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## March 2013 Trends



### Deteriorated Situations

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Egypt (p.11) Syria (p.10)  
Iraq (p.11)  
Lebanon (p.10)  
Myanmar (p.7)



### Improved Situations

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### Unchanged Situations

Afghanistan (p.6), Algeria (p.11), Armenia (p.8), Azerbaijan (p.8), Bahrain (p.10), Bangladesh (p.6), Bosnia (p.8), Burundi (p.2), Cameroon (p.2), Chad (p.2), China/Japan (p.5), Colombia (p.9), Côte d'Ivoire (p.4), Cyprus (p.9), Democratic Republic of the Congo (p.2), Eritrea (p.2), Ethiopia (p.3), Georgia (p.8), Guatemala (p.9), Guinea (p.4), Guinea-Bissau (p.4), India (non-Kashmir) (p.6), Indonesia (p.7), Iran (p.10), Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories (p.10), Jordan (p.11), Kashmir (p.6), Kazakhstan (p.4), Kenya (p.3), Kosovo (p.8), Kyrgyzstan (p.5), Liberia (p.4), Libya (p.11), Macedonia (p.8), Madagascar (p.3), Malaysia (p.7), Mali (p.4), Mauritania (p.12), Mexico (p.9), Morocco (p.12), Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) (p.9), Nigeria (p.4), North Caucasus (Russia) (p.8), Pakistan (p.6), Philippines (p.7), Rwanda (p.2), Saudi Arabia (p.11), Somalia (p.3), Somaliland (p.3), South Sudan (p.3), Sri Lanka (p.7), Sudan (p.3), Tajikistan (p.5), Thailand (p.7), Tunisia (p.12), Turkmenistan (p.5), Uzbekistan (p.5), Venezuela (p.9), Western Sahara (p.12), Yemen (p.11), Zimbabwe (p.3)

## April 2013 Watchlist



### Conflict Risk Alerts

Central African Republic (p.2)



### Conflict Resolution Opportunities

## 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.

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## Africa



### Central Africa

 **Burundi** UN-backed workshop on electoral process 11-13 March, attended by ruling party and opposition, agreed roadmap for 2015 polls including adoption of electoral code by Dec 2013. Journalist Hassan Ruvakuki, jailed since Nov 2011, granted provisional release 6 March. President Nkurunziza 10-12 March visited Paris, discussed intervention in Mali. 9 killed, some 40 wounded 12 March when followers of “Zebiya”, young woman claiming to have visions, clashed with police in Kayanza province; ministers of security and interior praised police, compared Zebiya followers to Nigerian Islamist sect Boko Haram. Following outcry at police brutality, comments by ministers, 3 policemen arrested. National Security Council 19 March declared Zebiya followers to be treated as outlaws.

- [“Montée préoccupante de l’extrémisme religieux au Burundi”](#), PANA, 21 March 2013.


 **Cameroon** Following Feb abduction of 7 French tourists, including 4 children, govt reinforced security along Waza-Dabanga-Kousseri road, deployed Rapid Intervention Battalion in Amchidé town; also established 3 inter-ministerial committees to deal with hostage crisis. Islamist sect Boko Haram 18 March released video of hostages, said suicide bombings and kidnappings will increase if govt does not release jailed Islamist militants. French FM Fabius visited 15-16 March, reiterated French support for efforts to liberate kidnapped French citizens. Political parties 18 March submitted candidate lists to Electoral Council; ruling Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement only party to field candidates in all 10 provinces. Govt 25 March confirmed deposed CAR president Bozizé had sought refuge in country.

- [“L’effet Boko Haram”](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 12 March 2013.


  **Central African Republic** Seleka rebel coalition 24 March seized capital Bangui and overthrew President Bozizé’s regime, following repeated violations of ceasefire throughout month; Bangui remains tense with fears factions of fragmented Seleka coalition could decide to continue armed struggle. Rebels 18 March detained 5 Seleka leaders acting as ministers in new cabinet. As rebels advanced on Bangui, 13 South African soldiers reinforcing CAR troops in Bangui reportedly killed; South African President Zuma said troops to remain in CAR, would possibly be reinforced; France deployed 300 additional troops to secure airport, protect French citizens. Reported govt helicopter attack killed several regional peacekeepers 23 March. President Bozizé fled to Cameroon; widespread looting reported across Bangui in wake of coup. Seleka statement 24 March said PM, power-sharing govt would remain in place and Jan Libreville agreement would be respected; rebel leader Michel Djotodia 25 March proclaimed himself president, suspended constitution and National Assembly, announced he would rule by decree, 30 March said he would preside over 3-year transition; army chiefs 28 March pledged allegiance to Djotodia. Djotodia 31 March named new caretaker govt comprised of rebels and opposition; appointed himself as defence minister. AU suspended CAR 25 March, imposed sanctions on leaders of Seleka; U.S. 30 March condemned seizure of

power. UNSC 25 March called for humanitarian access, parties to refrain from violence against civilians; Red Cross 30 March said some 78 bodies found in streets since rebel takeover.


- Thierry Vircoulon, [“Le Coup d’Etat et le Futur d’un Accord”](#), African Peacebuilding Agenda, 27 March 2013.
- [“Rebels seize capital and force president to flee”](#), *Guardian*, 24 March 2013.

 **Chad** Rebel Union of Forces of Resistance (UFR) coalition 21 March announced resumption of rebellion. 2,000 Chadian troops 9 March officially joined African regional force deployed in Mali. President Déby 18 March said extremist Islamic threat exists in Chad, some Chadians already joined rebel terrorist organizations. Opposition leader of disbanded rebel party FROLINAT 18 March returned to Chad after over 30 years’ exile following reconciliation with govt.

- [“L’UFR de Timan Erdimi veut reprendre la lutte armée contre Idriss Débyltno”](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 21 March 2013.


 **Democratic Republic of the Congo** ICC indictee Bosco Ntaganda 18 March surrendered to U.S. embassy in Kigali, ending violent infighting between M23 rebel factions in DRC that has killed over 150; transferred to ICC custody 22 March. Ntaganda-allied Jean-Marie Runiga and Baudoin Ngaruye reportedly crossed into Rwanda 16 March with 550 M23 fighters; Rwanda swiftly announced their arrest. Ntaganda rival Sultani Makenga reportedly assumed leadership of M23. Following Ntaganda’s surrender, DRC and Ugandan govts announced imminent resumption of Kampala talks. President Kabila 24 March met with Rwandan and Ugandan counterparts in Oyo, Congo Brazzaville, to discuss regional security. Mayi Mayi asking for Katanga independence briefly occupied Lubumbashi 23 March before surrendering to MONUSCO. UNSC 28 March approved deployment of 2,500-strong intervention force.

- [“UN approves DR Congo ‘intervention brigade’”](#), AlJazeera, 29 March 2013.

 **Rwanda** ICC indictee Bosco Ntaganda mid-month crossed border from DRC into Rwanda, surrendered at U.S. embassy and was transferred to ICC. Several donors resumed aid programs: UK 2 March released GBP 24m for humanitarian projects. Amnesty International 25 March reported trial of opposition leader Victoire Ingabire “flawed”, international standards flouted. Govt continued tightening controls on civil society. Grenade attack 27 March killed 1, wounded 8 in Kigali.

- [“Bosco Ntaganda at U.S. embassy in Kigali”](#), Hironnelle News Agency, 19 March 2013.

### Horn of Africa

 **Eritrea** Govt late Feb and early March reportedly detained and assaulted 125 Christians accused of “illegal” worship. In letter to UNSG Ban, President Afewerki 5 March reportedly requested inquiry into human trafficking, noting Eritrea remains target.

- [“President Afeworki addressed UN on human trafficking”](#), *Somaliland Sun*, 6 March 2013.

**New** Crisis Group Africa Report N°200, *Eritrea: Scenarios for Future Transition*, 28 March 2013. Change is in the air in Eritrea, a highly authoritarian state, but any political transition will require internal political inclusion and channels for external dialogue if it is to preserve stability and improve Eritrean life.

➡ **Ethiopia** National Intelligence and Security Service 25 March said 8 al-Shabaab militants arrested in Somali region, group planning abduction of UN workers from refugee camp in Dolo Ado. 4 senior Tigray Peoples Liberation Front members resigned 22 March, reportedly as part of plan to replace older leadership with younger party members. Court 27 March delayed appeal of journalist Eskinder Nega and opposition leader, jailed July 2012 on terrorism charges.

- [“Ethiopia says foils Somali rebel plot to seize UN staff”](#), Reuters, 25 March 2013.

➡ **Kenya** Largely peaceful presidential elections held 4 March: violence along coast in Kilif, Mombasa and Kwale counties on eve of election left 18 dead, including 6 police officers; Mombasa Republican Council blamed, denied responsibility. Electoral Commission declared ICC indictee Uhuru Kenyatta winner with 50.07% of vote; 86% of registered voters voted. Supreme Court 30 March upheld Kenyatta win after 25 March ordering partial recount of vote on basis of petition by PM Odinga alleging irregularities. 2 killed, 11 injured 30 March during protests over Supreme Court ruling. ICC 11 March announced charges against former civil service chief Francis Muthaura for role in 2007 election violence dropped, Kenyatta case postponed to 9 July, Ruto and Sang case to 28 May. At least 7, including policeman, killed 28 March in attack on casino in Malindi, coastal region.

- [“Kenya mostly calm after vote ruling; minor clashes in west”](#), Reuters, 31 March 2013.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°197, *Kenya's 2013 Elections*, 17 Jan. 2013.

➡ **Somalia** UNSC 6 March extended AMISOM mandate by one year, authorised purchase of light weapons by govt for security forces. PM Shirdon 26 March joined Kismayo conference on formation of Jubaland State, 30 March declared it unconstitutional, said conference outcome will not be recognized by Somali govt. Govt 6 March signed agreement with Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama, group to be incorporated into Somali security forces. Somali forces 24 March recaptured Hudur, capital of Bakool region. PM Shirdon and Puntland President Farole 11 March signed agreement regulating relations between Somalia and Puntland autonomous region. Inter-ethnic clashes within govt forces 22 March resulted in 2 killed, 4 injured. Reported rape victim previously jailed for offending honour of the State freed by Court of Appeals 3 March, journalist who interviewed her freed 17 March. Bombings 1, 18, 21 March in Mogadishu killed 13. Unidentified gunmen 24 March killed journalist in Mogadishu.

- [“The risks and rewards of easing Somalia's arms embargo”](#), IRIN, 21 March 2013.

➡ **Somaliland** FM Mohamed Abdullahi Omar 7 March said Somalia govt not ready for arms embargo to be lifted, decision could bring insecurity to East Africa (see Somalia). President Silanyo 16 March said he will not participate in Second London Conference on Somalia citing lack of focus on Somaliland. Hargeisa court 20 March sentenced clan elder Rabi Yusuf Abdullahi to 2 years' prison

for participating in Aug 2012 meetings for formation of Somali govt. 1 killed 5 March in clashes between clan militias over Dec 2012 municipal election results in Harirad, Awdal.

- [“Hargeisa court sentences elder to 2 years in jail for treason”](#), Sabahi, 20 March 2013.

➡ **South Sudan** Govt 12 March signed security agreement with Sudan; both govts mid-month began withdrawal of troops from demilitarised border zone. Govt 26 March said oil flow will resume soon; Sudan and S Sudan central banks 30 March agreed on methodology and experts to facilitate collection of Khartoum oil revenues. Reports late month suggested Khartoum has abandoned demand for 50% of administrative positions in Abyei administration, prompting hopes long-delayed referendum will be held. SPLA repeatedly clashed with rebels in Jonglei state; over 150 rebels, 20 govt troops reportedly killed 26 March in Pibor county.

- [“Sudans sign agreement to resume oil exports”](#), *New York Times*, 12 March 2013.

➡ **Sudan** Opposition figures and rebel groups early March welcomed security agreement between Sudan and S Sudan (see S Sudan). Defence Minister Hussein 20 March offered to hold direct talks with SPLM-N; SPLM-N reiterated need for negotiations to be based on UNSC resolution 2046, accused govt of aiming to isolate S Kordofan and Blue Nile states but did not refuse direct negotiations. VP Taha 26 March invited rebels to help draft new constitution. Following rumours of talks on national dialogue, Communist Party of Sudan (CPS) said would not negotiate with NCP so long as “oppressive policies, narrowing of political space and adoption of military solutions to problems facing Sudan” continue. President Bashir 20 March said he will not run for presidency in 2015 elections. Popular discontent continued: dozens protested 5 March in Khartoum over closure of hospitals; Darfur student association 15 March issued statement condemning targeting by security forces following early-March attack by NCP students. Thousands protested 19 March against “rigged” state governor elections; security forces forcibly dispersed protestors, injuring dozens.

- [“Sudan asks rebels to help draft constitution as tensions ease”](#), Reuters, 26 March 2013.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°198, *Sudan's Spreading Conflict (I): War in South Kordofan*, 14 Feb. 2013.

## Southern Africa

➡ **Madagascar** President Rajoelina 13 March announced legislative elections to be held 7 May.

- [“President announces election date”](#), African Elections Project, 13 March 2013.

➡ **Zimbabwe** Referendum on adoption of new constitution held 16-17 March with highest turnout for any election in decades. Of those voting, 94.5% voted in favour. MDC MP and BBC team reportedly assaulted during final stages of campaigning. Observers including national group Zimbabwe Election Support Network and SADC said referendum peaceful, reflected will of people; EU 25 March eased sanctions on 81 officials and 8 firms; sanctions on President Mugabe and 10 close associates remain. Tensions continued to rise ahead of upcoming elections with reports of ZANU-PF intimidation of civilians, police raids on civil society

organizations. Police 17 March raided PM Tsvangirai's communications office, seized computers, arrested 4 staff and charged them with breaching official secrets code, impersonating police and illegal possession of documents. Human rights lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa, who intervened during raid, arrested for obstructing justice; released on bail 25 March.

- ["Zimbabwe's imperfect constitution"](#), Think Africa Press, 22 March 2013.

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## West Africa

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➡ **Côte d'Ivoire** At least 7 people, including 2 FRCI, killed and over 1,000 displaced in raid by unknown gunmen on Zilebly town, near Liberian border, 13 March; several media reports blamed attack on "assailants from Liberia". Army reported 3 gunmen attempting to raid border village killed 23 March. Govt 11 March inaugurated 750-strong Centre for Coordination of Operational Decision-making in Abidjan to tackle insecurity in capital. Authorities 1 March released senior Ivorian Popular Front leader Laurent Akoun.

- ["Sept morts dans des affrontements près de la frontière avec le Liberia"](#), RFI, 14 March 2013.

➡ **Guinea** At least one killed in violent protests 4, 5, 8 March. Opposition pulled out of talks aimed at preparing for dialogue on May elections beginning 4 March, accused govt of failing to respect terms of dialogue. Authorities dropped investigations against opposition figures relating to protests. Revision of electoral lists suspended 14 March.

- ["Echauffourées entre forces de l'ordre et opposition à Conakry"](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 9 March 2013.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°199, [Guinea: A Way Out of the Election Quagmire](#), 18 Feb. 2013.

➡ **Guinea-Bissau** Govt, civil society 8-15 March held talks to promote dialogue with military. Transitional president Nhamadjo 11 March threatened to resign in absence of political progress. Preparations for PAIGC congress continued: former PM Aristides Gomes 4 March announced imminent return; José Mario Vaz and Domingos Simoes Pereira, former exec sec of CPLP, declared candidacy 7 and 14 March respectively. Court 13 March began hearing of Captain Pansau N'Tchama for Oct 2012 attempted coup; N'Tchama said order to stage coup reportedly given by former chief of staff Zamora Induta with support from Angola and Gambia. UN SRSG Ramos-Horta 3-4 March met EU president and parliament, called for renewed EU assistance, 13 March met with Nhamadjo. Youths in Colibuia in south clashed with Chinese timber company early March sparking media outrage, parliamentary debate, accusations against senior govt figures involved in selling permits.

- ["Sociedade civil guineense promove encontros com militares"](#), RFI, 8 March 2013.

➡ **Liberia** Opposition protested President Sirleaf Johnson's nomination of Jerome Kokoya as next chairman of Elections Commission on basis of Kokoya's membership of ruling Unity Party. UN mission (UNMIL) 14 March restated commitment to "providing maximum security" despite troop reduction. Defence Ministry refuted claims attack in Côte d'Ivoire attributable to gunmen from Liberia (see Côte d'Ivoire). UNHCR 19 March closed Dougee refugee camp following repatriation of over 5,200 Ivorian refugees.

- ["Border crisis halts refugees' return"](#), *New Democrat*, 28 March 2013.

➡ **Mali** Military operations targeting Islamist militant groups in north intensified, including fierce clashes in Gao as Islamist rebel attack repelled 24 March; clashes ongoing in Timbuktu following suicide bomb attack on army checkpoint 30 March. Chadian army 2 March said ex-AQIM emir Mokhtar Belmokhtar killed. French joint chiefs of staff head Guillaud 4 March said AQIM "Sahara emir" Abou Zeid "probably" killed in airstrike late Feb; media 6 March reported Ansar Dine leader Iyad ag Ghali likely killed during fighting in Tigarghar mountains. French Defence Minister Le Drian 7 March visited forces in Ametettai valley, said French forces "dismantled AQIM base", killed more than 150 rebels in Gao vicinity since Feb; President Hollande 6 March said final phase of military intervention, troop drawdown to begin in April. French FM Fabius 14 March called on UNSC to deploy peacekeepers; UNSG Ban 26 March report to UNSC proposed 11,000-strong multidimensional integrated stabilization mission. Regional states confirmed plans to send troops to join regional force. MNLA 5 March called on ICC to investigate army crimes; UN OHCHR 12 March issued communiqué accusing Malian army of reprisals against Tuareg, Arab and Peul communities, increasing fears of inter-ethnic backlash. Journalist Boukary Daou arrested for publishing article criticising coup leader Captain Sanogo's salary; arrest prompted media strike, concern over junta influence in Bamako. Govt 6 March announced creation of Dialogue and Reconciliation Commission.

- ["UN reports serious escalation of retaliatory violence by government troops"](#), UN News Centre, 12 March 2013.

➡ **Nigeria** At least 25 killed 22 March in four coordinated gun and bomb attacks by suspected Boko Haram (BH) militants in Ganye, near Cameroon border; some 120 prison inmates freed in attack. 3 bombs exploded in Kano 23 March; bomb attack 18 March killed at least 20 in Sabon Gari district, Kano; army 31 March said 14 suspected BH killed in raid in Kano. 20 BH militants killed 3 March by army after attacking military barracks in Monguno, Borno state. Kaduna politician Hussaini Dei Dei arrested 5 March after weapons, explosives found in his home. President Jonathan 7 March said he could not grant amnesty to BH militants until group members and aims known, following request from Sultan of Sokoto for amnesty like that given to Niger Delta MEND fighters. Ansaru militants 9 March said 7 foreign workers abducted Feb executed. Over 50 killed in communal violence following 27 March attack by Fulani herdsmen on 2 villages in Plateau state.

- ["Plateau violence spreads to Bokkos, 24 killed"](#), *Daily Trust*, 29 March 2013.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°196, [Curbing Violence in Nigeria \(I\): The Jos Crisis](#), 17 Dec. 2012.

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## Asia

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### Central Asia

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➡ **Kazakhstan** General Prosecutor proposed new police unit to deal with public unrest; citing Dec 2011 unrest in Janaozen, said police unprepared to protect citizens or themselves. Amid dispute with Russia over gas price, oil and gas minister 7 March said Kazakh

gas could be redirected to China if pricing agreement with Russia not reached.

- Deirdre Tynan, “Will Beijing Step Up in Central Asia?”, CNN, 14 March 2013.
- “Tony Blair, Kazakh police and human rights questions”, *Telegraph*, 17 March 2013.

➤ **Kyrgyzstan** Month saw numerous small rallies across country; protestors’ demands include release of Ata-Jurt MPs standing trial on charges of attempting to seize power in Oct 2012, and nationalization of Kumtor goldmine. President Atambayev claimed family of former president Bakiyev behind protests. Ata-Jurt MPs jailed end-month for 12-18 months. Negotiations over fate of Kumtor goldmine continued. PM Satybaldiev 18 March noted deteriorating investment climate in Kyrgyzstan, criticism of govt by business community; said developments in mining sector lacked order. News articles alleging that President and others own shares in Kumtor prompted libel allegations by President’s party. Osh mayor Melis Myrzakmatov 26 Feb admitted local courts and police are party to rights violations. U.S. Special Forces 25 Feb began 2-week training exercise in Osh with top Border Service unit. Russia announced plans to send Federal Security Service (FSB) specialists to Kyrgyzstan. Russian media speculated that CSTO creating rapid Reaction Forces base in south.

- “Uzbek language schools disappearing”, Eurasianet, 6 March 2013.

➤ **Tajikistan** Tajikistan delayed ratifying agreement on Russia’s 201st military base near Dushanbe, reportedly pushing Russia for financial support for hydropower projects, more military assistance; Moscow signalled Tajikistan has one month to ratify agreement. Reports of increasing Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) activity in northern Afghanistan, affecting Tajikistan. U.S. Under Sec State Robert Blake late Feb dismissed idea of “imminent Islamic militant threat” to Central Asia, but said Tajikistan vulnerable, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan worried by possibility of militants entering Ferghana Valley via Tajikistan.

- “Tajikistan re-opens bargaining over Russian military base deal – report”, RT, 19 March 2013.

➤ **Turkmenistan** Authorities launched anti-narcotics operation aiming to eliminate poppy farms in remote areas, uncover drug trafficking routes. President Berdymukhamedov met with Afghan and Tajik counterparts in Ashgabat 20 March, discussed plans to build connecting railway which could provide Tajikistan with alternative to Uzbek railroads.

- “Turkmenistan cracks down on drugs”, Central Asia Online, 12 March 2013.

➤ **Uzbekistan** FM Abdulaziz Kamilov met U.S. Sec State Kerry in Washington 12 March, discussed mutual relations, regional security. 3 Afghans killed 14 March after group attacked Uzbek border post. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan agreed to jointly patrol borders, set up commission to investigate border incidents; local authorities in contested border areas to abstain from agricultural and construction work to avoid tensions. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan held talks on border issues in Tashkent late month, focusing on Sokh enclave. Officials denied rumours that President Karimov suffering health problems.

- “Kerry should raise rights abuses at talks”, Human Rights Watch, 7 March 2013.

## North East Asia

➤ **China/Japan** Chinese mapping agency 12 March said surveyors will be sent to disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands when “time is appropriate”; Japan asked China to exercise restraint, not conduct land surveys. Presence of Chinese navy and maritime surveillance vessels off islands continued. Japanese Coast Guard 5 March seized Chinese ship fishing in its exclusive economic zone near islands. China 10 March announced merging of 4 maritime law enforcement agencies into National Ocean Administration, in move to enhance internal coordination, “better safeguard China’s maritime rights”. China 17 March appointed former ambassador to Japan Wang Yi as new FM. Japanese media 18 March reported Chinese military admitted Feb radar locking incident did happen; refuted by Beijing. Japanese PM Abe 17 March said Japan needs to increase its deterrence capabilities. Tokyo 13 March hosted defence dialogue with ASEAN calling for stronger security ties. U.S. 20 March said U.S. and Japan discussing worst-case contingency plans for retaking islands if China moves to seize them. U.S. 22 March said China will participate in U.S.-led Pacific Ocean naval exercises in 2014.


- Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt, “New Leaders, Same Assertive Foreign Policy”, CNN, 8 March 2013.
- “China’s new diplomats signal thaw with Japan, keeping U.S. at bay”, Reuters, 19 March 2013.

➤ **North Korea** UNSC 7 March unanimously passed resolution 2094 strengthening sanctions on DPRK in response to 12 Feb nuclear test; hours before UNSC vote, DPRK vowed to carry out pre-emptive nuclear strike on HQ of invaders, implying United Nations Command (UNC) HQ in Seoul. DPRK military and govt said would no longer be bound by 1953 Korean War armistice as of 11 March. DPRK 11 March cut hotline with UN Military Armistice Commission and Red Cross hotline with South Korea, 26 March ordered all its rocket and long-range artillery units to be combat-ready and targeting U.S. bases in region and U.S. territory. U.S. Sec Defence Hagel 15 March declared U.S. to deploy 14 more missile defence interceptors in Alaska in view of DPRK threats. DPRK conducted large-scale joint military exercise while U.S. and ROK 1 March-30 April conducting large-scale joint and combined field exercise Foal Eagle and UNC combined simulation exercise Key Resolve 11-21 March. U.S. and ROK 22 March signed agreement defining roles for retaliation against DPRK military provocations. U.S. deployed stealth bomber aircraft over ROK. DPRK 27 March cut off remaining military hotline with ROK, 30 March said it was entering “state of war” with ROK, may shut down Kaesong industrial park. At rare Central Committee meeting 31 March leader Kim Jung-un announced “new line” to increase nuclear arsenal and develop economy simultaneously; meeting declared nuclear weapons are non-negotiable, DPRK’s nuclear status should be written into law. ROK President Park 1 April said any provocation from DPRK should be met with “strong response”. UN HRC 21 March approved formal investigation into DPRK for crimes against humanity. Former U.S. National Basketball Association player Dennis Rodman 28 Feb-2 March visited DPRK, met Kim Jong-un, sparking heavy criticism within U.S.


- Daniel Pinkston, “Policies in Pyongyang Put Security Before Progress”, National, 4 March 2013.
- “North Korea cuts off the remaining military hot lines with South Korea”, *New York Times*, 27 March 2013.

**New** Crisis Group Asia Conflict Alert, “[The Korean Peninsula: Flirting with Conflict](#)”, 13 March 2013. North Korea has taken steps that raise the risks of inadvertent escalation and deadly conflict on the Korean peninsula.


## South Asia

 **Afghanistan** U.S. 9 March cancelled transfer of Bagram prison detainees to Afghan custody citing concerns over most dangerous prisoners; Bagram eventually transferred to Afghan control 25 March during 2-day trip by U.S. Sec State Kerry to discuss bilateral relations. Ulema Council 16 March backed call by President Karzai for withdrawal of U.S. forces from Wardak province following abuse allegations, full transfer of Bagram (in Wardak) to Afghan control; 300 demonstrators protested in Kabul same day against U.S. military presence in Wardak; govt reportedly reached agreement with U.S. forces 20 March on U.S. withdrawal from province, no specifics on timelines. UNSG Ban 19 March called for UN support for stability, peace in Afghanistan, expressed concerns over increased civilian casualties among women and girls. Opposition 18 March claimed talks with Taliban underway. Karzai 10 March said U.S. held talks with Taliban in Qatar; claim rejected by U.S. and Taliban. Karzai 31 March met Qatari leaders in Doha, discussed peace process and bilateral cooperation. Presidential spokesman 18 March said some countries sabotaging peace process, noting that 18 Taliban officials who wanted to join peace process killed or detained in Pakistan in last month. Govt 28 March cancelled military visit to Pakistan in protest at “unacceptable Pakistani artillery shelling” across border 25-26 March; Pakistan said army responding to “intrusions” from Afghanistan. Kabul Bank former chairman Sherkhan Farnood and former CEO Khalilullah Ferozi sentenced 5 March to 5 years’ prison for corruption; no action taken against Karzai’s brother, Mahmoud Karzai, a major bank shareholder. 7 killed, including 4 family members of Afghan parliament speaker Abdul Raouf Ibrahim, in suicide bomb attack in Kunduz province 13 March; 5 police killed in attack by 8 suicide bombers on police compound in Jalalabad 26 March. UNSC extended mandate of UNAMA to March 2014.

- [“Objections to U.S. troops intensify in Afghanistan”](#), *New York Times*, 16 March 2013.


 **Bangladesh** Month saw violent protests by Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami against country’s International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) and ruling Awami League (AL) party, sparking clashes with security forces and AL supporters, dozens killed and hundreds injured. Police 11 March arrested 154 prominent BNP members after nationwide strike. Police 31 March arrested Delwar Hussien, president of Jamaat-e-Islami student front Islami Chhatra Shibir, prompting further violence. President Zillur Rahman died of illness in Singapore 20 March. In context of ICT protests, attacks against Hindu minority and vandalism of temples increased.

- [“War-scarred Bangladesh torn by new tensions”](#), AFP, 7 March 2013.
- [“Bloodletting after the fact”](#), *Economist*, 1 March 2013.


 **India (non-Kashmir)** Police 11 March arrested 2 Maoists and seized large caches of explosives in Karimnagar, Andhra Pradesh. 2 soldiers and several Maoists injured during 18 March gunfight in Gondia district, Maharashtra. 1 soldier killed in 15 March bomb attack in Moreh, Manipur. Police 28 March reported 15 killed in clashes

between Maoist groups in Chatra district, Jharkhand. Unknown individuals 20 March hacked to death former Bharatiya Janata Party councillor in Paramakudi, Tamil Nadu. Large bomb defused 11 March at bus station in Bongaigaon, lower Assam.


- [“Double trouble brewing at border with Bangladesh”](#), *Hindustan Times*, 15 March 2013.

 **Kashmir** Series of attacks by militants in Jammu and Kashmir: 2 Indian policemen killed by unidentified gunmen 2 March in Handwara; 5 soldiers and 2 militants killed, 1 arrested in 13 March attack against Central Reserve Police Force camp in Srinagar, arrested militant reportedly confessed affiliation with Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT); suspected LeT militants 19 March killed boy in Sopore; 3 Border Security Force soldiers injured in 21 March militant attack in Srinagar. 1 killed, dozens injured during protests against Indian forces in Baramulla 5-6 March. J&K govt 11 March released 1,811 people involved in cases of stone throwing during summer 2010 unrest. Indian Defence Minister Antony 4 March claimed 188 violations by Pakistan along Line of Control (LoC) 2010-2012. Pakistan’s parliament 14 March condemned India’s Feb execution of Kashmiri militant Afzal Guru, demanded return of body to family, sparking protests from India. Indian parliament condemned Pakistan’s interference in J&K, declaring Pakistan-administered Azad Jammu and Kashmir an integral part of India.

- [“Five troops killed as gunmen attack Kashmir security camp”](#), BBC, 13 March 2013.

 **Nepal** Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), Madhesi Morcha, Nepali Congress and Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) 13 March agreed on election deal. Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi appointed Chairman of Interim Election Council of Ministers, composed of former bureaucrats and overseen by political committee of 4 major parties. June election date expected but govt has until 15 Dec to conduct polls. Deal also resolved dispute over ranks of former Maoist combatants now in Nepal Army, suspended controversial general amnesty clause in Truth and Reconciliation Commission Bill. Breakaway Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) and 18 smaller parties 14 March enforced nationwide strike opposing interim election govt. CPN-M obstructed voter registration, threatened poll boycott. Some Madhesi parties, ethnic indigenous groups opposed reduction of proportional representation seats, demanded fresh delineation of constituencies. Some rights groups said Regmi must step down as chief justice.

- [“Pragmatic move”](#), *Kathmandu Post*, 28 March 2013.

 **Pakistan** President Zardari 20 March announced general elections to be held 11 May; Election Commission 24 March nominated former Balochistan High Court chief justice Mir Hazar Khan Khoso as caretaker PM. Election campaigning began late month: Imran Khan 23 March held large rally in Lahore; ex-president Musharraf 24 March returned to Karachi after 4 year self-imposed exile; Nawaz Sharif held major rally in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Mansera district 25 March. 45 killed, some 150 injured 3 March by bomb in Karachi Shia neighbourhood; thousands of protestors 4 March demanded govt action against sectarian militant groups. Interior Minister Rehman Malik said 3 members of banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) militant group and Taliban militant arrested in connection with attack. Police 18 March arrested LeJ leader Abdul Hayee, accused of 2002 abduction and murder of U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl and other crimes. 4 killed, 20 injured

9 March in attack on Peshawar mosque. Suicide attack 18 March killed 4 in Peshawar courtroom; suicide bomber targeting police convoy killed 10 in Peshawar 29 March. Some 180 houses in mostly Christian neighbourhood of Lahore burned by mob 9 March. National Assembly's standing committee on human rights 14 March summoned Punjab police inspector general over police's failure to prevent incident; Punjab govt announced investigation. Female school teacher shot dead 26 March in Khyber region. 1 killed, 6 injured 30 March in attack on Karachi school. UN Special Rapporteur Emmerson 15 March said Pakistan govt has no agreement with U.S. over use of drones in FATA, drone use violates sovereignty.

- "Pakistan's election season begins with two very different candidates", *Time*, 25 March 2013.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°242, *Pakistan: Countering Militancy in PATA*, 15 Jan. 2013.

➡ **Sri Lanka** UN HRC 21 March approved resolution calling on Sri Lanka to properly investigate war crimes allegations, implement reforms recommended by its own reconciliation commission; U.S. officials 22 March hinted they might press for international investigation if govt does not conduct "independent and credible" inquiry. Thousands demonstrated in Tamil Nadu, India, for strong action at HRC. Minister of Youth Affairs Dalas Alahapperuma 22 March said UN HRC being used by "imperialists" to divide Sri Lanka. Former army chief Sarath Fonseka 20 March said he would answer allegations of involvement in war crimes. Defence Sec Gotabaya Rajapaksa 9 March expressed support for radical Buddhist Power Force, whose protests led Muslim clerics to cease practice of labelling foods as "halal". Mob reportedly led by Buddhist monks 28 March attacked Muslim-owned store in Colombo.

- Alan Keenan, "Why India Needs to Vote for U.N. Resolution on Sri Lanka", *Hindu*, 21 March 2013.
- "UN presses Sri Lanka to pursue wartime crimes", Reuters, 21 March 2013.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°243, *Sri Lanka's Authoritarian Turn: The Need for International Action*, 20 Feb. 2013.

## South East Asia

➡ **Indonesia** Constitutional Court 13 March rejected 4 challenges to recent Papua governor's election despite widespread irregularities, clearing way for highlander Lukas Enembe to be appointed governor in April. 6 killed in clashes in Timika between locals and migrant illegal miners near Freeport mine that began 15 March. Amid ongoing rivalry between police and army, around 100 soldiers burned down police station in South Sumatra 7 March, beat up policemen, in response to police killing of soldier involved in minor traffic violation. Counter-terrorism police 15 March shot dead 3 more terrorism suspects, adding to pressure to disband them. 17 men believed soldiers stormed prison in central Java, executed 4 detainees suspected of killing special forces (Kopasus) officer.

- "Papua's politics, a case of 'homo homini lupus'", *Jakarta Post*, 28 March 2013.

➡ **Malaysia** Stand-off in Sabah between supporters of Jamalul Kiram III, descendant of sultan of Sulu, who arrived from Philippines in Feb, and Malaysian security forces turned violent. 12 members of

Sultan's "army" and 2 Malaysian police killed in clash 1 March; 6 Malaysian police, 6 Filipinos killed next day. Malaysia responded forcefully with aerial, mortar assault 5 March; survivors of Sultan's army dispersed into wider area, sporadic firefights with military ongoing. Over 60 followers of Sultan, ten members of security forces, reported killed over month; over 400 detained, 8 charged with terrorism. Sultan's supporters and insurgent MNLF reportedly trying to send reinforcements; Malaysia established new safety zone and relocated residents in affected area. Over 5,000 people of Filipino origin fled Sabah for southern Philippines; Manila criticised Kuala Lumpur for allegedly abusing detainees and evacuees fleeing area. UNSG Ban appealed for end to fighting. Journalists and others demanding access to site.

- "Malaysia charges 8 Filipinos with terrorism offences over deadly armed siege in Borneo", AP, 20 March 2013.

➡ **Myanmar** New outbreak of intercommunal violence in Meiktila town in central Myanmar 20-22 March; at least 40 people killed, hundreds of mainly Muslim buildings destroyed, mainly in attacks by Buddhist mobs; over 12,000 displaced, mostly Muslims. Some speculation that violence pre-planned by extremists. President Thein Sein 22 March imposed state of emergency in Meiktila, deployed military to restore calm. Violence then spread to other towns and villages in following days, no reported fatalities. At latest round of peace talks between govt and Kachin Independence Organization in Chinese border town Ruili 11 March, both sides committed to working towards ceasefire agreement; to resume discussions early April. Situation remains tense, but signs of de-escalating. Legislature 15 March unexpectedly announced formation of constitutional commission comprising representatives from different political parties and outside experts, to review 2008 constitution, identify provisions for possible future amendment. Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK)-led official investigation commission into controversial Letpadaung copper mine project and police response to demonstrations released report 11 March, said police used smoke grenades containing white phosphorous, injuring demonstrators; recommended project not be cancelled. Led to demonstrations by local people against report and ASSK. ASSK's National League for Democracy 9-10 March held first ever national congress: ASSK re-elected as party chair, most of previous Central Executive Committee also reappointed. President Thein started first official European tour 26 Feb, ahead of April review of EU sanctions; mid-March paid official visits to New Zealand, Australia.

- Jim Della-Giacoma, "A Dangerous Resurgence of Communal Violence in Myanmar", *Resolving Conflict in South East Asia*, 28 March 2013.
- "Anti-Muslim violence spreads in Myanmar", *Financial Times*, 25 March 2013.

➡ **Philippines** Violence broke out in Sabah, Malaysia between supporters of Jamalul Kiram III, descendant of sultan of Sulu, and Malaysian security forces (see Malaysia). Malaysian-facilitated MILF peace talks aborted 25 Mar and postponed to mid-April; Philippine govt denied link to Sabah conflict. Australian kidnapped in Dec 2011 released by Abu Sayyaf Group end month.

- "Sabah crisis sends wider ripples", *Asia Times*, 28 March 2013.

➡ **Thailand** Insurgent violence in deep South continued following 28 Feb announcement of consensus agreement on formal dialogue between govt and Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN). First dialogue meeting 28 March in Kuala Lumpur resulted in agreement on terms of reference. National Security Council chief Police Lt-General

Paradorn Pattanathabutr 11 March reportedly said establishment of special administrative zone in region may be necessary for peace, provoking criticism from army, opposition; Paradorn later disavowed comment. 3 people killed 10 March in separate shooting attacks on Pattani; 4 police killed 15 March by IED in Reuso, Narathiwat Province. 3 rangers killed, 5 wounded by IED in Cho Airong, Narathiwat, 28 March as talks began in Malaysia. National Anti-Corruption Commission revealed it is investigating alleged financial misconduct by PM Yingluck. Group of 42 red-shirt-aligned Pheu Thai Party MPs submitted bill seeking amnesty for those jailed for 2010 political demonstrations.

- [“Little optimism for breakthrough in Thailand’s forgotten conflict”](#), Reuters, 25 March 2013.

## Europe

### Balkans

➡ **Bosnia** Bosniak Party of Democratic Action (SDA) MPs 21 March blocked nominations of 3 judges to entity’s constitutional court, which has been incomplete since 2008 and needs quorum of judges to rule on validity of Feb no-confidence vote in govt. Federation PM Nermin Niksic (SDP) walked out of govt session 20 March, accused other parties of staging a putsch after they voted to change procedures to allow deputy PM to call govt sessions. Court sentenced former Serb paramilitary commander Veselin Vlahovic, “Monster of Grbavica”, to 45 years’ jail for war crimes.

- [“Bosnians must solve Federation crisis, OHR says”](#), Balkan Insight, 28 March 2013.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°70, [Bosnia’s Dangerous Tango: Islam and Nationalism](#), 26 Feb. 2013.

➡ **Kosovo** 4 March 6th round of talks between Kosovo and Serbian PMs focusing on future of Serbian-financed parallel institutions in N Kosovo began in Brussels 4 March, no agreement reached. Following 7th round of talks 20 March, EU foreign policy chief Ashton said sides “very close to solution to some specific issues such as northern Kosovo”, hopeful that they will finalise deal at meeting scheduled 2 April. EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Füle told Kosovo leaders to strengthen fight against corruption, in addition to normalizing relations with Serbia, in order to achieve Stabilisation and Association Agreement by June.

- [“Serbia and Kosovo to discuss deal to ease tensions”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 31 March 2013.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°223, [Serbia and Kosovo: The Path to Normalisation](#), 19 Feb. 2013.

➡ **Macedonia** Opposition and govt 1 March struck deal ending political crisis: opposition agreed to end boycott of parliament and take part in 24 March local elections, govt agreed to talks on timing of general elections, debate about democratic freedoms; commission of experts to investigate 24 Dec 2012 incident in parliament that triggered crisis. In local elections, ruling VMRO DPMNE won first round vote in 25 out of 80 municipalities, with lead in 32 more ahead of second round scheduled early April. Opposition, which won only 1 seat outright, renewed call for early general elections. OSCE expressed concern over irregularities in polls. Beginning

of month saw 2 days of riots in Skopje following appointment of ethnic Albanian ex-guerrilla Talat Xhaferi as defence minister: protest by several hundred ethnic Macedonians reportedly turned violent, prompting counter-protests by ethnic Albanians; around 30 injured.

- [“Macedonians avoid ethnic violence in vote, boosting EU chances”](#), *Deutsche Welle*, 25 March 2013.

### Caucasus

➡ **Armenia** As supporters of defeated candidate in Feb presidential election Raffi Hovannisian continued to rally against result, Hovannisian 4 March made formal complaint to constitutional court alleging electoral fraud, went on hunger strike 10-29 March calling for President Sargsyan to step down. Court ruled no violations during vote. Sargsyan 25 March signalled readiness to engage in talks with Hovannisian.

- [“No end in sight to Armenia’s postelection standoff”](#), RFE/RL, 18 March 2013.

➡ **Azerbaijan** Police 10 March again violently dispersed several hundred demonstrators in Baku protesting deaths and alleged abuse of conscripts in military, in latest of series of unsanctioned protests on issue; 2 more conscripts died during month. Police detained several activists, charged 3 with drugs, weapons possession. Leader of opposition Musavat party beaten up by unknown assailants 14 March.

- [“Azerbaijanis protest against army deaths”](#), IWPR, 15 March 2013.

➡ **Georgia** Continued tensions with Russia despite rhetoric of rapprochement. Officials met for 2nd round of talks on normalization 1 March, however Russian President Putin 12 March met with Abkhazian de facto president Aleksandre Ankvab in Moscow to discuss cooperation, prompting criticism from Georgian FM Panjikidze. Parliament 7 March adopted resolution reaffirming country’s commitment to Euro-Atlantic foreign policy. Parliament 21 March approved motion removing president’s authority to dismiss govt and parliament. Georgia and U.S. held joint military exercise prompting Russian criticism; Tbilisi expressed “grave concern” over snap Russian military exercises in Black Sea late month. Latest round of Geneva talks with Russia late month reportedly ended inconclusively.

- [“Stalemate in Georgia continues despite consensus on pro-Western foreign policy”](#), RFE/RL, 12 March 2013.
- For latest briefing, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°69, [Georgia: Making Cohabitation Work](#), 18 Dec. 2012.

➡ **North Caucasus (Russia)** Targeted killings in Dagestan included unknown assailants shot dead teacher at Islamic school in Karabudakhent district 4 March, federal judge killed by unknown assailant in Izberbash city 9 March, folk healer killed in Buynaksk 10 March. Two security officers and 5 militants including local govt deputy killed in special operation in Dagestan capital Makhachkala 20-22 March. 4 suspected militants killed, 8 detained in clash with security forces at checkpoint in Kabardino-Balkaria 12 March. Three militants, 1 police officer killed in special operation in Vedensky district, Chechnya 7 March.

- [“Chechnya, Ingushetia on collision course over border dispute”](#), RFE/RL, 4 March 2013.



➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** U.S. National Intelligence Service published report highlighting dangers of continued standoff over N-K conflict. Azerbaijan's Defence Ministry reported Azerbaijani soldier shot dead 10 March by sniper in Fizuli region near Line of Contact (LoC), controlled by N-K forces; N-K military spokesman denied report. Armenian soldier reported killed in N-K 20 March. OSCE mission conducted planned monitoring of LoC 14 March.

- "Azerbaijan, Armenia deal on Karabakh 'unlikely'", Reuters, 13 March 2013.

## Western Europe/Mediterranean

➡ **Cyprus** UN-led reunification talks between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots on backburner amid Republic of Cyprus financial crisis. New Greek Cypriot gov't's €10 billion bailout deal with EU and IMF 24 March, including downsizing of financial sector and taxes on bank deposits over €100,000, caused public protests.

- Hugh Pope, "The Cost of Frozen Conflict for Cyprus, Greece and Turkey", *Ekathimerini*, 25 March 2013.
- "For Cyprus, a sudden need to play nice with Turkey", *New York Times*, 27 March 2013.

➡ **Turkey** Jailed leader of outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) Öcalan's 21 March call to militants for eventual ceasefire and withdrawal to outside Turkish borders boosted peace prospects between gov't and Kurdish insurgency. PM Erdoğan said Öcalan's call "positive" but will wait for implementation. PKK 13 March released 8 kidnapped public officials. PKK military leader in northern Iraq Karayılan declared ceasefire starting 23 March, suggested withdrawal could be completed by fall 2013. Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C) claimed responsibility for 2 simultaneous attacks on gov't buildings in Ankara 19 March. Israel PM Netanyahu 22 March issued formal apology to Turkey and agreed to pay compensation for killing 9 Turks aboard Mavi Marmara vessel in 2010, PM Erdoğan accepted apology but said ties will not normalize until Israel implements conditions.

- Hugh Pope, "Turkey's Tentative EU Springtime", *Majalla*, 4 March 2013.
- Didem A. Collinworth, "The Kurdish Movement and the Peace Talks With Turkey", Solving the EU-Turkey-Cyprus Triangle, 13 March 2013.
- "Hopes, suspicions over peace in Kurdish rebel hideout", Reuters, 27 March 2013.
- "Greater rights for Kurds key to Turkish peace efforts", AFP, 24 March 2013.

## Latin America/Caribbean

➡ **Colombia** Gov't and FARC 1 March indicated significant progress towards agreement on rural development, first issue on Havana peace talks' agenda. Agriculture Minister 14 March publicly rejected FARC proposal to increase to 59 number of Peasant Reservation Zones (ZRC). On closing latest round of talks 21 March, both sides confirmed advances, called for preparation of public discussion on political participation, second point on agenda. President Santos 13 March said possible to conclude talks within "months". Senator Roy Barreras 5 March said deal must be signed by July to allow Congress time to draft and debate legislation before

2014 elections. Barreras and 5 others travelled to Cuba 3 March for discussions with FARC, officially focusing on victims and legislative perspectives on peace. Several security personnel and FARC guerrillas killed during month in continued violent confrontations, and many injured in series of suspected FARC bombings. Santos 11 March claimed fewer than 8,000 remaining FARC fighters. Gov't 5 March destroyed large drug laboratory thought to be financing 5 FARC fronts, with much of output reportedly destined to be sold to Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel. ELN released 2 German hostages 8 March; ELN commander Gabino 24 March confirmed negotiating team ready for talks, but denied exploratory contacts. ELN brigade leader "Omar" reported killed 28 March during clash between guerillas and military in SW.

- "Si es para la paz, cuenten con el Eln", *El Espectador*, 24 March 2013.

➡ **Guatemala** Trial began 19 March of ex-military dictator Efraín Ríos Montt on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity, after Court 14 March upheld Supreme Court ruling rejecting amnesty. Gov't report 2 March showed violent deaths Jan-Feb higher than same period 2012. Tensions in eastern dept Jalapa following 17 March kidnapping of 4 Xinca indigenous leaders as they returned from meeting opposing mining in area; one found killed next day, others released.

- "Guatemala ex-ruler Rios Montt on trial for genocide", BBC, 19 March 2013.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°47, *Totoniacapán: Tension in Guatemala's Indigenous Hinterland*, 6 Feb. 2013.

➡ **Mexico** President Peña Nieto's gov't 17 March announced details of crime prevention plan to be implemented by Manuel Mondragón y Kalb as new head of National Security Commission; both this body and Mondragón's functions still to be specified. Gov't's secretariat absorbed competences and resources of Public Security Secretariat, including management of Federal Police. As reports of gruesome violence continued to make headlines, attacks against journalists in north continued, with Ojinaga Noticias journalist shot dead 3 March, media offices in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua attacked 6 March. Unknown gunmen 9 March killed Jalisco State tourism minister. Hundreds of vigilantes took control of town Tierra Colorado, Guerrero state, after group leader killed late month.

- "Los detonantes de la inseguridad en México", CNN Español, 26 March 2013.
- "Mexico's president gathers power, pushes reform", AP, 19 March 2013.

**New** Crisis Group Latin America Report N°48, *Peña Nieto's Challenge: Criminal Cartels and Rule of Law in Mexico*, 19 March 2013. Mexico must build an effective police and justice system, as well as implement comprehensive social programs, if it is to escape the extraordinary violence triggered by the country's destructive cartels in extortion, kidnapping and control of transnational crime.

➡ **Venezuela** President Chávez died from cancer 5 March; VP Maduro sworn in as acting president after funeral. Electoral commission (CNE) 9 March announced legislative elections to be held 14 April; will pit Maduro against opposition Democratic Unity alliance's Henrique Capriles. Maduro further hardened stance on opposition and U.S., claimed U.S. plot to assassinate Capriles "to create chaos in country". Gov't 5 March expelled 2 U.S. diplomats for allegedly conspiring against gov't; U.S. 11 March ordered 2 Venezuelan diplomats to leave U.S.. Opposition demanding that CNE


take steps to curb govt abuse of state resources for campaigning, wants armed forces to adopt more neutral stance.

- ["Venezuela's Capriles sees campaign as 'epic crusade'"](#), AFP, 28 March 2013.


**New** Crisis Group Latin America & Caribbean Conflict Alert, ["Venezuela's Political Transition"](#), 7 March 2013. The death of President Hugo Chávez casts a shadow over a polarised Venezuela whose immediate political stability cannot be taken for granted.

## Middle East and North Africa


### Eastern Mediterranean

 **Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories** New Israeli govt sworn in 18 March after 5-party coalition deal agreed 15 March; new coalition includes PM Netanyahu's Likud-Beitenu right-wing alliance, new centrist Yesh Atid party, peace-process focused Hatnua party and national religious Jewish Home party; excludes ultra-Orthodox parties. U.S. President Obama 20-22 March visited Israel and WB, discussed nuclear Iran, Syria and Palestinian diplomatic process; WB youth activists protested visit, criticized "Zionist" keynote speech. Demonstrations in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners continued in WB into beginning March, leading to several clashes with Israeli forces; military raids, incursions, settler-related violence continued throughout month. Israel 25 March announced resumption of regular tax transfers suspended last year after Palestinians gained UN non-member observer status. Netanyahu 22 March apologized to Turkey for 2010 Gaza flotilla deaths (see Turkey).

- ["Netanyahu agrees coalition government"](#), *Financial Times*, 14 March 2013.


 **Lebanon** Month saw further deterioration, with tensions escalating on several fronts and political uncertainty as govt collapsed 22 March after PM Mikati resigned following standoff with Hizbollah over extending Security Forces chief Ashraf Rifi's mandate. Mikati's resignation sparked further clashes between Sunni and Alawite militants in northern town Tripoli, killing 12 people 22-24 March. Ongoing tensions in southern town Saida between Salafist Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir and Shiite Hizbollah supporters. Regular cross-border shelling by Syria continued: Syrian Foreign Ministry mid-month threatened to strike rebels sheltering in Lebanon; several northern Lebanese border villages fired on by Syria 15, 31 March; Syrian regime for first time launched airstrikes 18 March targeting Aarsal, eastern Lebanon. U.S. described strikes as "significant escalation in the violations of Lebanese sovereignty" by Damascus. March 14 coalition mid-month called for deployment of army and UN troops along border. UNSC 14 March issued statement of concern over repeated incidents of Lebanese-Syrian cross-border fire, incursions, abductions, arms trafficking. 3 Sunni clerics attacked 17 March in 2 incidents in predominantly Shiite Beirut neighbourhood sparking demonstrations.

- ["Lebanese premier resigns as Syrian war fuels sectarian split"](#), *New York Times*, 22 March 2013.

 **Syria** First credible reports emerged of chemical weapons use: govt and rebels accused each other of firing a rocket loaded with chemical agents near Aleppo 19 March; opposition 25 March said govt killed 2, wounded 23 in chemical missile attack on Adra, near Damascus. 49 killed, including key pro-regime cleric, in attack on Damascus mosque 21 March; 20 killed in mortar attack on Damascus University 28 March. President Assad 22 March vowed to "cleanse" Syria of extremism. Rebel advance continued: rebels early March captured northern city Raqqa, their first entire provincial capital, began renewed push into Baba Amr, Homs. In Istanbul Syrian National Coalition (NC) 19 March elected Ghassan Hitto PM for rebel-held areas of Syria; NC leader Moaz al-Khatib resigned 24 March over "lack of help" from international community. At EU summit 15 March France and UK faced opposition to their proposal that EU arms embargo be lifted to allow arming of rebels. Rebel group "Martyrs of Yarmouk" 6 March captured 21 Filipino UN peacekeepers monitoring 1973 Israel-Syria armistice line in Golan, released 9 March. UN 25 March announced temporary withdrawal of some staff from Damascus citing insecurity. Syrian opposition opened embassy in Qatar 27 March, day after assuming Syrian seat at Arab League summit.

- ["Syrian opposition leader resigns"](#), *LA Times*, 25 March 2013.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°136, [Syria's Kurds: A Struggle Within a Struggle](#), 22 Jan. 2013.

### Gulf

 **Bahrain** Amid ongoing violence, national dialogue continued. Over a month into process, parties yet to set agenda despite 9 rounds of talks, sides blame each other for being uncooperative; tenth session began 31 March. King Hamad 11 March appointed Crown Prince Sheikh Salman, considered reformist, as vice-PM. Clashes between opposition forces and police in Manama 14, 29 March left several injured on both sides. Court sentenced 17 Shiites to 15 years' jail for role in April 2012 ambush in Eker. 2 policemen sentenced to 10 years' jail for torturing protester to death Feb 2011. Court of Appeals sentenced activist Zainab al-Khawaja to 3 months' prison for "insulting and humiliating a public employee." Court of Appeals 28 March acquitted 21 medics accused of supporting 2011 protests.

- ["Dozens injured as violence flares in Bahrain"](#), BBC, 14 March 2013.

 **Iran** Following late Feb talks with Iran, P5+1 arms control experts met in Istanbul 18 March to draft proposal detailing possibility of relieving sanctions in exchange for Iran suspending some nuclear activities, to be presented to 5-6 April meeting in Kazakhstan. Russian Deputy FM Sergei Ryabkov 21 March said P5+1 talks are "real progress" but "not sufficient to talk of irreversible trend". U.S. President Obama 15 March declared Iran is "1 year from developing nuclear weapons", U.S. will first pursue diplomatic means to prevent Iran from developing nuclear arsenal but "all options are on the table". Ayatollah Ali Khamenei 21 March said Iran will "destroy Israeli cities if attacked". NATO cyber warfare centre 24 March declared U.S.-Israel 2009 cyber attack on Iran an illegal act of force. International Energy Agency 19 March reported Iran's crude oil production capacity significantly reduced due to sanctions.

- ["Despite sanctions' toll on Iran, U.S. sees no shift in nuclear behaviour"](#), *Washington Post*, 17 March 2013.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°138, [Spider Web: The Making and Unmaking of Iran Sanctions](#), 25 Feb. 2013.

**Iraq** Political crisis continued, with signs of increasing sectarianism: parliament 7 March passed 2013 budget law relying exclusively on votes from Shia political blocs; Kurdish MPs boycotted vote in protest at amount allotted to pay oil companies operating in autonomous north. Council of Ministers 20 March announced elections in Anbar and Nineveh provinces, set for 20 April, to be postponed by up to 6 months due to violence, threats to election workers. Hardline security response to ongoing Sunni protests: security forces 8 March fired on stone-throwing Sunni demonstrators in Mosul, killing 2. Finance Minister Rafie al-Issawi resigned his post, as did Agriculture Minister Ezz al-Din al-Dawla, in solidarity with protesters. Series of car bombs and suicide blasts 19 March killed 50, wounded 160 on 10th anniversary of U.S.-led invasion. String of attacks 24 March left at least 5 dead in Mosul; candidate in provincial elections assassinated in Baghdad. 25 killed, 50 injured 14 March in series of attacks on gov't buildings in Baghdad; al-Qaeda-linked Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) claimed responsibility. 4 killed in series of attacks near Baghdad 27 March; over 20 reported killed, dozens injured in series of attacks against Shiite mosques in Baghdad 29 March. Armed group 6 March ambushed Syrian soldiers attempting to reenter Syria with the Iraqi army's help, killing 51 Syrian soldiers and 9 Iraqis; ISI claimed responsibility.

- Peter Harling, "The New Normal in Baghdad", *Monde Diplomatique*, 1 March 2013.
- "Iraq, 10 years later, is less threatening but riven by turmoil", *Washington Post*, 23 March 2013.

**Jordan** U.S. President Obama 22 March met King Abdullah II in Amman, discussed Syria and Israel/Palestine conflict; Obama pledged \$200 million in aid for Syrian refugees. Jordan 25 March closed border with Syria due to clashes in area.

- "Obama in Jordan after visiting Israeli symbolic sites", RFE/RL, 22 March 2013.

**Saudi Arabia** Police 1 March arrested 176 in Buraida, Qassim province after another protest over prisoners' incarceration without charge or trial; 5 March freed 109 protesters. Security forces mid-month arrested 18 Shiites, including an Iranian and a Lebanese citizen, accused of spying.

- "18 'spies' arrested in Saudi Arabia", AFP, 19 March 2013.

**Yemen** National Dialogue Conference tasked with drafting new constitution and preparing for Feb 2014 elections opened 18 March in Sanaa after numerous delays; conference attended by President Hadi, 565 delegates. Thousands of southern separatists protested in Aden and Hadramout, rejecting dialogue and calling for immediate secession. Yemeni Nobel peace laureate Tawakkul Karman boycotted dialogue in protest over failure to restructure army, former president Saleh's continued political influence and marginalisation of youth, civil society and women. Gunmen 23 March shot dead 3 in failed attempt to assassinate Abdo Abu Ras, Houthis' representative at negotiations. State's Land Real Estate Chair Abdullah al-Fadhali escaped 25 March assassination attempt. 5 killed 21 Mar in pro-gov't militia attack on al-Qaeda-linked Islamist militants in Abyan province. Pro-gov't fighters 24 March recaptured Batis town, Abyan province, after 3 days' fighting that left 6 militants, 3 pro-gov't militiamen dead. Suicide bomber 4 March killed at least 12, wounded 15 in attack on pro-gov't militia office in Lawdar, Abyan province. Main oil pipeline in central Maarib province sabotaged 6 March.

- "Yemen opens national talks amid rallies", AFP, 19 March 2013.

## North Africa

**Algeria** Authorities early-month said roughly 400 armed al-Qaeda militants still active in Kabylie region; army reportedly killed 5 Islamists in Kabylie raid late March. Security forces 8 March killed 2 suspected terrorists near Constantine; 9 March dismantled al-Qaeda cell in Bordj Badji town; 12 March dismantled kidnapping network in Boumerdes; 5 March forcibly dispersed youth demonstration in Ghardaia. Alliance for Green Algeria (MSP, El Islah and Ennahda) 8 March called on gov't to deepen investigation into financial and land tenure scandals.

- "Démantèlement d'une cellule terroriste du Mali en Algérie", *Magharebia*, 12 March 2012.

**Egypt** Amid ongoing stalemate between president and opposition, clashes between police and protesters continued; renewed violence outside Muslim Brotherhood (MB) Cairo HQ 22 March injured over 100; violent protests against MB 23-24 March. President Morsi 24 March warned he would take "necessary measures" to "protect the nation"; prosecutor general 25 March ordered arrest of several activists. Several killed, hundreds injured 3 March when clashes broke out in Port Said following transfer of detainees accused of involvement in 2012 Port Said soccer riot. Port Said court 9 March acquitted 28 defendants, sentenced 5 to life in prison and 21 to death for role in soccer riot deaths; only 2 police officers found guilty. Presidential spokesperson 14 March said families of those killed in recent Port Said violence would be compensated. Increasing demonstrations motivated by shortages, inflation, price increases. Month also saw unprecedented nationwide strikes by police and security forces; demands included dismissal of Interior Minister, separation of police from political conflicts. 6 March court ruling on electoral law technicality postponed parliamentary elections scheduled for 22 April. Sinai security forces late month reportedly arrested 25 Hamas and Al-Qaida militants attempting to cross to Nile Delta, found weapons cache in El-Arish.

- "Mursi warning stirs fears in Egypt opposition", Reuters, 24 March 2013.

**Libya** Series of violent interventions related to proposed "political exclusion" law barring Qadhafi-era officials from service caused political paralysis, bringing work of General National Congress (GNC) to a temporary standstill. Members of gov't-affiliated brigade, purportedly defending war-wounded protesters, 3 March ransacked main GNC hall; armed men supporting political isolation law next day stormed GNC members in makeshift hall, and ordered them to approve bill; lawmakers allowed to leave building after 12-hour siege, but GNC president Magharief's car shot at. Lawmakers suspended GNC mid-March due to threats. Chair of Human Rights and Civil Society Committee Hassan al-Amin 4 March announced resignation citing death threats. Gov't-affiliated militia late Feb rounded up some 50 Egyptian Copts, accused them of proselytizing; further attacks on Copts reported. UNSC 14 March decided to not fully lift arms embargo, expressed concern over arms flowing from Libya into neighboring countries and over thousands of detainees held by militias. Unidentified armed men 30 March reportedly attacked military air base near Sabha, killing 3 soldiers.

- "Libyan national congress attacked by rogue militias", *Guardian*, 7 March 2013.

➤ **Mauritania** President Abdelaziz 4 March said country ready to join UN peacekeeping force in Mali “if situation improves”; Nigerien President Issoufou, Malian interim president Traoré and Moroccan FM Saad Eddine El Othmani visited early month to discuss Mali crisis. AQIM said it executed French hostage captured in 2011. Electoral Commission 28 Feb announced legislative and municipal elections, initially scheduled in 2011, now due Sept-Oct 2013. Initiative for Abolitionist Resurgence 10 March denounced arrests of 9 of its members in Kaedi.

- “Mauritania receives Mali President”, Magharebia, 13 March 2013.

➤ **Morocco** Continued political protests, including as many as 15,000 at 10 March rally in Zaio in solidarity with 7 protesters arrested 2 March. Authorities 6 March barred EU parliamentary delegation headed to El-Ayoune from entering on grounds that they were “supported by Algeria” and had intention to provoke conflict. Doctors Without Borders asked to leave Morocco, ostensibly in effort to curb migration. King Mohamed VI visited Senegal, CDI, Gabon mid-month to discuss Mali crisis and shore up support for Morocco’s Saharan claims.

- “Mohamed VI en visite au Senegal, en Côte d’Ivoire et au Gabon”, *Jeune Afrique*, 15 March 2013.

➤ **Tunisia** Political crisis partially attenuated as newly-appointed An-Nahda PM Ali Larayedh 8 Mar unveiled new govt; includes previous coalition partners Ettakatol and Congress for the Republic (CPR). Key ministries ceded to independents: career diplomat Othman Jarandi named FM, Lotfi Ben Jedou interior minister, Rachid Sabbagh defence minister, Nadhir Ben Ammou justice minister. 80 National Constituent Assembly representatives 15 March adopted end-of-April deadline for completing draft of new constitution, calling for presidential and legislative elections before end-2013. Social and political tensions remained high following Feb assassination of leading opposition figure Chokri Belaid; thousands demonstrated in Tunis 16 March, demanded end to An-Nahda govt. Concern continued to grow over deteriorating

purchasing power and new round of economically-motivated self-immolation suicides.

- “Et la constitution dans tout ça?”, *Jeune Afrique*, 18 March 2013.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Report N°137, *Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge*, 13 Feb. 2013.

➤ **Western Sahara** French media 4 March reported Polisario Front fighters captured in Mali following battle with AQIM “emir” Abou Zeid. UN SGSR Ross 20 March visited Western Sahara, hoping to “end current impasse”. Polisario leader Mohamed Abdelaziz 16 March said Saharawi people will continue peaceful fight for independence, resume armed struggle “if necessary”.

- “President Abdelaziz confirms on peaceful struggle but does not exclude use of weapons”, Sahara Press Service, 17 March 2013.

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