

CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 6):

REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, SEPTEMBER 2012

This month's *Conflict Trends* report is the sixth monthly publication by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED) publishing and analysing realtime disaggregated data on political conflict on the African continent. This issue will focus on developments in **Côte d'Ivoire**, **DR-Congo**, **Kenya**, **Nigeria**, **South Africa**, and **Zimbabwe**. Realtime data for the month of August is presented, analysed and compared with longer-term trends to explore patterns in actors, modalities and geographies of violence.

As before, Somalia witnessed the highest level of violent conflict events overall, in addition to the highest number of reported fatalities. South Africa and DR-Congo follow with comparable levels of violent conflict events, although the nature and intensity of these events are profoundly different. Unusually, fatalities in Nigeria have dropped sharply from previous months, on a comparable level in August with those in Kenya. Zimbabwe typically experiences extremely low levels of reported conflict-related fatalities, while escalating tensions in Côte d'Ivoire and the ongoing overlapping crises in Mali drew international attention to these countries over the course of the month (see Figure 1).

Elsewhere, after a short, relative drop in activity, security conditions are deteriorating in **Egypt**, while religious tensions in **Libya** and **Tunisia** are revealing further divisions and the fragility of the state.



Conflict trajectory, August 2012

This issue also contains the second in a series of thematic focuses, providing an overview and analysis of different aspects of the dataset. This month, we explore **sources of data and reporting**. We explore sources which are used in ACLED coding, and investigate biases and imbalances in reporting across different publications and types of report.

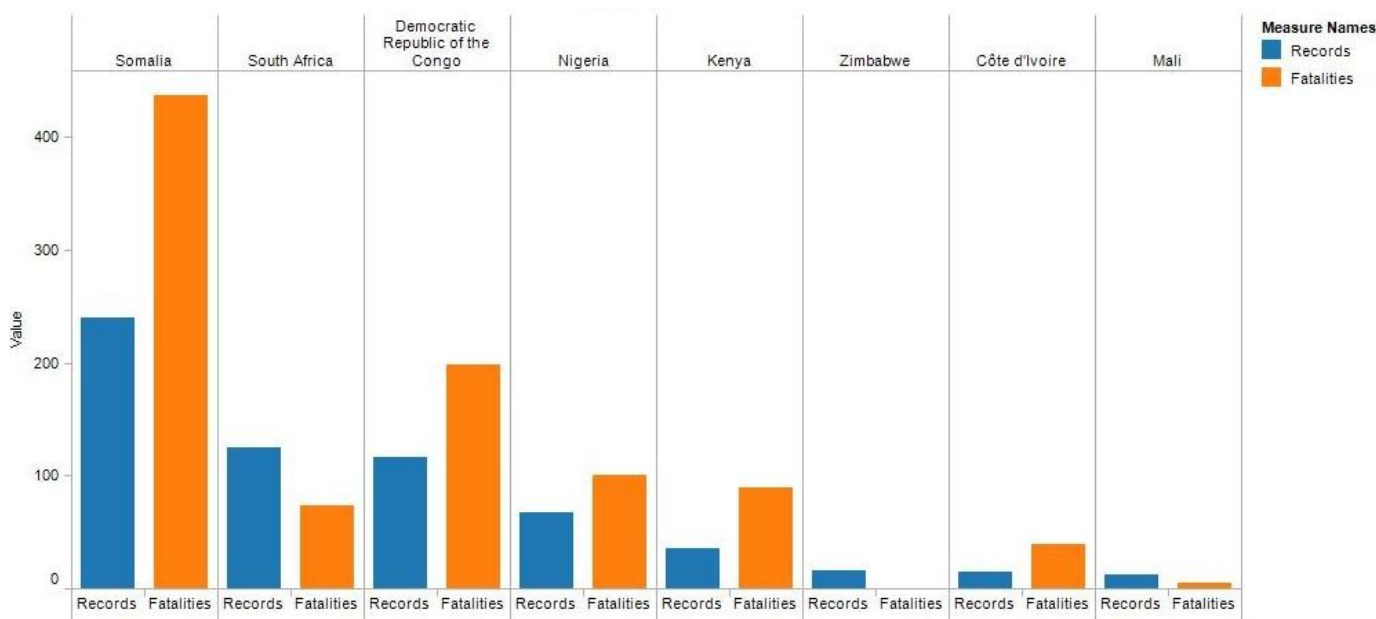


Figure 1: Conflict events and fatalities by country, August 2012

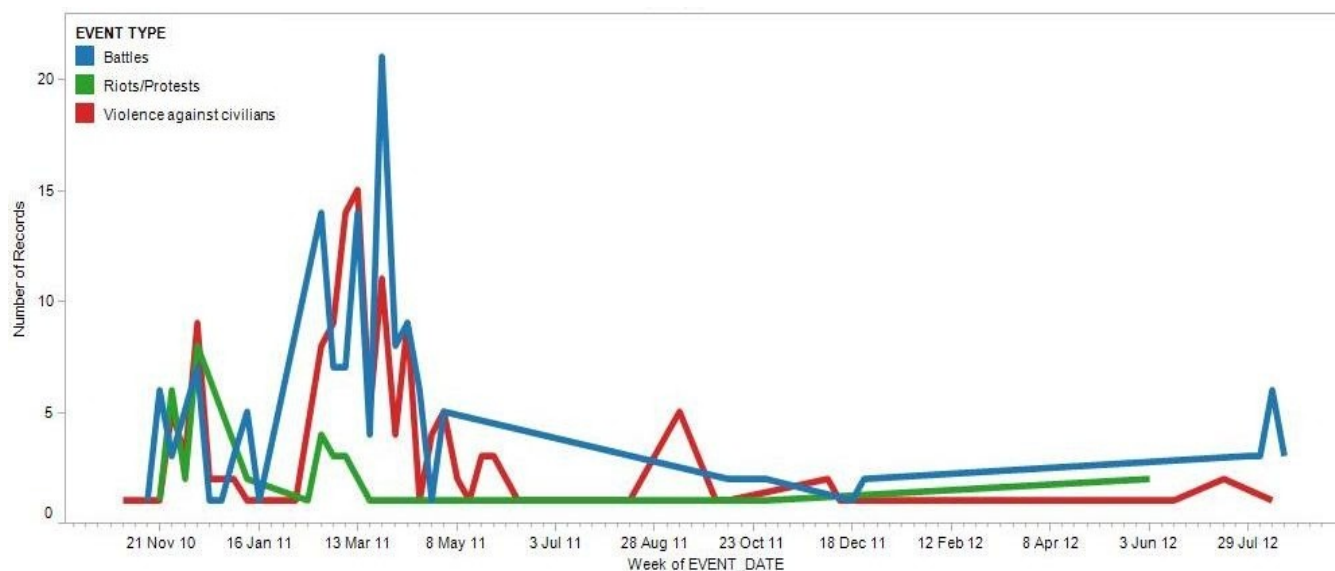


Figure 2: Violent Conflict Events by Type, Côte d'Ivoire, Nov 2010 - Aug 2012.

### Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire witnessed a very sharp increase in both activity and fatality levels in August, with a wave of attacks on police stations, military bases and checkpoints throughout the country. While many of these incidents have been attributed to formally unidentified armed groups, the driving force of the violence has its roots in pro-Ouattara and pro-Gbagbo militant groups. Ouattara supporters have blamed Gbagbo militias for the series of low-intensity attacks on security installations, while Gbagbo supporters have alleged the regime is using the recent unrest to crack-down on the opposition.

In the month a spokesperson of the country's Truth, Reconciliation and Dialogue Commission reported that the panel is 'not working,' many fear a re-hashing of the 2010–2011 violence which rocked the region (BBC News, 3 August 2012). Figure 2, above, provides an overview of the levels and types of violence the country has experienced since the November 2010 elections.

In a context of low-intensity attacks by largely informal militia groups, analysis of actors and patterns in activity presents challenges. What is clear from the data available is that the most

recent violent conflict events are concentrated in Lagunes, as they were at the tail-end of the 2011 unrest. This may simply reflect the concentration of activity around Abidjan and the endurance of conflict hot-spots due to conditions in those locales. However, it may also suggest—as analysis on post-war conditions in Sierra Leone and Liberia has indicated—that organisational networks and structures of former combatants persist in fragile, post-conflict situations, which can be revived for the remobilisation around the same fault lines. In the face of escalating instability, the geography of violence and its implications should be carefully monitored.

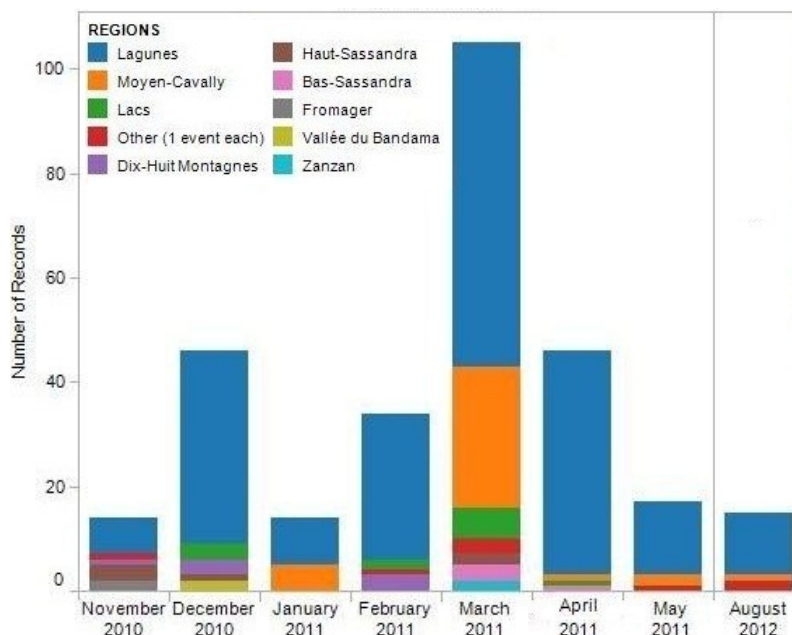


Figure 3: Conflict by Region, Côte d'Ivoire, Nov 2010 - Aug 2012.

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**DR-Congo**

Violent conflict events dropped in August in the DR-Congo, after a sharp increase was witnessed in July. However, there are several important factors which diminish this apparent improvement in conditions. The first is that conflict levels remain well above their monthly average for the year to date, and indeed, 2012 is already the third most violent year in the past 15 in the DR-Congo (surpassed only by 2009 and 1999), with eight months remaining. The second important caveat is that while violent conflict events overall dropped, violence against civilians specifically increased in August, as groups which may not have the military capacity to engage the government at present target vulnerable communities in an attempt to extract resources and establish territorial control claims. In a country in which violence against civilians levels are already extraordinarily high, any increase is a serious cause for concern. Figure 4 provides a breakdown of these events by non-state actors. Thirdly, the regional implications of the continued, complex crisis in the country keep it top of the security agenda.

M23 activity decreased significantly in August as an apparent ceasefire was maintained between the rebel group and military forces. A small number of battles took place between FARDC forces and the M23 towards the end of the month, but most of the effort to route the group from the east of the country was being expended on the regional and international stages. Rwanda's Foreign Affairs Minister briefed the UN Security Council in New York towards the end of the month, but aside from widespread condemnation of Rwanda's alleged involvement, and stating its support for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the international community is yet to

**Events involving violence against civilians increased again in August in DR-Congo, as groups often lacking the military capacity to engage government forces target vulnerable communities.**

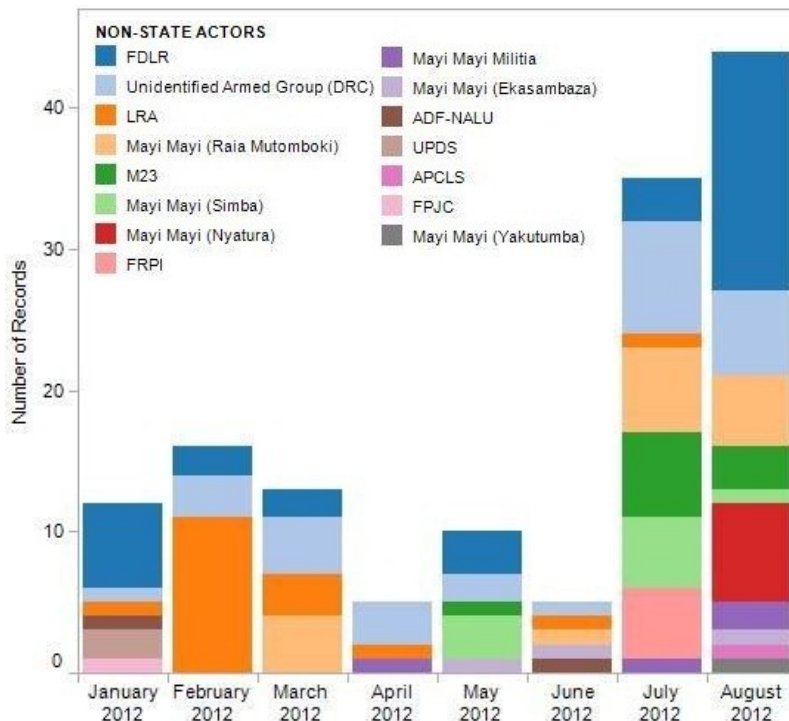


Figure 4: Events Involving Violence against Civilians by Non-State Actors, DR-Congo, Jan- Aug 2012.

find a strong voice in its treatment of DR-Congo's neighbour. Specifically, there has been no clear consensus on the concrete steps Rwanda could take to amend the situation (should it decide to), as measuring progress in the cessation of support Rwanda denies providing would be challenging if not impossible. On other fronts, the FARDC primarily focused on battling Raia Mutomboki militants in Sud-Kivu in August, while civilians have borne the brunt of battles between different, competing Mayi Mayi formations. Also back into the mix is the FDLR, which has seen a sharp increase in activity over the past six weeks, concentrating on attacking villages in Masisi and Kalehe.

We have previously reported on the multi-faceted nature of the crisis, and the growing number of discrete non-state actors involved. In this context, the disproportionate focus on the M23 group may prove costly to a regime faced with the possibility of dying of a thousand cuts. Equally there is need to draw attention to the types of violence in which different groups engage: groups such as various Mayi Mayi formations which pose no immediate threat (or claim) to the state nevertheless profoundly shape the lived experience of violence on the ground, which in turn shapes perceptions of governance, legitimacy and the success of the country's post-conflict transition.

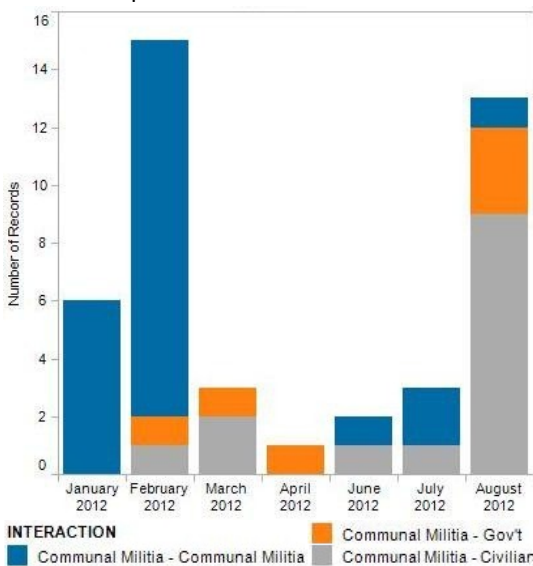
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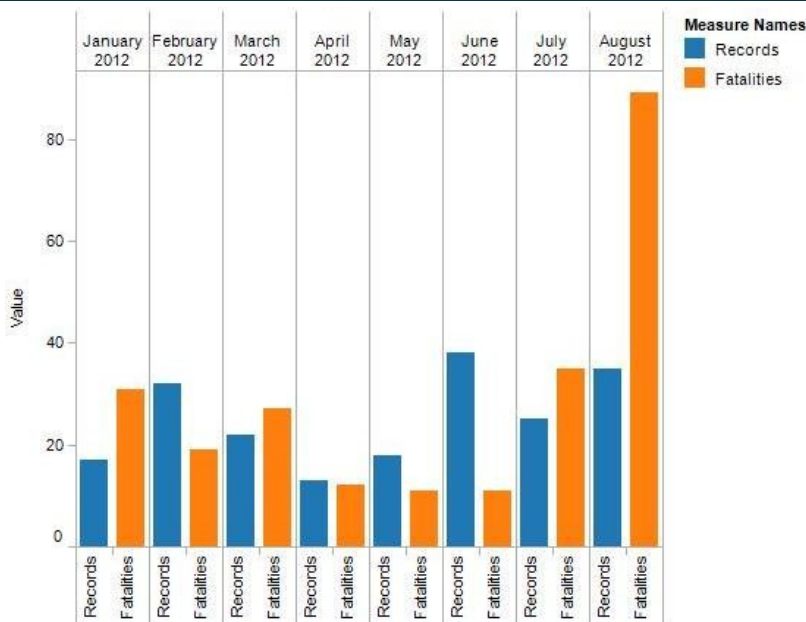
**Kenya**

Kenya witnessed an increase in events in August, although not a particularly dramatic one in terms of overall levels. This alone is telling: in a month in which Kenya experienced two distinct conflict crises, the actual number of events was not strikingly above average. The intensity of conflict events, by contrast, increased quite significantly. There was more than a two-fold increase in fatality levels from the preceding month (see Figure 5).

In the first instance, Kenya experienced a dramatic increase in communal militia violence, both between rival armed groups and, most strikingly, against civilians (see Figure 6). Most dramatically, a cycle of revenge attacks among Orma and Pokomo militants escalated mid-month, claiming over 50 lives in Tana River. This constituted the single most fatal conflict event in Kenya since the post-election violence of 2007/8. The driving force behind communal conflict are multiple and complex: disputed access to resources and related land tenure disputes appear to be more significant in the mix than absolute depletion of resources, though poor security provision and infrastructure also contribute to the impunity with which attackers operate.



**Figure 6: Communal Conflict Events by Interaction, Kenya, Jan - Aug 2012.**



**Figure 5: Violent Conflict Events and Fatalities, Kenya, Jan - Aug 2012.**

The Kenyan government’s response to the problem has been to suggest a disarmament campaign in rural areas to prevent a repeat of August’s events. This response is misjudged for two reasons: the first, is that light weaponry - when it is a factor in communal conflict - is more often a symptom of the problems detailed above, than a cause. Moreover, in the most deadly of August’s attacks, reports indicate that attackers used rudimentary weapons including machetes and pangas, and did devastating damage through burning homes, rather than relying on firepower.

A second and more fundamental reason to remain wary of a disarmament approach is the evidence of this policy’s failure regionally. Reports of human rights violations by disarming forces have emerged from Jonglei, South Sudan, where are accompanied by claims that the campaign is ethnically motivated. Similar reports have emerged from Uganda’s Karamoja region, where disarmament is only one in a series of perceived injustices visited upon communities in the area.

There is also evidence to suggest that communal conflict is being driven by present-day politics and processes, not only structural factors. Though not a significant factor in the Tana River raids, the ongoing and generally poorly coordinated process of devolution in Kenya was linked to communal clashes in Mandera in August, and Moyale in February. The granting of greater resources and power to local authorities under the new constitution is a dangerous process, the narrative of which is being subtly shaped by politicians vying for support, and populations laying claims on land. The process of devolution is in its nascent stages yet, but its effective implementation depends to a greater extent on the role and responsibility of local elites than on historical tensions between of communities likely to be blamed.

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Further south in Mombasa, the assassination of controversial Muslim cleric Sheikh Aboud Rogo, associated with the city’s Muslim Youth Centre, or *Al Hijra*, movement, sparked riots and attacks on police, civilians and churches in the area. Aboud Rogo has been linked to Somalia’s Al-Shabaab, and was suspected of being a key recruiter of principally Swahili-speaking Kenyans (as distinct from ethnically Somali) for the group (UNSC, 25 July 2012).

The events in Mombasa must be understood in two contexts: the first, and most obvious is Kenya’s involvement in the conflict in Somalia, which has left it vulnerable to attacks by Al Shabaab and sympathetic militants. Islamist militant activity and attacks since Kenya first invaded Somalia in October, however, have tended to be concentrated along Kenya’s relatively porous border with Somalia, and in Nairobi. In both locations, attacks have primarily been attributed Somali militants or ethnically Somali Kenyans. Islamist militancy in Mombasa is certainly not new, as the prominence of the Muslim Youth Centre in security discussions on Kenya reflects. However, more widespread militancy among the Kenyan Muslim population represents a significant escalation which will be a serious cause for concern in Kenya. A series of low-tech attacks on night clubs and busy bus terminals in Nairobi in October revealed how vulnerable the Kenyan population is to even the most unsophisticated of attacks.

More fundamentally, the events in Mombasa should be understood in the context of mounting tension in the Coastal province. Historical under-development, a perception of government neglect, poor access to state power, in addition to specific disputes over land tenure, and the government’s crackdown on the recently legalised Mombasa Republican Council combine in a constellation of factors which may leave Coastal communities particularly open to specific, and militant narratives. It is much too simplistic, however, to see August’s events only in the context of religious divisions.

Nigeria

Nigeria witnessed a slight increase in conflict events in August, but a sharp drop in fatality levels (see Figure 7). Well, this was the month President Jonathan reassured us that **‘Even if you listen to the incidents [of Boko Haram attacks], the whole thing is coming down gradually [...] the Nigerian government is going to control it, we are on it.’** (*The Vanguard*, 23 August 2012). Finally seeing some success? Not quite. Boko Haram activities actually increased in the month of August over previous months. This was also the month the group issued a statement threatening “impostors” posing as Boko Haram, blaming them for rumours the group was in discussions with the government. Unidentified armed groups have long operated in the same territory and with similar modalities as the infamous militia, either as aligned but formally non-associated militants, or as wholly distinct groups capitalising on Boko Haram’s presence as a form of cover. The warning may lead to a drop in such activity.

Meanwhile, though associated fatalities dropped slightly month-on-month, the sharp decline in national fatality levels is the result of a drop in communal conflict in the country, after a series of high-fatality attacks in previous weeks. The trend serves as a reminder of the multiple, discrete conflicts ongoing in a country whose security discourse is currently dominated by the Islamist militia.

A further reminder of this fact has been the slow increase in activity in the Niger Delta area in recent months. As previously reported in *Conflict Trends*, there are mounting rumours that those left out of the federal government’s costly amnesty agreement with Delta militants may be mobilising, and conversely, that the government is under pressure to cut its amnesty spending as Boko Haram becomes the security priority: either development is likely to be a game-changer for Jonathan.

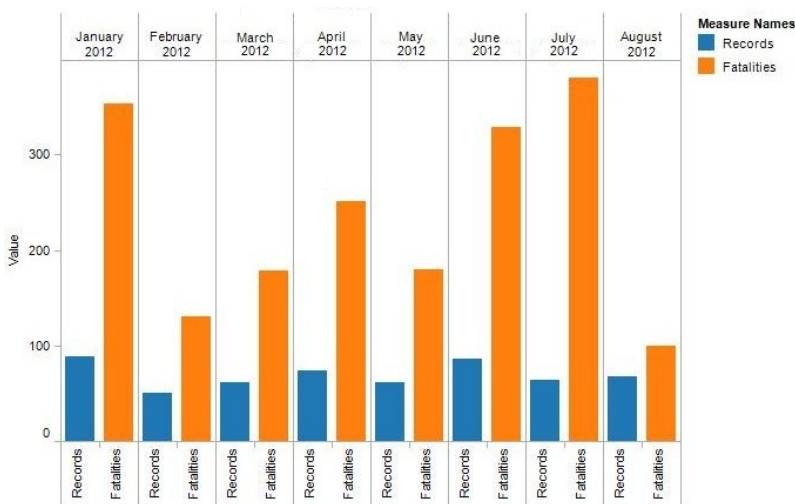


Figure 7: Conflict Events and Fatalities, Nigeria, Jan - Aug 2012.

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**South Africa**

South Africa was at the centre of headlines in August with the explosive escalation of the dispute at the Marikana mine, resulting in the death of over 40 people - including 34 striking miners. As with Kenya, it is telling that in a month in which a devastating act of political violence occurred, the overall level of events in the country did not increase enormously (see Figure 8). In the wake of the events at the Marikana mine on 16th of August, President Jacob Zuma declared, **“We believe there is enough space in our democratic order for any dispute to be resolved through dialogue without any breaches of the law or violence.”** What the data indicates is that in addition to 2012 being a notably volatile year in South Africa’s recent history, it is also more generally a country which witnesses extremely high levels of political violence regularly.

South Africa’s conflict profile is characterised by persistently high levels of riots and protests, followed by a much lower level of violence against civilians. Battles between armed combatants play a fairly minimal role in the country’s conflict profile. As a result, rioters and protesters are the most common actors, followed by the state forces, and militia groups, who constitute a relatively consistent level of events. Communal militias are almost entirely absent from much of the data on South Africa.

South Africa differs from other countries in which comparable levels of rioting, protesting and militia activity is recorded, primarily because other countries with equivalent levels of unrest tend to be experiencing single, coordinated campaigns orchestrated by opposition groups or broad movements. South Africa’s conflict is distinguished by its diffuse nature and lack of cohesion: protests and riots are

**2012 has been a notably violent year in South Africa’s recent history, but the country witnesses extremely high levels of political violence regularly, characterised by diffuse, uncoordinated events.**

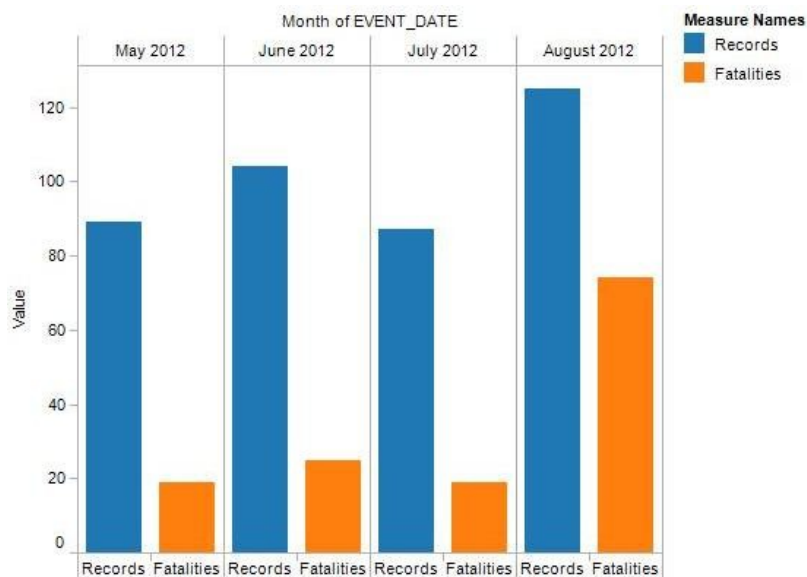


Figure 8: Conflict Events and Fatalities, South Africa, May - Aug 2012.

generally uncoordinated, occurring in distinct parts of the countries and focused on discrete issues, while participants range from students to professional groups and organised labour. Similarly, militia activity is a multifarious phenomenon, manifest primarily in spontaneous vigilante mob violence at local level - a politically violent act insofar as local communities who engage in this effectively usurp (or fill) the state’s role as security provider and enforcer of laws.

Much has been written and said in the wake of Marikana on the failure of President Zuma’s leadership, at least one feature of which was a generally hard line police action in response to crime in the country, which is now being used against him. The enquiry into the events at Marikana will proceed apace with the build-up to the ANC’s elective conference at Mangaung in December, with the latter likely to be profoundly influenced by the former. To date, the most viable contenders for the Presidency have mostly avoided commenting on the event or using it as political canon fodder, allowing Zuma to speak and act as the spokesperson for the party and the government on the issue.

This may be a mixed blessing for the President: as Motlanthe and Sexwale maintain what they must imagine to be a dignified silence, the expelled ANC Youth League leader, Malema, has gone to all possible lengths to use the events at the mine to his advantage. As he does so, he taps into a once simmering, now boiling, sense of resentment and disenfranchisement among much of the population, and may pave the way for further escalation in rhetoric and violence.

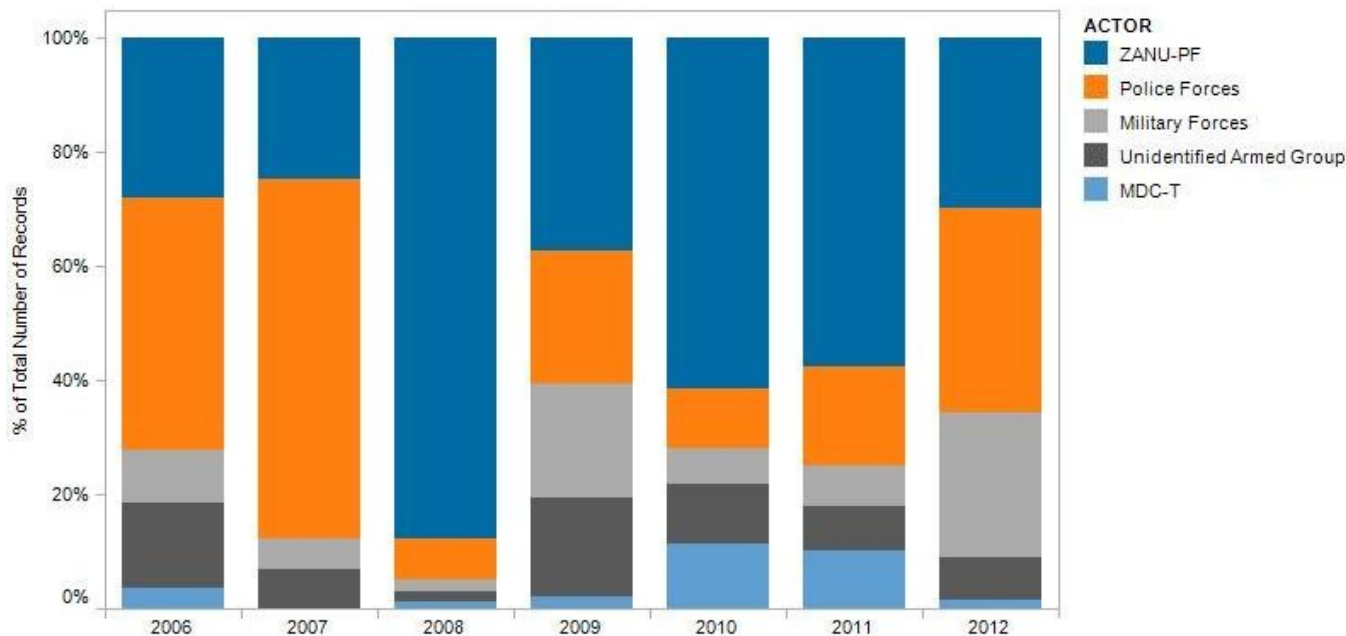


Figure 9: Violence against Civilians by Actor, Zimbabwe, 2006 - 2009.

### Zimbabwe

August witnessed an increase in conflict activity in Zimbabwe, primarily as a result of military forces disrupting census training exercises throughout the country early in the month. Elsewhere, the draft constitution - consultation over which was heavily marred by violence in 2010 - remains in limbo as ZANU-PF has proposed its own draft constitution, with provisions to strengthen executive power.

In the midst of this politicking, it seems pretty implausible to most outside Zimbabwe that Mugabe's party's popularity has in fact increased in recent years, as the results of a survey by Freedom House reported this month. From the findings, Mugabe's party now looks likely to win a majority in the upcoming elections.

There are several important issues relevant to this shift in support. One is the changing nature of the opposition. Politically, the coalition

**Away from the negotiating table, party members and pro-MDC-T groups have become more militant in recent years, with a particularly notable increase in violent activity in 2010 / 2011.**

arrangement in which MDC-T finds itself has put enormous strain on its credibility as an opposition force of any efficacy. Away from the torturous negotiating table, party members and pro-MDC-T groups have also become more militant in recent years, with a particularly notable increase in 2010/2011. This holds for both absolute and proportional measures, as Figure 9 highlights the proportional increase of the role of the MDC-T and associated militias in violence against civilians in 2009 - 2011. ZANU-PF, associated militant groups, and state security forces (which are more likely to engage in acts of violence against opposition and MDC-T supporters than those of ZANU-PF) continue to account for the vast majority of acts of violence against civilians, but as a cycle of retaliatory attacks and escalating animosity among membership sets in, the nature and dynamic of the opposition is undoubtedly changing.

The second issue is that of succession. As previously reported in *Conflict Trends*, factional in-fighting has shattered the once fairly unified ZANU-PF as contenders for Mugabe's position jostle for spotlight and support. Earlier in the year, this factionalism contributed to open conflict at several ZANU-PF events during which clashes between rival supporters broke out. A wave of recent deaths in office - most recently Meles, but also Mills and Mutharika - is likely bringing the need to secure successors into sharp focus for leaders across the continent. Party hopefuls' jostling for the spotlight may be drawing the support of those ready for a change in Zimbabwe's leadership.

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Special Focus: Sources of Data and Reporting

ACLED relies on a variety of sources to produce its dataset. These include news reports, NGO and governmental agency publications, security alerts and published texts or books. Sources include international, regional and national contents. The twenty most common sources in ACLED inform over 82.4% of events. The top ten make up 72.5% of events; and the top five make up 57.5%. Table 1 shows these sources in order, and provides a breakdown of the event types they cover.

Overall, Violence against civilians makes up 42.3% of violence reported in ACLED; Riots/Protests make up 15.7%; Non-violent activity makes up 7.3% of events; and Battles constitute 42.3% of events. Some sources diverge from this significantly. The top ten sources and breakdown by event reporting are listed in the table to the right.

Over the fifteen years of the dataset’s coverage, the number of discrete sources has increased significantly, an increase which is highly correlated to the number of events. The notable exception is 2002, in which the

Source	Battles	Violence against civilians	Riots/Protests	Non-violent activity
BBC Monitoring	53.5%	35.7%	6.8%	3.9%
Reuters	50.6%	29.8%	14.9%	4.5%
Agence France Presse	43.9%	32.8%	19.5%	3.6%
NSP / SPAS	57.2%	30.3%	8.4%	3.8%
All Africa	35.6%	44.2%	16.8%	3.2%
Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum	0.7%	92.28%	4.7%	2.1%
Associated Press	42.5%	32.8%	18.1%	6.5%
Xinhua	56.1%	32.8%	6.5%	4.4%
IRIN	53.1%	28.3%	13.6%	4.8%
Africa Research Bulletin	57.8%	30.1%	5.9%	6.1%

Table 1: Breakdown of Event Type Coverage by Source, all years.

number of sources fell, but level of events increased. The top ten countries with the highest number of discrete sources are DR-Congo, Somalia, Nigeria, Libya, Egypt, Kenya, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Algeria and South Africa. The ten countries with the lowest number of discrete sources are Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Botswana, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Benin, Eritrea, Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland.

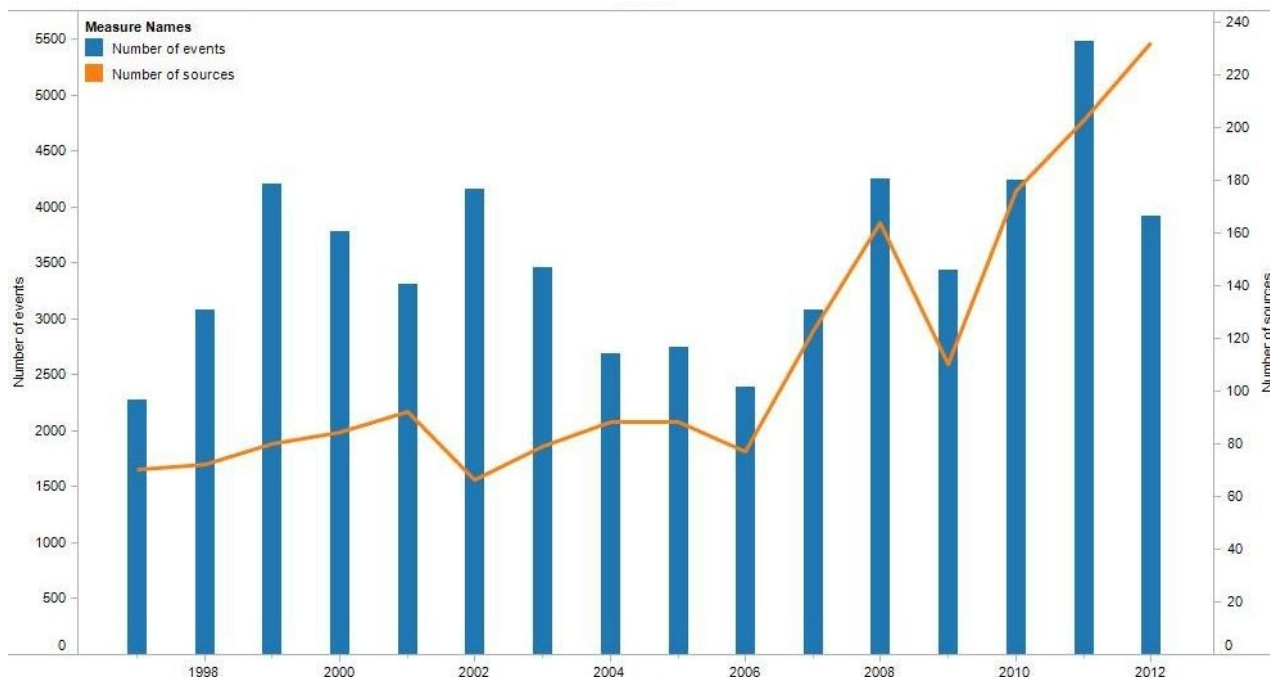


Figure 10: Number of Records and Number of Discrete Sources, all countries, all years.

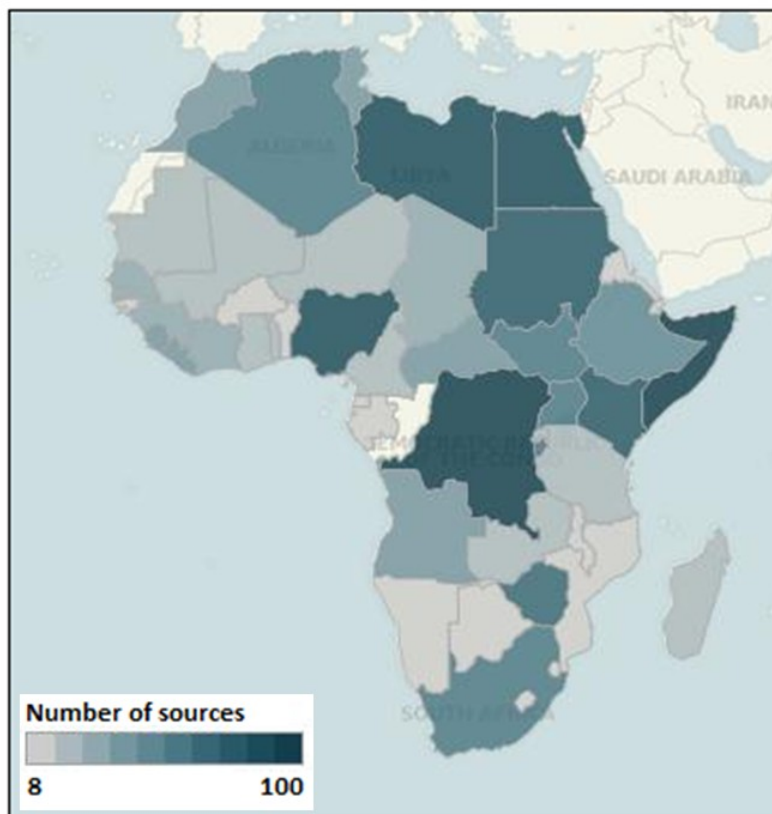


**Special Focus: Sources of Data and Reporting**

The number of discrete sources per country is represented in the map. As is clear, North, East and Central Africa have a higher number of discrete sources than West and Southern regions of the continent.

When organised by type, international sources – including international press wire services, global news agencies, and national sources published outside the country in question – clearly constitute the majority of ACLED sources, although the proportion these sources represents ranges from 41.6% in 2008 to 78.5% in 1999. National sources have constituted a growing proportion of sources over the fifteen years of the dataset’s coverage, reaching 34.4% of data sources in 2011. Regional sources – including Africa-specific news and analysis sources – have constituted approximately 8.1% of sources over the course of the dataset (see Figure 10).

In all years, news sources make up the largest share of sources. The proportion they make up, however, varies from 56.5% in 2008 to 86.2% in 2003. The relevance of NGO reports, and security reports from dedicated security analysis organisations has grown over the course of the dataset’s coverage.



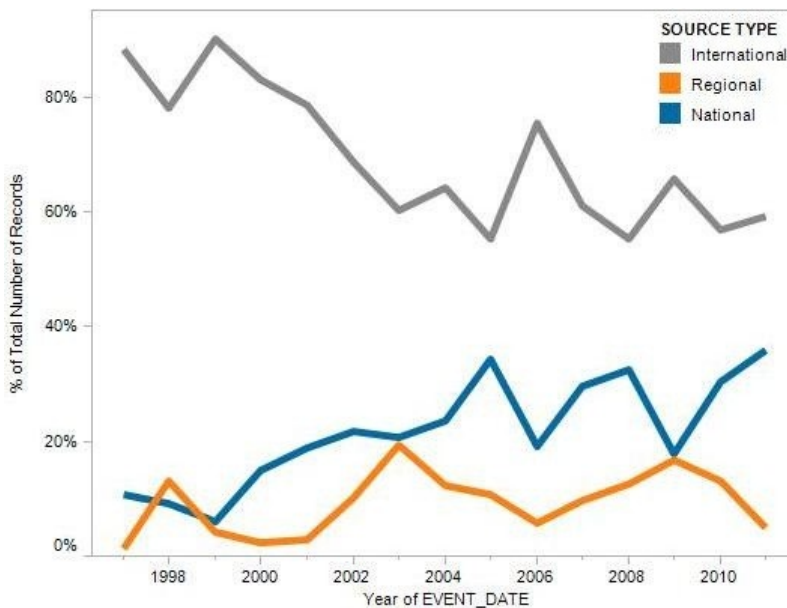
**Figure 11: Number of Discrete Sources per Country, all years.**

**Forthcoming special topics**

Forthcoming issues of ACLED *Conflict Trends* will include thematic topics of interest, including: Islamist Threats across the Continent; Rioting and Protesting Growing; Election Violence.

**Sources**

The information in this issue of ACLED *Conflict Trends* was compiled from a variety of sources, including ACLED data, compiled from news reports; NGO reports, and Africa-focused news reports to supplement daily media reporting. Further information on sources, coding procedures and data can be found online at [www.acleddata.com/data](http://www.acleddata.com/data).



**Figure 12: Discrete Sources by Type (Int'l, Regional, Nat'l), all years.**