition leader Ter-Petrosian at 17 Oct rally in capital announced temporary halt to protests in wake of renewed Nagorno-Karabakh resolution efforts, accused govt of "putting Karabakh up for sale" to secure Western support (see Nagorno-Karabakh). Georgia closed airspace to Russian military transport planes supplying Russian base in Armenia. Under increased domestic and international pressure, President Sargisian 23 Oct established independent commission to investigate March post-election violence, with equal opposition representation.

- "The opposition takes a break from Yerevan protests", *EurasiaNet*, 20 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N° 48, *Armenia: Picking up the Pieces*, 8 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Azerbaijan** President Aliyev re-elected 15 Oct with 89% of vote – turnout at 77% despite opposition boycott; OSCE monitors noted "considerable progress" but poll "characterised by lack of robust competition and political discourse". PACE delegation head Andreas Herkel voiced harsh criticism.

- "Azerbaijan finds itself in a geopolitical pinch", *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Oct. 2008.
- "Azerbaijan looks to monitors after Aliyev victory", Reuters, 15 Oct. 2008.

Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°50, *Azerbaijan: Defence Sector Management and Reform*, 29 September 2008. Reform of Azerbaijan's controversial army is stalling for lack of political will. Oil wealth has poured into the security sector raising concerns that President Ilham Aliyev might choose war with Armenia to recover Nagorno-Karabakh.



➡ **Chechnya (Russia)** Militant attacks throughout month left at least 3 security forces dead. Roadside bomb 19 Oct killed 1 soldier. Security forces 9 Oct shot dead 1 militant near Stary Achkhoi village.

- "1 Russian soldier killed, 10 wounded in Chechnya", AP, 24 Oct. 2008.

➡ **North Caucasus (non-Chechnya)** Situation in Ingushetia further deteriorating with steady increase in violence, growing pressure on govt institutions. Attacks on President Zyazikov, interior minister and relatives continued after Sept blood vengeance declaration by family of opposition website owner Magomed Yevloyev, who died in police custody. Russian President Medvedev 30 Oct dismissed Zyazikov, named

ethnic Ingush Col. Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, former senior military intelligence officer, acting president. Targeted militant attacks on state officials saw at least 2 senior police and 2 other officials killed. At least 3 soldiers left dead after 19 Oct guerrilla ambush on army convoy near Galashki village – unconfirmed reports suggested 40 casualties. At least 10 civilians, 1 police abducted by militants 19 Oct in Ordzhonikidzevskaya. Risk of inter-ethnic tensions with Ingush political forces increasingly recalling 1992 Ossetian “genocide” against ethnic Ingush. In Dagestan, gunmen 21 Oct killed 5 police near Makhachkala. In Kabardino-Balkaria region, security forces 7 Oct killed 2 militants.

- [“Soldier to run restive Ingushetia”](#), BBC, 31 Oct. 2008.
- [“Mass kidnapping as wave of attacks hits southern Russia”](#), AFP, 24 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°192, [Russia’s Dagestan: Conflict Causes](#), 3 June 2008.

➡ **Georgia** In aftermath of August war, EU monitoring mission confirmed Russian withdrawal from territory adjacent to South Ossetia (SO) and Abkhazia by 10 Oct deadline – around 7,600 Russian troops to remain in breakaway regions. EU mission blocked from SO, amid separatist authorities’ accusations that observers ignored “Georgian provocations”. Tbilisi 29 Oct denied BBC findings of war crimes against SO civilians. Security situation around conflict zones still fragile with car bomb in Tskhinvali 3 Oct killing 9 Russian troops. Near Abkhazia, local official and 2 civilians killed in blast 25 Oct, following fatal shootings 24 Oct of local official in Gali district and 22 Oct of Abkhaz defence ministry’s intelligence unit chief Eduard Emin-Zade. Geneva talks on future security arrangements broke down 15 Oct over attendance of separatist authorities. EU special envoy Pierre Morel visited Tbilisi and Moscow 25-28 Oct to negotiate new talks format. UNSC 9 Oct extended UNOMIG mandate for 4 months. Internal political struggle continued with growing opposition pressure: President Saakashvili 27 Oct replaced PM Gurgenedze with former ambassador to Turkey Grigol Mgaloblishvili; 4 other ministers dismissed. Influential former parliamentary speaker Burjanadze 29 Oct announced launch of new opposition party. At 22 Oct Brussels conference donors pledged \$4.55b. Parliamentary commission to investigate Aug events started hearings 23 Oct.

- Comment by Sabine Freizer (Crisis Group), [“A Mission for all of Georgia”](#), *EU Observer*, 7 Oct. 2008.
- [“EU monitors seek access to South Ossetia in first talks”](#), Reuters, 27 Oct. 2008.
- [“The political merry-go-round keeps spinning in Tbilisi”](#), EurasiaNet, 27 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°195, [Russia vs Georgia: The Fallout](#), 22 Aug 2008.

➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Renewed negotiation with Russian President Medvedev’s 21 Oct offer to host fresh peace talks 2 Nov in Moscow. Visiting Yerevan 3 Oct, Russian FM Sergey Lavrov said “very real chance” for resolving conflict if agreement reached on remaining “two or three” issues. Armenian forces 8 Oct reportedly captured Azerbaijani soldier.

- [“Top U.S. official says Karabakh deal ‘possible’ by year’s end”](#), EurasiaNet, 21 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°187, [Nagorno-Karabakh: Risking War](#), 14 Nov. 2007.

EASTERN EUROPE

➡ **Belarus** In effort to prevent further isolation of Belarus, EU FMs 13 Oct suspended travel bans on President Lukashenka, senior officials for 6 months; External Relations Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner met with FM Martynau in Luxembourg. Supreme court upheld August 3-year sentence on U.S. lawyer Emmanuel Zeltser accused of espionage. Ahead of Nov merger of aerial defence system with Russia, Lukashenko 23 Oct accused NATO of fuelling tensions.

- [“Russia’s western security outpost”](#), ISN Security Watch, 31 Oct. 2008.
- [“EU ministers extend olive branch to Minsk”](#), RFE/RL, 13 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Moldova** EU senior diplomat Kalman Miszei 6 Oct announced start of negotiations for new partnership agreement with Moldova by year end. NATO head de Joop Scheffer 30 Oct called on Russia to withdraw troops from Transdniestria as agreed at 1999 OSCE Istanbul summit.

- [“EU to start Moldova talks despite election fears”](#), *EU Observer*, 7 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Ukraine** President Yushchenko 9 Oct dissolved parliament, ordered snap poll in Dec; but temporarily reconvened to consider IMF \$16.5b financial rescue package – adopted 31 Oct. In same session parliament blocked funds for early elections. Yushchenko 24 Oct rejected Russian proposal to extend Black Sea Fleet lease in Crimea beyond 2017 expiration.

- [“Ukraine parliament approves IMF package”](#), *Financial Times*, 31 Oct. 2008.
- [“Ukraine denies Russian lease proposal”](#), AP, 24 Oct. 2008.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➡ **Basque Country (Spain)** 20,000 protested 25 Oct in 6 towns against Supreme Court ban on independence vote. ETA suspected of series of bombs: 2 small explosions 25 Oct at Berriz, Amorebieta train stations; 4 Oct blast at Tolosa regional court, no injuries. Car bomb 30 Oct at Navarra University, Pamplona injured 17. 4 alleged ETA activists arrested 28 Oct in Pamplona, Valencia.

- [“Car bomb targets Spain university”](#), BBC, 30 Oct. 2008.
- [“Basques protest against ban on vote”](#), Reuters, 25 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Cyprus** Face-to-face peace talks continued throughout month with weekly meetings. UN Special Envoy Alexander Downer said progress made in 13 Oct power-sharing talks. Both sides 14 Oct cancelled annual military exercises as confidence-building measure. Greek Cypriot leader Christofias 8 Oct rejected confederation of 2 separate states, citing danger of weakening central govt.

- [“Cypriot leaders discuss future federal administration”](#), SEE Times, 10 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°194, [Reunifying Cyprus: The Best Chance Yet](#), 23 June 2008.

➡ **Turkey** Trial of 86 members of ultra-nationalist Ergenekon network accused of plotting coup started 20 Oct. Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin 14 Oct apologised for “ill treatment” following death of leftist activist Engin Ceber in police custody. Renewed strikes against PKK forces after 17

soldiers killed in 3 Oct attack on Aktütün border post near Iraq – deadliest attack in a year. Ambush on police bus 8 Oct in Diyarbakir region killed 5. Army reported at least 21 soldiers, 78 PKK dead in clashes throughout month. Further raids into northern Iraq after parliament 8 Oct extended mandate for cross-border strikes. Violent pro-PKK protests in several Kurdish south eastern towns targeted Erdogan visit to region and left 1 protester dead 20 Oct. Turkish officials 14 Oct in Baghdad met Kurdistan Regional Govt President Masoud Barzani – first such meeting. U.S. State Secretary Rice in separate meeting with Barzani 28 Oct discussed cooperation with Turkey against PKK fighters in north Iraq. Turkey 25 Oct won seat on UNSC.

- [“Turkish military on the defensive”](#), ISN Security Watch, 24 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°184, [Turkey and Europe: The Way Ahead](#), 17 Aug. 2007.



Latin America / Caribbean

➡ **Bolivia** Agreement on constitutional referendum offers hope of resolving protracted political crisis that left dozens dead in Sept clashes. Govt-opposition talks failed early month, but compromise over new constitution text eventually reached. Congress 20 Oct passed law with two thirds of vote, setting referendum for 25 Jan 2009, new general elections Dec 2009. Almost 100 articles modified in new charter, including increasing regional autonomy. President Morales accepted will stand for re-election only in 2009, renounced possible 2014 third term.

- [“Bolivia respira tras el acuerdo”](#), BBC, 22 Oct. 2008.
- [“Bolivia’s Morales renounces possible third term”](#), AP, 20 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°18, [Bolivia: Rescuing the New Constitution and Democratic Stability](#), 19 June 2008.

➡ **Colombia** Army 26 Oct rescued ex-Congressman Oscar Lizcano after he escaped from FARC captivity. FARC suspected in several urban bombings throughout month: 1 killed in 13 Oct Neiva blast. Govt 30 Oct dismissed 2 generals, 24 soldiers suspected of killing 11 civilians to inflate army statistics on left-wing rebels killed; investigation opened. President Uribe 10 Oct declared “state of internal disorder” after judicial workers’ strike stalled court proceedings across country; 45-day strike ended 15 Oct after gov’t yielded to salary demands. 12,000 indigenous people in late-month Cali protest demanding land; 3 killed in clashes with police. Congress 29 Oct rejected constitutional amendment allowing Uribe to stand for 2010 re-election.

- [“Colombia fires 20 army officers over civilian deaths”](#), *Los Angeles Times*, 30 Oct. 2008.
- [“Colombian army frees Farc hostage”](#), BBC, 26 Oct. 2008.

Crisis Group Latin America Report N°29, [Correcting Course: Victims and the Justice and Peace Law in Colombia](#), 21 Oct 2008. Critically undermined by government disinterest in the victims of the armed conflict, transitional justice in Colombia risks failing.



➡ **Ecuador** Govt 20 Oct officially adopted new constitution; general elections set for Feb 2009. President Correa 4 Oct rejected Colombia President Uribe’s claims Ecuador not doing enough to combat left-wing guerilla camps; Uribe refused to attend 14 Oct Andean Community Summit in Quito. Tensions with Brazil continued over Sept expulsion of Brazilian company Odebrecht.

- [“Diplomatic breach widens between Colombia, Ecuador”](#), Reuters, 4 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Haiti** UNSC 14 Oct extended MINUSTAH mandate 1 year. Humanitarian situation critical after devastating Sept storms; death toll over 800, damages estimated \$1b.

- Comment by Mark Schneider (Crisis Group), [“In the Aftermath of Hurricanes, Haiti Situation is Critical”](#), World Politics Review, 20 Oct. 2008.
- [“UN extends Haiti mission, urges donor conference”](#), Reuters, 14 Oct. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Report N°28, [Reforming Haiti’s Security Sector](#), 18 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Peru** Shining Path rebels launched deadliest attacks in almost a decade: 12 soldiers, 2 civilians killed 10 Oct in Huancavelica province; 2 soldiers killed 14 Oct in Vizcatan. Attacks linked to renewed military offensive against rebels in Vizcatan beginning Aug. Cabinet replaced mid-Oct due to corruption scandal; President Alan Garcia 11 Oct appointed new PM, Yehude Simon, of centre-left PHP party.

- [“El resurgir de Sendero alarma a Perú”](#), *El País*, 18 Oct. 2008.
- [“Pursued by the ghosts of the past”](#), *Economist*, 16 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Venezuela** President Chávez stepped up harsh rhetoric ahead of 23 Nov local and regional elections: 25 Oct accused opposition leader Manuel Rosales of ties to terrorism and corruption, threatened “military action” if opposition wins in Zulia state. Govt 28 Oct opened corruption probe into Rosales – he said politically motivated. Analysts warned falling oil prices could severely threaten economy.

- [“Chavez ambitions in Venezuela may fade with oil price”](#), Bloomberg, 27 Oct. 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** Israeli elections set for 10 Feb 2009 as new Kadima party leader, FM Livni, failed to build coalition. PM Olmert in office until gov’t formed. President Peres met with Egyptian President Mubarak in Cairo 23 Oct; supported “spirit” of 2002 Arab League initiative. Riots and clashes between Arab and Jewish communities in coastal city Acre followed 8 Oct incident during Yom Kippur festival. Jewish settlers clashed with police, Palestinians in Hebron, amid continued attacks on Palestinian farmers. After weeks of talks with Palestinian factions, Egypt 20 Oct released draft proposal to end Hamas-Fatah rift including consensus gov’t, agreement on election timing and inclusion

of Hamas in PLO – factions to discuss early Nov. In West Bank, Palestinian Authority (PA) increased arrests of Hamas personnel. President Abbas 21 Oct removed intelligence head Tawfiq Tirawi. PA deployed additional 550 security personnel in Hebron 25 Oct. In Ramallah Israeli forces 13-16 Oct killed 3 Palestinian youths accused of preparing firebombs. EU envoy Blair 12 Oct said Gaza banks near collapse. Israel closed Gaza crossings 22, 30 Oct following rocket attacks in violation of ceasefire.

- “Into the electoral maze”, *Economist*, 30 Oct. 2008.
- “Chances for peace emerge in Mideast clashes”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 Oct. 2008.
- “Jews and Arabs trade blame after riots divide town”, *International Herald Tribune*, 12 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°24, *Round Two in Gaza*, 11 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Lebanon** Syrian and Lebanese FMs signed document 15 Oct announcing start of diplomatic relations – first since independence from France in 1940s. Embassies to be opened before year end. Move welcomed in UNSG’s report on Lebanon to UNSC, which also urged improved border security and halt to paramilitary build-up. Hizbollah leader Nasrallah and “March 14” movement leader Saad Hariri held talks 26 Oct ahead of national dialogue session due in early Nov. Suspects in deadly Aug and Sept Tripoli bombings targeting military arrested 12 Oct; warrants for others sought, linked to Fatah Islam. U.S. and Lebanon set up new bilateral commission to oversee military relations and assistance.

- “Nasrallah and Hariri break the ice during secret weekend meeting”, *Daily Star*, 28 Oct. 2008.
- “Syria, Lebanon formalize diplomatic ties”, AP, 15 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°78, *The New Lebanese Equation: The Christians’ Central Role*, 15 July 2008.

➡ **Syria** Unprecedented U.S. helicopter raid 26 Oct inside Syrian territory on Iraq border drew strong criticism. Damascus said raid killed 8 civilians. U.S. officials said it targeted and killed top al-Qaeda in Iraq figure running weapons, fighters through Syria. Thousands protested in Damascus 30 Oct. Events in sharp contrast with earlier signs including FM Moallem meetings in U.S. end Sept. Syria 1 Oct urged greater security cooperation on Lebanon border to address smuggling, following deadly 27 Sept Damascus car-bombing; more Syrian troops reportedly moved to eastern Lebanon border. President Assad signed decree 15 Oct establishing diplomatic relations with Beirut (see Lebanon).

- “Syria hardens stance after deadly US raid”, AP, 30 Oct. 2008.
- “Jihadist blowback?”, *Economist*, 2 Oct. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°63, *Restarting Israeli-Syrian Negotiations*, 10 Apr. 2007.

GULF

➡ **Iran** Despite Sept UNSC resolution again calling for halt to uranium enrichment, FM Mottaki 5 Oct said Iran would not stop even if guaranteed nuclear fuel from abroad. Positioning commenced for presidential polls due 19 June, with former speaker Mehdi Karroubi announcing challenge 12 Oct, former president Khatami suggesting possible candidacy. President Ahmadi-Nejad widely expected to run, has backing from Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. Continuing economic

problems compounded by falling oil prices, underlined by strike against proposed VAT by traders in main bazaars – first bazaari strike since 1979 revolution. Tehran and Baghdad signed agreement to share information regarding missing persons from 1980-88 war. U.S. announced further sanctions on Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iranian bank.

- “Iran feels economic pain as oil prices fall”, AP, 31 Oct. 2008.
- “The comeback cleric?”, *Economist*, 18 Oct. 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** Presidency council approved new provincial council elections law, clearing way for polls in 14 governorates (excluding Kirkuk) by 31 Jan 2009. UN 27 Oct proposed plan to parliament to reserve some council seats for minorities. Assassinations and threats against Christians in east Mosul mid-month triggered exodus of over 2,200 families to Christian towns in Ninewa plain. Local security forces, dominated by Kurdish parties, reportedly failed to intervene and accused al-Qaeda in Iraq, which uncharacteristically not only denied but denounced the attacks. U.S. and Iraqi forces commenced new offensive in Mosul. Security in Babil and Wasit provinces handed over to Iraqis. Govt 29 Oct demanded changes in draft long-term security deal with U.S. – UN MNF-I mandate to expire end Dec – including ban on using Iraqi territory to attack neighbours, following 26 Sept U.S. strike on Syria (see Syria), and clarity on Iraqi jurisdiction over crimes committed off-base by U.S. troops, contractors. Bombings continued, including at least 20 dead in Shiite mosque attack in Baghdad 2 Oct, some 10 in female suicide bombing in Baquba 8 Oct, but security incidents generally down. Turkish bombardments of PKK bases along Iraq border continued, after ambush killed 17 soldiers (see Turkey).

- “Bush confident of Iraq troop deal”, BBC, 29 Oct. 2008.
- “Fractures in Iraq city as Kurds and Baghdad vie”, *International Herald Tribune*, 28 Oct. 2008.
- “Mystery shrouds attack on Iraq’s Christians”, Reuters, 22 Oct. 2008.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°80, *Oil for Soil: Toward a Grand Bargain on Iraq and the Kurds*, 28 Oct. 2008. Acrimony over disputed territories will undermine fragile progress in Iraq unless a deal is reached over oil, revenue sharing, federalism and the constitution. The current piecemeal approach to resolution of the Kirkuk issue should be discarded in favour of a grand bargain involving all core issues.



➡ **Saudi Arabia** In continuing campaign against jihadism, interior minister said authorities had started to bring to court 991 prisoners detained on terrorism charges. 24 Oct OPEC decision to reduce output will require nearly 0.5m bpd cut by kingdom.

- “The struggle against Al-Qaeda”, *Economist*, 23 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Yemen** President Saleh 6 Oct said arrested terrorist cell had links to Israeli intelligence – Israel dismissed as “ridiculous”. Details unclear, but statement reportedly refers to 6 suspects detained after deadly 17 Sept attack on U.S. embassy in Sanaa. Houthi Shiite rebel sources 21 Oct said military blocking humanitarian supplies from reaching areas in northern Saada region. Human Rights Watch in 24 Oct report said “hundreds”

unlawfully arrested or disappeared since 2004 start to Houthi conflict, increased 2007–early 2008. Opposition coalition 8 Oct rejected “illegitimate” electoral commission, threatened to boycott 2009 parliamentary elections; govt stated intention to hold dialogue on issue.

- “Médecins sans Frontières fail to reach affected people in Sa’ada”, *Yemen Times*, 25 Oct. 2008.
- “Jangling nerves”, *Economist*, 2 Oct. 2008.

NORTH AFRICA

➡ **Algeria** President Bouteflika began campaign for constitutional amendment to secure third term in April 2009 presidential elections, amid strong condemnation from opposition RCD. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) staged further, small-scale attacks on military and police targets; 4 suspected AQIM members killed in 10 Oct police raid in western Tlemcen region. Up to 5000 rallied in Ghardaia demanding food and equipment after devastating flash floods early month.

- “Algeria constitution change draws attacks, praise”, Reuters, 30 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Egypt** Further 32 members of banned Muslim Brotherhood arrested 22 Oct over participation in protests against Gaza blockade. Signs of continuing Muslim and Coptic Christian tensions: 1 killed and 15 arrested in 3-4 Oct violent clashes in Al-Tayeba. Muslim man killed in attack on Cairo home allegedly by Christian relatives of wife, who had converted to Islam. UN reported some 40 killed over 2008 in smuggling tunnels between Gaza and Egypt.

- “Egypt arrests 32 Muslim Brotherhood members”, AFP, 22 Oct. 2008.
- “Egyptian killed in sectarian row”, BBC, 7 Oct. 2008.

- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°76, *Egypt’s Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration?*, 18 June 2008.

➡ **Mauritania** Following ban on demonstrations, police 5 Oct brutally dispersed protests in Nouakchott calling for release of ex-President Abdellahi, deposed in Aug military coup. International pressure for restoration of constitutional order continued: U.S. imposed travel bans on junta members, EU and AU threatened sanctions after no progress towards release at EU 20 Oct meetings with leader: EU set 1 month deadline for release. Arrest of 6 suspected terrorists announced 27 Oct, no details given.

- “EU gives Mauritania month to free ousted president”, Reuters, 20 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Morocco** 47 convicted for involvement in 2007 Casablanca suicide bombing, while 30 others began trial for links to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), including alleged ringleader Abdelkader Belliraj. Rights groups condemned scale of AQIM arrests, alleging most held on flimsy evidence. After 9-year diplomatic effort from Rabat, EU leaders 13 Oct announced plans to grant Morocco “advanced status” and deepen economic, political ties.

- “Dozens jailed over Morocco blast”, BBC, 17 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Western Sahara** In 21 Oct resolution, UN called for intensification of status talks towards solution guaranteeing “self-determination” of region’s people. Both parties welcomed statement: Morocco as endorsement of autonomy plan, Polisario Front of independence.

- “New UN resolution on Western Sahara gets positive reaction”, Magharebia, 24 Oct. 2008.

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President William J. Clinton, 5 March 2007

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