

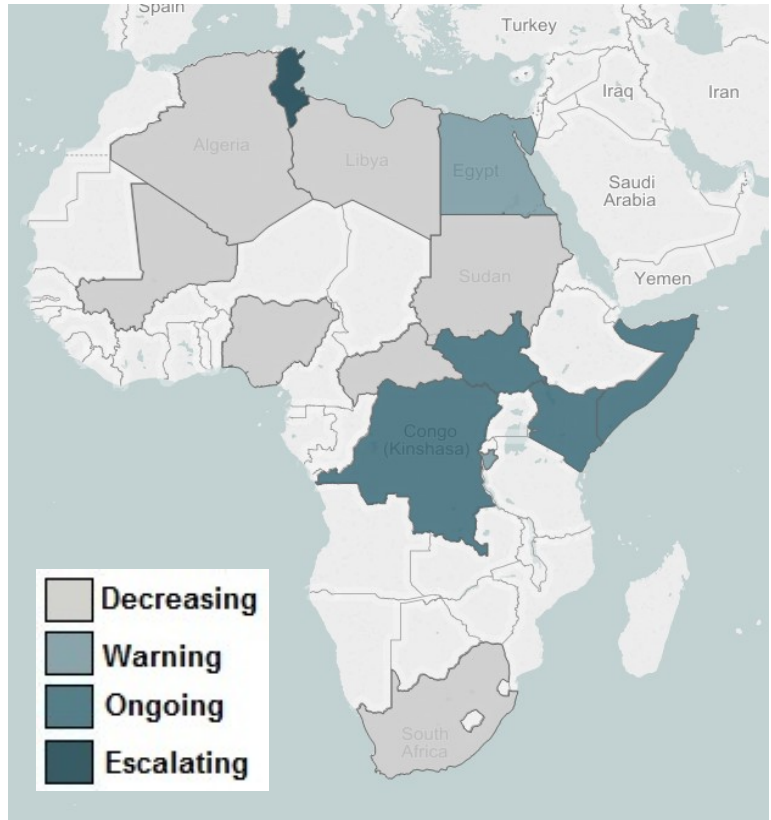
CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 39)

REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, JULY 2015

Welcome to the July issue of the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project’s (ACLED) *Conflict Trends* report. Each month, ACLED researchers gather, analyse and publish data on political violence in Africa in realtime. Weekly updates to realtime conflict event data are published on the [ACLED website](#), and are also available through our research partners at [Climate Change and African Political Stability \(CCAPS\)](#).

This month’s issue focuses on the shift in political strategy and increased lethality of violence in **Burundi**, the de-escalation of conflict between Malian forces and the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA) in **Mali**, increased coordination between rebel forces in **South Sudan**, violence against Darfuri students in **Sudan**, and competing strategies of violent Islamist groups in **Tunisia**. Two Special Focus Topics explore **reporting lags in realtime conflict data** and **state fragility and armed conflict across Africa**.

Elsewhere on the continent, **Egypt’s** Sinai Province witnessed dramatic clashes between the military and an Islamic State off-shoot, violence continues to decline in **Nigeria** and hit-and-run attacks by **Al-Shabaab** were reported in **Somalia**.



Conflict Trajectory, July 2015

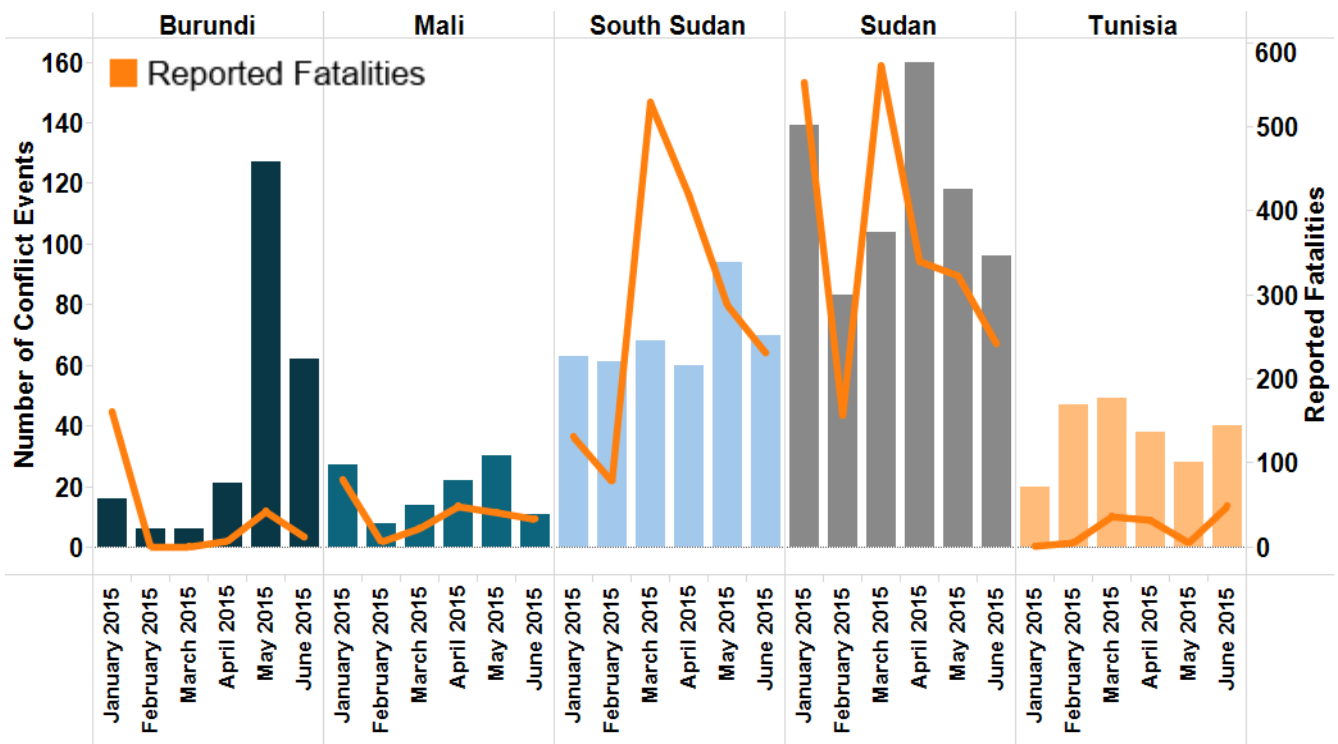


Figure 1: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities by Country, January - June 2015.

Burundi

The political crisis in Burundi is entering its 14th week and though aggregate levels of political violence have decreased since May when mass rioting and protests took hold of the capital, the forms of political violence employed by the varying sides of the political divide have become more lethal (see Figure 2). The riots and protests were sparked by President Nkurunziza’s bid to stand for a third term in office, an act deemed unconstitutional by the political opposition and large segments of the wider population. Riots and protests have largely subsided due to concentrated efforts by the police to subdue dissent in the opposition enclaves of Musaga and Kanyosha within Bujumbura ([Africa Confidential, 26 June 2015](#)).

Instead dissent and political violence has taken on a more insurgent character with unidentified groups attacking the police and civilians with grenades and gunfire. As a result, the violence has been at its most lethal since early May when the attempted coup by ex-Chief of the Army Staff Major General Godefroid Niyombare provoked pitched between different factions of the military ([Africa Confidential, 14 May 2015](#)).

The length of the political crisis may be responsible for the shift in tactics by anti-Nkurunziza actors. Similar political crises occurred in Burkina Faso and DR-Congo when Presidents Blaise Compaoré and Joseph Kabila both tried to extend their tenure beyond the constitutional limit. However, popular protest in Burkina Faso led to the ousting of Compaoré within two weeks while Kabila was eventually

blocked by his own legislature, resolving the political deadlock in under a month ([ACLED, 23 June 2015](#)).

Despite National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) obtaining a three-quarters majority in the legislature during the 2010 elections, Nkurunziza has used purges within the CNDD-FDD, and threats against Supreme Court judges, to ensure that there is no institutional block against his candidacy ([The Guardian, 5 May 2015](#); [Africa Confidential, 29 May 2015](#); [Colombo et al., 2014](#)). With both popular demonstrations and institutional protocol proving ineffective, it appears as if the opposition is resorting to insurgent tactics to pressure the government.

However, the death of prominent opposition leaders such as Jean Paul Ngendakumana indicates that it is not only the political opposition engaging in targeted attacks ([Hatcher, 28 June 2015](#)).

Another recent dynamic has been the spread of violence outside of the capital, with targeted attacks taking place in Ngozi, Kirundo and Muyinga. This diffusion is likely due to legislative and local elections, which were held on the 29th of June. Many of the events have involved grenade attacks against polling stations and resulted in the destruction of electoral infrastructure. The opposition have boycotted these elections, but the experience of the ineffectual 2010 boycott may be motivating opposition activists to damage electoral property and make a valid ballot impossible ([Al Jazeera, 30 June 2015](#)).

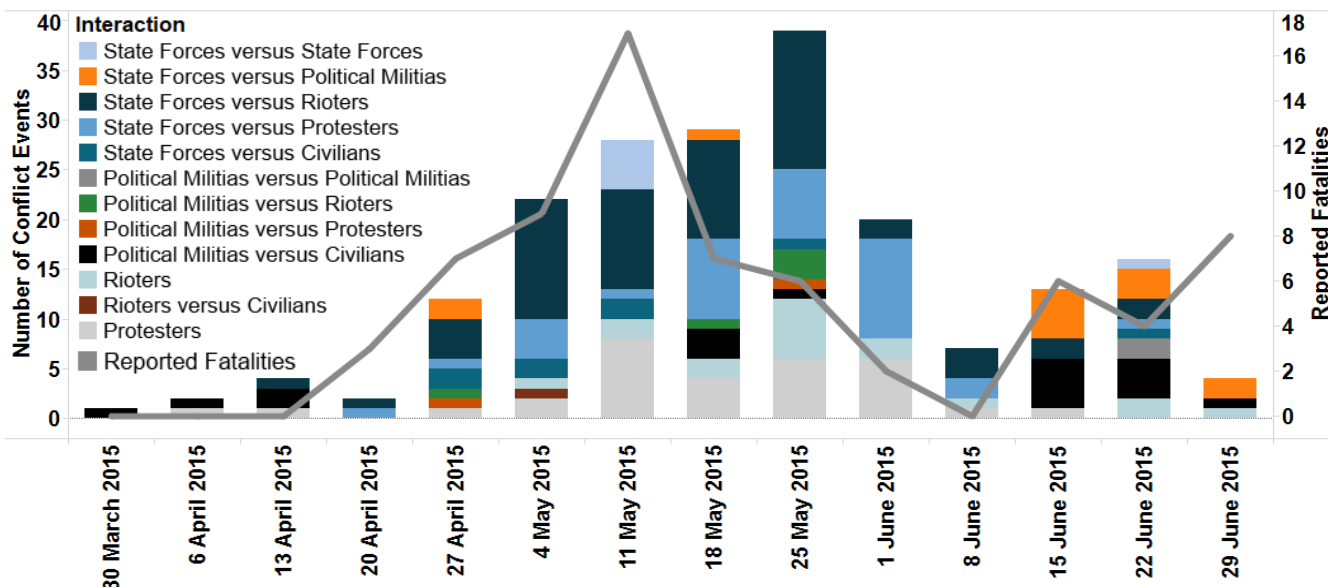


Figure 2: Number of Conflict Events by Interaction in Burundi, from March - June 2015.

Mali

Mali's current outlook can be termed as cautiously optimistic, although significant challenges remain following the signing of a peace treaty between the Government of Mali and representatives of the Tuareg-led rebels from the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA) on June 20 ([Al Jazeera, 21 June, 2015](#)). During the month the peace treaty was signed, the number of violent events and reported fatalities tracked by ACLED was significantly lower than April and May (see Figure 3), and there were no recorded instances of fighting between forces aligned with the Government of Mali and those of the CMA. Even more positively, in the run-up to the signing of the treaty, the pro-government Imghad Tuareg and Allies Self-Defense Group (GATIA) vacated the town of Menaka, allowing the Malian military and MINUSMA forces to take control and remove a major obstacle to a deal ([Al Jazeera, 19 June, 2015](#)).

However, despite these positive signs, both the violence of the past few months and the peace treaty itself could present obstacles for future stability. Mali now faces two specific challenges: first and foremost, is the level of Islamist militant activity throughout the country, including in Bamako and areas which had not previously seen operations by these groups (see Figure 2). While the levels and intensity of this violence does not rival the peak of the

Islamist-led insurgency in 2012/2013, the distribution of this violence across the country is now much more widespread than when it was primarily concentrated in the northern regions. This suggests that despite a nominal end to the rebellion, violence carried out by these groups is likely to continue and potentially expand due to their growing confidence and operational capacity. A second issue is that gaps still remain within the treaty between the government of Mali and the Tuareg-led rebels in terms of the lack of recognition for territory the CMA calls Azawad ([Al Jazeera, 17 June, 2015](#)). Associated with this issue is the concern over how much control both sides have over their forces. If this control is not absolute, then fighting could again break out as it did in May 2014 when the Malian Prime Minister visited Kidal ([BBC, 22 May, 2014](#)). All of these factors could jeopardize the nascent peace.

Notable attacks by violent Islamist groups during this period include an assault by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) forces on a military base in Nampala on January 1, which killed 8 Malian soldiers and succeeded in taking the base for a short time ([BBC, 5 January, 2015](#)); a highly publicized shooting incident in March by Mourabitounes Group of Azawad (GMA) targeting a nightclub popular with foreigners in Bamako which killed five people ([BBC, 7](#)

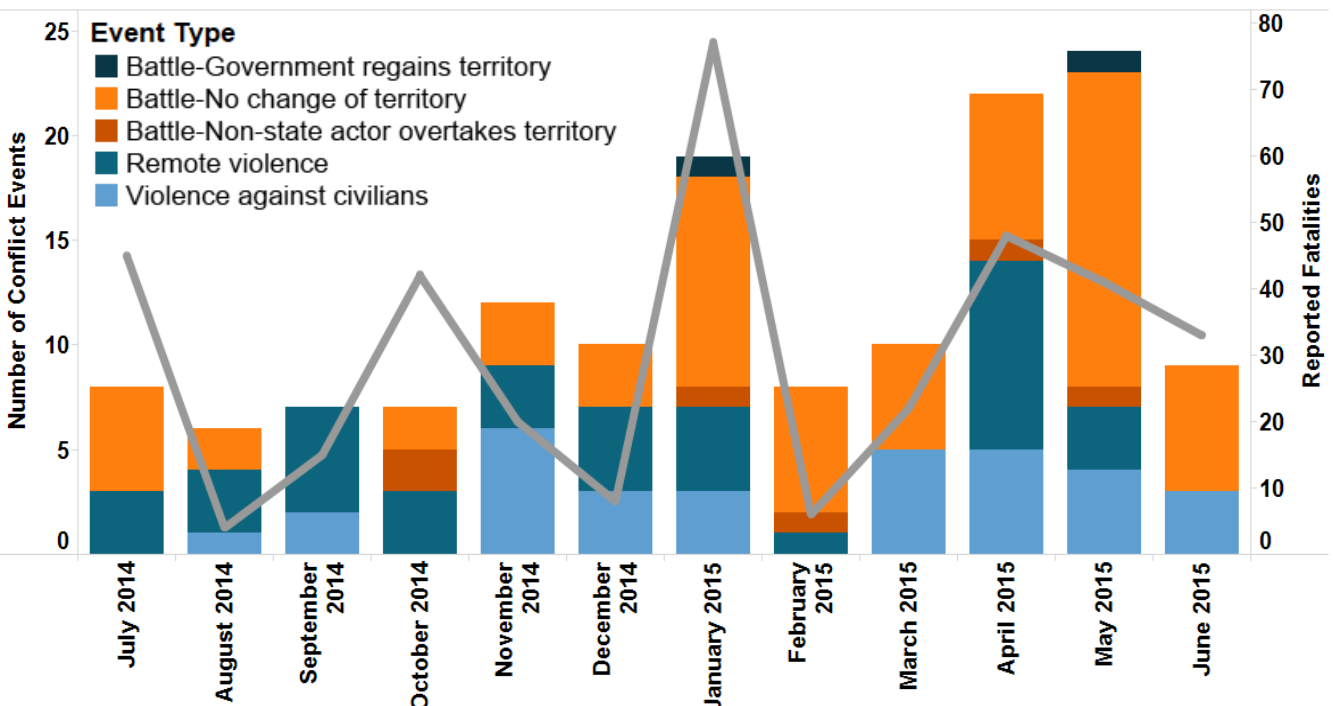


Figure 3: Number of Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities in Mali, from July 2014 - June 2015.

Mali

[March, 2015](#)); and, most recently, an attack on a MINUSMA convoy near Timbuktu by suspected Islamist militants on July 2, which killed 5 peacekeepers ([NBC News, 2 July, 2015](#)).

These attacks are representative of two trends in ongoing Islamist violence: first, it has moved out of the traditional areas of instability in northern Mali and is increasingly being seen directed against targets in the south. These events were also widely distributed, with every province of the country having seen at least one violent attack by recognized Islamist militant groups like AQIM or their affiliates since the beginning of 2015 (see Figure 4). Second, violence is targeted against foreigners, including both civilians and international forces. Events of remote violence targeting MINUSMA have been increasing, with two such events in January ([AFP, 4 January, 2015](#)) and March ([Reuters, 28 May, 2015](#)) claimed by MUJAO and AQIM respectively.

While the activity of Islamist militants in Mali is a major concern, the possibility of defusing the military standoff with the CMA in the North offers some relief on this front. It is yet to be seen whether the recently signed peace

treaty will actually satisfy the Tuareg base. In Kidal-- the only Tuareg-majority region of Mali--protests against the deal were held in the lead-up to the signing ([Reuters, 10 March, 2015](#)) and some believe the leaders of their movement have sold out, due to the refusal of the Malian government to discuss self-rule and the perceived acceptance of considerable concessions by the CMA during negotiations ([Al Jazeera, 17 June, 2015](#)).

The current situation thus creates a sense of foreboding about the future of the peace process, as a similar process occurred during the 2006-2008 Tuareg-led rebellion. During that conflict, the signing of a peace treaty with the government by the main Tuareg rebel group led to more radical splinter elements continuing to fight in protest over the terms of the deal. This, in turn, contributed to a significant proportional increase in violence as compared to the initial phases of the conflict, and left the door open for the rise of the kind of Islamic militancy that is seen today ([ACLED, January 2015](#)). In the current context, there may be an even greater risk of dissatisfied militants, who may feel betrayed by the rebel leadership, opting to support or even join Islamist militants in their continuing fight against the government.

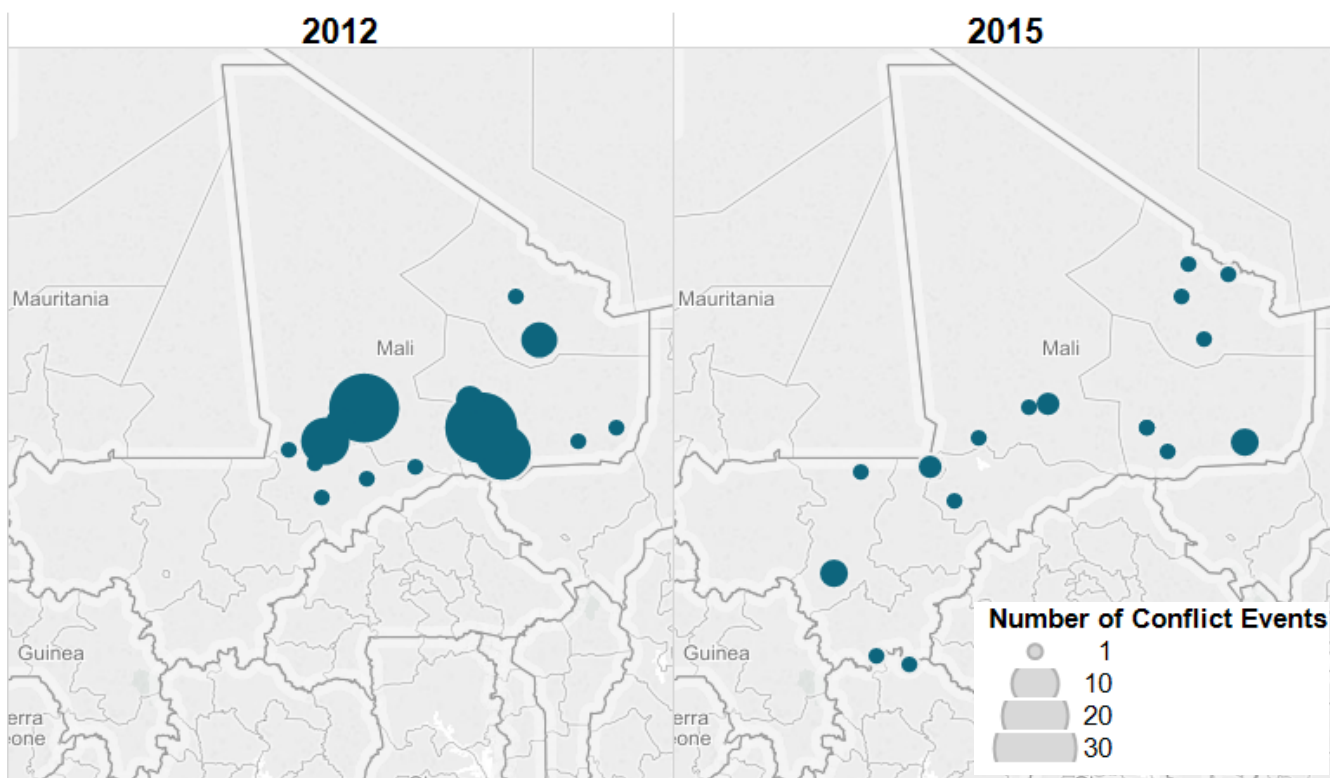


Figure 4: Islamism Violence in Mali, in 2012 and 2015.

South Sudan

Levels of political conflict in South Sudan decreased in June 2015. Though the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which has overseen multiple peace negotiations aimed at ending the 18-month conflict, may be tempted to refer to this drop in conflict as a sign of progress, the decrease is more likely due to the onset of the rainy season in South Sudan ([Africa Confidential, 15 May 2015](#)). This time last year, the beginning of the rainy season marked the adoption of a ceasefire and a decline in conflict between government and rebels as the rains restricted the movement of both people and vehicles ([Copnall, 27 October 2014](#); [ACLED, 2014](#)). Just as the onset of the rainy season and the signing of the ceasefire last year did not signal a resolution of the underlying conflict between the ruling Sudanese People’s Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) and the rebel Sudanese People’s Liberation Army – In Opposition (SPLA-IO), the recent decrease in violence may not endure beyond October when the rains stop.

The last two months have left the government in a weakened position relative to rebel non-state actors. In May, 20% of battles resulted in non-state forces capturing territory with only 16.8% of battles resulting in the government retaking an area. In June, the figures became 18.6% and 2.3% respectively (see Figure 5).

This surge in non-state victories, especially in Upper Nile state, is largely due to the activity of forces loyal to rene-

gade SPLA commander Johnson Olony. Olony had previously rebelled against the government in 2013 due to the underrepresentation of his Shilluk community in the state government and the SPLA’s violent disarmament campaign against the Shilluk in 2010 ([Small Arms Survey, 2015](#)). Olony had fought for the government against the SPLA-IO at Wadakona, but started attacking state forces in May before formally claiming an alliance with SPLA-IO leader Riek Machar last week.

Olony’s defection took place after the resumption of a land conflict between the Shilluk and the Dinka in Akoka County resulted in the death of his second-in-command at the hands of a Dinka militia ([Small Arms Survey, 2015](#); [New Nation Reporter, 25 May 2015](#)).

In response, the government has co-opted Dinka militias in its fight against Olony’s forces, capitalising on pre-existing ethnic tensions for recruitment. The government has also worked in tandem with Shilluk militias elsewhere in Upper Nile and Unity state to fight the SPLA-IO around Bentiu and the Paloch oilfields. This strategy shows that the conflict between President Kiir and Machar is not necessarily leading to different ethnic groups forming entrenched alliances with either the government or rebels but rather creating an environment of opportunism where armed ethnic militias can use the political conflict to loot and attack old enemies.

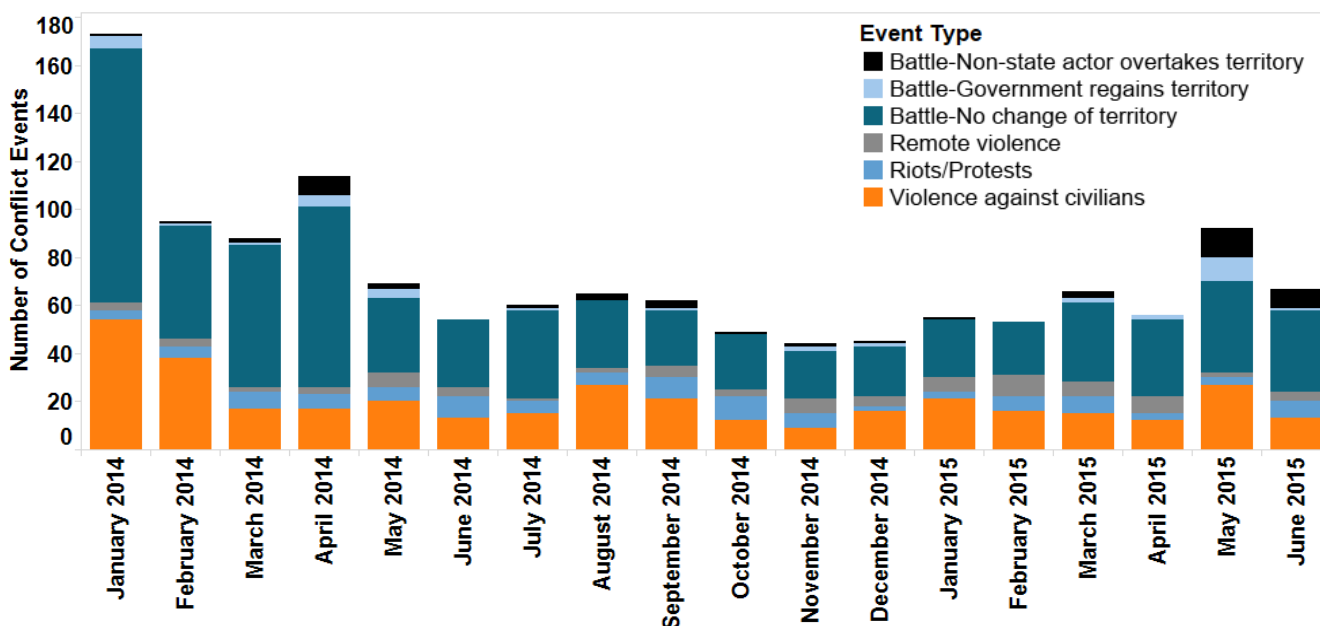


Figure 5: Number of Conflict Events by Event Type in South Sudan, from January 2014 - June 2015.

Sudan

A campaign of violence has been escalating in Sudanese universities in recent weeks, and over 200 students from Darfur have been assaulted, beaten, or detained over the last six months. On April 29th, 150 student members of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) attacked members of the Darfur Students Association (DSA) at Sharq El Nil College in Khartoum ([Sudan Tribune, 12 May, 2015](#)). The students were supposedly criticising recent presidential elections when NCP and security guards approached them with metal bars, crutches, and machetes ([Agence France Presse, 29 April, 2015](#)). During the attack, NCP student leader Mohamed Awad was killed, sparking a wave of violence against Darfuri students throughout May. At least half of the incidents have involved National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) agents.

Violence against Darfuri students has occurred primarily in the capital city of Khartoum and neighbouring Omdurman, which experienced seven such conflict events (see Figure 6). Violent attacks have also been carried out against students in Blue Nile State and Kordofan. Three separate incidents of violence occurred on May 11th alone. At the University of Sennar in Blue Nile State, NISS agents beat Darfuri students during protests over student support funds. At the University of Bahri in Khartoum,

NCP student members attacked Darfuri students holding a discussion group, wounding three people. The student group was alleged to be in support of the Minni Minnawiled faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) ([Sudan Tribune, 12 May, 2015](#)).

Two days prior to the attack, pro-government columnists called for Darfuri students to be expelled for allegedly supporting armed opposition forces ([Sudan Tribune, 12 May, 2015](#)). Also on May 11th, at the University of Dongola in the north of Sudan, NCP students and NISS torched a university women’s hostel before beating and detaining Darfuri students ([Nuba Reports, 15 May, 2015](#)). The DSA announced the disappearance of eight students following the incident. On May 12th, NCP and security agents continued to attack students at the University of Bahri, injuring 17 people. From May 21st to May 28th, similar attacks occurred at Aliyah University in Omdurman, Kordofan University in El Obeid, and El Zaeem El Azhari University in Khartoum ([Radio Dabanga, 19 May, 2015](#)). The most recent attack occurred on June 3rd, when NCP students injured three Darfuri students at the University of Sennar, using batons, iron bars, and knives.

The upsurge in violence against Darfuri students comes on the heels of national elections in April, which saw Omar al-

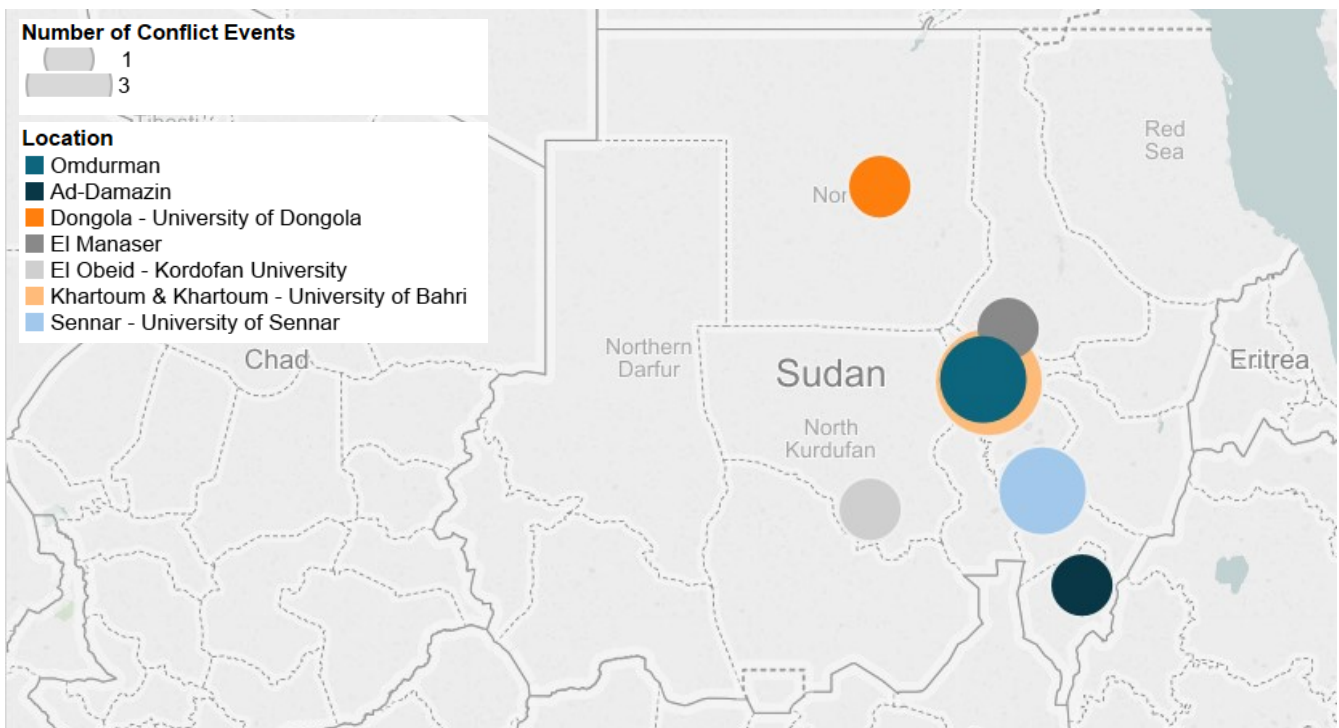


Figure 6: Locations of Violence against Students in Sudan, from January - June 2015.

Sudan

Bashir retain his presidency with a 94% majority ([Africa Confidential, 1 May, 2015](#)). Less than half of the country's registered voters went to the polls. The National Elections Commission reported 46% of registered voters marked ballots, while the opposition Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) reported voter turnout to be as low as 15% ([African Arguments, 28 April, 2015](#)). With results seeming to be a foregone conclusion, it was reported that queues for restaurants and soccer matches were longer than those for polling stations ([Africa Confidential, 1 May, 2015](#)). With increased protests associated with an opposition boycott of elections, April 2015 saw a six-month high in the number of total conflict events, with 151 (see Figure 7).

Although attacks on Darfuri students account for approximately 2% of violence against civilians in the country over the past six months, members of the DSA fear that the government is attempting to generate and manipulate manufactured "tribal" tensions ([Radio Dabanga, 19 May, 2015](#)). The way in which the NCP discusses the targeting of Darfuri students has been described as "ominously similar to the way language has been used to incite ethnic violence in other conflicts" ([Nuba Reports, 15 May, 2015](#)).

Although al-Bashir and NCP are often criticized for perpetuating insecurity in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile,

government-related protests and violence in and around Khartoum are relatively recent developments in the past few years. December 2011 saw a series of student protests, security raids, and arrests at the University of Khartoum ([Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2014](#)). Although Darfuri students are exempt from tuition fees according to the 2011 Doha Document for Peace in Darfur ([Radio Dabanga, 29 June, 2015](#)), in December 2012, four Darfuri students at Gezira University were found drowned in a canal following a police crackdown on tuition protests ([Agence France Presse, 8 December, 2012](#)). Pro-government students and Darfuri students clashed on several occasions in 2013, leaving at least four dead ([Nuba Reports, 15 May, 2015](#)). In early 2014, Darfuri students at universities in Babanusa and West Kordofan were expelled and beaten ([Radio Dabanga, 29 June, 2015](#)).

Although NCP and NISS have been directly involved in less than 4% of events involving violence against civilians in the first six months of 2015, April's disputed elections have reinvigorated political tensions on university campuses. If not quelled, the discrimination, attacks, and detentions may lead to further ostracism of Darfuri students attempting to gain an education outside of Darfur.

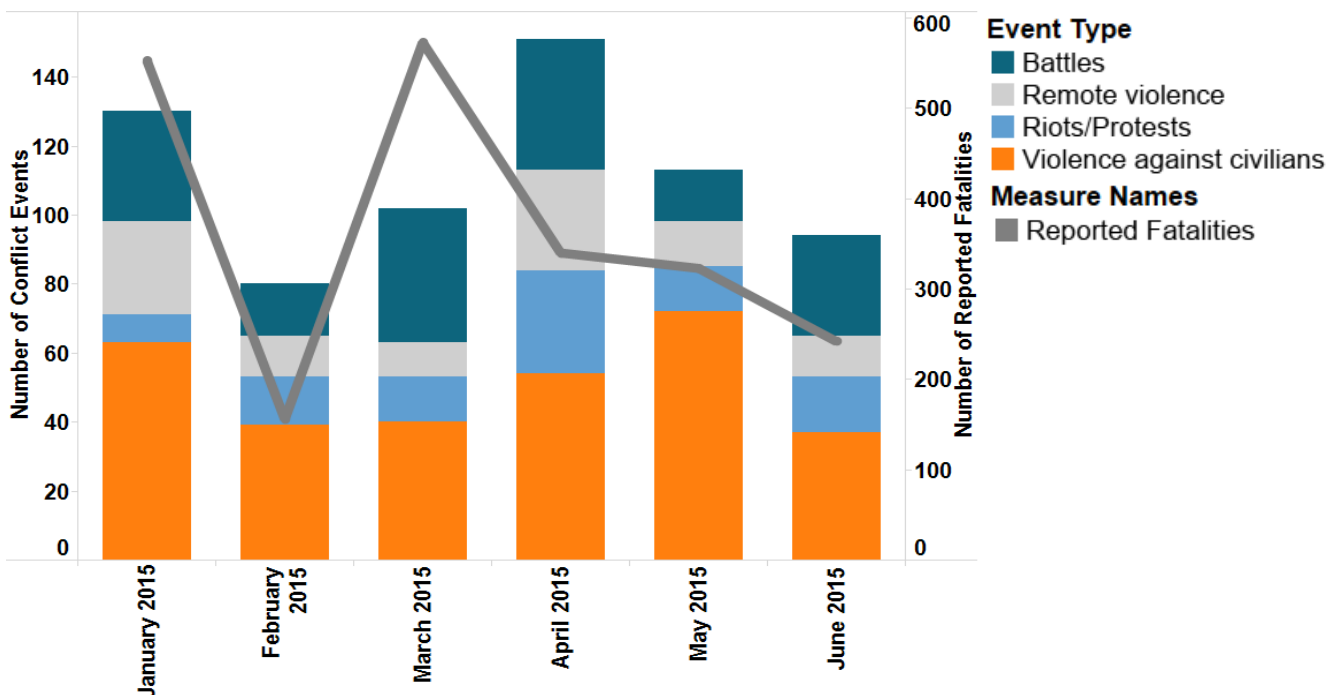


Figure 7: Number of Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities in Sudan, from January - June 2015.

Tunisia

While a new series of violent events targeted civilians and security forces in June, Tunisia witnessed a sustained increase in political violence (see Figure 8). Not only is the number of conflict events rising, reported fatalities were also at their highest since January 2011. Four national guards died in two separate shoot-outs with Islamist militias in the western regions of Kasserine and Jendouba.

These violent clashes between security forces and armed groups occurred after the launch of large-scale military operations in the heights of Kasserine, which resulted in the killing of at least four Islamist militants at the beginning of June ([Agence France Presse, 15 June 2015](#)). Furthermore, another attack targeted Tunisia’s tourism industry, three months after the assault on Bardo National Museum in Tunis: a young Kairouan-born Islamist, allegedly trained in a militant camp in Libya, stormed a tourist resort near the coastal locality of Sousse killing 38 foreign nationals ([BBC, 30 June 2015](#)). The raid, claimed by the Islamic State (IS), represented the deadliest attack in Tunisia’s modern history and a challenge to the country’s democratic institutions.

These patterns reveal an evolution in Tunisia’s conflict dynamics. Although the escalation of political violence has its roots in the post-revolutionary conflict cycle ([ACLED, June 2015](#)), competition within the Islamist camp seems to be instrumental in accelerating this process. Despite the seemingly coherent common ideological framework, the main Islamist militias have been pursuing different, and sometimes competing, strategies in Tunisia. The Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade, a prominent armed militia linked with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), claimed responsibility for a number of attacks against security forces and politicians. Although its position *vis à vis* IS is unclear, this militant group has established a ‘pocket of resistance’ in the remote area of Jebel Chaambi, near Kasserine, since 2013 ([Reuters, 19 March 2015](#); [Pusztai, 30 June 2015](#)).

By contrast, the IS, which has no operative base in the country, is seeking to gain a foothold by sponsoring attacks against sensitive targets, namely foreign tourists. As noted by an external observer, IS’s strategy is aimed at provoking “government clampdowns that fuels a popular sense of injustice, boosting its recruitment by winning

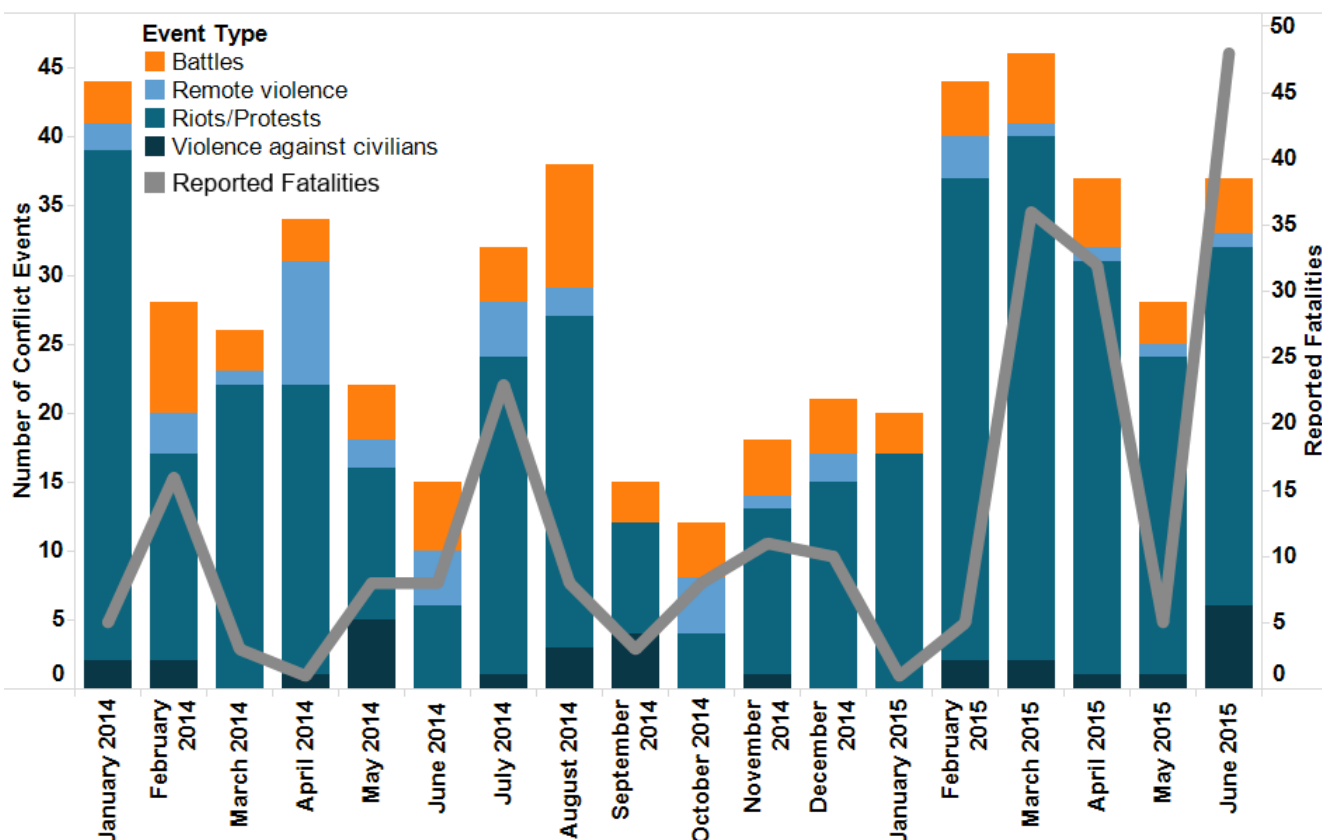


Figure 8: Number of Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities in Tunisia, from January 2014 - June 2015.

Tunisia

hearts and minds” ([The Independent, 2 July 2015](#)). In an attempt to gain higher visibility and attract a greater number of potential militants, this process of strategic tactical differentiation may induce both groups to scale up their insurgencies. Moreover, although these patterns reveal local dynamics of contention, they seem to reflect a wider shift in the global Islamist movement ([Libération, 3 July 2015](#)).

In addition to militia activity and organised violence, protesting and rioting have also been a major source of conflict in 2015. Whilst the increase in protesting activity points to the dissatisfaction for the persistence of a problematic socio-economic situation (high unemployment, regional inequalities, rampaging corruption), unrest has intensified greatly in the past few months.

Figure 9 reveals a greater incidence of riots and protests in central and southern regions, where economic indicators have stagnated in the aftermath of the revolution. The provinces of Tozeur and Kebili recently witnessed violent incidents between demonstrators and police forces, whose severe repression contributed to ignite protests in distressed local communities. In order to counter the

escalation of violence and restore security domestically, Tunisian authorities adopted draconian measures. Following the Sousse attack, the government decided to deploy 1000 additional security forces throughout the country, while at least 80 mosques accused of fuelling violence were shut down.

Furthermore, President Béji Caïd Essebsi declared a temporary state of emergency, which allows the government and the military to exercise exceptional powers for a period of thirty days ([Jeune Afrique, 5 July 2015](#)). However, it is not clear whether the security crackdown will be effective in reducing violent extremism. On the one hand, inadequate training and limited financial resources have hampered the reorganisation of security forces since the establishment of democracy. Several security failures have reportedly played a role in various attacks against military units and civilians ([Jeune Afrique, 2 September 2014](#); [The Telegraph, 30 June 2015](#)).

Therefore, providing financial and technical support to security forces would prove to be instrumental in restoring order. On the other hand, the government may be tempted to use its special powers (including imposition of curfew or prosecution of hostile demonstrators) to limit protest activity and suppressing dissent. Far from consolidating the fragile Tunisian democracy, non-targeted repression would accelerate an authoritarian turn while simultaneously feeding the ranks of insurgent groups.

In a country marred by an escalating cycle of violence and daunting economic prospects, difficult decisions await Tunisia’s political elites. Security clampdowns are unlikely to arrest the proliferation of violence effectively, as the recent example of Egypt seems to suggest. Rather than focusing merely on repression, Tunisian authorities should aim at improving the relations between the people and the government, by enhancing the accountability and the inclusivity of state institutions ([The Guardian, 1 July 2015](#); [Human Rights Watch, 7 July 2015](#)). Without addressing the root causes of marginalisation and widespread malaise, radical groups have already are likely to prosper and to extend their outreach further, thus jeopardising Tunisia’s efforts towards democracy.

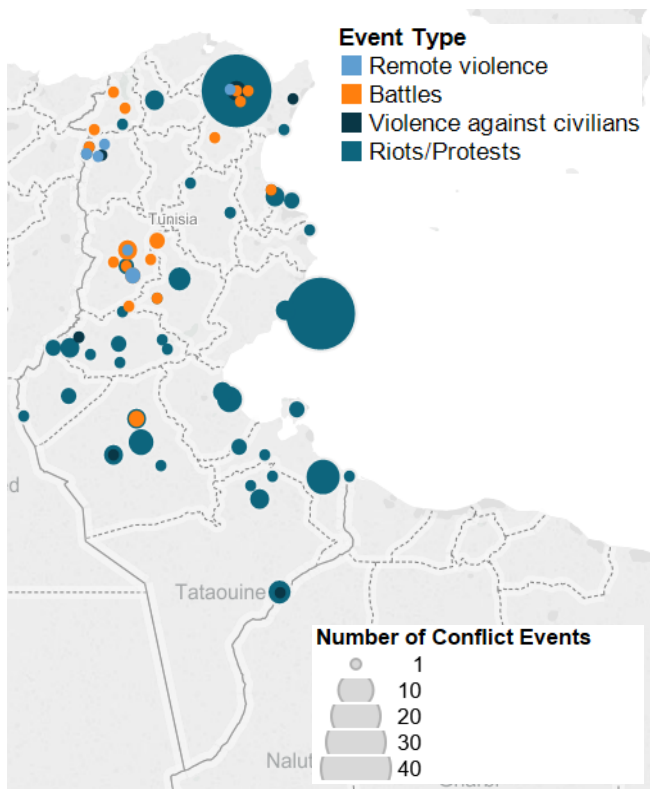


Figure 9: Number of Conflict Events by Location in Tunisia, by Type, from January - June 2015.

Special Focus Topic: Reporting Lags and the Timeliness of Realtime Data

ACLED collects disaggregated data of every event of political violence in Africa, henceforth expanding to Asia (Raleigh et al., 2010). A particularity of ACLED’s work is the publication of data on a real-time, weekly basis. One issue experienced in the collection of real-time data is that of reporting lags, by which information about a particular event is only available several days, weeks, or even months after it originally occurred. This report explores some of the determinants of reporting lags, and their relationship to the types of violence and actors involved.

For the purposes of this analysis, lagged reporting of an event refers to events which are not reported in the corresponding weekly coding period: this may mean there is a delay of several days, weeks or even months. What factors are associated with delays in reporting? To explore this, all events from ACLED’s realtime published data between May 2014 to April 2015 is compared to the lagged events (those published outside the coding week in question) from that period, allowing us to compare published with delayed data.

Event types:

The type of event may affect the timeliness of its reporting in several ways, with some events more likely to be reported immediately than others. Whether or not

observers can quickly access the location of an event might affect real-time reporting (Weidmann, 2014). Violence which occurs in a conventional battlefield may create particular challenges for observers to access sites of conflict: as experienced by some journalists during the Gulf War, military forces can control access to fighting areas, and may also control journalists’ material, and delay their release (Halliday, 1999). Despite the ‘news value’ of battle sites, and interest in fighting areas by observers (journalists, aid workers), information might be difficult to gather. By contrast, incidents of remote violence – such as bombings, IEDs or landmines – may allow observers to be near to the event location within a few minutes of it occurring. Incidents of remote violence may be devastating, the fact that they are typically perpetrated by combatants who are not at the site itself, may mean there is greater access to the conflict site than in incidents of direct clashes, such as battles.

Over the analysis period, approximately 17.4% of all published data is delayed. However the likelihood of reporting lags does varies by type of event. According to Figure 10, while battles and riots/protests events appear to be largely comparable in their degree of reporting delay, remote violence events show a very low level of delay (5.5%), particularly compared to the relatively high probability of

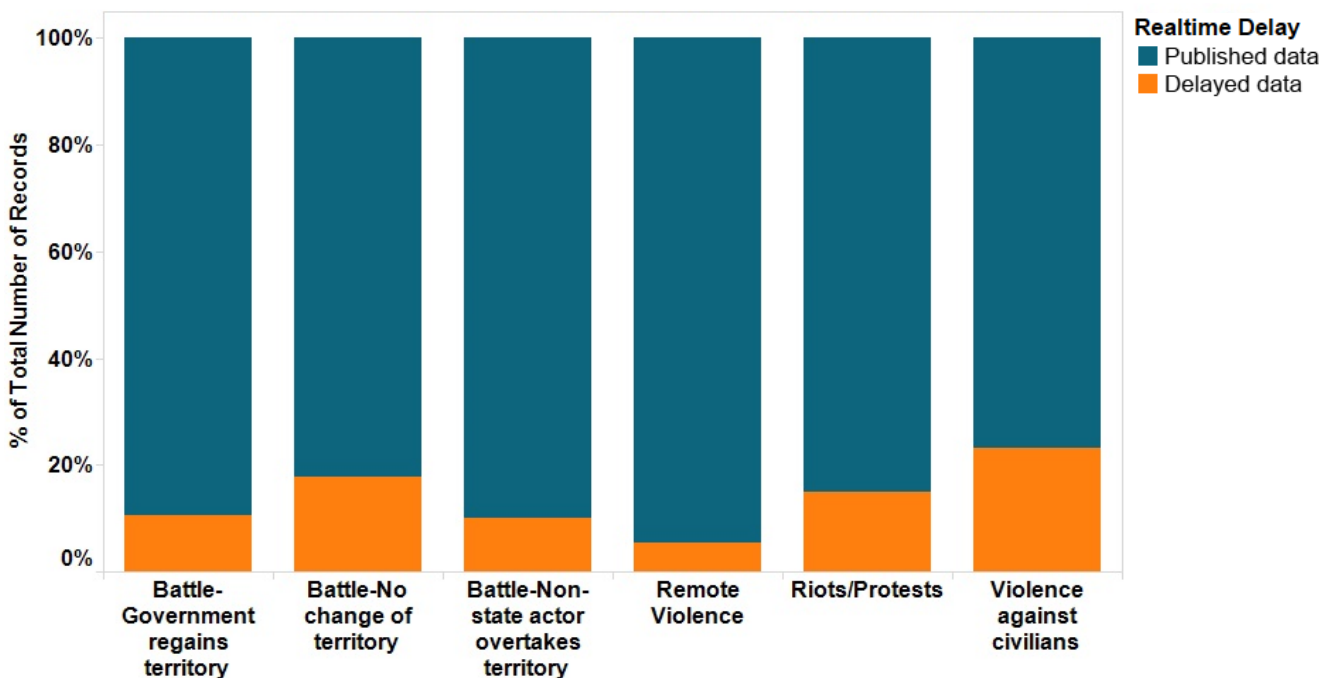


Figure 10: Percentage of Events Subject to Reporting Delay by Event Type, from May 2014 - April 2015.

Special Focus Topic: Reporting Lags and the Timeliness of Realtime Data

delayed reporting of violence against civilians (23.3%).

Incidents of violence against civilians may be more likely to be reported by civil society groups, such as NGOs and human rights organisations, whose investigations are based mostly on *post-hoc* interviews, which may constrain real-time reporting ([Wigmore-Shepherd, 2015](#)).

In spite of this general trend, some countries show marked variation in the degree of reporting timeliness by event type (see Figure 11). For example, in Cameroon, a quarter of events involving remote violence are delayed, compared to 12.1% for battles and 22.7% for riots/protests. One argument to explain these lags is the extreme remoteness of these incidences, or rural over urban occurrences. Sudan experiences a similar pattern: 16.9% events involving remote weapons are delayed, but only 12.8% of riots/protests events are lagged (see Figure 11). However, insights from high violence states including Libya, Somalia and Egypt contradict this assumption, as in those countries there is no clear gap between the timeliness of reporting of rural and urban events.

Actor types:

Disaggregating event types by actor also reveals interesting patterns: some conflict actors might have greater

‘news value’ for reporting than others, with implications for the timeliness of reporting. According to Drakos and Gofas, terrorist attacks are typically carried out in accordance with two objectives, to: “(1) maximize the probability of the attack being reported and (2) select the location that will provide the highest coverage” ([2006: 716](#)). Media may have a particular interest in the news value of terrorist attacks, while they may be designed or carried out with the purpose of exploiting media coverage as a communication tool in mind ([Frey and Rohner, 2006](#)). To avoid issues related to the definition of terrorism (see [ACLED, 2014](#)), this analysis uses those groups designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) by US Department of State. Seven FTOs were active within several African countries between May 2014 and April 2015 (Ajnad Misr, Al Shabaab, Ansar al-Sharia, Ansar Beit-al-Maqdis, Ansar Dine, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Boko Haram).

Overall, there is small gap between the timeliness of reporting events involving FTOs and non-FTOs: 15.9% of events involving FTOs are subject to a reporting delay, in comparison with 17.9% for non-FTOs. Although this pattern supports the assumption that reporting of incidents involving terrorism will be less delayed than reporting of other groups’ actions, the gap remains weaker

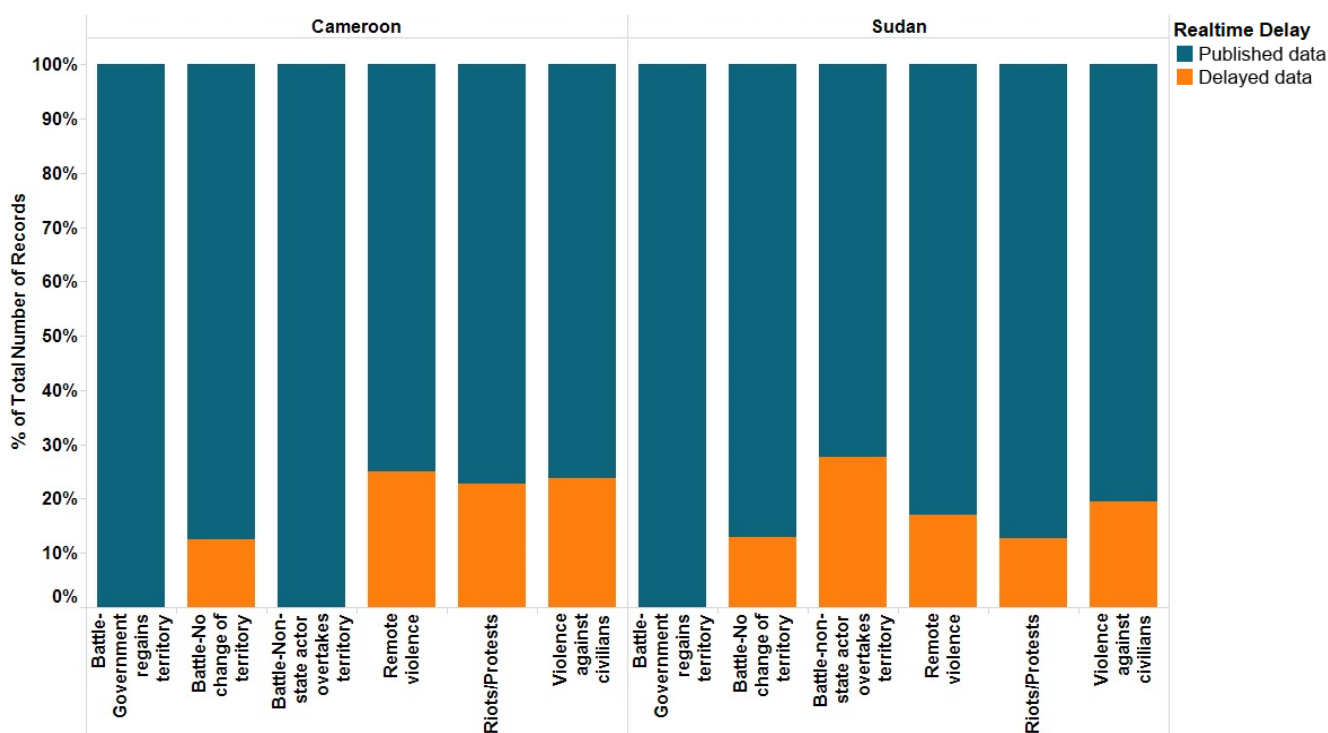


Figure 11: Percentage of Events Subject to Reporting Delay by Event Type and Country, from May 2014 - April 2015.

Special Focus Topic: Reporting Lags and the Timeliness of Realtime Data

than expected. However, when we disaggregate this data by country, limiting our analysis to those countries in which FTOs are active, we see that this convergence is driven by dynamics in a small number of countries, namely Libya, Somalia and to a lesser extent, Tanzania and Niger. In each of these cases, the reporting of FTO and non-FTO violence is broadly comparable: in Libya, 9.6% of events involving violence by both FTOs and non-FTOs is equally subject to a delay; while in Somalia, 19.6% of non-FTO violence is subject to delay, compared to 18.8% of FTO. In Tanzania and Niger, while absolute levels of FTO violence (associated with Al Shabaab operatives in the country) are low, the rate of delayed reporting is in fact higher for these incidents (28.6% and 4.4% respectively) than non-FTO counterparts (26.7% and 4.1% respectively).

Overall, however, there is weak but consistent evidence that the reporting of violence involving FTOs is subject to less of a delay than non-FTOs: in countries like Algeria, Cameroon and Egypt, the gap is particularly marked (see Figure 12). In the case of Nigeria, while the gap between reporting delays is relatively smaller (16.4% for non-FTOs compared to 14% for FTOs), these patterns emerge in spite of several studies suggesting that media reporting of Boko Haram activity is subject to severe delays, media bias, and lack of timeliness (Akpan et al., 2013; Okoro and

Chukwuma, 2012). However, in an analysis of the top ten most active non-state violent groups (excluding protesters and rioters) in Nigeria, approximately 20% of violence is delayed on average. By contrast, only 13.7% of Boko Haram events are subject to a delay, considerably less than the rate of delay for generic vigilante militias (22.6%) and the specific anti-Boko Haram militia, the Borno Vigilance Youths Group (21.4%). This divergence from patterns in Somalia might be explained by the fact that Boko Haram violence received considerable media attention within the period under review (e.g. the social media campaign, #BringBackOurGirls Twitter took place in April/May 2014).

In conclusion, this preliminary analysis suggests that the type of event is likely to influence the degree of reporting timeliness: remote violence, which may affect timely access to sites of conflict, is typically subject to less delay than other forms of violence, with violence against civilians exhibiting a clear tendency for delayed reporting. In addition, the types of actors involved in conflict influence the timeliness of reporting: FTOs typically see a lower rate of reporting delay than non-FTO counterparts. Further research is required to investigate the degree to which the location of an event within a particular country, or within a particular sub-national region in a country, affects timeliness.

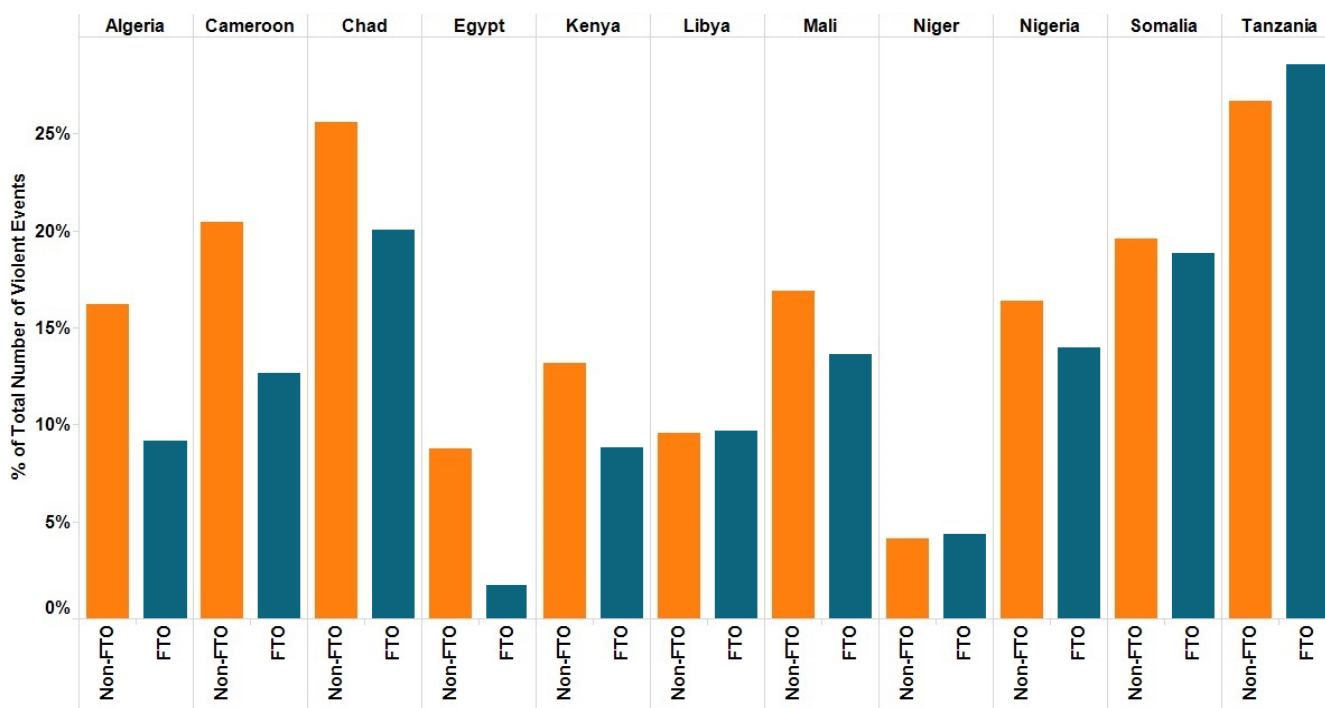


Figure 12: Percentage of Events Subject to Reporting Delays by Organisation Type, from May 2014 - April 2015.

Special Focus Topic: State Fragility and Conflict in Africa

The Fragile States Index (FSI), produced by The Fund for Peace, highlights pressures faced by states, identifying “when those pressures are pushing a state towards the brink of failure”, with the intent of shaping assessments of political risk by researchers and policymakers ([Messner et al., 2015](#)). The FSI is calculated for countries worldwide using an analytical platform drawing on data and information from a number of sources. A number of attributes within each state are taken into account and weighted – such as demographic pressures; economic factors; state legitimacy, human rights, and rule of law; etc. – to create an index for state fragility ([The Fund for Peace, 2015](#)).

Using real-time conflict data from ACLED and the latest Fragile States Index for 2015 (based on data collected during 2014), the effect of state fragility on future conflict and violence in Africa is explored here. Figure 13 maps the

geographic locations of all political conflict in Africa thus far in 2015 over a map of the 2015 state fragility scores of African states – based on levels of the various aforementioned attributes reported in 2014 – in which higher fragility scores denote higher fragility (i.e., more at risk).

In line with other studies that find correlations between state fragility and armed violence (for example, see [Geiß, 2009](#)), states deemed on high alert with high state fragility scores – such as South Sudan, Somalia, Central African Republic, and Sudan – see some of the highest levels of conflict and violence in Africa.

However, as a result of the aggregate measures used to compile the index and their weighting, certain attributes are deemed as more or less important in contributing to state fragility. These calculations, for example, have led to South Africa being labeled as a ‘low warning’ country when it is a hotbed of social unrest with the highest number of riots and protests reported this year relative to the rest of the continent. Similarly, while North Africa is deemed not as fragile as some Sub-Saharan African states, Libya and Egypt are responsible for a large proportion of the continent’s political violence this year, reporting fatality levels approximately equivalent to Somalia and South Sudan (the two states topping the Fragile States Index). Meanwhile, Nigeria – responsible for the largest number of conflict-related deaths on the continent by far as a result of increased Boko Haram conflict activity seen this year – is deemed less fragile than countries such as Chad and Guinea; Nigeria has reported approximately 64 times as many fatalities resulting from political violence thus far this year relative to Chad and Guinea combined.

These concerns highlight the importance of not relying solely on rankings and indices when examining the fragility of states. Given the crucial role of conflict in shaping humanitarian and development agendas, it is important to acknowledge changing conflict dynamics in developing states and how state institutions (which largely dictate fragility scores) may incentivize certain conflict patterns ([ACLED, 4 July 2014](#)).

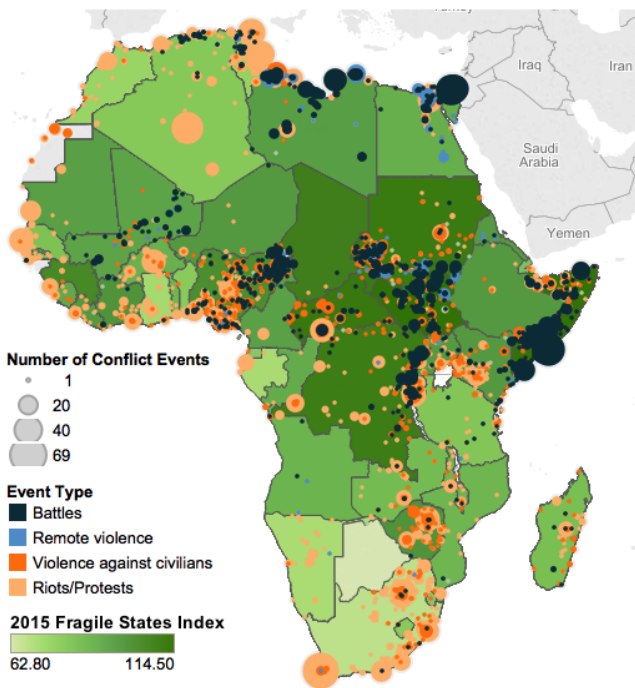


Figure 13: State Fragility and Political Conflict in Africa, 2015.

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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 on the [ACLED website](#).