

130 1 June 2014

May 2014 Trends



Deteriorated Situations

Kenya (p.2)
Libya (p.11)
South China Sea (p.6)
Thailand (p.6)
Yemen (p.11)



Improved Situations

Guinea-Bissau (p.4)



Unchanged Situations

Abkhazia (Georgia) (p.7), Afghanistan (p.5), Algeria (p.11), Armenia (p.7), Azerbaijan (p.7), Bangladesh (p.5), Burundi (p.2), Cameroon (p.2), Central African Republic (p.2), Chad (p.2), China (internal) (p.4), China/Japan (p.5), Colombia (p.9), Côte d'Ivoire (p.4), Cyprus (p.8), DR Congo (p.2), Ecuador (p.9), Egypt (p.11), Georgia (p.7), Guatemala (p.9), Guinea (p.4), India (non-Kashmir) (p.5), Indonesia (p.6), Iran (p.10), Iraq (p.11), Israel-Palestine (p.10), Kashmir (p.5), Kazakhstan (p.8), Korean Peninsula (p.5), Kosovo (p.7), Kyrgyzstan (p.9), Lebanon (p.10), Liberia (p.4), Macedonia (p.7), Madagascar (p.3), Mali (p.4), Mexico (p.9), Moldova (p.8), Morocco (p.12), Mozambique (p.3), Myanmar (p.6), Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) (p.7), Nepal (p.6), Niger (p.4), Nigeria (p.4), North Caucasus (Russia) (p.7), Pakistan (p.6), Papua New Guinea (p.7), Philippines (p.6), Rwanda (p.2), Somalia (p.3), Somaliland (p.3), South Sudan (p.3), Sri Lanka (p.6), Sudan (p.3), Syria (p.10), Tajikistan (p.9), Tunisia (p.12), Turkey (p.8), Turkmenistan (p.9), Uganda (p.3), Ukraine (p.8), Uzbekistan (p.9), Venezuela (p.9), Zimbabwe (p.3)

June 2014 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alerts

Libya (p.11)
Yemen (p.11)



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- summarises briefly developments during the previous month in some 70 situations of current or potential conflict, listed alphabetically by region, providing references and links to more detailed information sources (all references mentioned are hyperlinked in the electronic version of this bulletin);
- assesses whether the overall situation in each case has, during the previous month, significantly deteriorated, significantly improved, or on balance remained more or less unchanged;
- alerts readers to situations where, in the coming month, there is a particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict, or a particular conflict resolution opportunity (noting that in some instances there may in fact be both); and
- summarises Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers that have been published in the last month.

CrisisWatch is compiled by Crisis Group's Brussels Research Unit, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of our some 140 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 60 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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Africa

Central Africa

➡ **Burundi** Political situation remained tense: head of human rights group APROHD Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa 6 May said CNDD-FDD youth league “Imbonerakure” receiving weapons and paramilitary training in Congo; Mbonimpa arrested and jailed 15 May, charged with endangering state security. Opposition Movement for Solidarity and Development (MSD) president Alexis Sinduhije detained 1 May in Brussels as result of arrest warrant and request for extradition issued by govt following March confrontation between MSD supporters and police; released 6 May. Political actors, parties met 20 May to discuss implementation of March 2013 electoral roadmap.

- “Burundi arrests rights activist for endangering state security”, Reuters, 17 May 2014.

➡ **Cameroon** Nigerian Islamist sect Boko Haram (BH) attacks near Nigerian border continued including attack on gendarmerie in Fotokol early May, senior BH leader Aladji Moustapha freed. BH 16 May attacked Chinese construction company near Waza, killed 1 soldier, reportedly abducted 10 Chinese workers. President Biya agreed to step up regional security cooperation, 17 May declared war against BH at security summit in Paris, 22 May met Chad President Deby to discuss concerted actions; 900 troops deployed to Far North 25-26 May. Cross-border attacks from CAR continued despite presence of international and national security forces: 18 abducted 2 May close to Garoua Boulai; govt 5 May said abductees freed by security forces.

- “Nigerian neighbour Cameroon faces ‘phantom enemy’ Boko Haram”, NBC News, 20 May 2014.

➡ **Central African Republic** Attacks, several involving armed herders, multiplied in NW and centre including 55 killed early May near Paoua, 30 in Markounda, thousands displaced. Clashes between anti-balaka and Seleka increased in centre: at least 22 killed in Mala early May; 30 killed in Dekoa mid-May. Intense clashes between unidentified fighters and French troops close to Paoua 6 May. Sectarian violence continued in Bangui: violent anti-govt protests followed 28 May attack on church in Bangui that killed at least 17; 2 killed when peacekeepers opened fire. Leaders of different Seleka factions 9 May met in Ndélé, created interim political committee, formed military wing and appointed former regional commander Joseph Zindeko military chief; PM Nzapayéké strongly condemned outcome, accused Seleka of creating parallel security forces, attempting to divide country. French Defense Minister le Drian 19 May visited Bangui, expressed opposition to partition. New Seleka Chief of staff Zindeko 20 May signed “confidence measures” pact with French peacekeepers to avert clashes with anti-balaka in Bambari. French troops in Bambari 22 May attempted to disarm Seleka, at least 1 killed in ensuing clashes with protesting crowds; 24 May responded to Seleka attacks, killed several. Anti-balaka leaders 15 May gathered in Bangui, elected Sébastien Wenezoui new militia coordinator; appointment contested by former chief Ngaïssona. UN and U.S. 9 and 13 May respectively imposed sanctions on former CAR President Bozizé, anti-balaka leader Lévi Yakité, Seleka military leader Noureddine Adam; U.S. also imposed sanctions on former

Seleka leader and transitional president Michel Djotodia and Democratic Front of the Central African Republic People (FDPC) leader Abdoulaye Miskine.

- “Central African Republic’s Seleka rebels reorganise”, BBC, 20 May 2014.

➡ **Chad** President Deby 12 May announced closure of CAR border to stop cross-border violence, 17 May declared total war against Boko Haram during regional security summit in Paris; Amnesty International criticized closure as cutting off crucial lifeline to civilians seeking refuge in Chad.

- “Cameroon, Chad finalize Boko Haram security talks”, VOA, 23 May 2014.

➡ **DR Congo** Anti-ADF operation “Sukola” continued in N Kivu; army seized most known ADF strongholds. Operations against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) stalled. 2 new Hutu groups “Force Populaire pour la Protection des Hutu” and “Ingobokagihugu”, allegedly collaborating with FDLR, formed in Lubero. Fighting between FDLR/allied groups and Mai Mai Cheka/NDC displaced thousands in Lubero. FARDC operations against the Alliance of Patriots for Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS) ongoing in Masisi/Walikale region. U.S. Sec State Kerry and Special Envoy Russ Feingold early May met with President Kabila, Kerry expressed concern over whether two-term limit will be respected in next election, announced \$30mn support for transparent elections and reconstruction programs in east. Tensions mounted between DRC and Republic of Congo over vast security operation in Brazzaville in recent months that led to expulsions of thousands of DRC nationals; UN 26 May denounced ensuing humanitarian crisis, demanded halt to deportations. Former warlord Katanga sentenced to 12-year jail term by ICC 23 May.

- “U.S. urges Kabila to act against FDLR”, Rwanda Focus, 5 May 2014.

➡ **Rwanda** HRW 16 May published report documenting 14 missing person cases, implicated state agents; police denied allegations. Ministry of Justice early May denied media reports international inquiry proved govt involvement in dissident attacks.

- “Rwanda police denies missing persons report”, VOA, 18 May 2014.

Horn of Africa

➡ **Kenya** Terror attacks escalated across Kenya killing at least 30 this month including: 12 killed 16 May in Nairobi; 12 killed 19 May in Mandera county; 2 soldiers killed in Lamu 26 May. Police rounded-up over 300 in Mombasa 24-25 May in crackdown following 22 May grenade attack that injured 2; 80 more Somalis deported to Mogadishu 20 May. Senior Al-Shabaab member Fuad Mohamed Khalaf Shongole 22 May threatened further attacks on Kenyan capital. UK, U.S., France, Australia 15 May issued travel warnings; UK nationals advised to leave Mombasa. Main opposition party 5 May demanded troop withdrawal from Somalia; govt rejected call, confirmed long-term commitment. Inter-clan violence continued in NE, dozens killed throughout month: 3 killed 13 May and 12 killed 29 May in Wajir county; 5 killed 17 May and 3 more killed 28 May in Mandera county; 2 killed in Garissa county 24 May. Inter-communal conflict in Turkana county 22-25 May left 1 dead, at least 44 homesteads burned, significant numbers of livestock stolen.

- “Nairobi rocked by two deadly explosions”, Guardian, 16 May 2014.

➤ **Somalia** Al-Shabaab attacks continued: 7 killed 3 May by bomb targeting former govt officials in Mogadishu; 19 killed 12 May by suicide bomber targeting regional administration officials in Baidoa; security minister resigned after 10 killed 24 May in attack on parliament in Mogadishu govt military chief 28 May survived Mogadishu bomb blast. 40 killed 27 May in clashes between Al-Shabaab and local militia in Aato, Bakool region. 130 MPs 8 May signed petition demanding president's resignation over continuing insecurity. AMISOM offensive slowed: 50 militants killed 20 May in Jilib, Middle Juba region; soldiers 22 May withdrew from some bases in Lower Shabelle region. UNSC 29 May extended UNSOM mission by 1 year; 400-strong UN force deployed 18 May at Mogadishu airport. Intra-factional violence between Marehan clans in BeletHawo, Gedo region killed 6. Al-Shabaab militants and AMISOM clashed near Wajid (Bakool region), 10 killed.

- "United Nations deploys troops in Somalia to defend staff from Al Shabaab insurgents", AFP, 18 May 2014.

➤ **Somaliland** Kenya govt 17 May announced plans to open diplomatic liaison office in Hargeisa, approved Somaliland liaison office in Nairobi. Govt forces 17 May attacked Sah-dher town, disputed Sool region

- "Kenya to open diplomatic liaison office in Hargeisa", Sabahi, 19 May 2014.

➤ **South Sudan** President Kiir, SPLM-IO leader Riek Machar 9 May signed agreement in Addis Ababa committing to cessation of hostilities, agreed to transitional govt and participatory peace process; Kiir 12 May postponed 2015 elections to allow more time for reconciliation. Despite renewed ceasefire clashes continued: govt forces, assisted by Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and Sudan People's Liberation Army-North (SPLA-N), 4 May recaptured rebel stronghold of Nasir, Upper Nile; UNHCR 6 May reported over 11,000 predominantly-Nuer refugees crossing into Ethiopia for fear of ethnically-targeted attacks; similar movements reported into Sudan after clashes around Unity's Bentiu early-mid month. UNMISS report 8 May found reasonable grounds to believe crimes against humanity committed by both sides; UNSG Ban 12 May urged creation of Special Tribunal to investigate; UNSC 27 May revised UNMISS mandate to prioritize civilian protection, human rights compliance, humanitarian assistance and ceasefire implementation, mandate extended to 30 Nov. U.S. Sec State Kerry 1 May warned of possible genocide; 6 May announced first sanctions against head of presidential guard and SPLA-IO military leader. UN humanitarian chief Amos 20 May warned 4mn threatened by famine, urged warring parties to allow humanitarian access; donor countries pledged additional \$600mn in aid.

- "Fighting not Talking: South Sudan's Warring Parties Jockey for Position", The African Peacebuilding Agenda, 13 May 2014.
- "South Sudan crisis among gravest in history, says UN", *Guardian*, 16 May 2014.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°217, *South Sudan: A Civil War by Any Other Name*, 10 April 2014.

➤ **Sudan** Opposition National Umma Party (NUP) leader Sadiq al-Mahdi arrested 17 May following accusations newly-formed paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) committed human rights abuses in Darfur and S Kordofan; NUP 17 May suspended participation in National Dialogue. Fighting between govt forces, govt-backed militias and SPLM-N continued in S Kordofan: Sudanese Air Force 1-2 May reportedly bombed catholic hospital in

Nuba Mountains, govt 8 May denied accusation; UN OCHA 19 May reported 116,000 displaced in April-May. Clashes continued in Darfur, including around Galab 19 May, El Fasher 20 May; 1 UNAMID peacekeeper killed 24 May, North Darfur. Defence Minister Abdurrahim Mohamed Hussein 23 May said army to launch second wave of "hot summer" operations. Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) late April and SPLM-N SG Arman 18 May urged complete cessation of hostilities.

- Jérôme Tubiana, "Out for Gold and Blood in Sudan", *Foreign Affairs*, 1 May 2014.
- "Sudan arrest threatens national dialogue", Al Jazeera, 19 May 2014.

➤ **Uganda** 4 National Resistance Movement (NRM) members arrested by police 4 May for trying to rally support for PM Mubazi's rumored 2016 presidential bid. Police 5 May dispersed gathering of opposition politicians, supporters including Kampala mayor celebrating nomination of by-election candidate. Head of military 20 May called for deployment of Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) troops to South Sudan; denied use of cluster bombs reported by UNMISS 8 May (see S Sudan).

- "Uganda calls for urgent deployment of troops in South Sudan", *Wall Street Journal*, 20 May 2014.

Southern Africa

➤ **Madagascar** Inter-communal clashes fuelled by cattle rustling early-mid month killed 22 and displaced 3,000 in southern Amboasary district; additional security forces deployed. MAPAR coalition still divided over role in opposition; 23 May elected former president Andry Rajoelina as leader. IMF, World Bank, EU, U.S. announced full resumption of development assistance.

- "22 morts dans des violences", BBC, 19 May 2014.

New Crisis Group Africa Report N°218, *A Cosmetic End to Madagascar's Crisis?*, 19 May 2014. Madagascar's recent elections marked an ostensible return to democracy, but unless the new government works hard to implement meaningful political, economic and social reforms, the prospect of further crisis is just a matter of time.

➤ **Mozambique** 87.7% of potential electorate registered for October elections as brigades finished work 9 May; RENAMO leader Dhlakama 23 May announced intention to run for president. RENAMO 28 May warned of bloodshed if army advance on Dhlakama hideout, 2 soldiers killed 15 May in army-RENAMO clash in Zambezia province. Peace talks resumed 19 May, disagreement over status of international monitors persisted.

- "Mozambique's Renamo opposition leader says to run for president", Reuters, 23 May 2014.

➤ **Zimbabwe** Economic downturn continued; govt 14 May slashed diamond licence fees, 15 May announced tax incentives for foreign investors, 26 May eased local ownership laws. China 7 May demanded gold collateral for loans; World Bank 16 May announced Zimbabwe not entitled to debt relief. MDC-T on brink of collapse: National Assembly Speaker Jacob Mudenda 8 May urged party factions to take divisions to court after repeated dismissal attempts from both sides. 18 injured 4 May in Zanu-PF, MDC-T clash in Epworth.

- "MDC-T factions fight over party leadership", *Zimbabwe Independent*, 9 May 2014.

West Africa

➡ **Côte d'Ivoire** Govt 14 May announced formation of new Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), opposition said commission not inclusive, prone to manipulation in next election. Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) 22 May asked supporters to boycott national census, accused ruling Rally of Republicans (RDR) of planning to use census for mass fraud; 27 May announced lifting of boycott. Govt agreed to let census run to end May following pressure from civil society, 27 May extended deadline to 14 June. 13 killed 15 May in attack on Fetai village, SW Ivorian-Liberian border, some 2,500 displaced; army regained control 16 May. Govt 31 May released 50 prisoners detained since 2010-2011 post-electoral crisis.

- ["La commission électorale indépendante sera réformée"](#), RFI, 20 May 2014.

➡ **Guinea** Opposition party Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) 11 May insisted local elections take place in 2014, rather than delay until 2015. Other major opposition leader, Sidya Touré, insisted presidential election should take place no later than 27 June 2015, called for single opposition candidate, reiterated concerns about lack of progress in electoral preparations. Authorities 26 May signed investment frameworks with international company to exploit iron ore in Simandou area.

- ["Sidya Touré : 'Si les élections n'ont pas lieu le 15 juin 2015, nous entrons dans une transition'"](#), GuinéeNews, 9 May 2014.

➡ **Guinea-Bissau** Presidential election runoff vote held peacefully 18 May with reported 78% voter turnout: PAIGC candidate José Mario Vaz declared winner 20 May with 61%; Chief of staff António Injai acknowledged results 21 May. Challenger Nuno Nabiam contested results, tried to negotiate positions in new regime, but recognised defeat 22 May. PAIGC and main challenger party PRS announced 22 May that they would work together for reconciliation. UNSC 29 May extended UNIOGBIS mandate until 30 Nov 2014.

- ["Main parties in joint peace vow"](#), APA, 23 May 2014.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°98, [Guinea-Bissau: Elections, But Then What?](#), 8 April 2014.

➡ **Liberia** Civil Law Court 21 May revoked license of 15 political parties for violating constitution, party registration law.

- ["Court revokes license of 15 political parties in Liberia"](#), FrontPageAfrica, 22 May 2014.

➡ **Mali** National Reconciliation Minister Ould Sidy Mohamed 3 May reiterated gov't willingness to engage in dialogue, warned that discussions must respect national territorial integrity, regional stability and principle of inclusion. High Council for Unity of Azawad (HCUA) 11 May expressed desire to hold dialogue outside Mali; FM and Minister for Reconciliation 22 May traveled to Algiers to discuss offer to facilitate talks; not all rebel groups accepted. Mauritanian President Ould Abdel Aziz 24 May visited Kidal, secured ceasefire agreement; UNSC 29 May exhorted gov't, rebels to uphold ceasefire. MNLA informant killed 2 May in Kidal by unidentified gunmen; French soldier killed 8 May near Tessalit; Serval forces 11 May arrested "Mortalla" Al-Housseini ag Ahayare, former political commissioner of Ansar Dine. PM Mara 17 May visited Kidal, prompting deadly clashes between Tuareg armed fighters and security forces: 8 soldiers killed and 25 injured; 28 Tuareg fighters killed and 62 wounded. MNLA early May abducted 4 civil servants and 24 Malian soldiers, blamed gov't's failure to advance

peace talks; hostages released 18-19 May after negotiations; PM Mara said gov't "officially at war with rebels". Following 17 May death of 8 gov't hostages in Kidal, President IBK said "cannot understand" why France pressuring gov't to negotiate with MNLA.

- ["Une quarantaine de soldats maliens tués et soixante-dix prisonniers, selon le MNLA"](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 22 May 2014.

➡ **Niger** Opposition Democratic Movement (MODEN) leader Hama Amadou 2 May requested Supreme Court settle dispute over his position after representatives of President Issoufou's ruling coalition argued Hama cannot remain National Assembly president; court 9 May confirmed Hama to remain assembly president until next presidential or legislative election. Govt 25 May reportedly arrested 40 opposition members close to Hama, including Hama's son, for plotting regime's overthrow, also announced closure of pro-opposition daily *Le Courrier*; authorities 30 May imposed ban on opposition demonstrations. Hama 31 May alleged unidentified people attempted to bribe his staff to assassinate him. Boko Haram members 6 May reportedly attacked army patrol in Diffa region.

- ["Niger arrests fourteen suspected Boko Haram gunmen after patrol ambushed"](#), Reuters, 7 May 2014.

➡ **Nigeria** Security remained volatile in centre and NE. Some 500 civilians killed in suspected Boko Haram (BH) attacks including: 19 killed 1 May in Abuja bombing; over 300 killed 5 May in Gamboru Ngala town, Borno state; 60 civilians, some 200 BH members killed 13 May in Kalabge district, Borno state; over 120 killed 20 May in Jos city, Plateau state; 31 soldiers killed 26 May in attack on barracks in Buni Yandi town, Yobe state; 2 traditional leaders abducted 30 May near Shaffa town, Borno state. Govt soldiers 14 May opened fire on own general after 12 soldiers killed in BH ambush. BH leader Abubakar Shekau 5 May released video, admitted to 15 April abduction of nearly 300 schoolgirls; 12 May demanded release of all BH prisoners in exchange for girls' return. UNSC 22 May added BH to list of Al-Qaeda-linked organisations, approved sanctions. U.S. gov't 14 May announced drone and aircraft flights begun in Nigeria in search of abducted girls. Parliament 20 May approved extension of state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states by 6 months. President Jonathan 29 May offered amnesty to BH members; 17 May attended summit in Paris with regional and European leaders, U.S. representatives, discussed cooperation on BH.

- Comfort Ero, ["Nigeria's insurgency has to be tackled at the roots"](#), *Financial Times*, 13 May 2014.
- ["Boko Haram's two-pronged attack"](#), BBC, 21 May 2014.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°216, [Curbing Violence in Nigeria \(II\): The Boko Haram Insurgency](#), 3 April 2014.

Asia

North East Asia

➡ **China (internal)** 31 killed and 90 injured 22 May in Urumqi market, attack linked to Uighur-Han tension. Separatist East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) 11 May claimed responsibility for April bomb and knife attack in Urumqi station. Security increased following attacks: 39 sentenced 21 May and 55 27 May in Xinjiang to up to 15 years in jail on terrorism charges, 3 sentenced to death; suspects believed to be Uighur. 6 injured 6 May in knife attack

in Guangzhou. Nationwide anti-terror campaign announced by state media 25 May; Xinjiang police 26 May detained 5, seized 1.8 tonnes of bomb-making material in Hotan. President Xi 29 May urged development, education, employment and legal religious activities to promote Xinjiang stability.

- [“Urumqi attack kills 31 in China’s Xinjiang region”](#), BBC, 23 May 2014.

➡ **China/Japan** Security advisory panel to Japanese PM Shinzo Abe 15 May agreed constitution should be reinterpreted to allow “collective self-defence”. China-Japan-Republic of Korea Agreement of Promotion, Facilitation and Protection of Investment came into effect 17 May, despite ongoing tensions over disputed territories; Japanese, Chinese trade ministers 17 May met for first time in 2 years at APEC forum, agreed to strengthen economic cooperation. Japanese media 19 May suggested Japan planning to build 3 military outposts on disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands; Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said specific locations not decided. Chinese fighter jets 24 May flew within 30 metres of Japanese surveillance aircraft in disputed airspace near Senkaku/Diaoyu islands increasing diplomatic tension.

- [“Japan to establish island military posts”](#), AFP, 19 May 2014.

➡ **Korean Peninsula** Joint US-ROK investigation 9 May concluded 3 drones found late March near demilitarised zone from DPRK; DPRK state media decried accusations as “charade for confrontation”. Pyongyang 10 May renewed threat of nuclear testing. U.S. National Intelligence Director James Clapper 14 May met ROK Defence Minister Kim Kwan-jin, reportedly discussed DPRK escalating rhetoric. Chinese FM Wang Yi visited ROK counterpart Yun Byung-se 26 May, agreed to increase cooperation on opposition to DPRK’s nuclear testing. DPRK fishing boats turned away with warning shots by ROK coastguard 20 May after crossing maritime border; DPRK military 22 May exchanged fire with South Korea warship across disputed sea border. Japanese and DPRK delegations finished talks 28 May in Stockholm aimed at lifting sanctions in return for investigation into abduction of Japanese citizens in 1970s and 1980s; missile and nuclear tests also on agenda; DPRK agreed to reopen investigation into abductions, both parties agreed to further meetings. High-rise apartment collapse in Pyongyang rumoured to have caused up to 500 deaths; DPRK media reported public apologies by senior officials. ROK President Park continued major govt shake-up in wake of Sewöl ferry disaster.

- [“North Korea rages over South’s drone allegations”](#), CNN, 13 May 2014.

South Asia

➡ **Afghanistan** Final results from April presidential election announced 15 May: former FM Abdullah Abdullah won 45%, former Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani second with 31.6%; second round run-off scheduled for 14 June. Western observers estimated fraud tainted 8-9% of votes, down from 25% in 2009. Independent Election Commission dismissed over 5,000 staff over fraud allegations, announced plans for thousands of additional polling stations in populated areas; observers raised concern about security forces’ ability to protect additional sites. Violence continued including: 13 killed in Taliban attack on Nangarhar provincial justice department 12 May; security forces next day killed senior Taliban member Mullah Abid Rahmani in Zabul Province; militants 23 May attacked Indian consulate in Herat, 3

assailants killed; suicide bomber 26 May killed at least 2 Afghan soldiers in Kabul. U.S. President Obama 27 May announced plans for 9,800 troops to stay after end-2014 expiry of NATO mandate, to be largely withdrawn over 2 years.

- Louise Arbour and Graeme Smith, [“Reduced to eating grass, Afghanistan’s forces are in dire need of our help”](#), *Globe and Mail*, 12 May 2014.
- [“Afghan presidential election heads for run-off in mid-June”](#), Reuters, 15 May 2014.

.....
New Crisis Group Asia Report N°256, [Afghanistan’s Insurgency after the Transition](#), 12 May 2014. To contain a growing, increasingly confident insurgency as NATO troops withdraw, Afghanistan needs continued international support, including military, and the new government in Kabul will need to reinvigorate the state’s commitment to the rule of law.

➡ **Bangladesh** Leader of opposition Bangladesh National Party (BNP) Khaleda Zia 4 May threatened violent demonstrations if govt refused to step down, same day accused ruling Awami League (AL) party and its political allies of 1 May murdering 7 abductees 3 days earlier in Narayanganj district; anti-terrorism Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) accused by relatives of victims of carrying out killings on behalf of local AL leader Nur Hossain. Govt 5 May forced 3 RAB officers to retire; public prosecutors 22 May charged 2 senior officers with murder. Information Minister Hasanul Huq Inu said RAB killed 373 during Zia’s tenure as PM. High Court judge 11 May asked govt to consider amending police laws to guarantee constitutionally protected rights. International Crimes Tribunal, tasked with prosecuting war crimes committed during 1971 independence war, 11 May formally charged and issued arrest warrant for former Jatiya Party legislator Abdul Jabbar; Jabbar found guilty 29 May of crimes including killing 36, forcibly converting 200 Hindus to Islam.

- [“Two officers of elite police unit charged with murder in Bangladesh”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 22 May 2014.

➡ **India (non-Kashmir)** Result of general elections announced 16 May: Hindu nationalist BJP won landslide victory, absolute majority in parliament. Pakistani PM Sharif congratulated incoming PM Narendra Modi, attended inauguration ceremony 26 May. At least 43 Muslims killed in Assam state early month, reportedly by Bodo rebels targeting migrant communities for not supporting Bodo candidate in election; Indian police 4 May shot dead 3 suspects. 7 police killed in suspected Maoist bombing 11 May in Maharashtra state.

- [“Death toll hits 43 after attacks on Muslims in Assam”](#), *Guardian*, 7 May 2014.

➡ **Kashmir** Last phase of Indian general elections held 7 May in Jammu and Kashmir: opposition BJP and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) won all seats. Election turnout at 50.1%, up from 39.7% in 2009. Polls relatively calm despite separatist boycotts, demonstrations in several towns and reports of threats to voters. Militants 8 May killed village govt head associated with National Congress in Kulgam district. 2 reported killed when PDP supporters clashed with supporters of losing candidate in Kupwara district 16 May. Several incidents along Line of Control including Indian soldier killed, 2 wounded, in IED explosion 19 May. 2 militants reported killed by police near Srinagar 25 May.

- [“2 killed in clash at PDP’s victory celebration in Kashmir”](#), Hindu, 17 May 2014.

➡ **Nepal** UCPN-Maoists, CPN-Maoists held reunification talks mid-month; UCPN chairman said ready to hand leadership to CPN chairman if helpful for reunification effort.

- [“Will Modi’s win impact India-Nepal relations?”](#), Al Jazeera, 21 May 2014.

➡ **Pakistan** No tangible progress in govt’s dialogue process with Pakistani Taliban (TTP): army offensive in N Waziristan continued including scores killed late May in army air strikes on suspected militant hideouts, ground fighting. 9 soldiers killed in roadside bombing 8 May. Several militants reported killed in fighting between rival TTP factions, including over 20 killed 6-8 May; key faction linked with Mehsud tribe announced split from TTP late month. Head of Taliban intermediary committee Maulana Samiul Haq 18 May admitted infighting complicating peace talks with govt. Gunmen 7 May killed Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) member Rashid Rehman in Multan; 26 May killed American-Pakistani doctor in Punjab province. 8 killed in Karachi in criminal and militant violence 3 May.

- [“Key Mehsud tribe breaks away from the Pakistani Taliban”](#), AFP, 28 May 2014.

➡ **Sri Lanka** Govt 18 May celebrated fifth anniversary of civil war’s end with large military parade, public events in south; military-enforced ban on Tamils commemorating dead in north and east, Jaffna University closed; small Tamil National Alliance (TNA) commemoration 16 May outside provincial council building in Jaffna disrupted by police. TNA 24 May condemned govt listing of Tamil diaspora groups and activists as terrorist supporters; Malaysia 26 May deported 3 Sri Lankan Tamils on suspicion of working to revive LTTE. Newly-elected Indian PM Modi met President Rajapaksa 27 May, urged “early and full implementation” of 13th amendment and further devolution to support national reconciliation. University students 7 May held large demonstration against closure of health services degree program outside president’s residence in Colombo, in violation of police ban; more than dozen student leaders arrested 16 May, reportedly beaten in police custody, at least 4 hospitalised. Ruling party urban councilor 12 May shot dead by unknown gunmen outside Colombo. Former Chief Justice Shirani Bandaranayake refused to plead guilty or non-guilty to corruption charges 12 May.

- [“Sri Lanka blocks Tamil memorials amid war parade”](#), BBC, 18 May 2014.

South East Asia

➡ **Indonesia** Election Commission 9 May released official results of April parliamentary elections; main Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) won 18.9% of vote, failed to secure 25% needed to field candidate in 9 July presidential election without coalition. PDI-P candidate Joko Widodo 19 May announced former VP Jusuf Kalla from Golkar party as running mate; Golkar announced support for former army general Prabowo Subianto and running mate Hatta Rajasa, former chief economics minister.

- [“Indonesia’s Jokowi gets election boost from VP pick”](#), Reuters, 19 May 2014.

➡ **Myanmar** Govt, Kachin Independence Organisation leaders met 13 May for bilateral talks following April clashes; representatives of other ethnic groups, UN, China attended as observers: agreement reached on establishing joint conflict resolution committee.

Another round of multilateral peace talks between govt, various armed groups held 19-21 May. Enumeration period for controversial census extended to 10 June to reach populations in Kachin, Rakhine states. Opposition NLD, 88 Generation group held series of joint rallies across country pushing for constitutional change. Election commission 15 May consulted with political parties after releasing draft of new campaigning regulations; draft criticised for restricting ability to campaign freely.

- [“Myanmar opposition concerned over proposed campaign rules”](#), Radio Free Asia, 15 May 2014.

.....
New Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°144, [Counting the Costs: Myanmar’s Problematic Census](#), 15 May 2014. Myanmar’s controversial census has inflamed ethnic tensions at a critical moment in the peace process. Releasing the data will require great political sensitivity to avoid further violence, all the more so with elections scheduled for 2015.

➡ **Philippines** Skirmishes in Mindanao continued including 39 miners taken hostage by New People’s Army (NPA) rebels 3 May during confrontation with govt forces in Compostela Valley. Govt, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) 6 May announced creation of regulatory bodies to oversee peace process. Philippine and Indonesian FM’s met 23 May in Manila, signed agreement defining maritime borders after 20-year dispute; tensions with China continued (see South China Sea).

- [“Philippines and Indonesia resolve 20-year border dispute”](#), BBC, 23 May 2014.

➡ **South China Sea** China-Vietnam tensions escalated: Chinese oil rig placed in disputed waters near Paracel Islands 2 May; China sent 80 ships including 7 military vessels to support rig, Hanoi sent 29 ships to disrupt operations. Vietnam 7 May accused Chinese vessels of using water cannon against Vietnamese ships, ramming several vessels; Vietnamese boat sank 26 May after colliding with Chinese vessel. Anti-China protests in Vietnam 13 May left estimated 140 Chinese nationals injured and 2 dead; thousands of Chinese citizens evacuated. Philippines officials 14 May said satellite images revealed Chinese construction on South Johnson Reef on disputed Spratly Islands. South China Sea dispute dominated 11 May ASEAN Summit: Vietnamese and Philippines pushed for stronger action against China, statement released by ASEAN leaders called for restraint by all parties. Vietnamese PM 21 May said legal action being considered against China.

- [“Hot oil on troubled waters”](#), *Economist*, 17 May 2014.

➡ **Thailand** Army 22 May staged coup after months of political unrest, violence and large-scale demonstrations: suspended constitution; dismissed caretaker govt; arrested hundreds of politicians including former PM Yingluck, democracy activists and journalists. Several released under orders to remain in country, not oppose coup. Coup followed army chief Gen Prayuth Chan-ocha’s announcement of nationwide martial law 20 May: military shut down broadcasts from partisan TV and radio stations, disbanded govt’s temporary security centre, instructed all protesters to remain peaceful. Prayuth 26 May said formally recognised as head of National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) by King, warned force will be used in case of renewed protests. Junta ordered military tribunal to try lèse majesté and national-security cases. Hundreds of anti-coup protesters rallied daily in Bangkok late month, in defiance of martial law but without serious violence. Prayuth 30 May said 15 months of “reform”, “reconciliation” needed before general elections. Ahead of army intervention, Constitu-

tional Court 7 May removed caretaker PM Yingluck Shinawatra and 9 cabinet ministers for abuse of power; governing Pheu Thai Party called court ruling “judicial coup”. National Anti-Corruption Commission 8 May voted to impeach Yingluck. Widespread pro- and anti-govt protests early month: 3 killed, over 20 injured 15 May in grenade and shooting attack on anti-govt protesters in central Bangkok. Violence in south continued with several insurgent attacks including: 2 bombs detonated 6 May in Hat Yai city, 2 police and 6 civilians injured; coordinated attacks across Narathiwat and Yala provinces 11 May, 1 dead and 9 injured; bombing at Khok Pho Hospital, Pattani, 28 May, 10 injured.

- [“Thai junta chief declares 15 months of ‘reforms’ before general elections”](#), AFP, 31 May 2014.

Pacific

➤ **Papa New Guinea** Govt mid-May started resettlement of “genuine” asylum seekers from Australian-backed Manus Island detention centre; Australian report on mid-Feb riots in camp released 23 May, called for increased security; report criticized by PNG police as “cover-up”. Triumph Heritage Empowerment (THE) Party divided after dismissal of THE leader Don Polye from PNG Treasury and Polye’s move to opposition; 3 MPs resigned from party mid-May.

- [“‘Frustration’ sparked riots at Australian-backed detention center”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 26 May 2014.

Europe and Central Asia

Balkans

➤ **Bosnia** Some 200 protested outside Federation parliament in Sarajevo 9 May calling for resignation of entity govt, demanding govt fulfil demands submitted by citizens’ plenums in April. UN High Rep to Bosnia 15 May emphasised need for ongoing international oversight of 1995 Dayton peace agreement implementation.

- [“Protest marchers pile pressure on Bosnia’s Federation govt”](#), *Balkan Insight*, 9 May 2014.

➤ **Kosovo** Main parties 7 May agreed to dissolve parliament and hold snap elections 8 June following failure to agree on creation of national army; Serb parties refused to support move unless guaranteed reserved seats in parliament for another 4 years. Montenegrin officials warned would seek international arbitration in Kosovo border dispute if no agreement reached soon.

- [“Kosovo leaders agree on early election after vote on army nixed”](#), *Reuters*, 6 May 2014.

➤ **Macedonia** Opposition Social Democratic Union 28 May resigned seats in parliament in protest over 27 April snap poll results. Arrest of ethnic Albanian suspected of killing young Macedonian sparked protests, ethnic clashes in Skopje 20-21 May; several dozen protesters detained, 5 charged; civil rights groups accused police of excessive force. NATO Sec Gen Rasmussen 23 May said resolution of name dispute with Greece key to joining alliance.

- [“Opposition resigns seats in parliament”](#), *ABC News*, 28 May 2014.

Caucasus

➤ **Abkhazia (Georgia)** (side) Demonstrators 27 May stormed President Ankvab’s office; head of national Security Council denounced “coup”, reiterated security forces’ allegiance to president. Opposition called for govt’s resignation, Ankvab refused to dismiss govt or step down. Russia reportedly sent two senior Kremlin officials including presidential advisor Vladislav Surkov to Sukhumi following crisis.

- [“Demonstrators storm president’s headquarters in Abkhazia”](#), *Reuters*, 27 May 2014.

➤ **Armenia** French President Hollande 12 May suggested EU association with Armenia should allow for commercial union between Armenia and Russia.

- [“Hollande says Armenia can reach EU accord, join Russian-led Customs Union”](#), *RFE/RL*, 12 May 2014.

➤ **Azerbaijan** Azerbaijan assumed chairmanship of Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers amid criticism by some European officials over ongoing rights crackdown: court 6 May found 8 youth movement activists guilty of organising “mass disorders”, possessing weapons and illegal drugs, sentenced to 6-8 years jail; opposition journalist sentenced to 8 years jail 15 May. Chairman of election monitoring organisation Anar Mammadli sentenced 26 May to 5 ½ years jail for falsifying election results, tax evasion, illegal business activities; U.S. embassy said charges “highly questionable”.

- [“Azerbaijan takes leading role in Council of Europe, amid rights crackdown”](#), *RFE/RL*, 13 May 2014.

➤ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Several reports of clashes along front line: 2 Azerbaijani troops, 1 Armenian soldier reported killed in clashes near Fizuli region 28 May. Armenian President Sarkisian visited 9 May to mark WW2 Victory Day.

- [“Two Azerbaijani officers, one Karabakh soldier dies in latest clash”](#), *RFE/RL*, 28 May 2014.

➤ **Georgia** NATO SRSG for Caucasus and Central Asia 1 May praised Georgia’s efforts toward membership, said NATO looking at “next steps”. French President Hollande 13 May and European Council President Van Rompuy 14 May visited Tbilisi, met with President Margvelashvili and PM Garibashvili, discussed Georgia’s integration into EU and NATO; Van Rompuy announced Association Agreement to be signed 27 June. Approx 500 residents 29 May protested in Gardabani, demanded investigation into 28 May attack on ethnic Azerbaijanis by ethnic Georgians. EU 14 May hailed release of 17 Georgian nationals detained in breakaway South Ossetia region. Former health minister and opposition MP severely beaten in Tbilisi 27 May.

- [“Georgia’s justice minister appeals for calm in Garabani”](#), *RFE/RL*, 29 May 2014.

➤ **North Caucasus (Russia)** President Putin appointed Lt. Gen Sergey Melikov as new envoy to N Caucasus, mid-May announced new ministry for N Caucasus headed by Lev Kuznetsov, governor of Krasnoyarsk Krai. Dagestan attacks included: 3 suspected insurgents killed in Khasavyurt 5 May; 7 suspected insurgents killed in Makhachkala 7 May; 3 police killed, 10 injured in attack in Sogratl’ village 15 May;

imam of Stalskoe village mosque found dead 16 May. 10 Dagestanis arrested in Moscow early May reportedly preparing terrorist attack. 2 police injured, 2 assailants killed 17 May in clash in Chegem city, Kabardino-Balkaria; leader of local insurgency group and 2 insurgents killed 18 May in Dulugubey village; 4 suspected insurgents killed in Baksan city 23 May. 7 suspected militants, including republican insurgency leader Artur Getagazhev, killed 24 May in Ingushetia. Chechen security presence in Ukraine widely reported, repeatedly denied by head of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov. Tatarstan insurgency leader Rais Mingalejev killed alongside another suspect militant 1 May.

- [“Seven militants killed by Russian forces in North Caucasus”](#), Reuters, 24 May 2014.

Eastern Europe

➤ **Moldova** Govt early May put border forces on alert amid increasing concern over escalating crisis in Ukraine. Russian deputy PM and special representative for Moldova’s breakaway Transdniestrian region Dmitry Rogozin visited Transdniestria 9 May, pledged Russia would guarantee security of region; Chisinau summoned Russian ambassador to explain Rogozin’s visit. Rogozin 12 May reportedly warned of consequences if Chisinau signs EU Association Agreement.

- [“Moldova wants Russian explanation for V-day trip to Transdniestria”](#), RFE/RL, 6 May 2014.

➤ **Ukraine** Presidential elections held 25 May: businessman Petro O. Poroshenko elected by wide margin, vowed to end war, unite Ukraine and push for early parliamentary elections in 2014. Violence continued in east where pro-Russian separatists prevented voting in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Russian President Putin 7 May called for postponement of independence referendums in east to encourage dialogue, said presidential elections move in “right direction”; referendums nevertheless held 11 May in Donetsk and Luhansk regions; separatists announced 90% voted in favour of “people’s republics” amid claims of widespread voter fraud. Acting president Turchynov 1 May reinstated conscription, warned Ukraine on “full combat alert”. 2 Ukrainian military helicopters shot down 2 May by separatists, pilot and serviceman killed; around 42 killed in clashes in Odessa same day. About 20 killed in Mariupol clashes 9 May. Major battle for control of Donetsk airport 27 May, at least 30 separatists reported killed. Ukrainian general among 14 reported killed when helicopter downed near Slovyansk 29 May. 4 OSCE military observers reported missing in Donetsk region 26 May; at least 16 soldiers killed by separatists at checkpoint near Donetsk 22 May. UNSC 28 May discussed Ukraine, UN political chief Jeffrey Feltman said violence in east dramatically escalated; at early May meeting Russia warned of “catastrophic consequences” of Kyiv military operations, U.S. said response “proportionate and reasonable”. NATO Sec Gen Rasmussen 30 May said signs of partial withdrawal of Russian troops from near Ukrainian border.

- [“Pro-European businessman claims victory in Ukraine presidential vote”](#), *New York Times*, 25 May 2013.

New Crisis Group Europe Report N°231, [Ukraine: Running out of Time](#), 14 May 2014. Ukraine needs a government of national unity that reaches out to its own people and tackles the country’s long overdue reforms; both Russia and Western powers should back a vision for the country as a bridge between East and West, not a geopolitical battleground.

Western Europe/Mediterranean

➤ **Cyprus** European Court of Human Rights 12 May ruled Turkey must pay €90mn compensation for human rights violations related to 1974 Cyprus invasion: €60mn to enclaved Greek Cypriots on Karpas peninsula in north, €30mn to relatives of missing persons. Turkish FM Davutoğlu said Turkey did not intend to pay and decision hurts ongoing reunification talks. New phase in talks between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots started 13 May with discussion of property issue; chief Turkish Cypriot negotiator 28 May said no agreement on roadmap for next stage, issue of natural gas discoveries could present obstacles in talks. During highest level American visit to island in over 50 years, U.S. VP Biden 21 May said Republic of Cyprus is only recognised gov’t, reiterated U.S. commitment to solving Cyprus problem and developing energy partnership.

- [“Prudent on talks, Turkish Cypriots say gas find could be obstacle”](#), Reuters, 28 May 2014.

➤ **Turkey** Over 300 killed, hundreds wounded, in coal mine explosion in town of Soma, Aegean Manisa province 13 May; police used water cannon, tear gas in subsequent protests in several major cities, including Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. Police fired live bullets during clashes in Istanbul 22-23 May, 1 civilian shot, 1 died in grenade blast, at least 9 injured including 7 police. Woman, in coma since inhaling tear gas during Dec protests, died 30 May. No visible progress toward gov’t-PKK settlement, ceasefire continued to hold despite several breaches. Soldiers 19 May reportedly shot dead Syrian Kurdish woman crossing border in Şırnak province. FM Davutoğlu 8 May said compensation talks with Israel over 2010 Mavi Marmara incident progressing; passenger injured in incident died 23 May after 4 years in coma, court 26 May issued arrest warrants for 4 former Israeli military chiefs. European Court of Human Rights 12 May issued ruling against Turkey on 1974 Cyprus invasion (see Cyprus).

- Hugh Pope, [“Free Associating: Looking for Options on the EU-Turkey Relationship”](#), Solving the EU-Turkey-Cyprus Triangle, 22 May 2014.
- [“Clashes in Istanbul kill two as protest anniversary nears”](#), Reuters, 23 May 2014.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°230, [The Rising Costs of Turkey’s Syrian Quagmire](#), 30 April 2014.

Asia

Central Asia

➤ **Kazakhstan** President Nazarbayev 7 May met U.S. Deputy Sec State William Burns instead of attending Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) meeting in Moscow as scheduled. Kazakh Senate 15 May ratified agreement with Russia to create unified regional air defence system. Nazarbayev 19-22 May visited China, discussed bilateral cooperation. Founding treaty of Eurasian Economic Union (EES) signed by Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus 29 May in Astana, due to come into force 1 Jan 2015; dozens of protesters demonstrating against EES arrested 29 May in Astana.

- [“U.S. Deputy Secretary of State visiting Kazakhstan”](#), RFE/RL, 8 May 2014.

➤ **Kyrgyzstan** Kyrgyz-Tajik border tensions continued: some 60 injured 7 May in mass brawl in Vorukh, Tajik enclave; mob same day attacked Kok-Terek village in Kyrgyzstan, burned vehicles, shops and petrol station. Kyrgyz citizens 9 May blocked Isfara-Vorukh road, accused Tajiks, demanded prosecution of those responsible. Crowds same day gathered in Batken, demanded governor's resignation, said if govt fails to resolve border issue residents would do it. Both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan govts said they would accelerate border delimitation and demarcation. Kyrgyz parliament committee suggested limiting water supply from Toktogul reservoir to Uzbekistan, risking increased tensions with Uzbekistan. Kyrgyz security 17 May arrested Uzbek intelligence agent, said he was under orders to kill Rashod Kamalov, influential imam and alleged Hizb ut-Tahrir leader.

- "Clashes along Kyrgyz-Tajik border", RFE/RL, 7 May 2014.

➤ **Tajikistan** Tajik authorities continued crackdown on local networks sending citizens to fight in Syria; bill adopted mid-May to allow prosecution of Tajiks for taking part in military conflicts abroad. 3 killed in clashes in Khorog, Gorno-Badakhshan region, following police offensive against suspected criminals 21 May; protesters 24 May attacked security forces building, 1 killed; civil society and authorities 25 May agreed to investigation.

- "Tajikistan amends criminal code to address nationals fighting abroad", RFE/RL, 21 May 2014.

➤ **Turkmenistan** Commission formed by President Berdymukhamedov 17 May tasked with modernising constitution in line with international norms. Berdymukhamedov 14 May visited Beijing, discussed continued cooperation including on gas exports from Turkmenistan.

- "New Turkmen opposition movement appears", RFE/RL, 30 April 2014.

➤ **Uzbekistan** Central Election Commission 12 May approved election plan and schedule: parliamentary and local elections to be held 21 Dec 2014, presidential elections May 2015. NATO liaison office opened 16 May in Tashkent; SRSJ James Appathurai confirmed cooperation on defence, military and counter narcotics initiatives. Karakalpakstan independence groups claimed to have formed militia group.

- "Post-Crimea, whither Uzbekistan's 'autonomous' Karakalpakstan?", Eurasianet, 5 May 2014.

Latin America

➤ **Colombia** Govt, FARC representatives 16 May reached preliminary agreement on drug policies, 3rd issue under discussion in Havana peace talks; parties agreed, inter alia, on national crop substitution program and demining initiative; first time FARC has implicitly recognised wider links to drug-economy. Agreement followed 16 May historic announcement of joint FARC/ELN unilateral ceasefire 20-28 May. Óscar Iván Zuluaga, peace talks sceptic, won first round of presidential elections 25 May; faces incumbent President Santos in 15 June run-off. Turnout historically low at 40%. Video released 17 May showed Zuluaga apparently discussing ways to use classified military intelligence to undermine peace process; followed 6 May arrest of Zuluaga campaign aide for allegedly spying on Santos and FARC negotiator email accounts. Santos' chief campaign manager resigned 5 May, accused of having received \$12mn from notorious drug trafficker.

Ombudsman's Office 12 May said some 2,500 indigenous people from High Baudó region (Chocó) displaced by fighting between ELN and NIAG Urabeños. Police 30 May arrested 46 NIAG Rastrojos members in Barranquilla, Atlantico dept. Govt 8 May created national platform to discuss peasant demands established during March meeting of "Agrarian Summit", end new wave of social protests; FARC 13 May praised grassroots organisations for achieving "formidable triumph".

- Javier Ciurlizza, "La paz en los tiempos de la ira", El Colombiano, 18 May 2014.
- Christian Voelkel, "Progress Meets Politics", Latin America Crime and Politics, 20 May 2014.
- "Colombia and Farc rebels agree on drug trade plan", BBC, 17 May 2014.

➤ **Ecuador** President Correa 24 May announced backing constitutional amendment which would allow him and other state representatives to run for re-election indefinitely.

- "Ecuador's president backs indefinite re-elections, coy about his plans", Reuters, 24 May 2014.

➤ **Guatemala** Former Supreme Court Justice Thelma Aldana sworn in 17 May for four-year term as attorney general, ending selection process criticised as opaque and politicised. Aldana vowed to make cases involving organised crime, including drug trafficking, priority as well as violence against women, said she would formulate new criminal justice policy, promised to consult with UN International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG); did not specify whether she will re-prosecute former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt. Authorities 15 May arrested alleged drug lord Jairo Orellana Morales, reportedly linked both to Zetas cartel and Lorenzanas family accused of trafficking cocaine, in eastern Zacapa dept after shoot-out with military and police forces which left 2 dead. Pérez Molina 18 May announced creation of air task force to fight drug trafficking.

- "New bad old times for Guatemala?", *New York Times*, 14 May 2014.

➤ **Mexico** Some 450 former vigilantes sworn in as rural police officers in Michoacán 10 May; federal security envoy Alfredo Castillo said govt received over 3,000 applications from former vigilantes, announced self-defence groups registered about 8,000 firearms under 14 April agreement requiring them to put down weapons or join official security forces. Some vigilantes reportedly intend to continue patrols, maintain checkpoints. Govt Minister Osorio Chong 12 May announced security plan for Tamaulipas state, where surging violence since early April has killed approx 100; Tampaulipas intelligence chief and 2 bodyguards died 5 May in shoot-out. Zapatista movement leader Subcomandante Marcos 25 May announced stepping down from public leadership.

- "Mexico begins swearing in former vigilantes for new Michoacan force", BBC, 10 May 2014.

➤ **Venezuela** Tensions remained high: opposition Democratic Unity (MUD) alliance coordinator 13 May said talks with govt "in crisis"; President Maduro 14 May said he had no intention of abandoning talks, hoped MUD would reciprocate. Regional FMs acting as negotiation facilitators visited, held meetings with both sides 18 May in bid to break deadlock but no progress made. Intensity of student-led protests continued to decline, but no easing of repression on part of security forces: 4 "peace camps" set up by protesters in different parts of Caracas violently dismantled 8 May.

- Javier Ciurlizza, “Dialogar requiere mucho más que dos”, Política Exterior, 8 May 2014.
- Javier Ciurlizza, “The Wrong Message: U.S. Sanctions on Venezuela”, Latin America Crime and Politics, 21 May 2014.
- “Venezuela detains dozens of anti-government protesters”, BBC, 14 May 2014.

New Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°30, *Venezuela: Tipping Point*, 21 May 2014. Failure to resolve the Venezuelan crisis could plunge the country into yet more violence, leaving it unable to address soaring criminality and economic decline and exposing the inability of regional inter-governmental bodies to manage the continent’s conflicts.

Middle East and North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

➡ **Israel-Palestine** Palestinian and Israeli leaders traded blame following April peace talks crisis and Fatah-Hamas announcement of formation of unity govt: Israel condemned Palestinian President Abbas for cooperating with Hamas; PLO criticised Israel for advancing settlement construction during talks, not presenting position on borders. Seeking to deter future prisoner releases that accompanied past negotiations, Israeli govt 11 May authorised law which, if passed by Knesset, would allow judges to sentence some prisoners to life imprisonment without parole. PM Netanyahu declared support for controversial law defining Israel as “Nation State of the Jewish People”; passage uncertain. Fatah, Hamas officials 27 May said most ministerial posts in new unity govt agreed on, Abbas 29 May asked PM Hamdallah to form govt. Israeli troops 15 May shot dead 2 Palestinians in W Bank as Palestinians commemorated 1948 war; NGO later released video of killings and claimed they were unprovoked, UN and U.S. urged investigation.

- “Abbas asks PM Rami Hamdallah to head Fatah-Hamas unity cabinet”, BBC, 29 May 2014.

➡ **Lebanon** President Suleiman’s term ended 25 May following repeated failure of parliamentarians to elect successor; March 14 coalition threatened boycott of parliament in absence of new president, ministers attended cabinet session 30 May seeking agreement on rules governing presidential vacuum. Army’s “security plan” continued to contain rising levels of violence, several militants arrested or surrendered throughout month. Thousands demonstrated against worsening economic outlook 14 May. Several wounded in clashes between rival Palestinian groups 12 May in refugee camp in Sidon.

- “Lebanon’s political standoff leaves leadership vacancy”, *New York Times*, 24 May 2014.

New Crisis Group Middle East Report N°153, *Lebanon’s Hizbollah Turns Eastward to Syria*, 27 May 2014. Hizbollah’s intervention in Syria strengthens the Assad regime but transforms the Shiite movement as it redefines the enemy and itself within the confines of an increasingly sectarian struggle.

➡ **Syria** Regime and rebel fighters early May struck deal for rebel evacuation from Homs old quarter: hundreds of fighters withdrew to rebel-held areas north of city; army entered central Homs 9 May. Regime accepted agreement on terms it previously rejected; rebels secured withdrawal not achievable by military means. Regime compromise reportedly due to Iranian pressure; at least 1 Iranian citizen among roughly 40 detainees released by Islamic Front rebel alliance as part of deal. At least 39 killed by mortar fire 22 May during rally in support of President Assad’s candidacy in June’s presidential election. Rebel infighting intensified: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) gained ground in east; over 200 rebels reported killed in clashes early month in Deir al-Zour, over 100,000 residents fled. Tensions also rose between al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) and allied rebel groups: JN early month captured local rebel commander in southern province Daara, sparking clashes; leading groups cooperating with JN, including Islamic Front, 17 May released joint “Honour Covenant” conflicting with several of JN’s positions: rejected affiliation with ‘foreign entities’, welcomed cooperation with external states, avoided overt Islamist language. Several observers including Human Rights Watch, French FM Fabius accused regime of employing chlorine gas in multiple attacks over past months. UN Syria envoy Brahimi resigned 13 May. Russia, China 22 May vetoed UNSC resolution referring Syrian conflict to ICC.

- Didem Akyel Collinsworth, “How World Can Respond to Syria’s Refugee Crisis”, CNN, 12 May 2014.
- “Russia and China veto UN move to refer Syria to ICC”, BBC, 22 May 2014.


New Crisis Group Middle East Report N°151, *Flight of Icarus? The PYD’s Precarious Rise in Syria*, 8 May 2014. The PYD (Kurdish Democratic Union Party) has imposed its dominance in northern Syria, but its long-run prospects – like those of the areas it controls – depend on the party’s ability to adopt a more balanced and inclusive strategy.

Gulf



➡ **Iran** Fourth round of talks between Iran and P5+1 seeking comprehensive nuclear agreement held in Vienna 14-16 May, no progress achieved: U.S. and allies insisted Iran drastically scale back enrichment program, lengthening “breakout time” required for building nuclear bomb to at least 1 year; Iran insisted at least 19,000 centrifuges needed to meet country’s practical needs. Zarif and P5+1 lead negotiator Ashton held follow-up meeting in Istanbul 26-27 May. IAEA announced Iran offered additional information on past experiments with exploding bridgewire detonators, part of what IAEA considers “possible military dimensions” of nuclear program, after agency early month signalled dissatisfaction with information provided; Iran agreed to provide more information by 25 Aug, including on alleged large-scale high-explosives experimentation, studies on neutron transport. IAEA confirmed Iran continuing to live up to obligations under Nov interim agreement, cut stockpile of 20% enriched uranium by around 80%.

- “IAEA says Iran agrees to address issues in nuclear bomb probe”, Reuters, 21 May 2014.

New Crisis Group Middle East Report N°152, *Iran and the P5+1: Solving the Nuclear Rubik’s Cube*, 9 May 2014. A comprehensive nuclear accord may be in reach if both sides – Iran and the Security Council permanent members plus Germany – show determination to settle on a technical agreement and isolate the deal from its complex regional context.


 **Iraq** Results of 30 April parliamentary elections reported 26 May: PM Maliki's State of Law list won 92 seats, more than 2 leading rival Shiite groups combined. Electoral commission reported 60% overall participation despite low turnout in govt-controlled parts of Anbar province. Maliki signalled intention to retain premiership in govt comprised of State of Law along with smaller parties, excluding leading Shia and Sunni rivals. Sunni Mouttahidoun group publicly abandoned hope of forming govt without Maliki, shifted focus to organising Sunni and secular groups for negotiations over formation of new govt. Deadly bombings across Baghdad mid-month followed election-day lull: at least 34 killed 13 May, at least 29 killed in bombings and shootings 15 May; at least 35 Shiite pilgrims killed 22 May. At least 74 killed across country 28 May, including dozens in several Baghdad car bombings. Govt forces escalated fight against insurgents in and around Falluja, including indiscriminate shelling with "barrel bombs"; scores killed, thousands fled. Increased tensions between previously allied anti-govt fighters after Falluja military council late-April accused Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) of kidnapping, beating, and disarming its members, trying to assert unilateral dominance; ISIL clashed with other groups, including over sale of gas and other commodities in eastern Anbar.

- "Thousands flee Iraq government assault on rebel-held Falluja", Reuters, 16 May 2014.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°150, *Falluja's Faustian Bargain*, 28 April 2014.

  **Yemen** Security and economic conditions deteriorated sharply as al-Qaeda retaliatory attacks against U.S.-backed govt offensive in south continued: AQAP raid on govt institutions in Seiyun, Hadramout, 23 May left at least 27 dead including 12 govt troops and 11 attackers; govt regained control of city 24 May. At least 23 killed 13 May in simultaneous attack on military positions in Azzan and Jul al-Rida. U.S. embassy in Sanaa suspended public services 8 May in anticipation of retaliatory attacks. Defence Minister Mohamed Nasser Ahmad and 2 senior security officers 9 May survived ambush traveling from Abyan to Shebwa province. President Hadi early May said country in "open war" with AQAP, would expand operations. Prominent AQAP figure Abu Abdel Rhaman al-Masri reportedly killed late May; army 25 May announced top AQAP militant Saleh al-Tays killed. Attacks against oil and infrastructure escalated in wake of govt offensive; main oil export pipeline bombed 6-7 May; gunmen same evening closed Maarib gas-fired power plant. Fighting in northern Amran province renewed 20 May between Huthi fighters and tribes aligned with Ahmar clan and Sunni Islamist party, Islah, backed by 310 military brigade. Dozens killed thus far; combatants on both sides preparing for further clashes. Fighting between army and Huthi fighters in Amran city late May left dozens dead including at least 13 soldiers.


- "Dozens dead in Yemen clashes", Al Jazeera, 20 May 2014.

North Africa


 **Algeria** Following April re-election, President Bouteflika 5 May named new cabinet, opposition refused offer to participate; Bouteflika 15 May proposed constitutional amendments including two-term presidential limit, less restrictions on media. Violence continued in south: 12 militants killed by govt forces 5 May in

Tamanrasset province. 2 AQIM members killed by govt forces 13 May in Boumerdes province; AQIM 1 May claimed responsibility for Kabylie attack 18-19 April that killed 11 soldiers. Govt 19 May closed border with Lybia, fearing influx of militants.

- "Algeria reviews border security after Tamanrasset operation", Magharebia, 15 May 2014.

 **Egypt** Presidential election held 26-28 May amid heavy security presence; Hamdeen Sabbahi, sole challenger to Former Defence Minister Field Marshal Abdelfattah el-Sisi, alleged number of violations; reports of detentions and arrests of campaign members, voter intimidation, pro-Sisi campaigning inside polling stations, Sabbahi's representatives denied access. PM Mehleb declared second day of voting public holiday, Election Commission extended voting to third day; both Sabbahi and Sisi filed complaints against extension. Early unofficial results suggested Sisi won around 93% of vote. Reported turnout numbers varied, judicial sources said around 44%. Sabbahi conceded defeat, questioned turnout numbers. Muslim Brotherhood-led National Alliance to Support Legitimacy claimed only around 10% voted, staged several protests; 4 supporters reported killed 30 May during clashes with police in Cairo. Tamarrod group said 1 member and 1 Sisi campaign coordinator shot dead in Giza province same day. In run-up to election, Sisi restricted public appearances to select TV interviews after claiming 2 assassination plots against him uncovered early month: campaign message included warnings 2 years of tough reforms needed; media should temper criticism of govt in interim; protests and strikes should cease; democracy not feasible in short term. Sisi showed no inclination towards reconciling with anti-coup forces. Violent unrest, acts of terrorism and state crackdown continued. Twin suicide bombings killed 3 in Sinai 2 May, claimed by insurgent group Ansar Beit al-Maqdis; same day 2 soldiers killed in Cairo bombings and 2 killed in Alexandria, reportedly during clashes between Morsi supporters and residents. 3 police killed 20 May in drive-by shooting outside Cairo's al-Azhar university. Court 21 May sentenced former president Mubarak to 3 years imprisonment for stealing public funds.

- Issandr El Amrani, "Egypt After the Election", Council On Foreign Relations, 23 May 2014.
- "Decision to extend vote further harms credibility of Egyptian political process", Democracy International, 28 May 2014.

  **Libya** Libya brought to brink of country-wide military showdown over persistent insecurity and General National Congress (GNC) decision to back Ahmed Maiteeq, widely perceived as backed by Misrata-based Islamist groups, as new PM despite fierce controversy over legality of his 4 May appointment; Maiteeq 25 May obtained disputed GNC vote of confidence. Retired army general Khalifa Hiftar, army units and tribal-backed forces from east 16 May launched military assault including airstrikes against militant Islamist groups in Benghazi; at least 70 killed in fighting; several army units including Benghazi-based Special Forces, Tobruk-based airforce units and Ibrahim Jedran's Petroleum Guards Force declared support for Hiftar's operation; Jedran and Hiftar 26 May said did not recognise Maiteeq's govt; interim PM al-Thinni's govt also questioned legality of Maiteeq's appointment. Militia allies 18 May attacked GNC in Tripoli, ordered its suspension; at least 4 killed, dozens injured. Radical Islamist Ansar al-Sharia Benghazi leader al-Zahawi 27 May vowed to battle Hiftar, accused U.S. of supporting him, threatened to

- bring foreign fighters to **Libya** U.S. 28 May issued travel warning, recommended U.S. citizens leave immediately.

 - ["The new danger in Benghazi"](#), *New York Times*, 27 May 2014.

- **Morocco** Govt 6 May gave police authority to enter universities in case of security threat following death of student 24 April in clash between Leftist and Islamist student groups,. Hundreds of sub-Saharan migrants 28 May stormed border fence with Spanish enclave of Melilla in northern Morocco.

 - ["Morocco tightens university security"](#), Magharebia, 15 May 2014.

- **Tunisia** Political calm marred by security incidents: state of emergency declared in south 9 May following violent clashes between inhabitants over agricultural land. Socio-economic protests continued in interior and south. Aziz Amami, blogger and leader of "I burned a police station" movement established to defend young demonstrators on trial for burning police stations during 2011 uprising arrested 12 May on drug charges, charges dismissed 25 May. Human rights groups reported Amani mistreated in custody, said arrest due to police desire for revenge. President Marzouki 6 May raised prospect of presidential pardons for jihadists while visiting Mount Chaambi area, target of ongoing military operations. 2 soldiers killed, 4 injured by landmine in Mount Chaambi 23 May. PM Jomaa 25 May reported terrorist operation targeting national leaders, economic and tourist establishments prevented by security forces. Interior Minister Ben Jeddou's home in Kasserine, south, attacked late May by suspected Islamist militants, 4 policemen killed. Court 26 May ordered dissolution of vigilante group League for the Protection of the Revolution. New electoral law officially promulgated 26 May: head of electoral committee said general elections will "probably" take place late-Nov.

 - ["Tunisia foils attacks on industrial, tourist sites"](#), AFP, 25 May 2014.

Crisis Group Offices

Brussels brussels@crisisgroup.org
+32 2 502 9038

Washington washington@crisisgroup.org
+1 202 785 1601

New York newyork@crisisgroup.org
+1 212 813 0820

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"I very much appreciate the work that International Crisis Group is carrying out around the world. Your continuous monitoring of the situation in the most fragile, conflict-prone and conflict-affected countries and regions is highly valuable for the European External Action Service (EEAS)."

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, July 2012