

Welcome to the October issue of the Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED) *Conflict Trends*. Each month, ACLED researchers gather, analyse and publish data on political violence in Africa in realtime. Realtime conflict event data is published through our research partners at [Climate Change and African Political Stability \(CCAPS\)](#) where it is updated monthly.

In addition, historical data from Volume III of the dataset, covering conflict in Africa from January 1997 to December 2012, is available online at [acleddata.com](#), along with previous *Conflict Trends* reports, country profiles for key conflict-affected states, special features, and information on the data collection and publication process.

This month, the report focuses on the intensification of violence in DR-Congo as international and national security forces redouble their efforts against the M23; persistent violence in Mali; the collapse of the peace agreement in Mozambique; ongoing unrest and several high-profile, high-intensity attacks in Nigeria; and rising unrest in Tunisia (see Figure 1).

Elsewhere on the continent, protest levels increased significantly in Namibia in October, while violence levels dropped in Algeria.



Conflict Trajectory, September 2013

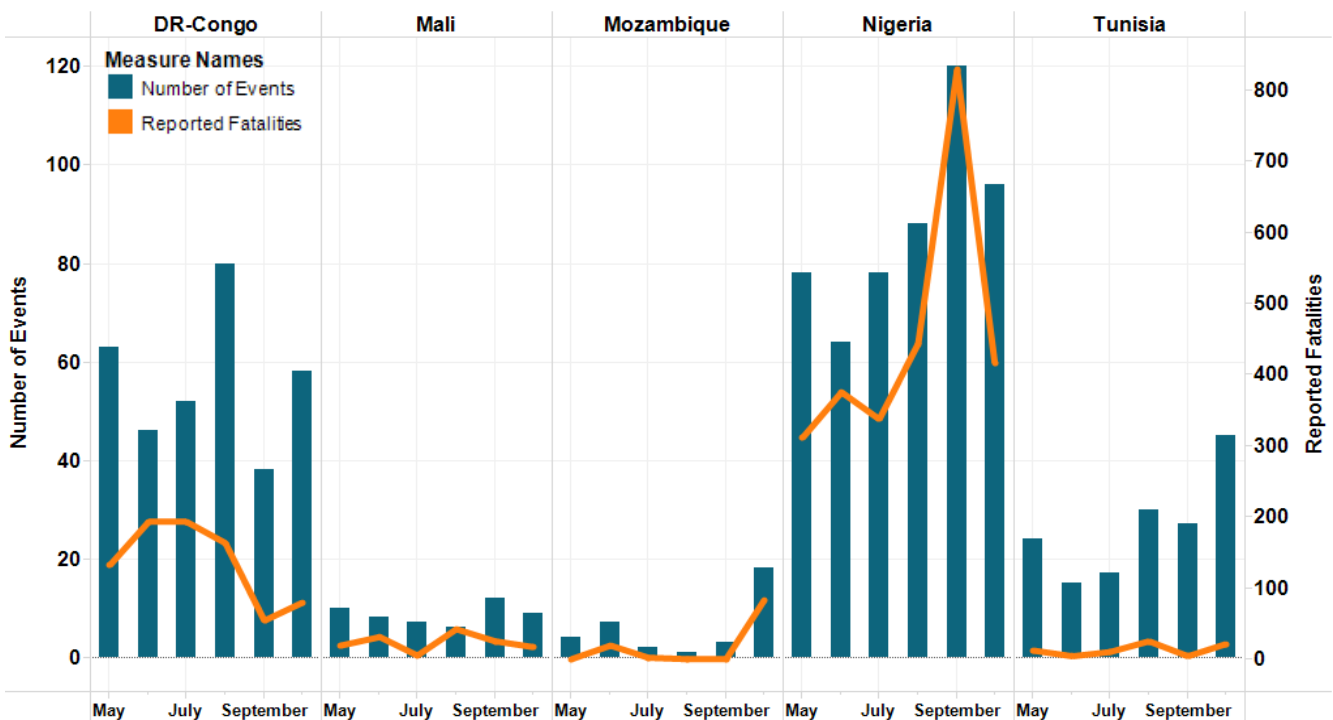


Figure 1: Conflict Levels and Reported Fatalities in DR-Congo, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria and Tunisia, May - Oct 2013.

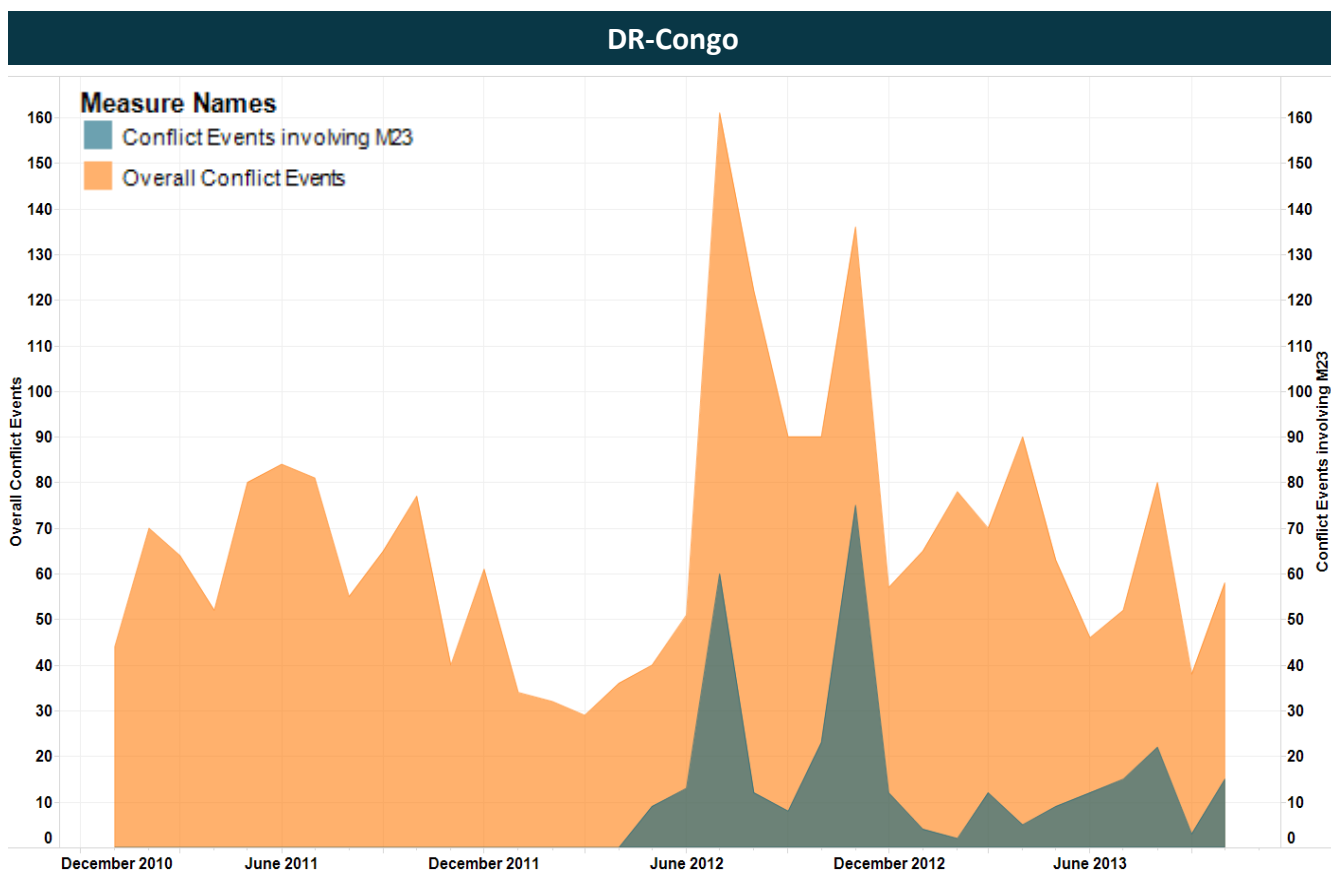


Figure 3: Overall Conflict Events and Events involving M23, DR-Congo, January 2011 - October 2013.

M23 calls it quits. At the time of writing, the M23 has given up arms in eastern DR-Congo. This may be a consequence of effective peace-brokering by the always-impressive Russ Feingold and others; but from the field, the group’s demise looks due to effective soldiering on by the FARDC, bolstered by the UN’s Force Intervention Brigade (FIB). Are we waiting for the next version of the Rwandan/Tutsi proxy force? Perhaps not, as the mandate of the FIB was not just to resuscitate the FARDC, but to also track down and eliminate all armed groups operating in Kivu. This means that Rwanda’s campaign against the FDLR may be carried out by another force. Quite a job.

It is perhaps useful to review the M23 movement and what it has meant for instability in Kivu (see Figure 3). The peaks and troughs of being a Rwandan proxy force involve heady highs (such as the claim in December 2012 that Kivu should secede from DR-Congo; or when they were ‘greeted’ when overtaking Goma last November), but times also get tough, such as recently when Rwanda has stayed quiet while the force is being eradicated by the FARDC. Rwanda has come under unprecedented pressure to stop destabilizing DR-Congo for its own means, and to

cease encouraging an ‘army within an army’ through its officers positioned in the Congolese military. Rwandan influence cannot be overstated: since 1996, there has consistently been a Rwandan allied armed group in Eastern Congo. This marks the first substantive change (see Congo Siasa for more details).

In the past two weeks, the FARDC has taken multiple towns including Kiwanja, Rutshuru, Kibumbu and M23 camps in Rumangabo and Bunagana. Africa Confidential reports that the group has retreated to hills near the Rwandan border (Runyoni, Mbuzi and Chanzu) that were its first bases. Taking back control from the M23 began in October, and the major advances have been in the last two weeks.

The speed of this change is due to three factors: the new capacity of FARDC, backed by the FIB; and the weakening of M23 from internal issues and external abandonment. FIB is composed of African soldiers with a mandate to “neutralize and disarm [M23], as well as other Congolese rebels and foreign armed groups in strife-riven eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.” As mentioned by “Texas

DR-Congo

in Africa”, the FIB not only changed the military balance in the conflict environment, it also trained, supported and taught FARDC that they could win battles.

M23 had growing internal problems: it began with the integration of Bosco Ntaganda’s Rwandan supported CNDP (Congrès national pour la défense du peuple) rebel group into the FARDC in 2009. This group effectively had an independent run of Eastern Congo, which they used to protect Rwandan interests. Kinshasa realized that disbanding the ‘army within an army’ was the only way to regain control, and needed a ‘good will’ gesture by turning over commanders to the ICC. Bosco Ntaganda was to be the sacrifice. Instead, a mutiny occurred in early 2012.

Yet the M23 could not rouse support as previous groups have done, perhaps because of its largely elite membership and aims. It was primarily a Northern Kivu group and based most of its activity here (see Figure 4). The low intensity war that resulted was one of many campaigns of violence taking place in the East, and their inability to dominate was despite well-documented Rwandan support. But its strength was that it had trained, coherent, and largely homogenous group and in comparison the FARDC, this was a stellar fighting force. Infighting befell

the M23. In March 2013, the international response to the fall of Goma was ready: and there were serious internal divisions about how to deal with the oncoming FIB. Regional groups fought about group policy and 200 soldiers are believed to have died.

The other critical reason is that Rwanda was taken aback by reactions to what had become usual practice. The International Community has been swift in its condemnation and Rwanda has to take a step back, all while insisting that it was not the puppet master. Even attempts to forestall the FIB with Kenyan and Ugandan allies fell flat. The writing was on the wall, and Rwanda capitulated. However, the FIB’s mandate will include the FDLR, so Rwanda might get its wish, although it may still want to insist that it runs the Kivus. These problems, as well as excellent discussion of M23 and the conflict’s geopolitics, please see Kris Berwouts’ African Arguments discussion “Congo waiting for M24 or a real window of opportunity?”

What of the rest of Congolese violence? Congolese violent groups are various, often funded through illegal means, and (quite importantly) part of an intractable conflict. Moving such a conflict from Kivu will take a mighty effort, and that is just what it might get.

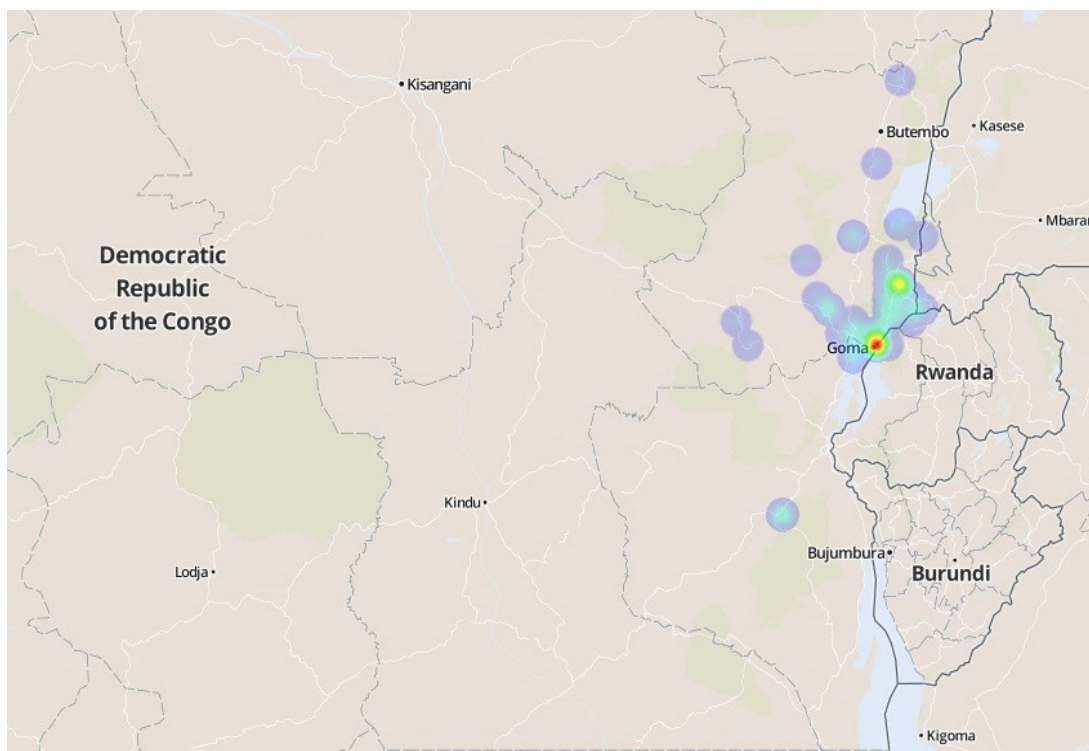


Figure 4: Heatmap of Conflict Events involving M23, DR-Congo, April 2012 - October 2013.

Mali

Conflict events and associated fatalities fell slightly in Mali in October (see Figure 5), but only after a rather sharp increase in violence in September. Both months have seen relatively high levels of violence compared to the pre-crisis levels witnessed in 2011, and both reflect discrete, though overlapping, dynamics of unrest in the country.

In the first instance, Islamist violence has continued in the region, with early November witnessing the abduction and murder of two French journalists in Kidal in Northern Mali, and refocusing the world’s attention on tensions in the restive region. When violent Islamist groups holding territory in the North of the country withdrew with little resistance in the face of French forces in early 2013, many predicted that militants melting away would facilitate a regrouping and resurgence in low-intensity attacks later, a prediction which may now be coming true.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has reportedly claimed responsibility for the killings, in an apparent show of sustained military and organisational capacity following international efforts to rout violent Islamist groups from the country’s Northern region at the beginning of the year. Alongside AQIM, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) has been resurgent in the region, with approximately one-quarter of non-state violence in the region attributed to each group in October.

In spite of tendencies in the media to aggregate the two groups into a single threat, the two militant organisations have discrete conflict profiles: AQIM has been active to a greater degree in Kidal, while violent activity attributed to MUJAO has been more persistent in Gao. A breakdown of conflict events by week reveals that the two groups have been active concurrently in the same region in only a small number (approximately 20%) of conflict events involving the two organisations. In addition to slightly different areas of operation, the two groups differ in their conflict activity, with MUJAO engaging in higher levels of violence against civilians (making up approximately 18.2% of its activity), compared to AQIM (with civilian targeting constituting less around 8% of its actions). The killing of two journalists attributed to AQIM is all the more notable in that it is less characteristic of this group’s activities.

These distinctions highlight the need for different policy and military approaches to the two groups. However, also among the most active non-state groups in the region are the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), who engaged in a small number of clashes with government forces in September. The underlying drivers of violence in the Northern region which pre-empted the rise of Islamist violence there should not be neglected in analyses and policy approaches to the region.

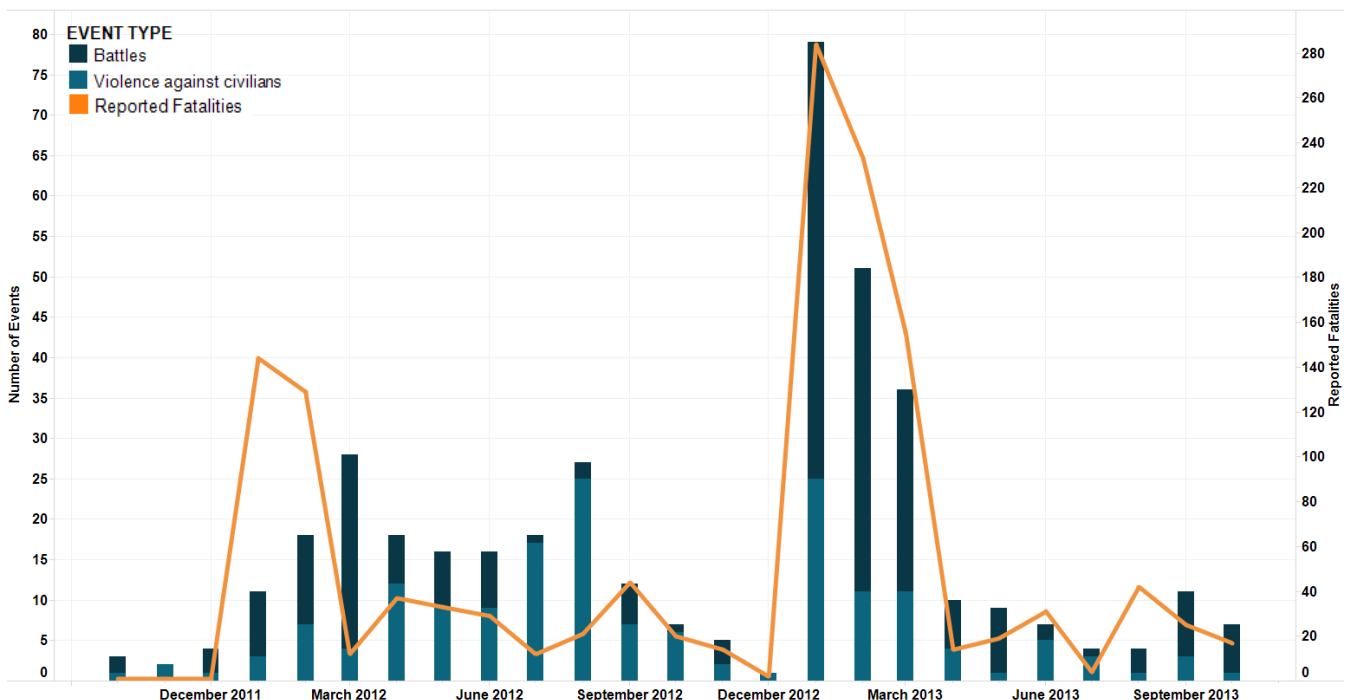


Figure 5: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities , Mali, October 2011 - October 2013.

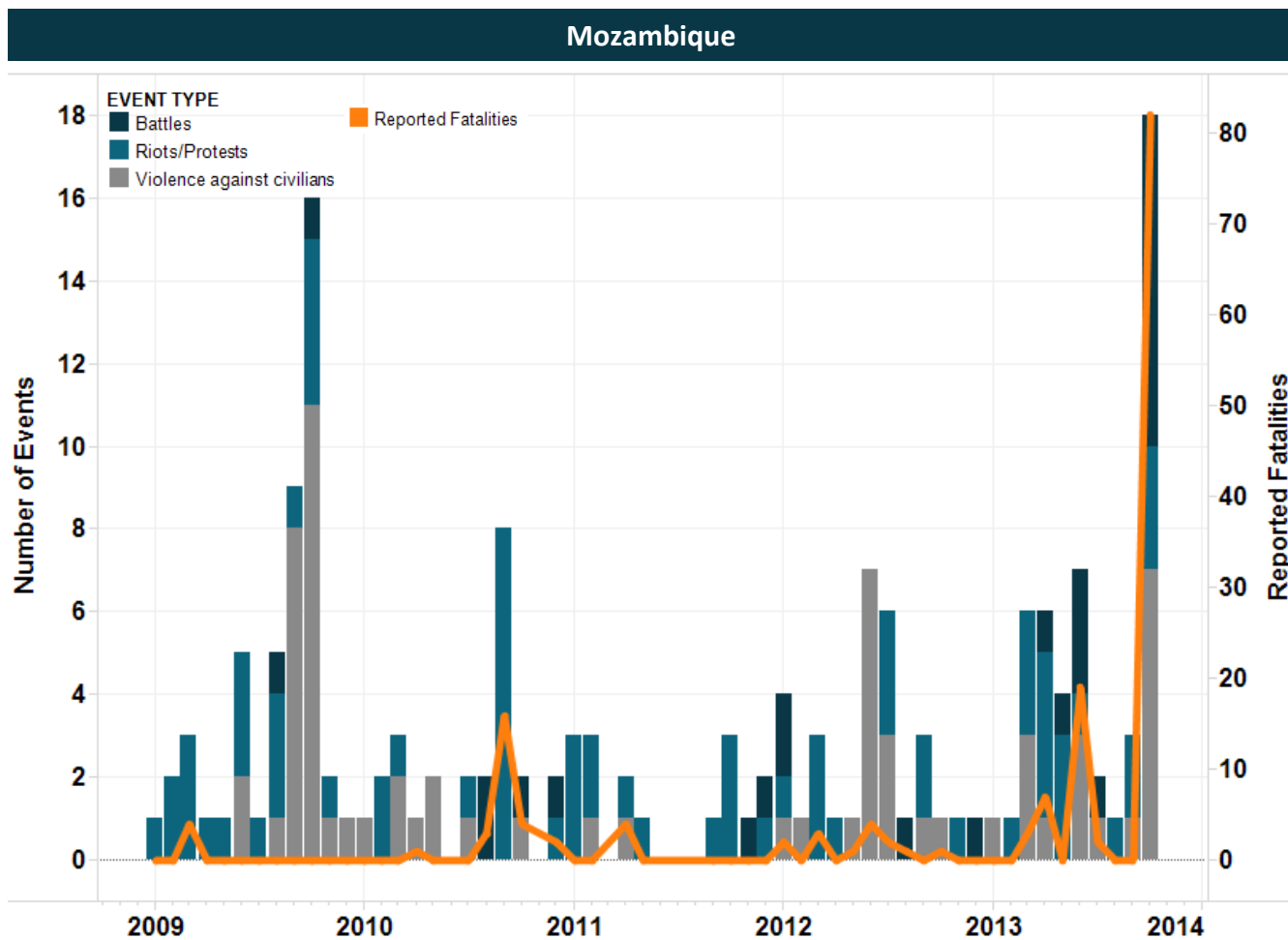


Figure 6: Conflict Events by Type, Mozambique, January 2009 - October 2013.

After months of simmering tensions (see ACLED’s *Conflict Trends* report in August), the situation in Mozambique escalated dramatically in October 2013, with the abrogation by main opposition Renamo of the peace agreement which has been in place since 1992.

Following a government raid on Renamo’s base in Sofala province, Renamo spokesperson, Fernando Mazanga declared ‘Peace is over in the country [...] The responsibility lies with the Frelimo government because they didn’t want to listen to Renamo’s grievances.’

Technically, the announcement returns the country to a state of civil war (*Africa Confidential*, 29 October 2013), although a return to open war seems unlikely. Renamo’s forces are both limited and disorganised: even with the renunciation of the peace accord, they have primarily engaged in low-intensity, sporadic attacks on vehicles via a system of road blocks in Sofala. The party itself is also organisationally weak, with limited political impact and

popular support, which will likely act as a check on the return to all-out violence (*Africa is a Country*, 25th October 2013).

The situation has essentially arisen as a result of the inability of Renamo to establish itself as a meaningful political power following the civil war, with elections in 2009 serving as a rallying point for resentment over what Renamo see as a systematically biased system of political rule (see Figure 6).

Frelimo leadership seems to have made the judgment call that it does not need to concede political (or economic) power to a weak Renamo. However, while Renamo certainly lacks the capacity to effectively engage in all-out war, Frelimo may have underestimated the potentially destabilising effect of a weakened opposition whose claims of political exclusion appear more legitimate the longer the Frelimo government refuses to make concessions.

Nigeria

Conflict events in Nigeria fell slightly in Nigeria in October, following a particular intense period of fighting involving Federal forces and the North-Eastern based group, Boko Haram in September (see Figure 7). Reported fatalities also fell very considerably this month. Since 2010, Boko Haram have been the single most violent group in Nigeria, involved in over 24% of violent conflict events since January of that year. Since the Federal Government redoubled its efforts to rout the group from its North-Eastern stronghold, Boko Haram has been the subject of increased media and analytical attention. To frame this analysis in empirical data, the ACLED dataset presents several ways to analyse whether or not the group’s activities have been increasing in volume and intensity over time.

In the first instance, it is possible to track the level of violent activity attributed to the group over time (see Figure 8). From this, it is clear that while events dipped in October following a number of high-profile assaults in September of this year, the 2012 period actually represents the spike in activity levels for the group so far (specifically, the first and last four months of the year).

To better capture the intensity of these events, reported fatality levels can be analysed in aggregate, or - as Figure 10 does - as a ratio of fatalities per event. A measure of reported fatalities per event can highlight dynamics in the intensity of individual attacks ways which may be obscured by aggregate fatality figures. From this data, we

can see that while overall event levels were higher in 2012, 2013 has witnessed the most intense fatal violence since the peak of fatal violence surrounding the group’s inception as a militant force in 2009.

A third method of assessing a group’s conflict intensity involves the number of reported fatalities associated with each individual conflict event involving Boko Haram, as in Figure 9. Here, we exclude the exceptionally high fatality rate associated with 2009 as an outlier, and graph individual events since 2010, clearly showing an increased clustering over time of medium- to high-fatality events.

Taken together, the data clearly indicate that while individual violent events involving Boko Haram are relatively rarer in the current year than past periods, the intensity of these events has increased over time. This has implications for analysis of Boko Haram and policies to mitigate this violence. The change over time may reflect the group’s evolving military and logistical capacity, having transformed from a militant organisation which primarily initially engaged in primarily low-intensity assassinations of security and political personnel, to a well-armed and organised militant unit. It may also reflect increased pressure by the Federal Government on the group: if the organisation is driven out of previous urban strongholds, it may increasingly resort to high-intensity, ‘spectacular’ attacks on more vulnerable targets, with implications for non-combatant populations across the region.

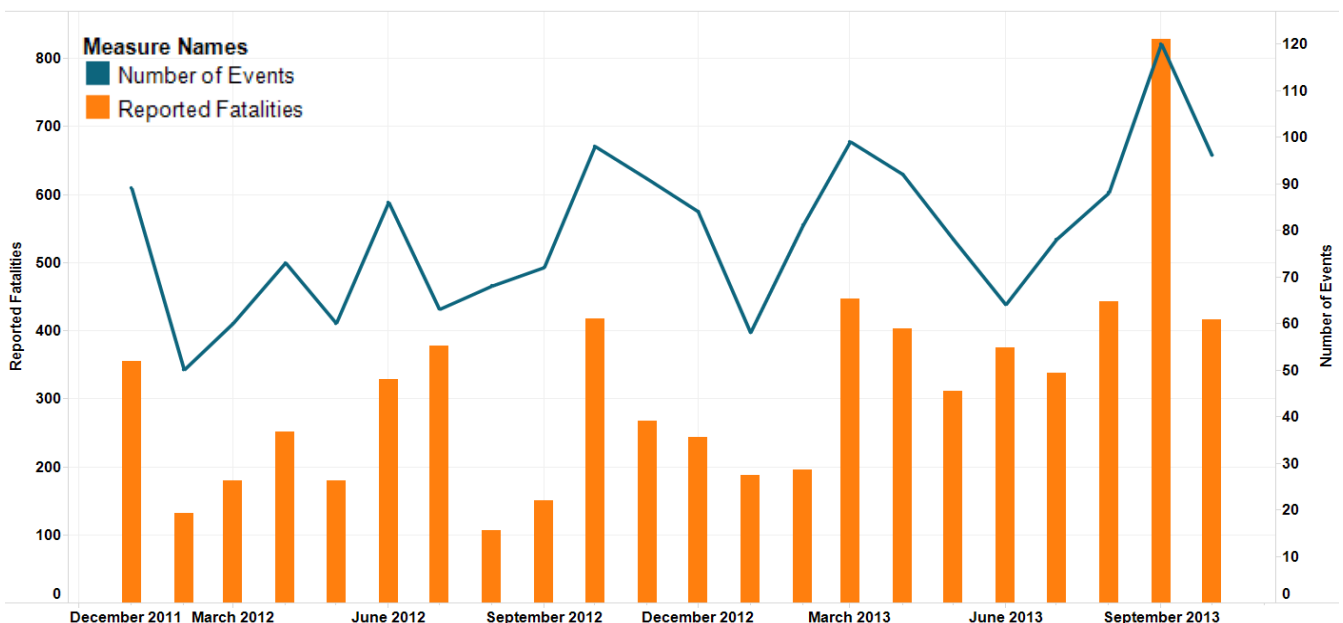


Figure 7: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, Nigeria, January 2012 - October 2013.

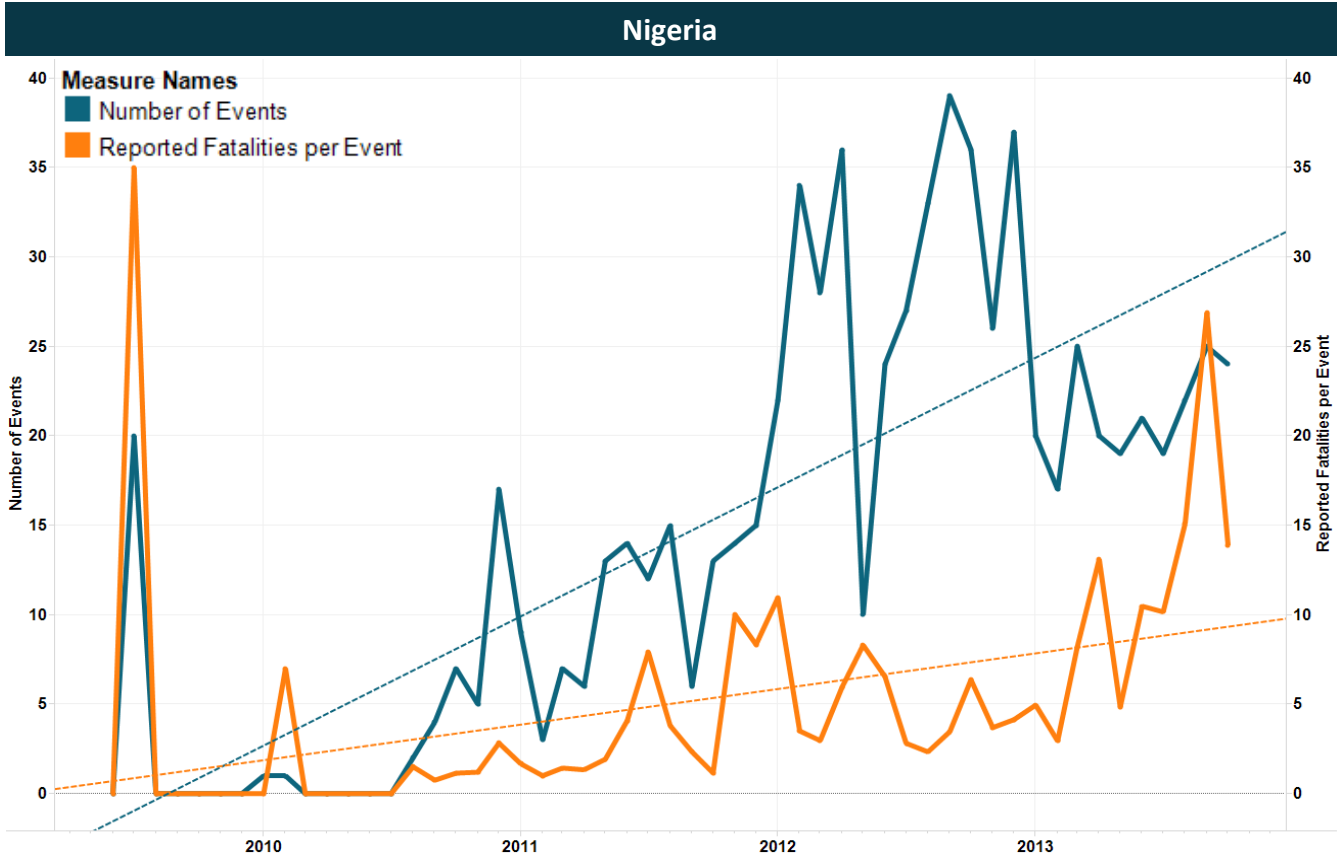


Figure 8: Reported Fatalities by Individual Conflict Event, Boko Haram, Nigeria, January 2010 - October 2013.

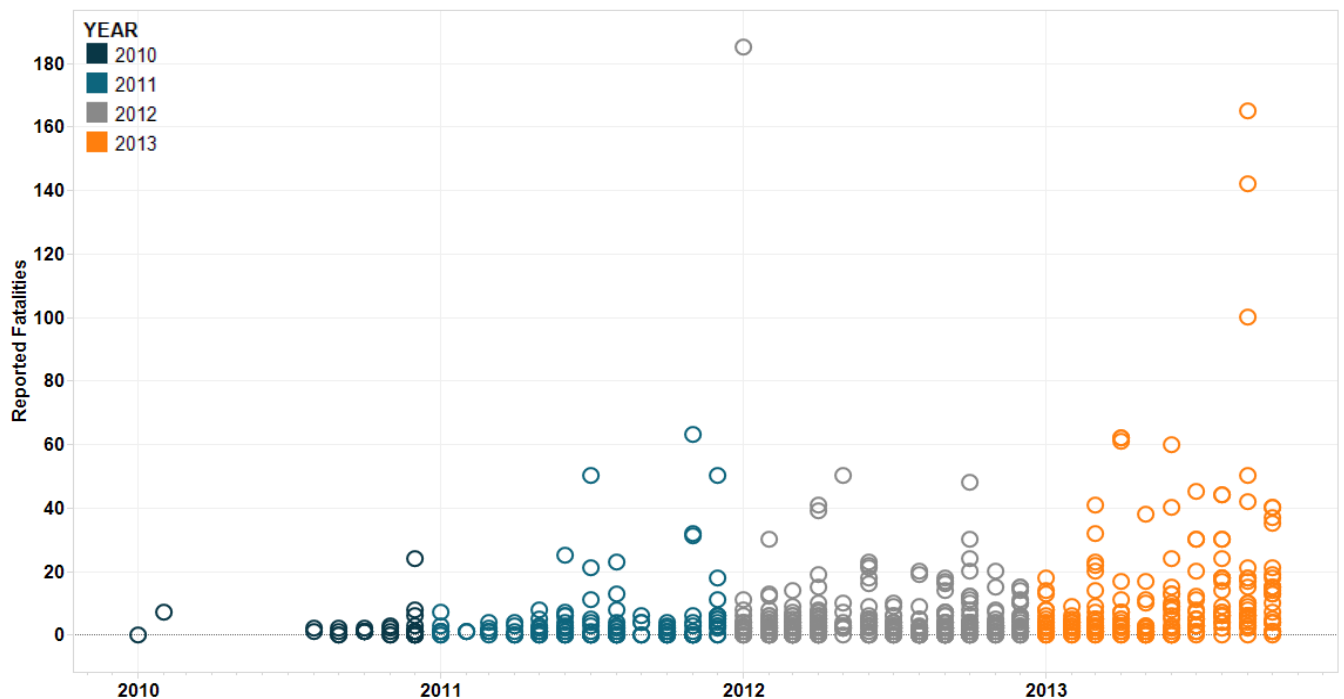


Figure 9: Reported Fatalities by Individual Conflict Event, Boko Haram, Nigeria, January 2010 - October 2013.

Tunisia

The month of October saw Tunisia experience its highest number of conflict events to date in 2013, primarily owing to the surge in riots and protests that took place as a result of growing dissatisfaction with the Islamist-led government. A broad range of civil society groups participated in protests with universities across the country hosting large student demonstrations and reactionary protests by security forces denouncing what they see as a lack of resources to combat violent Islamist groups which have been active in the country since (*Agence France Presse*, 18th October 2013).

This rise in riots and popular protests (*see* Figure 10) was met by the announcement that the Tunisian Ennahda party would step down following talks with its secular opposition; a move which attempts to resolve the political deadlock sparked by Mohamed Brahmi’s assassination in July. The transition to an interim government coincided with increased public concern after continued targeting of Tunisian police and security forces in a growing number of armed attacks, which culminated in the death of at least 6 officers of the National Guard in Sidi Bouzid on the 23rd October.

Despite sustained attacks on security apparatus - which has contributed to a slight spike in the frequency and intensity of battles in the region - armed militant activity

has tended to be characterised by sporadic, individual clashes rather than organised and concentrated attacks.

The recently banned militia group Ansar al-Sharia becoming a more prominent actor in clashes with police forces this month, in line with a longer-term trend of increasing activity by suspected Islamist militants in the months since August. Whilst overall the number of battles involving these groups has not been as high as those of other post-Spring countries such as Egypt or Libya (*see* Figure 11) levels of hard-line Islamist activity have been on the rise. A recent isolated suicide bomb attack and failed detonation of explosives in Sousse and Monastir serve as reminders of the fragile political environment with which Tunisia is grappling. As the government attempts to address divisions in opposing secular and moderate Islamist party views that have led to a political crisis and growing disparity between the promise and reality of post-revolution Tunisia, vulnerability to the proliferation of Islamist violence grows (*Arab American Institute*, 7th October, 2013).

The success of the political roadmap carved out over the course of the next few weeks by the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) will be a test of Tunisia’s resilience towards instability and will certainly be an important precursor for the dominant conflict profile of November and December.

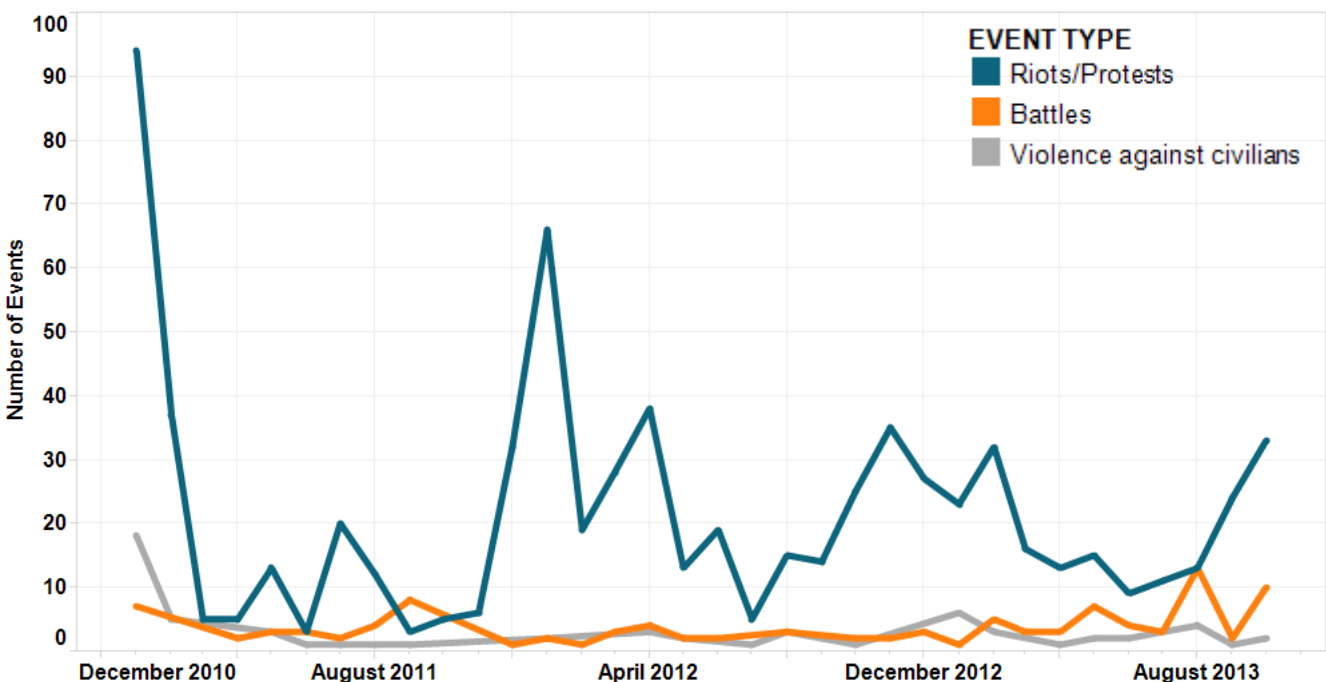


Figure 10: Conflict Events by Type, Tunisia, January 2011 - October 2013.

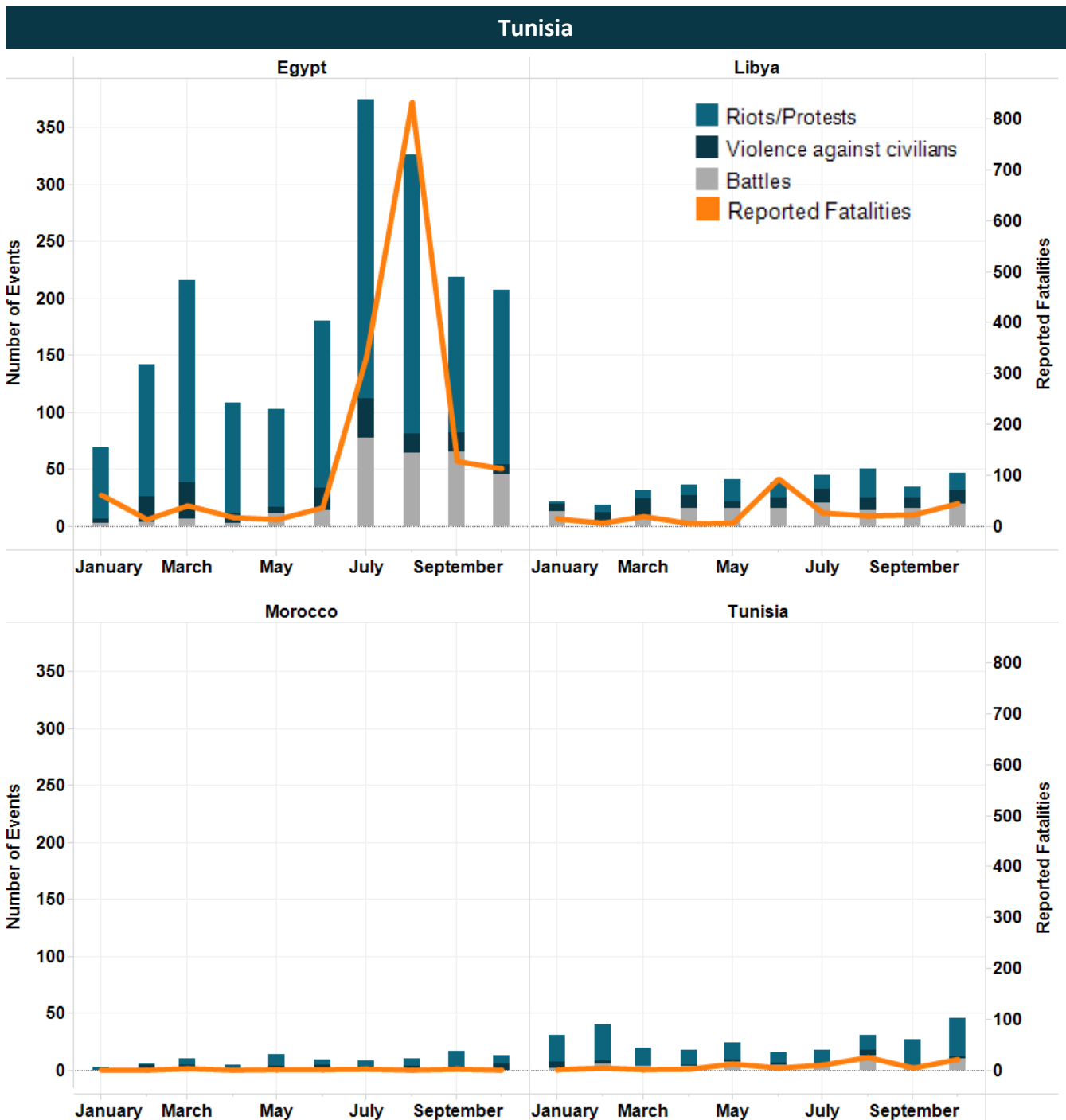


Figure 11: Conflict Events by Type, and Reported Fatalities, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Jan 2013 - Oct 2013.

Support

This material is based upon work supported by, or in part by, the U.S. Army Research Office grant number W911NF-09-1-0077 under the Minerva Initiative of the U.S. Department of Defense.

Sources

Conflict Trends reports are compiled from ACLED data and draw on news sources, civil society reports, and academic and policy analyses. Full details of sources and coding processes are available online at acleddata.com.