

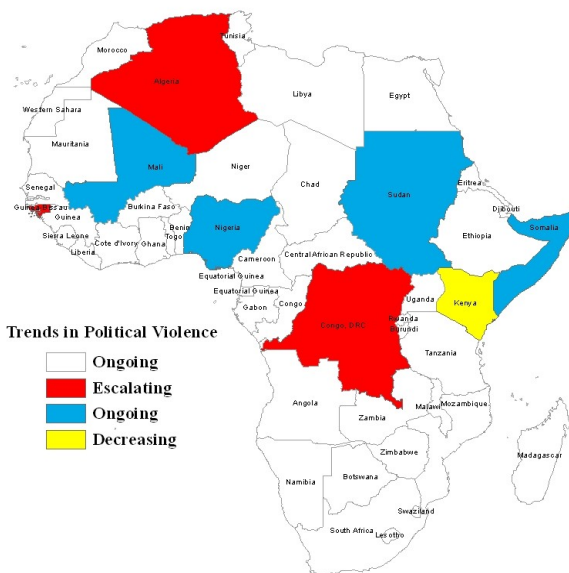
CONFLICT TRENDS (NO.2):

REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, MAY 2012

This conflict trend report from ACLED is the second of our monthly reports that focus on regional conflict trends within Africa. We concentrate our analysis on recent political violence emanating from the Sahel belt and East Africa, due to the rise in instability there. Focus countries include **Algeria, DR-Congo, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan & South Sudan.**

Analysis is focused on the month of April 2012, with reference to violence patterns over the course of the last three months. Present conflict patterns are compared with recent violent with new trends, actors and locations highlighted.

ACLED data is disaggregated by violence type, group and location. Recent additions to the dataset include estimates of reported fatalities by event. Combining these features gives an overview of a region, country or actor's particular conflict profile. In April, Somalia, Nigeria and DR-Congo were recorded as having the highest number of events, in addition to the highest number of conflict-related fatalities (see Figure 1). Sudan and South Sudan, though the focus of much international attention at present, witnessed a lower number of discrete events. Fatalities in the neighbouring states were relatively high, although they are likely to be higher in reality, as many news reports simply reported 'many' or 'multiple' fatalities, which cannot be coded accurately.



Conflict events and country status, January-March 2012

Correction: In *Conflict Trends* (No. 1, April 2012) the average fatality level per event in Sudan and South Sudan in February 2012 was wrongly noted as 408. The correct figure is 40.8. This has been corrected in the most recently available version of the document.

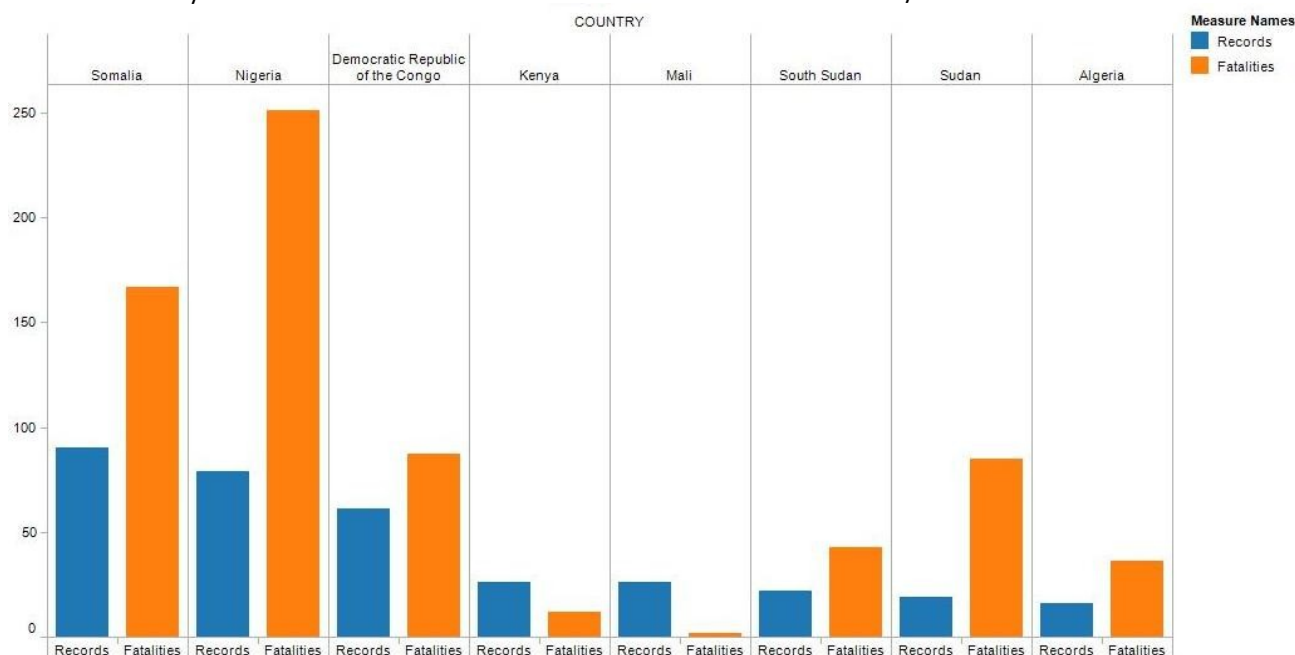


Figure 1: Conflict events and fatalities by country, April 2012

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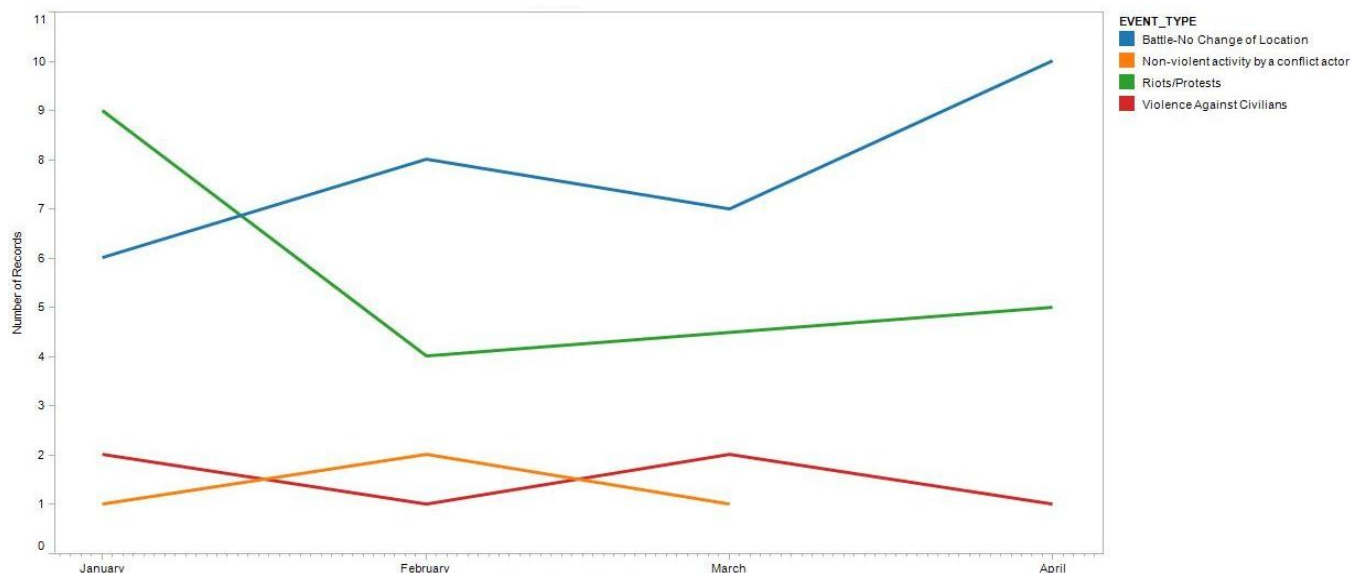


Figure 2: Conflict events by type, Algeria, January - April 2012.

Algeria

Algeria faced both domestic and regional challenges in the month of April, as conflict events increased in the country (see Figure 2). Domestically – upcoming elections on 10th May in which there are countervailing pressures. The Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) are calling for boycotts of the elections on the grounds that party ‘quotas’ have allegedly been decided in advance; while the militant group AQIM has denounced the elections outright. It is expected that the FLN and RND, two parties in the ruling coalition will do well, although questions remain as to the performance of Islamist groups in the polls. The issue is sensitive in Algeria after the election of the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) was blocked by the military in 1992, leading to a decade-long civil war in the country.

Riots and protests increased in April following a drop in March. Demonstrations included RCD youth marching to call for a boycott of the upcoming polls, while youth on fixed-term government contracts also demonstrated, threatening to boycott the polls if they

Riots broke out following the attempted self-immolation of a young man following alleged police harassment.

were not given permanent positions. Elsewhere, riots broke out following the attempted self-immolation of a young man in Jijel in the wake of alleged police harassment. In addition to this socio-political unrest, Algerian military forces continued campaigns against AQIM and MUJAO. Military and police forces suffered several losses due to IED attacks by unidentified armed groups.

Regionally, there were two high-profile attacks in neighbouring Mali on Algerian representatives. On the 31st March, an attack occurred on consulate in Timbuktu, while on the 5th April, the consul and six staff members were kidnapped from the mission in Gao, north-eastern Mali. The seizure was claimed by MUJAO (Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa). The group reportedly branched off from AQIM to spread jihad to West Africa, and also claimed responsibility for an attack against Algerian police in Tamanrasset, in March, in which 23 people were wounded. MUJAO demanded the release of 40 political prisoners – including members of GIA, AQIM – in exchange for the consular staff. Following the refusal of demands, there were reports that MUJAO captors told media outlets that Algerian consulate staff’s lives were at risk. Algeria’s Prime Minister made moves to counter unrest across the border in Mali by reaching out to Tuareg leaders and communities in the southern province of Tamenrasset.

Geographically, events have declined in Boumerdes Province, where they were highest from January – March, as a result of the large number of attacks by unidentified groups against military and civilian government personnel in the area. In April, event locations were more diffusely spread across Algeria, with Khenchela province seeing an increase in activity.

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DR-Congo

DR-Congo witnessed an increase in conflict activity in April 2012, mostly concentrated in the country's restive east. An army mutiny in which hundreds of former CNDP troops loyal army General Bosco Ntaganda deserted their posts led to clashes with the military in early April in Nord- and Sud-Kivu. While the government began regaining territory towards the end of the month, CNDP forces held key towns in the Karuba area, while their defection from posts facilitated the FDLR takeover of territory in Masisi. Nearby, Mayi-Mayi militias under the Cheka benefited from the chaotic environment and made territorial gains in Walikale amidst heavy losses on both sides.

These events point to several key issues shaping violence in DR-Congo: the first is the implications of the International Criminal Court's pursuit of General Ntaganda, and President Kabila's reversal of policy on the issue of his arrest, in spite of the potentially destabilising consequences. The second point of note is the continued salience of the CNDP, which was effectively disbanded in 2009, but appears to remain relevant – both operationally and ideologically – to troops who are disgruntled with integration into the national armed forces. Earlier in the year, Colonel Albert Kahasha led 30 troops to mutiny in Nord-Kivu in protest at conditions in the FARDC. While Kahasha and his troops were reintegrated following negotiations in February, the series of defections point to broader issues of dissatisfaction within the armed forces, and potential volatility in light of the multiple groups to which troops can defect.

Elsewhere, the LRA have been reported in Orientale province, though at much lower levels of activity than previous months. The infamous group appears to be operating in 'survival mode' with limited operation capacity at present.

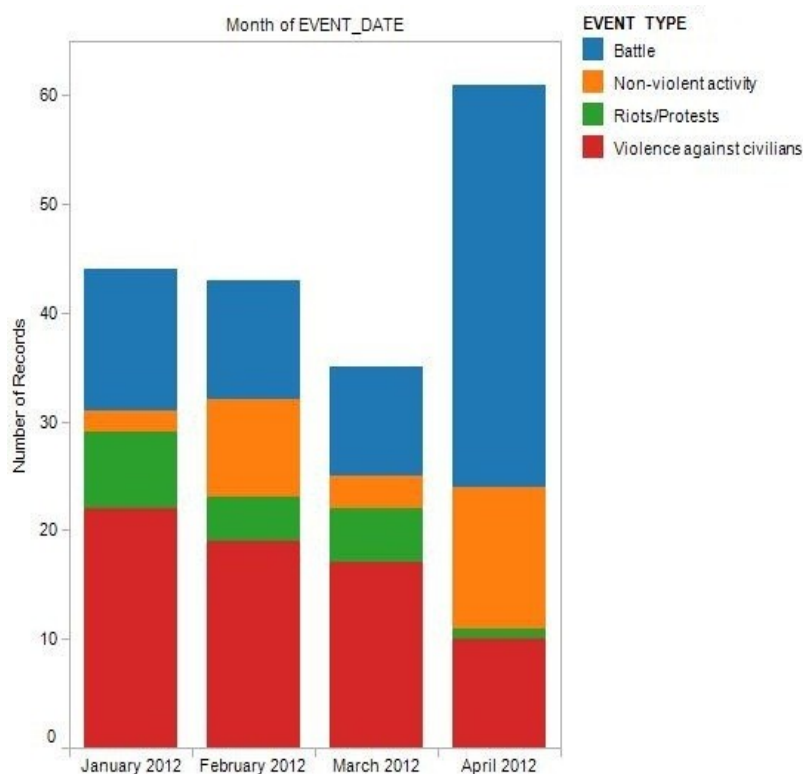


Figure 3: Conflict event by type, DR-Congo, January - April 2012.

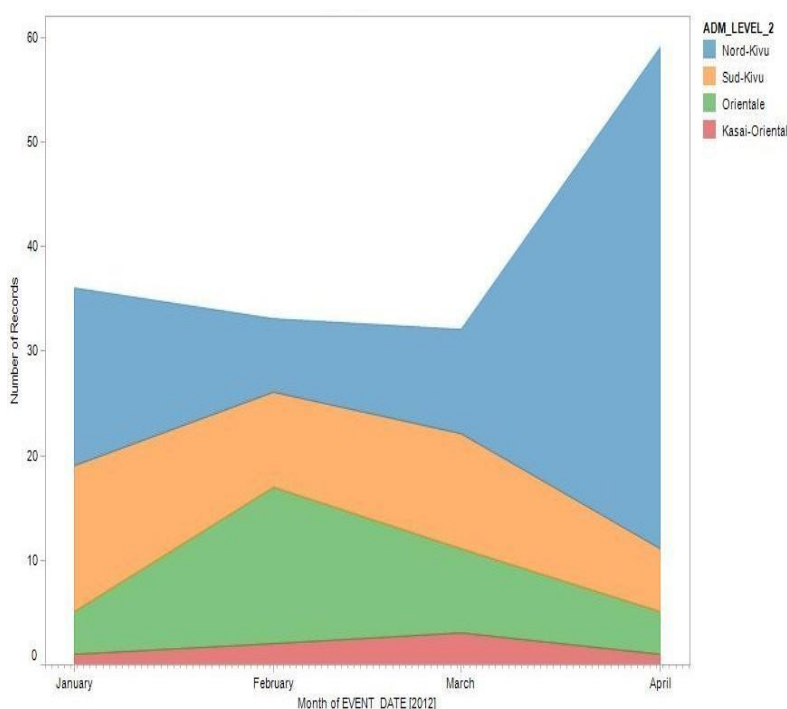


Figure 4: Location of events, DR-Congo, January - April 2012.

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Mali

Several significant political developments shaped events in Mali in April. Junta forces found themselves isolated internationally in early April, and again following a series of arrests of high-ranking officials of the former government. Nevertheless, the US and others welcomed the swearing in of the interim president by 12th April, when incoming interim President Traore threatened to wage 'total war' against Tuareg rebels in the North (RFI, 12 April 2012). Battles between armed groups fell off significantly after the first week of April, as rebel groups consolidated their hold on northern territories, leading to lower levels of violence overall in April than in the tumultuous preceding month. Incidents of violence against civilians have increased, however, predominantly in the north.

Tensions are reported within the rebel factions which have declared independence in the north of the country, particularly as the MNLA continues to try to distance itself from the jihadist AQIM (ARB, 29/03/2012). The MNLA

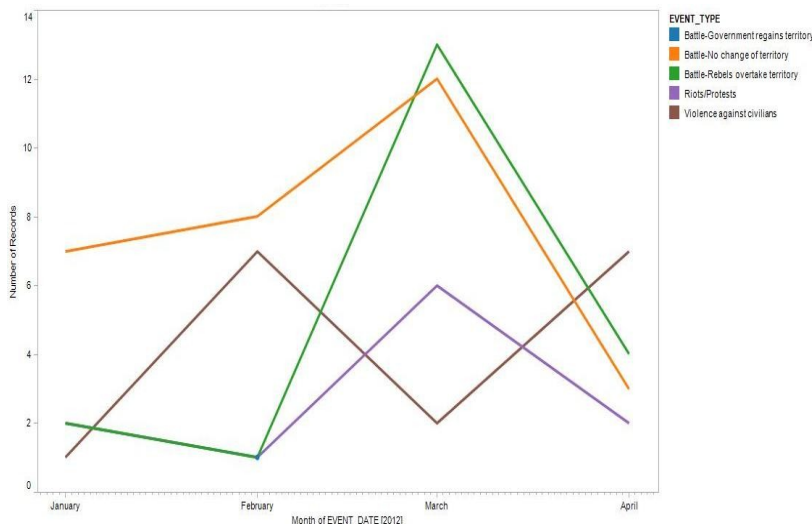


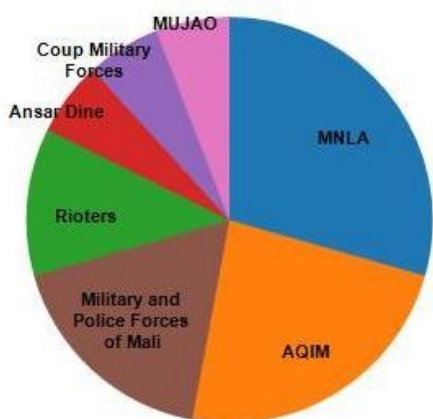
Figure 5: Violent events by type, Mali, January - April 2012.

declared the independent state of Azawad in northern Malian territory on 6th April, only shortly after the Islamist group Ansar Dine reported it was opposed to Tuareg independence, stating "Ours is a holy war [...] We are against rebellions. We are against independence. We are against revolutions not in the name of Islam." (AFP, 6 April 2012) Rights groups have reported incidents of sexual violence, recruitment of child soldiers, and looting and pillaging in the seemingly chaotic areas under rebel control, witnesses reportedly implicating MNLA forces for most of the events. (HRW, 30 April 2012) Triangulated ACLED data confirms that MNLA and AQIM contributed together to over 50% of the reported violence against civilians (see Figure 6).

While Ansar Dine have reportedly intervened in an attempt to quell looting and disorder, accounts have surfaced of the punishment of civilians by Ansar Dine troops for breaking Sharia law, and of violence between Ansar Dine and MNLA rebels in areas of contestation. (HRW, 30 April 2012) The reported abuses may explain the mobilisation of anti-rebel protests held in Timbuktu and Kidal, as residents demonstrated against rebel occupation of the towns, and were dispersed by gunmen.

In addition to the key actors above, the recently formed FNLA entered the foray by attempting to seize control the town of Timbuktu briefly, before withdrawing amid allegations of power struggles between rival factions. The FNLA is reported to oppose both the secession of northern Mali, and the imposition of strict Islamic law. AQIM representative confirmed to press that they requested the FNLA's departure from the city (AFP, 28 April 2012). MUJAO was also active in Mali, carrying out an attack and abduction in the Algerian consulate in Gao, attempting to negotiate their release in exchange for the release of prisoners aligned to GIA and AQIM.

The northern rebel factions are not the only group facing internal fissures. Fighting broke out in Bamako on 30th April, as a counter-coup attempt was launched by forces which tried to seize control of the airport, and the national television and radio station, ORTM.



- ACTOR1 (group)
- MNLA: National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (Mali)
- AQIM: Al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb (International)
- Military and Police Forces of Mali
- Rioters (Mali)
- Ansar Dine (Mali)
- Coup Military Forces of Mali (2012)
- MUJAO: Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa

Figure 6: Violence against civilian by actor, Mali, January - April 2012.

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Nigeria

Overall violent events have been climbing in Nigeria since February, with a sharp increase witnessed in April in levels of violence against civilians in particular (see Figure 7). The majority of these acts were perpetrated by Boko Haram, whose territorial scope has spread considerably in recent months. In April 2011, Boko Haram activity was heavily concentrated in Borno and Kano States. In April this year, Borno, Kano, Kaduna, Yobe, Federal Capital Territory, Plateau, and Lagos all experienced Boko Haram activity.

Many of the areas in which Boko Haram is most active, also witness high levels of attacks by unidentified armed groups – either in the form of unidentified assailants shooting at police or military personnel, or through bomb attacks for which no responsibility is claimed. The relationship between Boko Haram and these actors is unclear: it may be that Boko Haram agents are responsible for a wide variety of low-level attacks for which the central organisation does not claim responsibility. Alternatively, the presence of Boko Haram activity may create a conducive environment for a wide range of actors with varying degrees of politico-criminal agendas to engage in violence

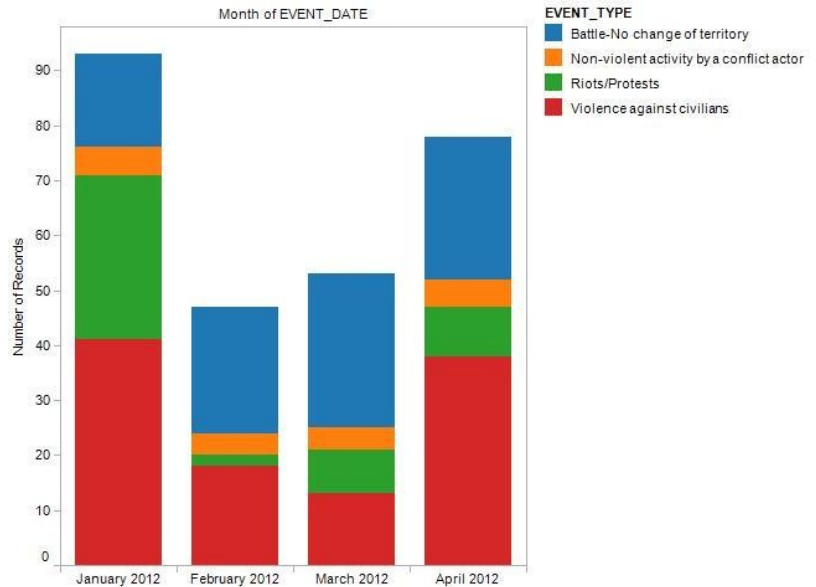


Figure 7: Violent events by type, Nigeria, January - April 2012.

under the cover of the region’s most active organisation.

Somalia

April witnessed a drop in the level of violent events in Somalia overall, as the rate of violence drops from a high in February 2012. The most dramatic decline has been witnessed in Banadir region (Mogadishu and environs), where violent conflict has fallen significantly (see Figure 9) Al-Shabaab retreated from the territory they were holding in Mogadishu in late 2011, though they continued to launch attacks on TFG-AMISOM forces and civilian populations in the capital. April seems to show that they now either face such severe operational constraints in the city, or have strategically chosen to reduce the number of targeted assaults in the capital in favour of concentrating troops in areas they have traditionally held further south.

To this end, Bay region witnessed an increase in violence, as Al-Shabaab forces engaged with TFG, AMISOM, ASWJ and Ethiopian forces around Baidoa and Qansax Dhere. Baidoa served as an administrative centre for the group, and Al-Shabaab forces continued to engage allied forces in battles in the area throughout the month, in spite of having lost control of the town back in February. All rebel groups have a hierarchy of spaces, which is shaped varying by concerns with logistics, territory, ideology and population support. As Al-Shabaab’s near-total withdrawal from Mogadishu appears to be approaching, forces may concentrate their energies on southern strongholds, chief among which is the port city of Kismayo which also serves as a revenue base for the group.

In addition to these changing territorial patterns, reports also surfaced in April of Al-Shabaab forces engaging in armed battles with local armed units and pastoral community groups in Lower Juba, Hiran and Lower

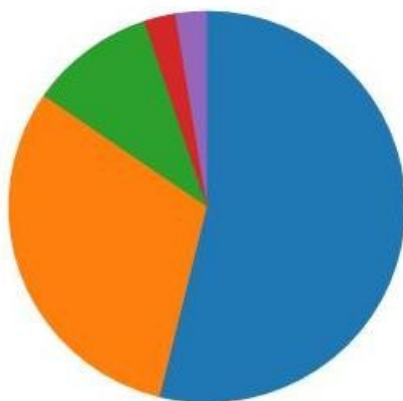


Figure 8: Violence against civilians by actor, Nigeria, April 2012.

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Shabelle. Reports suggested clashes broke out after Al-Shabaab troops attempted to seize livestock and property from communities. The subsequent violence may be an indication of communities' growing confidence in the Islamists' imminent defeat, or may reflect troops' growing desperation as they increasingly rely on extracting revenue and resources by force. Similarly, Al-Shabaab engagement in violence against civilians has been increasing since February, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of overall activity (see Figure 10). This may reflect the group's struggle to assert control in contested areas.

Issues of troop discipline were evident elsewhere in the country, with infighting among the disparate militias which serve under the TFG banner reported in Mogadishu, and pronounced volatility in Belet Weyne, Hiran Region. Allied forces appear to have largely consolidated their hold on the Belet Weyne area after wresting it from Al-Shabaab in early 2012. However, the attempted establishment by the TFG of a new regional administration in April cast light on the cracks in the alliance as ASWJ factions battled amongst themselves and with TFG-appointed security.

Sudan & South Sudan

April saw a sharp increase overall in violent events in both countries with the escalation of hostilities in disputed border areas. Battles constituted the majority of events which were dominated by interactions between the two countries' militaries, allied with a variety of smaller rebel groups and factions. Violence against civilians – while still considerable – constituted a lower proportion overall of events than in recent months. Much of the violence has taken place through aerial bombardment, as Sudan's military (the SAF) appears to be weak on the ground, and is seeking to clear territory without committing ground troops. Sudan's political and military weakness, therefore, has consequences for civilian casualties caught in heavy bombardment in border areas.

Increased violence between local militias and Al-Shabaab may be an indication of communities' growing confidence in the Islamists' imminent defeat, or may reflect troops' growing desperation as they increasingly rely on extracting revenue and resources by force.

The present patterns of violence are very similar to those observed during Sudan's civil war prior to partition. This suggests that while analysis and predictions are currently centring on whether or not this dispute will lead to all-out war between the two states, the experience of violence on the ground in both countries is reminiscent of the two states' lengthy experience of civil war.

Elsewhere, April witnessed lower levels of communal violence between ethnically- or tribally-identified militias. This is broadly in keeping with seasonal changes witnessed across East Africa as communal violence tends to be shaped by grazing patterns, migration routes and livestock conditions. We may see renewed levels of communal violence towards the end of the season.

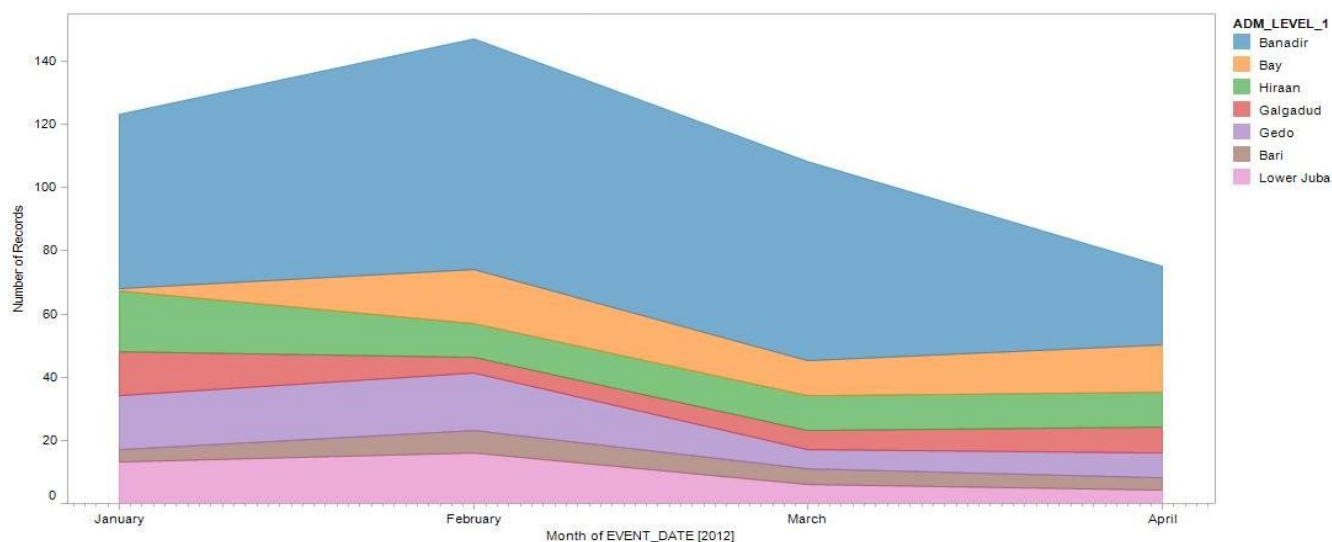


Figure 9: Violent conflict events in Somalia by region, January—April 2012.

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Additional Comments

Guinea-Bissau—A coup in Guinea-Bissau brought the West African country into the spotlight in April, as the military took control on 12th April. The move was strongly condemned by the UN Security Council, the European Union, the African Union and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (*IRIN*, 23 April 2012). At the end of the reporting period, discussions were ongoing as to the appropriateness of sending a UN peacekeeping intervention.

Kenya—Violent events in Kenya fell again in April, following a 2012 high in February. This drop is shaped in part by the decrease in ethnic and communal violence. Kenya’s conflict profile is characterised by a large number of ethnically-identified militia actors and events, but the frequency of these events varies in line with the seasonal calendar. Grazing patterns, migration routes and livestock condition all affect communal raiding practices, which heavily influence the level and intensity of ethnic conflict, concentrated in the north of the country (see *Figure 12*). In the south, Kenyan security personnel made a number of arrests of Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) members and dispersed illegal meetings of the group. While all events involving the MRC were non-violent in April, the scale of the campaign launched against the group in coastal regions may suggest a remobilisation in the coming months.



Figure 12: Interactions between ethnic militia and other actors, Kenya, January - April 2012.

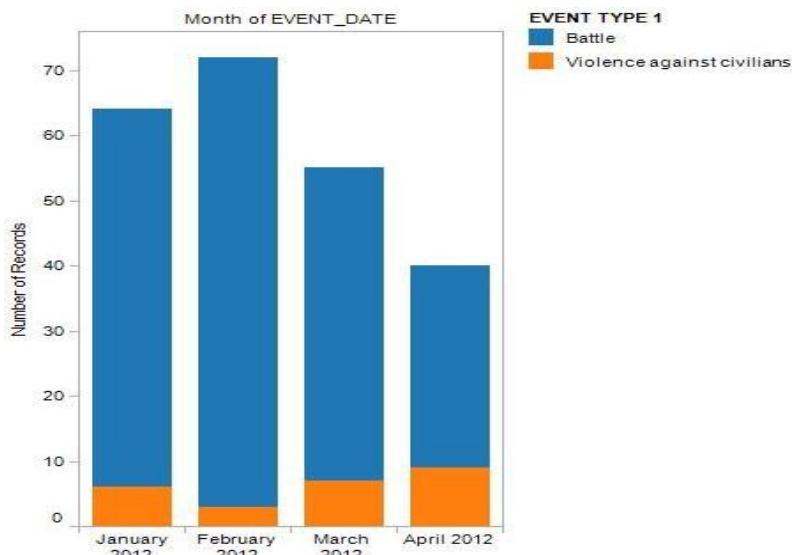


Figure 10: Al-Shabaab activity, Somalia, January - April 2012.

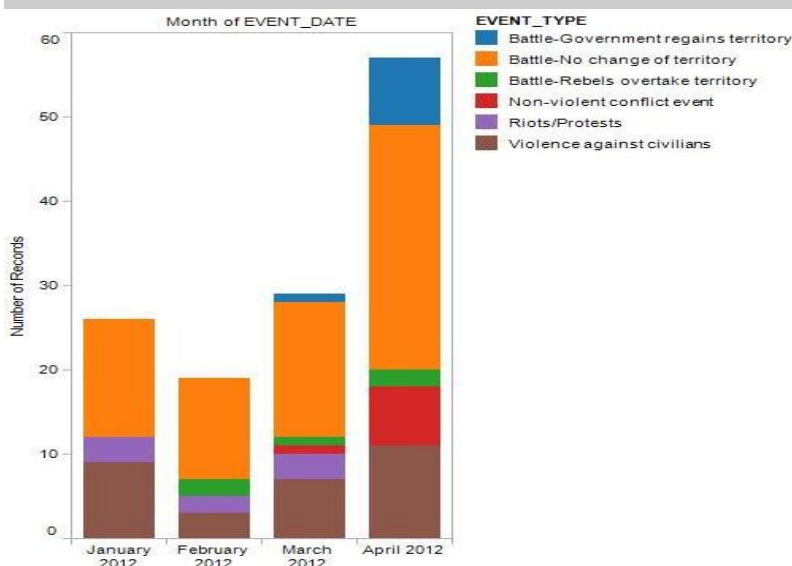


Figure 11: Conflict events by Type, Sudan and South Sudan, January - April 2012.

Sources

The information in this issue of ACLED *Conflict Trends* was compiled from a variety of sources. Sources include ACLED data, compiled from local, regional, national and continental news reports, NGO reports, and Africa-focused news reports integrated to supplement daily media reporting. Additional sources include *Africa Confidential* (Af Con), *Africa Research Bulletin* (ARB), *Agence France Presse* (AFP), *Human Rights Watch* (HRW), *Radio France Internationale* (RFI), and reports from the NGO Safety Programme (NSP), specifically for information concerning Somalia. Further information on sources, coding procedures and data can be found online at www.acleddata.com/data.