

## 1 February 2009, N°66

### 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 130 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](mailto:crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org).

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## February 2009 Watchlist



### Conflict Risk Alerts

Democratic Republic of Congo  
Sudan



### Conflict Resolution Opportunities

Democratic Republic of Congo  
Sudan

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## CENTRAL AFRICA

➡ **Burundi** Implementation of 4 Dec peace deal edged forward, but amid signs of divisions within rebel Palipehutu-FNL. Palipehutu-FNL 9 Jan announced formal removal of ethnic reference from name, becoming FNL, and intention to register as political party, while govt 3 Jan began release of political prisoners. Demobilisation of FNL troops however remains stalled over issue of adequate demobilisation facilities. Communiqué issued 27 Jan by unspecified “Palipehutu-FNL” members indicated emergence of new dissenting group within FNL, raising concerns within FNL leadership even as it denied links. In signs of ongoing political deadlock, opposition parties in National Assembly, Senate blocked President Nkurunziza’s 20 Jan bid to secure approval for new electoral commission, citing inadequate consultation.

- “Name change to help legalise rebel party”, IRIN, 13 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°53, *Burundi: Restarting Political Dialogue*, 19 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Central African Republic** President Bozize 18 Jan named new “consensus govt” following Dec Inclusive National Dialogue talks: reappointed PM Touadera as PM, gave rebel APRD and UFDR 2 ministerial posts. Opposition coalition UFDN said new govt failed to deliver expected reduction in presidential powers or distribution of cabinet posts. Rebel attacks continued in north: severe clashes 16-17 Jan between govt troops and unidentified rebel group allied to UFDR around Ndele forced some 4,500 across Chadian border. UNSC 14 Jan approved deployment of MINURCAT troops to replace EUFOR in Chad/CAR; 500 troops to be in CAR.

- “Ex-rebels join CAR unity cabinet”, BBC, 20 Jan. 2009.
- Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°55, *Central African Republic: Untangling the Political Dialogue*, 9 Dec. 2008.

➡ **Democratic Republic of Congo** Following 5 Dec agreement between DRC and Rwanda to jointly move against FDLR rebels, Rwandan troops crossed border into N Kivu from 20 Jan: varying reports of numbers, but President Kagame 30 Jan told Crisis Group 2,100 deployed in 3 locations, with focus on encouraging defections and present intention to withdraw by 10 Feb. No reported casualties at month end, but international concern at risk of civilian deaths if military action escalates. CNDP rebel leader Nkunda displaced by Bosco Ntaganda and arrested 23 Jan in Rwanda. Bosco agreed to integrate troops into national army: issue of his ICC indictment unresolved. First ever ICC trial, of ex-rebel leader Thomas Lubanga, opened 26 Jan. ICC 12 Jan reviewed evidence for case against former VP Bemba, accused of war crimes during CAR civil war; decision on trial due within 60 days. In north-east, joint military operation against Northern Uganda LRA rebels continued after operation extended mid-month to 6 Feb (see Uganda). Intensified rebel attacks on DRC villages continued: some 600 civilians killed since operation launched in Dec; rape and child recruitment widespread.

- See *Crisis Group Conflict Risk Alert: DR Congo*, 27 Jan. 2009.

- “More than 100 killed in Congo massacre”, Reuters, 28 Jan. 2009.
- “Rwanda and Congo join to arrest Nkunda”, *Financial Times*, 23 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°140, *Four Priorities for Sustainable Peace in Ituri*, 13 May 2008.

➡ **Rwanda** Rwandan troops deployed to eastern DRC from 20 Jan as part of alliance agreed Dec to combat former Rwandan Hutu FDLR rebels. Rwanda, reportedly long providing support to rebel CNDP leadership, 23 Jan arrested long-standing CNDP leader Nkunda in Kigali. Followed by mass protests in Rwandan refugee camps; DRC demanded extradition. Following Nov arrest in Germany, 1st hearing of director of state protocol Rose Kabuye opened 28 Jan over assassination of former president Habyarimana; relations with France improved after Kabuye allowed to spend holiday period in Rwanda. Rwandan court 20 Jan sentenced former justice minister Agnes Ntamabyariro to life in prison for incitement during 1994 genocide.

- “Rwanda arrests Congo rebel leader”, BBC, 23 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Uganda** DRC, S Sudan, Uganda pressed forward with joint operation against LRA rebels in northeast DRC, launched Dec following repeated failure of LRA leadership to conclude peace deal. Bloody wave of reprisal attacks by rebel forces continued, amidst widespread criticism over impact of operation on civilians. LRA denied responsibility for recent violence, reportedly called on UN envoy Chissano to broker ceasefire. Govt late month claimed Okot Odhiambo, 1 of 5 LRA rebel commanders indicted by ICC, captured near DRC hideout; reports 20 others surrendered; details unclear. Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which led northern rebellion for Muslim rights from 1990s, 22 Jan threatened to resume violence unless Kampala commits to peace talks.

- “Snatching war from the jaws of peace”, openDemocracy, 16 Jan. 2009.
- “Peace feels frail to displaced Ugandans”, *Los Angeles Times*, 25 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°146, *Northern Uganda: The Road to Peace, with or without Kony*, 10 Dec. 2008.

## HORN OF AFRICA

➡ **Chad** Rebel alliance-building intensified with 19 Jan establishment of joint insurgency movement Union of Resistance Forces, expanding 15 Dec coalition, comprising 8 rebel groups. Timane Erdimi, relative and former political advisor of President Deby, elected as movement’s leader. UNSC 14 Jan unanimously approved deployment of 5,500 UN troops from March to replace EUFOR in Chad/CAR; mission has 1-year mandate. Senegal justice ministry 21 Jan announced justice reforms complete to allow country to host trial of former Chadian president Habre, but international funding still needed.

- “Chad’s rebels unify in bid to overthrow Déby”, *Mail and Guardian*, 19 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Djibouti/Eritrea** In wake of June 2008 border clashes, UNSC 14 Jan issued resolution praising Djibouti for military withdrawal to pre-conflict locations, demanding Eritrea follow suit within 5 weeks and cooperate with diplomatic efforts.

Asmara 15 Jan dismissed resolution as “ill-considered”, said cannot withdraw forces from its own territory.

- [“Eritrea rejects UN demand for border pull-back”](#), Reuters, 16 Jan. 2009.

➔ **Ethiopia** Army 21 Jan announced it killed senior ONLF rebel leader Serad Dolal. ONLF 6 Jan warned Malaysian company Petronas against oil exploration in Ogaden region; govt 9 Jan dismissed threat. After 2-yr intervention, Ethiopian troops completed pull-out from Somalia 26 Jan (see Somalia). Parliament 6 Jan passed controversial NGO law prohibiting aid organizations with more than 10% foreign funding from working on human rights, conflict resolution and other issues. Opposition leader Mideksa 11 Jan ended 14-day hunger strike, announced intent to initiate legal procedure against Dec re-arrest, life sentence.

- [“New law ratchets up repression”](#), Human Rights Watch, 8 Jan. 2009.

➔ **Kenya** Fast passage of bill to create tribunal for 2007 electoral violence – hastily introduced to parliament 20 Jan to ensure passage by deadline established in Waki Commission report – blocked 30 Jan by MP Imanyara, formally on procedural grounds. Waki report states that names of suspected perpetrators of Dec 2007 violence to be passed to ICC if tribunal deadline missed; PM Odinga, seeking to defuse alarm, 1 Feb said deadline flexible, govt committed to implementation. Govt 9 Jan declared national emergency over continued food shortages, called for \$406m donor aid; critics stress need for barriers against corruption.

- [“A chaotic Kenya vote and a secret U.S. exit poll”](#), *New York Times*, 30 Jan. 2009.

➔ **Somalia** Progress on Djibouti agreement with expansion of Parliament and election of moderate ARS leader Sheikh Sharif Ahmed as president. Ethiopian troop withdrawal resulted in power vacuum, fighting between Islamist groups. Ethiopian withdrawal from Mogadishu completed 15 Jan, celebrated by residents; Islamist groups took control of 4 of 6 vacated bases. Ethiopian withdrawal completed 26 Jan with departure from Baidoa; Al-Shabaab same day seized parliament building, installed Sharia law. Violence increased after withdrawal, including 20 Jan Islamist attacks on Mogadishu police stations killing 19; 24 Jan suicide bomb on AU base killing at least 15, mostly civilians. Early Jan fighting in Galgaduud region between Al-Shabaab and other Islamists killed over 50, caused 50,000 to flee. MPs meeting in Djibouti voted 26 Jan to expand parliament, adding 275 MPs in line with Nov Djibouti agreement – 200 for ARS, 75 for civil society; 28 Jan swore in 149 ARS MPs, extended TFG mandate 2 yrs; 30 Jan elected ARS leader Sheikh Sharif new president. UNSC 16 Jan expressed provisional intent to set up UN peacekeeping force, pending further review of security situation; subject to further decision by 1 June. Also urged AU to increase AMISOM from 3,200 to 8,000, requested UNSG Ban set up trust fund, develop force mandate by 15 Apr. 2 WFP staff shot dead 6, 8 Jan, prompting WFP to threaten withdrawal.

- [“Somali president faces tough task”](#), BBC, 31 Jan. 2009.
- [“With Ethiopian pullout, Islamists rise again in Somalia”](#), *Washington Post*, 22 Jan. 2009.

➔ **Sudan** Imminent ICC judges’ decision on whether to issue arrest warrant for President Bashir dominating political dynamics, fuelling fears for continued

deterioration of security situation amid threats of possible Darfur rebel attacks against cities, oil installations. As political options for dealing with ICC indictment under debate, hopes remain for positive reaction from political forces in favour of ICC cooperation. Month saw escalation of Darfur inter-tribal fighting, govt aerial bombing of rebel-held areas, clashes between rebel groups. Govt early Jan bombed JEM positions in North Darfur, 13, 14 Jan bombed rebel positions in southern Darfur; govt troops 22 Jan clashed with Darfur rebels. Violence intensified 15 Jan between SLM-Minni Minawi (MM) and JEM forces around SLM stronghold Muhajirya. Clashes between militias and Joint Integrated Units in Southern Kordofan 13 Jan killed at least 16. With ICC judges’ decision on Bashir arrest warrant expected within weeks, JEM reportedly planning attacks when decision announced. Sudanese authorities 14 Jan arrested Popular Congress Party leader al-Turabi after he urged Bashir to surrender to ICC. Progress stalled on Qatari initiative to bring rebel groups, govt to peace talks; rebel groups refusing to participate or still considering. Doubts mounting over whether fair elections will take place mid-2009, despite NCP and SPLM assurances. Govt 29 Jan accused Chad of helping JEM.

- [“Sudan army clashes with Darfur fighters”](#), Reuters, 23 Jan. 2009.
- [“‘Anything is possible’ if ICC indicts president”](#), IRIN, 22 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°145, *Sudan’s Southern Kordofan Problem: The Next Darfur?*, 21 Oct. 2008.

## SOUTHERN AFRICA

➔ **Madagascar** Antananarivo hit by serious unrest after anti-govt rally – called by opposition leader and city mayor Andry Rajoelina – drew some 40,000 to streets in 2 days of violent protests from 26 Jan, after weeks of tension between Rajoelina and president: state media stations, businesses linked to president targeted in widespread looting and arson; up to 100 killed. Rajoelina at 31 Jan rally declared himself in charge of national affairs, denouncing president’s “dictatorship” and rejecting dialogue; no reaction from govt 1 Feb. Events escalated following forcible closure of Rajoelina’s TV network Viva in Dec. Back on air 27 Jan, Viva reported Rajoelina’s plan to form transitional govt with support of armed forces. AU Chair Ping condemned coup attempt, called for dialogue.

- [“Mayor ‘in charge’ of Madagascar”](#), BBC, 31 Jan. 2009.
- [“Stand-off in capital of Madagascar”](#), *Financial Times*, 27 Jan. 2009.

➔ **Zimbabwe** Opposition MDC 30 Jan agreed to form unity govt (GNU) with President Mugabe’s ZANU-PF, following months-long political deadlock and raising prospects for urgent social and economic reforms. Swearing-in expected to begin 11 Feb. MDC leader and future PM Tsvangirai led calls for participation amid reportedly intense party debate. Agreement reached despite early-month signs that deadlock hardening. Mugabe 6 Jan appointed 8 cabinet ministers, allegedly temporary but amid wide expectations he planned to form govt unilaterally. SADC states at 26 Jan emergency summit stepped up call for formation of GNU, said agreement secured from ZANU-PF, MDC leaders on timetable. MDC initially denied deal, condemned SADC’s failure to address

key demands regarding terms of power-sharing, release of political prisoners. Dozens of MDC supporters, activists still detained; further reports of state torture. EU 26 Jan extended sanctions against companies, individuals linked to ZANU-PF regime. Deaths from spiralling cholera epidemic reached 3,000 as health, food and economic crisis intensified.

- Comment by Donald Steinberg (Crisis Group), [“No Time to ‘Wait-and-See’”](#), 30 Jan. 2009.
- [“Tsvangirai gambles on ‘forced marriage’”](#), *Financial Times*, 30 Jan. 2009.
- [“Opponents of Mugabe tell court of torture”](#), *New York Times*, 15 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°56, [Ending Zimbabwe’s Nightmare: A Possible Way Forward](#), 16 Dec. 2008.

## WEST AFRICA

➡ **Cameroon** Relations with Equatorial Guinea deteriorated after EG army killed 1 Cameroonian fisherman in Dec, arrested 3 others 6 Jan, for alleged intrusion into EG waters. Cameroon followed 11 Jan with arrest of 3 EG soldiers in southern town Kribi; prisoners exchanged 12 Jan. Pirates in Cameroonian waters attacked Greek vessels 24 Jan, killing 1. Opposition, civil society denounced President Biya’s 30 Dec appointment of former members of ruling party CPDM to all but one of electoral commission seats; Supreme Court 27 Jan rejected call by main opposition party SDF to cancel nominations.

- [“Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea exchange border captives”](#), Reuters, 12 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Côte d’Ivoire** Ex-rebel FN forces 15 Jan formally handed control over administration and taxation in northern strongholds to central govt, raising prospects for reunification, though observers cautious on FN commitment; handover yet to start. Rebel disarmament stalled over lack of funds. UN envoy 13 Jan stressed major achievements in voter identification amid ongoing controversy over election delays. 21 detainees escaped from Abidjan prison 7 Jan in second high-security prison break since Dec. France, citing improved security, announced troops to be reduced from 2,000 to 900 by summer.

- [“Patchy progress in Ivorian pre-poll unity moves”](#), Reuters, 15 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°139, [Côte d’Ivoire: Ensuring Credible Elections](#), 22 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Guinea** Ruling CNDD military junta 14 Jan named 30-member military and civilian govt, announced wide-ranging reform programme to privatise services, target corruption, review mining contracts. International community maintained pressure to bring elections forward to 2009; govt yet to confirm timetable. Junta employed further strong-arm tactics to consolidate control, including 1 Jan raid on former PM’s home; 3 colonels, including 1 minister, arrested 27 Jan in sign of internal power struggle. Opposition, civil society generally acquiescent to new regime. France led international calls for return to civilian rule, elections within the year; U.S. 5 Jan announced suspension of all but humanitarian aid, ECOWAS 13 Jan joined AU in suspending Guinean membership, while AU threatened sanctions. Regional messages mixed with Senegalese, Libyan, Liberian leaders over month indicating degrees of support.

- [“Guarded optimism for new government”](#), IRIN, 19 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°52, [Guinea: Ensuring Democratic Reforms](#), 24 June 2008.

➡ **Guinea-Bissau** Tension between President Vieira and military leadership escalated 4 Jan when acting presidential guard, the “Aguntas” militia, fired shots near convoy carrying army chief Tagme Na Wai. Military command said attack backed by interior ministry; govt claimed shots accidental. Aguntas guard subsequently disbanded. Newly installed PM Gomes 8 Jan appointed 31-person govt dominated by ruling PAICG members and allies, despite earlier pledge to reach out to opposition.

- [“Presidency guards shot at army chief: Bissau army”](#), Reuters, 6 Jan. 2009.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°57, [Guinea-Bissau: Building a Real Stability Pact](#), 29 January 2009. Despite Guinea-Bissau’s widely praised elections in 2008, allegations of attempted assassination and coup d’état heighten the need to guarantee stability and institutional reforms. Firm commitment is needed from all political and military actors to engage in a dialogue directed at supporting reforms and to seize, while it is still there, the outstretched hand of donors.

➡ **Liberia** President Johnson-Sirleaf 18 Jan removed all non-statutory members of Liberia’s public corporation boards citing poor governance and performance amid ongoing debate over levels of public corruption; reappointments expected shortly. Govt 22 Jan signed \$2.6b iron ore exploration deal with China Union, 1 of largest ever single foreign investments in Liberia.

- Comment by Donald Steinberg (Crisis Group), [“First Lehman Brothers, Next Liberia?”](#), *The Globalist*, 26 Jan. 2009.
- [“Liberian ex-president’s son jailed in US for torture”](#), *Guardian*, 10 Jan. 2009.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°148, [Liberia: Uneven Progress in Security Sector Reform](#), 13 January 2009. Liberia has come far since Charles Taylor was overthrown, but its security reform has serious gaps. Despite real progress in security sector reform since the civil war ended in 2003, much more is required to counter public dissatisfaction with the police. The police desperately need a combination of managerial expertise, strategic vision, and a major increase in resources.

➡ **Mali** Govt, Tuareg rebel clashes escalated, in serious blow to April ceasefire. 2 killed in 2 Jan ATNMC rebel group grenade attacks on home of prominent MP in Gao. Govt launched series of raids on ATNMC bases around northern town Tinsalak 12-23 Jan, reportedly destroying 4 rebel bases and leaving 31 dead. President Touré and ATMNC traded threats of further attacks; Touré on 20 Jan vowed to use “all means” to secure north. Amid govt crackdown, 3 groups allied to ADC Tuareg rebels agreed to cease hostilities and return to peace process.

- [“Tuareg rebel base is ‘destroyed’”](#), BBC, 21 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Niger** UN envoy Fowler, aide and driver still missing following Nov disappearance outside Niamey; govt and Canadian investigations ongoing. President Tandja 13 Jan rejected domestic media accusations of govt involvement and alleged responsibility lay with “armed bandits” – a reference to Tuareg rebels – and “terrorist” groups. PM Oumarou 23 Jan announced

legislative elections for Dec 2009, local elections for 30 June.

- [“Terrorists’ hold missing Canadian diplomats in Niger: President”](#), AFP, 13 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Nigeria** Ongoing violence in Niger Delta and threat of renewed escalation overshadowed early-month signs of improving security, including decision by 2 major oil companies to lift emergency status. Militant and criminal attacks on on- and off-oil sites, kidnappings for ransom continued over month; 2 soldiers killed in 11 Jan militant attack on Bomadi oil facility. Govt troops arrested 1 senior militant, killed another early month, stepped up raids on militant bases; numerous civilians reportedly killed in 17 Jan operation near Port Harcourt. After late-month clashes in Rivers State, MEND 30 Jan called off Sept ceasefire, threatened “sweeping assault” on oil sites across region. In further religious violence, 5 killed, at least 100 injured in 9 Jan clashes between Muslims groups in Kaduna State. President Yar’Adua announced new economic team amid declining state revenues, dissatisfaction with pace of reform, but analysts doubt impact without shift from oil dependence.

- [“Nigeria militants say ending ceasefire in oil delta”](#), Reuters, 30 Jan. 2009.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°54, [Nigeria: Ogoni Land after Shell](#), 18 Sept. 2008.



## Asia/Pacific

### CENTRAL ASIA

➡ **Kazakhstan** Head of U.S. Central Command Gen Petraeus in Kazakhstan mid-Jan as part of regional visit, 19 Jan announced transit agreements with Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries, in move to shift U.S. logistics routes following 2008 attacks on U.S. facilities in Pakistan. 3 opposition leaders went on trial 22 Jan for conspiracy. Parliament considering legislation to tighten state control over internet.

- [“US strikes Central Asia deal to supply troops in Afghanistan”](#), *Telegraph*, 20 Jan. 2009.

- [“US military chief announced new supply network for Afghanistan”](#), EurasiaNet, 20 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Kyrgyzstan** Numerous senior level changes in cabinet, central and local govt, including 1st deputy PM replaced with prominent opposition politician Omurbek Babanov, a move seen as intended to split president’s opponents. Month also saw continuing govt harassment of senior opposition politicians as they increase activities; 2 opposition leaders detained mid-Jan for organizing illegal rallies, while govt warned of serious action against any unrest in Spring. Rumours of closure of U.S. base at Manas airport outside Bishkek – supposedly in return for \$2bn Russian aid – scotched during Gen Petraeus visit to Bishkek mid-month (see Kazakhstan); further U.S. officials to visit Feb to discuss specifics of increased cooperation. President Bakiyev 12 Jan signed restrictive new religion law, strongly criticised by rights activists. Gas prices increased by some 80% due to Uzbek price increase.

- [“Kyrgyz opposition fears ‘Reasonable Balance’ masks power grab”](#), RFE/RL, 28 Jan. 2009.

- [“Air base at center of Kyrgyz talks with Moscow, Washington”](#), RFE/RL, 19 Jan. 2009.

- For background, please see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°79, [Kyrgyzstan: A Deceptive Calm](#), 14 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Tajikistan** Sweeping govt changes, including heads of main energy providers dismissed live on television 15 Jan, plus commander of interior forces. Following 17 Jan Gen Petraeus visit (see Kazakhstan), govt to allow transit of commercial goods to U.S. facilities in Afghanistan. Worsening electricity shortages ahead of severe cold weather predictions; supply reduced late Jan to maximum of 2-3 hrs a day outside Dushanbe. Exacerbated by accident at power plant in north and suspension of electricity supply from Turkmenistan after failure to agree on rate for Uzbek transit of electricity; Tajikistan subsequently threatened to limit water supply to Uzbekistan. In possible sign that govt fears unrest, Interior Minister replaced 29 Jan. Supreme Court 8 Jan banned fundamentalist Salafi movement as danger to state security, prohibited distribution of Salafist materials.

- [“Remittance economy leaving long-term social impact”](#), EurasiaNet, 21 Jan. 2009.

- [“Energy price hikes leave many fearing cold”](#), EurasiaNet, 9 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Turkmenistan** Major dismissals in govt 15 Jan included energy minister, head of state oil company, top geology official; most removed for “grave shortcomings”. Defence minister, head of border service among second round of dismissals 22 Jan; 13 senior administration figures removed in total. Following 16 Jan Gen Petraeus visit (see Kazakhstan), govt denied Russian media reports that Ashgabat to provide NATO with training camps, logistical support. During its 9 Jan opening session, new Parliament passed law expanding powers. FM 22 Jan announced EU mission to open in Ashgabat. Govt 15 Jan announced increase in price it pays farmers for grain in attempt to increase production, reflecting reportedly severe shortages. Govt 3 Jan announced gas exports to China, originally pledged for 2009, postponed.

- [“Only a few holdovers from Niyazov era now remain”](#), EurasiaNet, 23 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Uzbekistan** During visit by Russian President Medvedev, govt 23 Jan pledged to export gas via future pipeline routes through Russia only. Reports emerged that activist involved in 2005 Andijan massacre tortured to death in prison late 2008; 2 other similar incidents also reported.

- [“Uzbek leader quells Russian gas fears, secures deal”](#), RFE/RL, 23 Jan. 2009.

### NORTH EAST ASIA

➡ **North Korea** Month of mixed signals as North looked intent on garnering leverage with new U.S. administration. Kim Jong Il met Chinese envoy Wang Jiarui 23 Jan, reiterated NK’s commitment to dismantling nuclear weapons program. But North announced 29 Jan unilaterally ending series of agreements with South. Earlier, independent U.S. analyst Selig Harrison reported Pyongyang said 30.8 kg of plutonium now “weaponised”. Seoul nuclear envoy team 15-19 Jan visited North to investigate purchase by South of unused fuel rods from Yongbyon; first official visit since President Lee took office Feb 2008. President Lee replaced Unification minister 19 Jan: Hyun In-taek, previous critic of engagement with North, to hold post.

- [“South Korea heightens military readiness as North scraps pacts”](#), *New York Times*, 30 Jan. 2009.
- [“N. Korea strident as Obama takes reins”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 20 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°62, [After the North Korea Nuclear Breakthrough: Compliance or Confrontation?](#), 30 Apr. 2007.

- ➡ **Taiwan Strait** Former President Chen Shui-bian, on trial for corruption charges, admitted having pursued explicit independence policy throughout his 8 years in office.
- [“Taiwan’s Chen admits being a ‘splittist’”](#), *Financial Times*, 19 Jan. 2009.

## SOUTH ASIA

- ➡ **Afghanistan** Security incidents continued at unprecedented level in winter amidst mild weather. 17 Jan suicide blast between the German Embassy and U.S. troop training HQ killed 4 Afghan civilians and 1 U.S. soldier. President Karzai 25 Jan accused U.S. forces of killing 16 civilians in raid in central Laghman province; thousands protested incident. U.S. VP-elect Biden visited Kabul 10 Jan, signalled tougher line from Washington toward Karzai govt, and once back in U.S. warned of likely increase in coalition casualties ahead. U.S. President Obama 22 Jan named Richard Holbrooke roy to Afghanistan and Pakistan. U.S. General Petraeus announced agreement of new ISAF supply routes through Central Asia in visit to region mid-Jan.
- [“Nato chief sees Iranian role in Afghan fight”](#), *Financial Times*, 26 Jan. 2009.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°85, [Policing in Afghanistan: Still Searching for a Strategy](#), 18 Dec. 2008.

- ➡ **Bangladesh** Civilian federal govt sworn in 6 Jan, led by Awami League (AL) leader Sheikh Hasina, ending 2 years of military-backed caretaker administration. Opposition BNP pledged to work with govt, but 28 Jan walked out of parliament over seating arrangements. Local upazila council polls held 22 Jan; polling suspended in 7 districts as polling centres plagued by violence and reports of fraud. Election commissioner noted “irregularities”, said interference by “ruling party” to blame. Candidates affiliated with Awami League (AL) took 306 of 463 upazila councils, strengthening party’s mandate.
- [“Violence, rigging mark upazila polls”](#), *New Age*, 23 Jan. 2009.
  - [“Violence hits Bangladesh poll, but down from past”](#), Reuters, 22 Jan. 2009.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°84, [Bangladesh: Elections and Beyond](#), 11 Dec 2008.

- ➡ **Kashmir** Pakistan Interior minister 14 Jan said some 120 alleged militants arrested in connection to Nov attacks on Mumbai. Intensified military operations in India-controlled Kashmir continued: army reported 4 killed in 9-day gun battle with Muslim militants near Line of Control that ended 8 Jan. Indian govt sharply rejected 21 Jan remarks by UK FM Miliband, visiting New Delhi, that resolution of Kashmir dispute key to South Asian security; Delhi sees Kashmir as domestic issue.
- [“Pakistan arrests 124 over Mumbai attacks”](#), *Financial Times*, 15 Jan. 2009.

- ➡ **Nepal** UNSG’s report 8 Jan expressed regret over failure of Nepali parties to make further progress on integrating and rehabilitating ex-Maoist fighters. Special committee on integration formed but yet to start work. Journalist Uma Singh killed by armed gang with reported Maoist links 11 Jan in Janakpur. Constitution drafting committees established and starting work but political consensus still shaky. PM used 25 Jan address to nation to call for new deal but relations with army and opposition parties have deteriorated.
- [“UN regrets slow Nepal moves on Maoist fighters”](#), Reuters, 9 Jan. 2009.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°156, [Nepal’s New Political Landscape](#), 3 July 2008.

- ➡ **Pakistan** As military operations continued in NWFP, President Zardari 22 Jan underscored govt policy of no political settlement with groups unwilling to accept writ of state. Paramilitary operation launched in Mohmand agency mid-month; govt claimed some 60 killed 19-20 Jan. Some 20 killed in U.S. missile strikes – first under new U.S. administration – in N. and S. Waziristan 23 Jan. NATO SG de Hoop Scheffer visited Islamabad 21-22 Jan, said no evidence of impact of Pakistani efforts to curb militancy in north west. 5 small explosions in Lahore 10 Jan as U.S. VP-elect Biden arrived to discuss regional security; incoming administration in Washington emphasised future military aid would be conditioned on counter-insurgency progress.
- [“Pakistan tackles Swat, a key militant area”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 30 Jan. 2009.
  - [“Suspected U.S. missile strikes kill at least 20 in Pakistan”](#), *Washington Post*, 23 Jan. 2009.
  - For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°160, [Reforming the Judiciary in Pakistan](#), 16 Oct. 2008.

- ➡ **Sri Lanka** Hundreds of civilians killed and more wounded as govt forces made decisive gains in northern Wanni region, capturing last remaining towns under LTTE control. Estimated 250,000 civilians trapped alongside LTTE in shrinking area of Mullaitivu district; situation could worsen further without effective relief operations. UN and ICRC condemned civilian deaths in govt-declared “safe zone”; appealed to LTTE to allow civilians to leave and to govt to permit unimpeded access to those who remain. Indian FM Mukherjee in 27 Jan visit to Colombo requested govt to respect safe areas and grant full access.
- [“250,000 civilians said to be stuck in Sri Lanka war zone”](#), *Washington Post*, 29 Jan. 2009.
  - [“Tigers melt into jungle as last town falls”](#), *Financial Times*, 25 Jan. 2009.
  - For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°159, [Sri Lanka’s Eastern Province: Land, Development, Conflict](#), 15 Oct. 2008.

## SOUTH EAST ASIA

- ➡ **Indonesia** Tensions remained high in Aceh ahead of April national parliamentary polls. Security tightened in Poso late month after 2 small explosions 19-20 Jan.
- [“Police tighten security in Poso”](#), *Jakarta Post*, 27 Jan. 2009.
- ➡ **Myanmar/Burma** New Thai FM Kasit signalled shift in neighbour’s relations to Myanmar, noting interest in

environmental, human rights concerns. U.S. 15 Jan froze assets of 2 “regime cronies” and further extended existing sanctions. Crackdown on dissent continued in advance of 2010 polls: 9 members of opposition NLD arrested 30 Dec for demonstrating for release of Aung San Suu Kyi; 6 freed 15 Jan. Student activist Bo Min Yu Ko sentenced to 104 years’ imprisonment.

- “Casting light on plight of Burmese dissidents”, *New York Times*, 17 Jan. 2009.
- “U.S. freezes assets of 2 Burmese businessmen who backed military junta”, *New York Times*, 16 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°161, *Burma/Myanmar After Nargis: Time to Normalise Aid Relations*, 20 Oct. 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°86, **Local Election Disputes in Indonesia: The Case of North Maluku**, 22 Jan. 2009. An Indonesian provincial election dispute that once threatened to erupt in violence appears to be sputtering to an anticlimactic close, more evidence that Indonesia’s democratic institutions are working.



➡ **Philippines** 3 ICRC workers kidnapped on Jolo island 15 Jan by Abu Sayyaf faction led by Albader Parad. 3 former MILF rebels sentenced to life imprisonment for Dec 2000 “Rizal Day” bombings that killed 22 in Manila. No movement towards immediate talks with MILF rebels, despite early month completion of peace panel appointments.

- “MILF rejects pre-negotiation talks”, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 8 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°83, *The Philippines: The Collapse of Peace in Mindanao*, 23 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Thailand** Govt bolstered its weak majority in 11 Jan by-elections, held to fill seats vacated after court’s Dec dissolution of PPP and 2 other parties. PM Abhisit made first visit to south 17 Jan, took steps to restore civilian control of southern policy, including establishing special committee to handle south. PM’s compound again swarmed by anti-govt protesters 30 Jan as pro-Thaksin United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) demanded Abhisit step down.

- “Protesters swarm Thai PM’s compound”, *Financial Times*, 31 Jan. 2009.
- “After turmoil, hopes for stability with new Thai prime minister”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 16 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°82, *Thailand: Calming the Political Turmoil*, 22 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Timor-Leste** Roughly 100 Australian troops serving in Timor-Leste began redeployment 23 Jan; some 650 remain.

- “Opposition backs E Timor troop return”, ABC, 24 Jan. 2009.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°148, *Timor-Leste’s Displacement Crisis*, 31 March 2008.



## BALKANS

➡ **Bosnia** Leaders of 3 main parties 26 Jan announced agreement on new constitutional arrangements, following on Nov Prud Agreement; includes 4 territorial units (instead of current 2 entities), 3 administrative levels (instead of 4), plus implementation of outstanding Peace Implementation Council demands. Contradictory statements from leaders 27 Jan created confusion over exact terms of agreement, while Bosniak SBIH preemptively criticized possible creation of Croat entity. High Representative Lajcak’s surprise 23 Jan announcement of resignation to become Slovak FM prompted urgent international community consultations over successor. SDA 20 Jan announced boycott of Council of Ministers decisions in protest over PM Spiric’s decision to nominate himself acting head of Directorate for European Integration.

- “Bosnia leaders agree new administrative setup”, *Balkan Insight*, 26 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe report N° 180, *Ensuring Bosnia’s Future: A New International Engagement Strategy*, 15 Feb. 2007.

➡ **Kosovo** EU rule of law EULEX mission continued to deploy across Kosovo. Kosovo Security Force (KSF) became operational 20 Jan, replacing Kosovo Protection Force: 1,000-strong, to expand to 2,500. Belgrade 19 Jan said new force “unacceptable” (see Serbia). KSF base in Pec hit by grenade 23 Jan; no injuries. EULEX chief de Kermabon 15 Jan said late-Dec/early-Jan Mitrovica violence linked to criminal activity, criticized attempts to manipulate incidents to heighten tensions. Further incidents in Jan included 14 Jan grenade attack on Albanian home in Mitrovica North, 2 explosions 24 Jan in Mitrovica; no injuries. Discussions continued over possible negotiations between Pristina and Belgrade to resolve “technical issues” – 2 sides still in disagreement on format.

- “Selection rows mark launch of Kosovo ‘army’”, *Balkan Insight*, 29 Jan. 2009.
- “Confusion reigns over Serbia - Kosovo ‘talks’”, *Balkan Insight*, 16 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe report N° 196, *Kosovo’s Fragile Transition*, 25 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Macedonia** Parliament speaker 10 Jan announced 22 March date for presidential, local elections. Ruling VMRO DPMNE, ahead in polls, picked newcomer Ivanov as candidate 25 Jan; main opposition Social Democrats 26 Jan selected former FM Frckovski. Outgoing president Cervenkovski announced intention to lead Social Democrats following election. Parliament 9 Jan approved constitutional amendment lowering minimum voter turnout from 50 to 40%. UN mediator in name dispute with Greece 12 Jan said name talks to resume 11 Feb; expectations low as both sides trade provocations. 1st hearing started 19 Jan in ICJ Macedonia vs Greece case over alleged Greek violation of 1995 Interim Accord; court gave Macedonia until 20 July to file written memorandum.

- “Macedonia, Greece court case starts in Hague”, *Balkan Insight*, 19 Jan. 2009.

Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°52, *Macedonia's Name: Breaking the Deadlock*, 12 Jan. 2009. The dispute between Athens and Skopje puts at risk the EU and NATO strategy for stabilising the western Balkans. After Greece blocked Macedonia's NATO entry at the April 2008 Bucharest summit, relations between the two countries deteriorated. Both sides must first rebuild trust: Skopje should accept the UN mediator's latest proposal to rename the country as the "Republic of North Macedonia". Greece should accept its northern neighbour's "Macedonian" identity and language.



➡ **Serbia** Belgrade 23 Jan condemned newly-established Kosovo Security Force (see Kosovo) as "illegal paramilitary formation" in protest letters to UNSC, NATO. 3,000 ethnic Albanians 26 Jan rallied in Presevo for release of 10 ex-KLA members detained Dec on suspicion of atrocities against Serbs during June-Oct 1999 conflict. FM Jeremic 28 Jan said Serbia to apply for EU candidacy by June; Czech FM 3 Jan said Mladic arrest should not be precondition for EU SAA talks.

- "Serbia in KSB protest to UN, NATO", B92, 22 Jan. 2009.

## CAUCASUS

➡ **Armenia** Following mid-month visit to Armenia by members of its monitoring committee, Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe (PACE) 27 Jan adopted resolution expressing concern over persons detained following March 2008 post-election violence, but decided not to apply sanctions at this stage. Govt 13 Jan pardoned 9 more prisoners who had appealed for amnesty; around 60 remain in prison. Trial of 7 opposition members accused of instigating post-election violence repeatedly adjourned after defendants refused to stand for judge. Ombudsman 19 Jan criticized "excessive force" by riot police dispersing over 200 opposition supporters outside court 16 Jan. European Court of Human Rights 13 Jan ruled arrest of 3 opposition supporters contravenes freedom of assembly rules. Opposition 9 Jan threatened parliamentary boycott in protest at gov't's failure to address post-election crisis. After Turkish FM Babacan 16 Jan said Turkey and Armenia "never closer" to plan on normalizing relations, FM Nalbandian said Armenian position unchanged.

- "Yerevan gets another Council of Europe reprieve", Armenialiberty.org, 27 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N° 48, *Armenia: Picking up the Pieces*, 8 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Azerbaijan** Ahead of 18 March referendum on removing constitutional ban on presidential term limits, parties started organizing "initiative groups" around proposed amendments, including 9 Jan establishment of "Civil Movement for the Republic and Karabakh" by opposition groups. 2 opposition members collecting signatures for registration of a group arrested 22 Jan in Sabirabad. Govt mid-month expressed concern over alleged 2008 Russian arms delivery to Armenia (see Nagorno-Karabakh). Council of Europe 15 Jan condemned Dec gov't ban on international radio station broadcasts. President Aliyev 27 Jan told Budapest summit on Nabucco that Azerbaijan ready to participate in pipeline.

- "Russia-Ukraine gas conflict helps Azerbaijan, Nabucco", EurasiaNet, 20 Jan. 2009.

- "Azerbaijan – Turkmenistan of the Caucasus", RFE/RL, 14 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°50, *Azerbaijan: Defence Sector Management and Reform*, 29 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Chechnya (Russia)** Early release 15 Jan of Russian Colonel Budanov, jailed for 2000 murder of Chechen girl and pardoned late Dec, provoked outrage in Chechnya. Prominent Russian human rights lawyer representing murdered girl's family, and "Novaya Gazeta" journalist, both shot dead 19 Jan in Moscow after media briefing on plans to appeal Budanov's release; hundreds protested death in Grozny. Former Chechen rebel Umar Israilov, who in 2006 had accused Kadyrov and others of torture and abductions, murdered in Vienna 13 Jan. Home of Sulim Yamadaev, Russian commander in ongoing political struggle with President Kadyrov, set on fire 15 Jan. Emissary of Chechen separatist leader Akhmed Zakayev killed by Russian forces 17 Jan.

- "Slain exile detailed Chechen ruler's systematic cruelty", *New York Times*, 31 Jan. 2009.
- "Deaths in Moscow", *Economist*, 22 Jan. 2009.
- "Chechens protest killing of prominent lawyer", AP, 20 Jan. 2009.

➡ **North Caucasus (non-Chechnya)** Sporadic violence continued across region: several bombs exploded in Ingushetia and Dagestan early month; 4 suspected militants killed in 11 Jan clash with security forces in Ingushetia; military commander, policeman killed in separate incidents in Nazran 12 Jan; vice speaker of Parliament and opposition party leader shot dead 13 Jan in Karachay-Cherkessia; 1 soldier killed, 2 injured in 29 Jan attack by militants in Sunzhensky. In 20 Jan Ingushetia visit, Russian President Medvedev announced pledge to spend \$880m on province, said "emergency measures" needed. Congress of Ingush People held 31 Jan in Nazran.

- "Daghestan's leadership seeks to contain 'religious-political extremism'", RFE/RL, 27 Jan. 2009.
- "Russian President calls for 'emergency measures' in Ingushetia", RFE/RL, 21 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°192, *Russia's Dagestan: Conflict Causes*, 3 June 2008.

➡ **Georgia** Situation at Ossetia administrative border still tense with repeated attacks on Georgian police, including 16 Jan fatal shooting of policeman, allegedly by sniper in South Ossetia; 2 police wounded 19 Jan after truck came under fire close to border. Several incidents also at Abkhaz administrative border, including 8 Jan attack on Georgian village with automatic grenade launchers. Human Rights Watch 23 Jan said Russia and Georgia both guilty of "numerous violations of the laws of war" during Aug 2008 conflict, South Ossetian forces engaged in ethnic cleansing of Georgian villages. U.S.-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership signed 9 Jan, including plan for NATO-Georgia commission, U.S. military assistance. Opposition criticized gov't deal with Russian company Inter RAO on joint management of hydropower plant on Abkhaz administrative border for lack of transparency, perpetuating dependence on Russia. Abkhaz official 29 Jan said talks underway with Moscow to set up Russian bases in Abkhazia. 12 opposition parties 29 Jan signed joint declaration calling for President Saakashvili to resign, early elections. Negotiations continued with Russia on continuation of OSCE mission to Georgia.



- “12 parties call for Saakashvili’s resignation”, *Civil.ge*, 29 Jan. 2009.
- “Washington and Tbilisi sign strategic pact sure to irk the Kremlin”, *EurasiaNet*, 9 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°51, *Georgia: The Risks of Winter*, 26 Nov. 2008.

- **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Following meetings with OSCE Minsk Group, Armenian and Azeri Presidents met in Zurich 28 Jan to discuss ways to resolve conflict. Group’s U.S. co-chair Bryza said mediators hope framework peace deal to be signed by summer; Armenian FM Nalbandian 21 Jan said agreement contingent on popular support. Azerbaijan 16 Jan expressed concern over alleged 2008 Russian arms delivery to Armenia, reported by Azeri media but denied by Russia, Armenia; Azerbaijan accused Russia of breaching UN resolutions and its commitment to Azerbaijan. Azeri soldier killed 16 Jan following ceasefire violation; 3 Armenian soldiers killed 26 Jan in alleged attack on Azeri positions.
- “Arms scandal stirs suspicions of Moscow”, *EurasiaNet*, 27 Jan. 2009.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°187, *Nagorno-Karabakh: Risking War*, 14 Nov. 2007.

## EASTERN EUROPE

- **Belarus** OSCE 22 Jan met with officials and opposition activists to discuss possible changes to election law. United Democratic Forces activists 19 Jan reported difficulties finding premises for founding meeting for project to change election laws – meeting and registration required by law before signatures can be collected. President Lukashenko 19 Jan said Belarus interested in full cooperation with EU; FM in Brussels 27 Jan for talks with EU troika. Govt 2 Jan devalued ruble by 20%; fears of price rises, further devaluation, sparked widespread spending, purchase of hard currency.
- “EU says Belarus ‘halfway’ in Eastern Partnership project”, *RFE/RL*, 27 Jan. 2009.
- **Ukraine** Dispute with Russia over gas payments created energy crisis in Europe, soured EU-Kyiv, EU-Moscow relations, shone spotlight on rift between PM Tymoshenko and President Yushchenko. After Russia cut gas supplies to Ukraine 1 Jan over payment dispute, situation escalated rapidly as Russia 6, 7 Jan cut gas supplies to Europe by 78%, claiming Ukraine stealing Europe-bound gas. 18 countries affected; Slovakia, Bulgaria among worst-hit. In attempt to restore Europe flows, Moscow, Kyiv, EU agreed on EU-led monitoring mission to gas stations in Ukraine, Russia. Russia mid-month announced gas again flowing to Europe, then traded accusations with Ukraine after gas failed to arrive. As EU patience with Kyiv, Moscow increasingly stretched, 17-18 Jan talks between PM Tymoshenko and Russian PM Putin resulted in 10-yr agreement: Ukraine to pay market rate with 20% discount for 2009; Russia to pay market transit rate starting 2010; Russia resumed gas supplies 20 Jan. President Yushchenko 22 Jan criticised deal, said renegotiation needed, later retracting concerns in face of EU criticism. Opposition parties mid-month called for govt resignation, impeachment over crisis. With confidence in Russian gas supply shaken, EU discussions on need for energy diversification and market integration gained new force.
- “In long term, Moscow-Kyiv gas dispute could redraw

Europe’s energy map”, *RFE/RL*, 23 Jan. 2009.

- “Gas issue points to Ukraine’s failures”, *Washington Post*, 19 Jan. 2009.

## WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

- **Basque Country (Spain)** Trial of Basque Nationalist leader Juan Jose Ibarretxe thrown out 12 Jan after prosecution admitted his contacts with banned ETA-linked Batasuna party not illegal. ETA explosion 16 Jan targeted TV transmitter near Hernani; no injuries. French police 12 Jan arrested 2 ETA suspects in Ascaïn and Bayonne, SW France. ETA statement 21 Jan claimed responsibility for Dec killing of Spanish businessman; warned workers on planned Basque-Madrid high-speed rail link would be targeted.

- “Eta warns rail workers are target”, *BBC*, 21 Jan. 2009.
- “Basque leader’s trial thrown out”, *BBC*, 12 Jan. 2009.

- **Cyprus** Few areas of agreement 4 months into negotiations between Greek and Turkish Cypriot community leaders, as point of departure for give and take remain difficult to find. Greek Cypriot leader Christofias 13 Jan said no “real progress to report”, but UN envoy Downer 16 Jan talked up “real possibility” of settlement. Talks on power-sharing concluded 16 Jan; leaders met 28 Jan to discuss property. Andros Kyprianou 22 Jan elected new AKEL (Communist Party) leader after President Christofias stepped down as party head. Turkish Cypriot parliamentary elections brought forward to 19 Apr from Feb 2010.

- “Optimism over latest Cyprus talks”, *BBC*, 16 Jan. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°194, *Reunifying Cyprus: The Best Chance Yet*, 23 June 2008.

- **Turkey** PM Erdogan visited Brussels for EU talks 19 Jan, called for “fair treatment” for Turkey in accession process and pledged progress in reforms; Commission President Barroso urged Turkish cooperation on EU energy supplies. New ministerial post for EU affairs created 9 Jan. Further arrests in case against “Ergenekon” network accused of coup plot; 18 arrested 7 Jan, 26 on 22 Jan, including former generals, police special unit officers; arms caches seized 9, 12 Jan. Opposition criticised arrests, alleging political motive; army chief of staff Ilker Basbug expressed concern in meetings with Erdogan and President Gul 8 Jan. Authorities dropped prosecution of leading intellectuals for online petition apologising for WW1 massacres of Armenians 26 Jan.

- “Dozens more held in Turkish coup plot”, *AP*, 22 Jan. 2009.
- “Turkey tries to revive EU drive”, *BBC*, 19 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°197, *Turkey and Europe: The Decisive Year Ahead*, 15 Dec. 2008.



## Latin America / Caribbean

- **Bolivia** New constitution approved with 60% of vote in 25 Jan referendum, but political polarisation remains after clear majority voted against in 4 opposition departments. President Morales hailed vote as “new beginning”; new charter strengthens indigenous rights, but critics say text contradictory,

difficult to implement. Campaign passed relatively peacefully. Morales 12 Jan threatened to enact constitution by decree if opposition in Congress interferes in passing.

- “¿Cambio posible?”, BBC, 26 Jan. 2009.
- “A passport to Utopia”, *Economist*, 22 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°18, *Bolivia: Rescuing the New Constitution and Democratic Stability*, 19 June 2008.

➡ **Colombia** 2 killed in 28 Jan Bogotá bombing, FARC rebels suspected; earlier 4 killed, 11 injured in 13 Jan suspected FARC attack in Nariño department. FARC 1 Feb unilaterally released 4 hostages, as promised Dec 2008; 2 further, including ex-senator, to be released early Feb. President Uribe early month authorised opposition senator Piedad Córdoba and Vatican to mediate liberation. 3 FARC members deserted separately with hostages in Jan, likely in response to govt’s Oct offer of freedom from prosecution and economic compensation for FARC deserters who liberate high-profile hostages. Tensions growing within ruling pro-Uribe coalition over president’s possible 2010 re-election. Further 11 army officers dismissed 23 Jan, suspected of extrajudicial killings. Despite recent tense relations, Uribe 25 Jan met Venezuela President Chávez and agreed increased economic cooperation in face of financial crisis.

- “The FARC: Why are they freeing their hostages?”, *Semana*, 1 Feb. 2009.
- “Colombia y el ‘efecto Isaza””, BBC, 14 Jan. 2009.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°29, *Correcting Course: Victims and the Justice and Peace Law in Colombia*, 30 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Ecuador** Govt 24 Jan rejected Colombia President Uribe’s offer to reopen diplomatic relations, suspended since March 2008 regional crisis; said Colombia must first pay for damages from 1 March airstrike on FARC camp inside Ecuador. Indigenous groups protested govt’s new mining law throughout month, sporadically violent.

- “Colombia, Ecuador spar over renewing diplomatic ties”, AFP, 23 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Haiti** Fears increased over food security as WFP warned its stocks could run out March without added US\$100m donation; no decision on donors conference. Preparations remain slow ahead of Apr senate elections; ex-rebel leader Guy Philippe mid-month filed to stand as candidate.

- “Haiti at a crossroads as donations dry up and upheaval looms”, *Miami Herald*, 14 Jan. 2009.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Report N°28, *Reforming Haiti’s Security Sector*, 18 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Nicaragua** Opposition liberal party (PLC) agreed to rejoin Congress 16 Jan, ensuring quorum; ended months of political deadlock after opposition accused ruling Sandinista party of fraud in Nov 2008 municipal elections. Decision came after President Ortega 16 Jan agreed to pardon ex-president Arnoldo Alemán (PLC) from 20-year corruption sentence. Alemán said will run for president 2011.

- “Del fraude al repacto”, *La Prensa*, 25 Jan. 2009.
- “Second Coming of the Sandinistas turns sour”, *Guardian*, 11 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Peru** Shining Path rebels early month threatened to “continue and expand” guerilla war; govt said will seek “final defeat” of

rebels in 2009, 15 Jan announced creation of militarised zone in central Peru where rebel attacks most frequent.

- “Perú crea región militar para combatir a guerrilla de Sendero Luminoso”, *El Nacional*, 15 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Venezuela** National Assembly 14 Jan overwhelmingly approved 15 Feb referendum on removing term limits for all elected officials, including president. Opposition questioned legality; student protesters clashed with police throughout country late month, President Chávez ordered security forces to suppress protests. Govt started soliciting bids from Western oil companies in attempt to increase production, generate revenue as effects of falling oil prices more noticeable.

- “Chávez lets West make oil bids as prices plunge”, *New York Times*, 14 Jan. 2009.
- “Venezuela lawmakers OK unlimited re-election bill”, AP, 14 Jan. 2009.
- 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** Following massive damage in Israeli offensive in Gaza, unilateral ceasefires 18 Jan by Israel and Hamas, both claiming victory. Ground incursion commencing 3 Jan reached outlying areas of Gaza City; airstrikes commencing 27 Dec and shelling targeted weapons stores, tunnels for arms smuggling, rocket launching sites, Hamas members, including Interior Minister Siyam killed 15 Jan. Police stations, ministries, hospitals, schools and UNRWA compound also hit. Palestinian rockets from Gaza hit southern Israeli cities including Ashdod, Ashkelon, Sderot, Beersheba. Palestinian sources reported over 1,300 dead including many hundreds of civilians, over 5,000 injured, tens of thousands homeless; 13 Israelis killed including 3 civilians. Delegations from Hamas, Fatah, other Palestinian groups and Israel visited Cairo for Egypt-mediated talks before and after 18 Jan ceasefire. Following ceasefire, Israeli troops completed withdrawal 21 Jan; 27 Jan bomb attack killing 1 Israeli soldier led to renewed air strikes and incursion into Gaza near Khan Yunis, killing 1 civilian, followed by renewed rocket fire into Israel and further air strikes 28-29, 31 Jan. Cost of reconstruction estimated at almost \$2bn. UNSG Ban 20 Jan called for investigation into bombing of UN compound. Numerous protests against Gaza offensive in West Bank cities; 1 protester killed by Israeli troops in Hebron 16 Jan. New U.S. Middle East envoy George Mitchell in talks with PA and Israeli leaders 29-30 Jan.

- Comment by Robert Malley (Crisis Group) “Ein Sieg für die Hamas, ein Sieg für Israel”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 15 Jan. 2009
- “A long and bumpy road”, *Economist*, 29 Jan. 2009.
- “Counting the cost”, *Economist*, 22 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°26, *Ending the War in Gaza*, 5 Jan. 2009.

➤ **Lebanon** Isolated incidents of rocket fire into Israel 8, 14 Jan from south amid widespread anger at Israeli onslaught in Gaza (see Israel/OPT) sparked fears that country would be drawn into conflict. Hizbollah members, govt officials distanced movement from rockets, warned against Lebanese involvement in conflict; responsibility unclaimed but Palestinian militant groups suspected. Hizbollah leader Nasrallah 7 Jan condemned Israel, Egypt at Beirut rally. Numerous protests against Gaza offensive held in Beirut and elsewhere; police used tear gas to disperse protesters outside U.S. embassy 4, 18 Jan.

- "Strikes on Israel from Lebanon raise new tensions", *Wall Street Journal*, 15 Jan. 2009.
- "Lebanese Army, UNIFIL unearth arms cache near Israeli border", *Daily Star*, 10 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°78, *The New Lebanese Equation: The Christians' Central Role*, 15 July 2008.

➤ **Syria** Incoming U.S. Sec of State Clinton 13 Jan said new Obama administration to move on engagement with Syria soon; President Assad welcomed dialogue if without preconditions. French President Sarkozy in Damascus 6 Jan, requested Syrian help in obtaining Hamas ceasefire in Gaza (see Israel/OPT), while Assad condemned Israeli raids. At 16 Jan Qatar summit, Assad called on Arab states to cut ties with Israel. Hundreds of thousands attended Damascus protest against Israeli offensive 8 Jan. Israeli troops in occupied Golan Heights reportedly hit by gunfire from Syria 11 Jan. Iraq 28 Jan sent first ambassador to Damascus since 1979.

- "Syria wants dialogue with US without preconditions", AP, 26 Jan. 2009.
- "Clinton to engage Iran and Syria soon", *Wall Street Journal*, 14 Jan. 2009.
- Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°27, *Engaging Syria? Lessons from the French Experience*, 15 January 2009

Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°27, *Engaging Syria? Lessons from the French Experience*, 15 January 2009. One of Barack Obama's early moves will likely be to engage in the kind of regional diplomacy his predecessor shunned, notably by "talking to the enemy", but how should he engage Syria concretely? Nicolas Sarkozy has been able to seize unexpected opportunities when they presented themselves. But ultimately, the Franco-Syrian rapprochement will become untenable if the U.S. is not drawn in.



## GULF

➤ **Bahrain** Arrest of 3 leading Shiite rights activists 26 Jan on charges of anti-regime incitement sparked clashes between police and youths in Shiite villages. Further riots 30 Jan followed Shiite demonstration protesting "biased" citizenship law.

- "Police in Bahrain clash with protesters", AP, 30 Jan. 2009.

➤ **Iran** Leaders responded ambiguously to U.S. President Obama's conciliatory statements on Iran – President Ahmadi-Nejad 28 Jan called on U.S. to apologise for past crimes against Iran; FM Mottaki 29 Jan said cooperation possible if U.S. policies change. U.S. Gen Petraeus 8 Jan said Iran shared interests in Afghanistan with U.S.; Pentagon 13 Jan

reported Iranian influence still destabilizing Iraq. Ex-president Khatami 12 Jan announced either he or former PM Musavi would stand as reformist candidate in June presidential elections. Ahmadi-Nejad's candidacy confirmed by aide 28 Jan. Leading human rights lawyer and Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi's home attacked by hardline mob 1 Jan. Authorities 17 Jan announced 4 convicted for alleged U.S.-backed coup plot, including 2 well-known AIDS specialists. BBC Persian TV station launched 14 Jan, denounced by officials as security threat. EU removed anti-regime Mojahedin-e Khalq group from terrorist organization list 26 Jan. 1 dead in 7 Jan bomb attack on Shiite religious ceremony in north eastern Torbat-e Jam. 12 police reported killed 25 Jan by "bandits" near Pakistan border.

- "Teheran 'can co-operate with US'", BBC, 29 Jan. 2008.
- "Iranian AIDS doctors sentenced to prison", AP, 19 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°51, *Iran: Is There a Way Out of the Nuclear Impasse?*, 23 Feb. 2006.

➤ **Iraq** Iraqis voted in provincial elections 31 Jan; few violent incidents reported amid tight security. Reported turnout lower than 2005 elections at 51% overall. No voting planned in semi-autonomous Kurdish region; postponed in disputed Kirkuk province. Several candidates and campaigners killed across country during run-up to elections. Bomb attacks throughout month targeting police, soldiers, politicians, killed several in Baghdad, Mosul and Kirkuk areas. 8 members of Sunni family killed 22 Jan near Baquba. U.S. troops reportedly killed 3 in 24 Jan raid near Kirkuk, 2 policemen in Mosul 31 Jan. Sunni Iraqi National Consensus Front coalition failed to appoint new parliament speaker 11 Jan; smaller parties left coalition, alleging attempt by dominant Iraqi Islamic Party to impose candidate. Incoming U.S. President Obama discussed plans for troop withdrawal with senior military and security staff 21 Jan; several options reportedly under consideration including 16 month time-frame.

- Comment by Joost Hiltermann (Crisis Group) "Bravo Iraqi elections, but now comes the hard part", *Foreign Policy*, 30 Jan. 2009.
- "A step in the right direction", *Economist*, 31 Jan. 2009.
- "Arabs, Kurds take their fight to polls", *Los Angeles Times*, 25 Jan. 2009.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°82, *Iraq's Provincial Elections: The Stakes*, 27 January 2009. Elections on Saturday have the potential to make still fragile Iraq more stable by reversing severe imbalances in provincial governance created four years ago, which generated deep grievances and widespread violence. These polls could represent a peaceful turning point for Iraq.



➤ **Yemen** Houthi rebels in northern Saada region released 30 detained govt forces 24 Jan; localised clashes continued in region during month. Security sources reported 2 suspected al-Qaeda members killed, including 1 Saudi, during police raid in Sanaa 18 Jan; 3 suspected militants arrested Ma'rib 30 Jan. 3 detained 26 Jan after gunfire incident near U.S. embassy. Saudi and Yemeni branches of al-Qaeda announced merger 27 Jan. Protesters against govt discrimination towards South in Aden and neighbouring areas led to armed clashes with security forces 18 Jan; Sanaa-Aden road blocked for several days in Lahj.

- "Houthis release military prisoners amidst ongoing clashes in the north", *Yemen Times*, 25 Jan. 2009.
- "Southern Movement protesters clash with security forces", *Yemen Times*, 18 Jan. 2009.

## NORTH AFRICA

➡ **Algeria** Opposition RCD 15 Jan announced boycott of April presidential elections; President Bouteflika's intention to run for 3rd term confirmed by ruling party. Former leader of GSPC (now Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, AQIM) Hassan Hattab 19 Jan called for group to lay down arms, condemned attacks on civilians. 11 reportedly charged 7 Jan with plotting New Year terror attack in Algiers. Security services claimed 4 suspected militants killed in operations east of Algiers 6, 24 Jan. 27 reported wounded 30 Jan in clashes between Mozabite Berbers and Arabs in Beriane, central Algeria.

- "GSPC founder calls for al-Qaeda surrender in Algeria", *Magharebia*, 21 Jan. 2009.
- "Algeria opposition pulls out of presidential vote", *Middle East Online*, 16 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Egypt** Mubarak govt faced widespread anger at home and in Arab world at perceived inaction over Israel's Gaza offensive (see Israel/OPT), particularly over failure to open Rafah border with Gaza except for severely wounded, some humanitarian supplies. Protests over Gaza crisis continued, with 50,000 reported at 9 Jan Alexandria demonstration led by opposition Muslim Brotherhood (MB); heavy security presence in Cairo prevented large rallies in capital. Over 860 MB members

arrested throughout month, including at least 350 following 18 Jan Cairo protest.

- "Gaza crisis threatens outlook for Mubarak", *Bloomberg*, 27 Jan. 2009.
- "Gaza strikes reverberate in Egypt", *Washington Post*, 10 Jan. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°76, *Egypt's Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration?*, 18 June 2008.

➡ **Mauritania** Forum convened by leaders of Aug military coup 5 Jan agreed on 30 May date for presidential elections, 6 month transition period to democracy; failed to reach consensus on eligibility of military officers for election. Junta leader Gen Ould Abdelaziz 23 Jan announced election scheduled for 6 June. Deposed President Abdallahi prevented from entering capital Nouakchott 23 Jan. AU, rejecting junta's legitimacy, excluded Mauritania from 29 Jan summit.

- "Mauritanian assembly fixes date for presidential elections", *Magharebia*, 8 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Western Sahara** New UN envoy Christopher Ross formally appointed 7 Jan. Polisario Front 14 Jan asked Dutch oil company to cease exploration in territorial waters; 22 Jan called on EU to prevent fishing off coast of disputed territory, suspend 2005 EU-Morocco fisheries agreement.

- "EU boats must stop fishing off W.Sahara – Polisario", *Reuters*, 22 Jan. 2009.
- "U.N.'s new Western Sahara envoy has daunting task", *Reuters*, 12 Jan. 2009.

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President William J. Clinton, 5 March 2007

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