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## CrisisWatch:

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

*CrisisWatch* is compiled by Crisis Group's Brussels Research Unit, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of our nearly 120 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 50 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to [crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org](mailto:crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org).

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## February 2007 Watchlist



### Conflict Risk Alerts

None



### Conflict Resolution Opportunities

None

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## Africa

### CENTRAL AFRICA

➤ Burundi Supreme Court acquitted former President Domitien Ndayizeye and 4 others of coup-plot charges, but sentenced Alain Mugabarabona, chairman of Forces Nationales de Libération (FNL-Icanzo) party and Tharcisse Ndayishimiye to 20 and 15 years respectively; seen as government strategy to save face as coup allegations generally accepted as unfounded. Possible internal rift in CNDD-FDD ruling party between President Nkurunziza and Chairman Hussein Radjabu over latter reportedly opposing release of coup suspects and freeing of 3 journalists on trial for reporting army involvement in coup plot. Party congress in February could discuss Radjabu's potential dismissal. Joint Verification and Security Mechanism remained on hold as Palipehutu-FNL agreed to take part by 10 February if government freed jailed FNL members by 27 January; no release occurred.

- ["Court acquits ex-president over coup plot"](#), IRIN, 16 Jan. 2007.
- ["Burundi party boss hides in South African embassy"](#), Reuters, 23 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°120, [Burundi: Democracy and Peace at Risk](#), 30 Nov. 2006.

➤ Central African Republic UN Security Council announced intention to send new technical assessment mission to Chad and CAR; called on UNSG Ban Ki-moon to send advance mission and submit recommendations by mid-February on possibility of formal UN presence in eastern Chad and northeast CAR, where rebel attacks increasing. Internally displaced reportedly tripled in 2006 from 50,000 in April to estimated 150,000 at year end.

- ["CAR rebel leader welcomes 'step towards reconciliation'"](#), AFP, 29 Jan. 2007.
- ["Internal displacement in Central African Republic: a protection crisis"](#), Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 26 Jan. 2007.

➤ Democratic Republic of Congo Insecurity continued in Ituri and North Kivu with hundreds fleeing to Uganda and Rwanda. Despite November 2006 ceasefire, Ituri rebel commander Peter Karim continued offensives against army around Fataki, north of Bunia. Government and renegade General Laurent Nkunda reached partial settlement on troop integration into army and sharing of command posts. Despite government proposal on terms of exile, including dropping war crimes charges, Nkunda stated preference to serve in FARDC alongside his reintegrated rebels. President Kabila's Alliance of the Presidential Majority increased its hold on state institutions in both 19 January senatorial elections and 27 January elections for provincial governors' seats - though elections marred by corruption complaints. DRC Ambassador to UN asked for renewal of MONUC's mandate until new government is formed and able to re-negotiate. ICC confirmed forthcoming trial of former Ituri rebel leader of Union des Patriotes Congolais, Thomas Lubanga, on charges of training and using child soldiers between September 2002 and August 2003.

- ["Opinion split in Ituri over rebel's indictment"](#), IRIN, 30 Jan. 2007.
- ["Less rumble in the jungle"](#), *Economist*, 29 Jan. 2007.
- ["Dissident general seeks troops' integration into national army"](#), IRIN, 23 Jan. 2007.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°44, [Congo: Staying Engaged after the Elections](#), 9 January 2007.  The international community must renew its strong political engagement after Congo's successful elections. When the MONUC mandate is renewed in February, the Security Council should redefine its political role, while allowing it to continue to assist in conflict prevention and management, as well as supporting state institutions, monitoring human rights abuses and enforcing the arms embargo. Donors should create a smaller successor body to the International Committee for Supporting the Transition.

➤ Rwanda Human rights group warned of new cycle of violence sparked by murders of witness and judge in gacaca courts; reported 13 killed in November 2006 including 3 suspects in police custody.

- ["Rwanda return to violence warning"](#), BBC, 22 Jan. 2007.
- ["Killings threaten justice for genocide"](#), Human Rights Watch, 22 Jan. 2007.

➤ Uganda LRA withdrew from peace talks with Ugandan government in southern Sudan, demanding change in venue and replacement of South Sudan VP Riek Machar as chief mediator: claimed Sudanese President Omar Bashir's pledge to eliminate LRA makes Sudan insecure, and that Machar is biased towards Uganda. LRA failed to gather at assembly areas designated by cessation of hostilities agreement by 16 January deadline, though neither party has called for its termination. LRA was accused by Ugandan army of killing 13 civilians in 3 ambushes in Southern Sudan. New UN special envoy for LRA-affected areas, Joaquim Chissano, who toured region and attempted to salvage talks, announced change of venue for talks.

- ["Chissano has a daunting task to resuscitate the Juba peace talks"](#), ISS, 19 Jan. 2007.
- ["Suspected rebels kill 13 in southern Sudan"](#), IRIN, 4 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°41, [Peace in Northern Uganda?](#), 13 Sept. 2006.

### HORN OF AFRICA

➤ Chad Fighting between disparate rebel groups and government continued in east. UN considering peacekeeping force for Chad and CAR after investigative team sent mid-January; said would only be protection force and would not intervene in conflict. Chadian Union of Forces for Democracy and Development rebels targeted by government airstrikes 24 January in border town of Ade; military claimed 20 rebels killed, aid workers forced to flee.

- ["Army bombs rebels in eastern Chad, aid workers flee"](#), AlertNet, 24 Jan. 2007.
- ["Chad rebels take town on Sudanese border"](#), AlertNet, 17 Jan. 2007.

➤ Ethiopia PM Meles Zenawi announced withdrawal of one third of troops from Somalia by 28 January, as part of 3-phase withdrawal to be completed in February; said would continue supporting Somali Transitional Federal Government but not indefinitely (see Somalia).

- [“Meles winds it up in Somalia”](#), Garowe Online, 30 Jan. 2007.

➤ Ethiopia/Eritrea UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1741 extending UN peacekeeping force UNMEE’s mandate until 31 July 2007. Resolution stipulated “reconfiguration”, from 2,300 to 1,700 personnel; called on Ethiopia to accept Boundary Commission decision to demarcate border and Eritrea to remove troops from Temporary Security Zone.

- [“No danger of Ethiopia-Eritrea war – Meles”](#), Reuters, 28 Jan. 2007.
- [“Ban Ki-Moon proposes extension to UN peacekeeping mission”](#), UN News, 24 Jan. 2007.

➤ Somalia Situation remained unstable after Council of Somali Islamic Courts’ (CSIC) end-December defeat by Ethiopian and Transitional Federal Government (TFG) troops. TFG now faced with task of reconstituting cabinet as genuine government of national unity, including credible leaders from communities that backed CSIC. Ethiopia said its forces began phased withdrawal, but discussions ongoing over proposed 8,000-strong AU peacekeeping force to maintain security with Burundi, Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria and Malawi only pledging half. U.S. launched airstrikes in south 8 and 23 January, targeting “senior al-Qaeda operatives”. Daily violence continued with attacks on Ethiopian and TFG positions in Mogadishu, including presidential palace and airport. PM Ali Mohamed Gedi imposed martial law in areas under TFG control from 30 January, beginning with curfew in southern town of Baidoa. TFG requested Kenya hand over CSIC leader, Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, who surrendered to Kenyan authorities 21 January. Key warlords signed agreement with TFG to hand in weapons and integrate fighters into army. Parliament voted out Speaker prominent in past efforts to engage CSIC in dialogue.

- [“More peacekeepers heading to Somalia”](#), AP, 31 Jan. 2007.
- [“A rare chance for Somalia”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 25 Jan. 2007.
- [“What next?”](#), *Economist*, 18 Jan. 2007.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°45, [Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead](#), 26 January 2007. The international community must vigorously support a national reconciliation process if Somalia is to avoid protracted conflict and the incubation of extremism. The country has an historic opportunity for stabilisation and reconstruction, but the government is weak, unpopular and faction-ridden. The power vacuum in the south is rapidly being filled by the same warlords the CSIC overthrew less than a year ago. For lasting peace, the Transitional Federal Government must negotiate transparently with Islamist elements and disaffected clan leaders to form a genuine government of national unity.



➤ Somaliland (Somalia) 3 main Somaliland political parties, UDUB, KULMIYE and UCID, called for national demonstrations against Transitional Federal Government

policies and warned of regional war, as Somali transitional president, Abdullahi Yusuf, declared Somaliland would remain part of Somalia “forever”. At AU PSC meeting in Abuja, Rwandan foreign minister tabled motion for Somaliland to be formally recognised by AU. Yusuf then said TFG would engage in dialogue with Somaliland government once rest of Somalia at peace.

- [“Somaliland requests AU heads to recognize its sovereignty in Addis Ababa summit”](#), Shabelle.net, 28 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°110, [Somaliland: Time for African Union Leadership](#), 23 May 2006.

➤ Sudan Sudanese air force escalated bombing campaign in northern Darfur; government targeted possible sites of planned SLA field commanders’ conference after promising AU and UN to let conference go forward. Little progress with AU/UN 3-phase plan for Darfur: discussions on phase 2, heavy assistance package, delayed due to lack of enthusiasm amongst troop-contributing countries and delays for tripartite AU/UN/Sudan meeting; no progress with phase 3 (AU/UN hybrid force). UNSG Ban Ki-moon called on Khartoum to admit UN troops as part of hybrid force at AU summit. Relations between Khartoum and government of Southern Sudan at all-time low, with SPLM 1st Vice-President Salva Kiir and President Bashir trading blame for delays in CPA implementation. For second consecutive year, AU members rejected Sudan’s bid to chair organisation.

- Comment by Nick Grono and David Mozersky (Crisis Group), [“Sudan and the ICC: A question of accountability”](#), openDemocracy, 31 Jan. 2007.
- [“Darfur violence wrecks Sudan’s attempt to take AU leadership”](#), *Guardian*, 30 Jan. 2007.
- [“U.S. urges Sudan to agree fully to Darfur plan”](#), *Washington Post*, 24 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°43, [Getting the UN into Darfur](#), 12 Oct. 2006.

## SOUTHERN AFRICA

➤ Zimbabwe Entrenched divisions remained between rival factions of opposition Movement for Democratic Change, despite earlier indications of end 2006 rapprochement. MDC faction leader Morgan Tsvangirai announced “Save Zimbabwe Plan” to fight postponement of 2008 presidential elections by 2 years, promising protests and strikes in coming months, but gave no details. Economic situation increasingly dire, as doctors’ strike over demands for 8000% pay rise continued to paralyse health system.

- [“Zim opposition urges action to end Mugabe rule”](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 17 Jan. 2007.
- [“Zim opposition remains fractured”](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 9 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°117, [Zimbabwe: An Opposition Strategy](#), 24 Aug. 2006.

## WEST AFRICA

➤ Burkina Faso/Niger Local officials from both sides of Niger/Burkina Faso border met to defuse tensions following accusations of cross-border activities by sides’ security forces; agreed to call on International Court of Justice to arbitrate and demarcate border.

- ["With rising border tensions, local officials meet"](#), IRIN 5 Jan. 2007.

↪ Côte d'Ivoire UN Special Representative for West Africa, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, attended ECOWAS summit 19 January to help implement UNSC resolutions on Côte d'Ivoire supporting PM Banny and extended transition period. UNSC extended mandate of UNOCI 10 January, altering its mandate to include cooperation with UNMIL in Liberia on cross-border arms trafficking until end June 2007. Forces Nouvelles leader Guillaume Soro agreed to engage in "direct dialogue" with President Gbagbo, with Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore as facilitator, starting February 2007. Main border post between Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana at Noe attacked by rebels 12 January, killing 5.

- ["Ivory Coast rebel chief announces talks with president in February"](#), AFP, 25 Jan. 2007.
- ["Insecurity reigns' after border attack"](#), IRIN, 15 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°40, [Côte d'Ivoire: Stepping Up the Pressure](#), 7 Sept. 2006.

↪ Guinea Country descended into violence as security forces clashed with thousands of demonstrators calling for President Conté's departure. Some 59 killed since strike began 10 January in response to calls by trade union leaders to protest Conté's December move to free 2 allies from jail and continuing problems of high inflation and bad governance; strike suspended 27 January after agreement with Conté on appointment of new independent PM and other social measures.

- ["Strike spells more hardship"](#), IRIN, 25 Jan. 2007.
- ["Blood and diamonds"](#), *Economist*, 25 Jan. 2007.
- ["More than 20 killed in Guinea-strike violence"](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 23 Jan. 2007.

↪ Liberia President Johnson-Sirleaf rejected domestic trial for former president Charles Taylor given his prosecution by Sierra Leone Special Court. Taylor ally and House speaker Edwin Snowe received no-confidence vote 18 January. Investigation into former transitional government chairman Gyude Bryant on allegations of corruption started 22 January. Truth and Reconciliation Commission formally started taking statements 16 January concerning abuses committed during 14-year civil war.

- ["Liberia ex-leader probed on graft"](#), BBC, 19 Jan. 2007.
- ["Johnson-Sirleaf's Liberia: One year on"](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 17 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°107, [Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System](#), 6 Apr. 2006.

↪ Nigeria Attacks on oil workers in Niger Delta surged while political violence escalated throughout country ahead of April presidential election. In Delta region, 2 killed in 16 January attack on oil vessel near Bonny Island while 12, including several local chiefs, killed in attack in Rivers state same day. Over 40 foreign oil workers taken hostage.

- ["Corruption and Misuse Robs Nigerians of Rights"](#), Human Rights Watch, 31 Jan. 2007.
- ["Kidnappings in Nigeria's oil region more frequent, bolder"](#), AFP, 25 Jan. 2007.
- ["Eight die in Nigerian political militia infighting"](#), AlertNet, 18 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°118, [Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis](#), 28 Sept. 2006; and Crisis

Group Africa Report N°119, [Nigeria's Faltering Federal Experiment](#), 25 Oct. 2006.

↪ Senegal Sporadic fighting continued in Southern Casamance near Guinea-Bissau border. Security forces and MFDC faction led by Cesar Badiate clashed 18 and 24 January, causing recently returned villagers to leave their homes. Opposition protestors demanding early parliamentary elections clashed with police 27 January.

- ["Senegalese police shoot tear gas, detain opposition leader"](#), AP, 27 Jan. 2007.
- ["Soldiers and rebel fighters clash in Senegal"](#), Reuters, 25 Jan. 2007.

↪ Sierra Leone Internal Affairs Minister Pascal Egbenda warned SL police not to favour any political party ahead of or during presidential and parliamentary elections in 2007. Special Court for Sierra Leone postponed Charles Taylor trial to 4 June from 2 April to give defense more time to prepare.

- ["Internal affairs minister warns police"](#), *Concord Times*, 17 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, [Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States](#), 8 Dec. 2004.

## Asia/Pacific

### CENTRAL ASIA

↪ Kazakhstan PM Daniyal Akhmetov resigned 8 January; parliament approved Deputy PM Karim Masimov as successor. Justice Ministry registered opposition Social Democratic Party 25 January.

- ["Masimov may signal new reform priorities"](#), IWPR, 11 Jan. 2007.
- ["Kazakh parliament approves new prime minister"](#), RFE/RL, 10 Jan. 2007.

↪ Kyrgyzstan President Bakiyev approved constitutional amendments reinstating some presidential powers. His renomination of PM Kulov rejected twice by parliament, but nomination of Agriculture Minister Azim Isabekov for PM approved by overwhelming majority.

- ["Public, politicians give positive reaction to new premier"](#), RFE/RL, 31 Jan. 2007.
- ["Yet another constitution for Kyrgyzstan"](#), IWPR, 16 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°55, [Kyrgyzstan on the Edge](#), 9 Nov. 2006.

↪ Tajikistan Supreme Court banned 10 organizations as terrorist, including al-Qaeda, Harakati Tablighot, Jamiyati Tablighot, Islamic Party of Turkestan, Sozmoni Tabligh, and Tojikistoni Ozod. Authorities reportedly acknowledged fault of border forces after Kyrgyz Batken province governor threatened on border 9 January.

- ["Tajik supreme court updates terror list"](#), RFE/RL, 15 Jan. 2007.
- For most recent report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, [Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?](#), 19 May 2004.

- Turkmenistan Interim president Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, front-runner for 11 February elections, pledged social and education reform but vowed to remain loyal to Niyazov legacy.
  - [“What chance of a thaw?”](#), IWPR, 29 Jan. 2007.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°85, [Repression and Regression in Turkmenistan: A New International Strategy](#), 4 Nov. 2004.

- Uzbekistan President Karimov continued term notwithstanding constitutional requirement of mandate renewal on 22 January; new elections due December 2007. More restrictive controls over media came into effect 15 January.
  - [“Why aren’t voters electing a new president?”](#), RFE/RL, 25 Jan. 2007.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°54, [Uzbekistan: Europe’s Sanctions Matter](#), 6 Nov. 2006.

## SOUTH ASIA

- Afghanistan U.S. Sec. Defense Robert Gates noted 3-fold increase in cross-border attacks from Pakistan in visit to Kabul 16 January, and warned expected increase in violence this spring. Pressure on Pakistan’s role mounted with apprehended Taliban spokesman’s claim leader Mullah Omar hiding in Quetta under Pakistani intelligence (ISI) protection. NATO said it killed 150 suspected Taliban infiltrators crossing from Pakistan in major battle in Paktika 11 January. President Hamid Karzai said open to talks with Taliban in 29 January speech. NATO head of forces David Richards called for more troops, saying 1 more year of sustained battle needed to defeat Taliban; U.S. announced duty extensions that effectively boost troops by 2,500 in short term.
  - [“The big Afghanistan push comes to shove”](#), *Guardian*, 30 Jan. 2007.
  - [“Nato general: we need one more year to defeat Taliban”](#), *Guardian*, 22 Jan. 2007.
  - [“At border, signs of Pakistani role in Taliban surge”](#), *New York Times*, 21 Jan. 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°59, [Afghanistan’s Endangered Compact](#), 29 January 2007. While the growing insurgency is attracting increasing attention, long-term efforts to build solid governmental institutions are faltering. There has been slow progress since the government and international community committed to a “stable and prosperous Afghanistan” in the Afghanistan Compact. The international community must demand serious steps of the Karzai government to end impunity and pay greater attention to building institutions at provincial and district level and to bringing the legislative branch into the heart of the governance process.

- Bangladesh Elections scheduled for 22 January postponed indefinitely after poll-related violence continued early in month, UN withdrew technical assistance, and U.S. and EU indicated they would not recognise polls as free and fair. President Iajuddin Ahmed resigned as head of caretaker government 11 January, declaring state of emergency with night-time curfews and some rights suspended. Former central bank governor Fakhrudin Ahmed took over, promising fair polls as soon as possible, but High Court decision 29 January blocked polls until voter registration system overhauled. 5 election commissioners

- resigned 31 January, allowing commission’s reconstitution and smoothing path to reform. Street violence ebbed, but arrest of over 3,000 and reports that up to 20 may have died in custody raised new concerns about military role.
  - [“Controversial Bangladesh poll officials resign”](#), AlertNet, 31 Jan. 2007.
  - [“The coup that dare not speak its name”](#), *Economist*, 18 Jan. 2007.
  - [“Bangladeshi poll postponed after interim leader resigns”](#), *Guardian*, 12 Jan. 2007.

- India (non-Kashmir) Army deployed 13,000 troops to Assam state in response to escalation in attacks by separatist ULFA movement. Series of shootings 5-7 January carried out by suspected ULFA rebels killed over 70 across state, mostly Bihari migrant workers and local police; followed by small blasts later in month killing several. Intercommunal riots in Bangalore 21 January.
  - [“Bangalore hit by communal riots”](#), *Dawn*, 21 Jan. 2007.
  - [“Assam’s troubled brew”](#), *Economist*, 11 Jan. 2007.
  - [“India deploys troops for separatist hunt”](#), *Financial Times*, 9 Jan. 2007.

- Kashmir Continued engagement between Delhi and Islamabad, but no concrete progress on Kashmir sticking points. Indian FM Pranab Mukherjee reported “positive” visit to Islamabad 13 January but PM Singh said movement on Siachen Glacier dispute would be “premature”. Next talks due in March.
  - [“India and Pakistan set up crisis panel”](#), *Financial Times*, 14 Jan. 2007.
  - [“Mirwaiz supports Musharraf’s ideas”](#), *Dawn*, 18 Jan. 2007.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°51, [India, Pakistan and Kashmir: Stabilising a Cold Peace](#), 15 June 2006.

- Nepal 73 Maoists sworn into 330-seat legislature and new interim constitution promulgated 15 January; interim government likely to be formed in February. UN Security Council voted to establish 12-month UNMIN ceasefire monitoring and electoral assistance mission; monitors already registering weapons and combatants now confined to cantonments. Violent protests by ethnic Madhesi in Tarai plains began 21 January and killed 11; protestors criticised interim constitution and electoral system as discriminatory. Government arrested 3 former royal ministers 29 January for protest instigation and PM Koirala pledged 31 January to push for federal system and redistricting before June elections in bid to assuage Madhesi complaints. UN Human Rights Commissioner Louise Arbour urged government to prosecute war crimes committed during 11-year conflict.
  - [“Ethnic unrest in southern plains undermines peace pact in Nepal”](#), *New York Times*, 1 Feb. 2007.
  - [UN Security Council Resolution 1740](#), 23 Jan. 2007.
  - [“Nepal PM holds emergency meet after violence, strike”](#), AlertNet, 22 Jan. 2007.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°126, [Nepal’s Peace Agreement: Making it Work](#), 15 Dec. 2006.

- Pakistan U.S. increased pressure on Pakistan over its failure to clamp down on terrorism. U.S. intelligence director John Negroponte said al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders still operating from Pakistan base (see Afghanistan). Suicide attack on military convoy in Mirali, North Waziristan 22

January killed 4: first attack since Pakistan's controversial September Waziristan Accord and likely reprisal to Pakistan strike on militants in South Waziristan 16 January. Locals claimed attack was by U.S. drone. NATO explained U.S.-led coalition helicopter strike in Shawal border region that killed 1 Pakistani soldier was "mistake". Suicide attacks in Islamabad, North Waziristan and NWFP killed more than 20 in run up to Ashura, including attack near Peshawar Shia mosque that killed 15; government said Taliban-based militants responsible.

- "Spate of attacks target Pakistan's Shia Muslims", *Financial Times*, 29 Jan. 2007.
- "US pressures Pakistan over Taliban", *Financial Times*, 17 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°125, *Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants*, 11 Dec. 2006.

⏪ Sri Lanka Fighting intensified in east, where government forces made major advances including capture of strategic town Vakarai 19 January, held by LTTE for 11 years. Over 30,000 fled region in month; UNHCR estimated 213,000 new IDPs since April 2006. 2 deadly LTTE bus bombings near Colombo killed over 20; attacks increasingly targeting civilians in apparent return to pre-ceasefire tactics. Police in Tamil Nadu (India) made large seizures of bomb materials believed bound for LTTE. Rebel bombing of police bus 31 January killed 12. Army offered amnesty to 17,000 deserters in attempt to boost forces. 18 opposition UNP parliamentarians joined government, undermining hopes of a government-opposition accord on the ethnic conflict. Donors warned Colombo continued military escalation would jeopardise aid.

- "Sri Lanka to rebels: Talk peace or face more war", Reuters, 22 Jan. 2007.
- "Civil war haunts Sri Lanka again", BBC, 20 Jan. 2007.
- "Sri Lanka takes key rebel town, death toll hits 376", AFP, 19 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°124, *Sri Lanka: The Failure of the Peace Process*, 28 Nov. 2006.

## NORTH EAST ASIA

⏪ North Korea U.S. and North Korea held surprise bilateral talks in Berlin 16-18 January, reportedly reaching compromise that would ease sanctions on Pyongyang. U.S. also scrutinising frozen Pyongyang funds at Macau bank in possible step to release limited funds to North, but asserted UNDP may have improperly funnelled funds to Pyongyang; North has agreed to audit. U.S. upbeat about six-party talks, which resume 8 February, but speculation North may use threat of second nuclear test as leverage.

- "N.Korea eyes 2nd test if dispute not resolved", AlertNet, 31 Jan. 2007.
- "Nuke deal may include freeing N. Korea funds", *Chosun Ilbo*, 20 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°56, *North Korea's Nuclear Test: The Fallout*, 13 Nov. 2006.

⏪ Taiwan Strait Beijing tested anti-satellite weapon 11 January, drawing international concern. Taipei called test "bad for regional security" and said over 900 mainland missiles now pointed across Taiwan Strait.

- "Satellite killer really aimed at Taiwan", Asia Times Online, 23 Jan. 2007.
- "Taiwan sounds alarm on Chinese missiles", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°42, *China and Taiwan: Uneasy Détente*, 21 Sept. 2005.

## SOUTH EAST ASIA

⏪ Indonesia Tension in Poso spiked 22 January after police raid on hideout of Jemaah Islamiyah-linked mujahidin and supporters resulted in gun battle killing 15 (including 1 policeman), on heels of 11 January raid killing 2. Deaths could boost jihadi recruitment but government moved swiftly to explain operation to Muslim leaders and secure their support. Police arrested 2 including most wanted suspect known as Basri 1 February. Military operations against Free Papua Movement in Yamol area reportedly displaced up to 3,000.

- "Indonesia police arrest two wanted Muslim militants", AlertNet, 1 Feb. 2007.
- "Poso tense as hunt continues for militants", *Jakarta Post*, 24 Jan. 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°127, *Jihadism in Indonesia: Poso on the Edge*, 24 January 2007. Recent police raids in Poso with high casualties may have given Indonesia's weakened jihadi movement a new boost. While the government's new determination to crack down on violent jihadi networks is welcome, it should step back and address the broader causes of ongoing violence in Poso. It should set up an independent fact-finding body to examine grievances left over from the communal conflict that reached its height in 2000-2001. Poso must not become the new cause celebre for the country's mujahidin.



⏪ Myanmar/Burma China and Russia vetoed and South Africa also opposed U.S.-sponsored Security Council resolution calling for inclusive political dialogue; release of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi; and end to attacks on ethnic minorities, forced labour and restrictions on humanitarian organisations. ASEAN issued communiqué calling for progress towards democracy. India confirmed arms sales to Myanmar in exchange for assistance in combating Assam separatists (see India).

- "India to snub US on Burma arms embargo", *Australian*, 23 Jan. 2007.
- "Double veto for Burma resolution", BBC, 12 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°58, *Myanmar: New Threats to Humanitarian Aid*, 8 Dec. 2006.

⏪ Philippines Boost to Manila's fight against Abu Sayyaf militants after DNA tests confirmed death of leader Khadaffy Janjalani in September clash, while top commander killed in gunbattle 16 January. Manila reportedly intervened to end skirmishes between army and MILF rebels that killed 6 in North Cotabato end month and further jeopardised peace process.

- "6 killed as RP, MILF forces clash", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 28 Jan. 2007.
- "A last extended interview with Janjalani", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 22 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°110, *Philippines Terrorism: The Role of Militant Islamic Converts*, 19 Dec. 2005.

⇒ Thailand Spectre of new insecurity grew after 9 small explosions in Bangkok 31 December; speculation focused on supporters of former PM Thaksin: 14 military officers and 5 civilians detained but all released for lack of evidence. Council on National Security (CNS) military government tightened media controls and extended Emergency Decree in south for 3 months where daily attacks continued. 35-member committee began drafting constitution, headed by CNS pick Prasong Soonsiri.

- [“Thailand clears all New Year’s Eve bomb suspects”](#), AlertNet, 27 Jan. 2007.
- [“Thailand partly lifts martial law”](#), BBC, 26 Jan. 2007.
- [“Constitution ‘can be finished in five months’”](#), *Bangkok Post*, 26 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°105, *Thailand’s Emergency Decree: No Solution*, 18 Nov. 2005; and N°98, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad*, 18 May 2005.

⇒ Timor-Leste Rogerio Lobato, former interior minister, went on trial 9 January on charges of setting up hit squads during April-May 2006 unrest. Former police inspector Neto Mok and 3 Timor-Leste defense force personnel named in UN Special Commission of Inquiry report remanded to Becora prison 12 January. President Xanana Gusmao announced would not run again in forthcoming elections. UN, T-L and Australia signed trilateral agreement 26 January establishing forum to discuss security issues and ensure coordination between government and peacekeepers. PM Horta submitted controversial bill to parliament providing for conscription into defence forces.

- [“Australia, UN sign Timor security pact”](#), *Age*, 26 Jan. 2007.
- [“E Timor ex-minister goes on trial”](#), BBC, 9 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°120, *Resolving Timor-Leste’s Crisis*, 10 Oct. 2006.

## PACIFIC

⇒ Fiji Coup leadership secured itself amnesty and installed interim government. Leader Frank Bainimarama returned executive authority to President Ratu Iloilo, appointed himself interim PM and said elections might not be called for 3-5 years. Chief Justice placed on administrative leave pending inquiry into 2000 coup. Interim cabinet includes former PM Chaudhry and handful of military officials. Military rejected widespread accusations of mistreatment of civilians after 1 died in custody.

- [“The commander improvises”](#), *Economist*, 11 Jan. 2007.

⇒ Solomon Islands SI police commissioner, Australian citizen Shane Castles, declared persona non grata late December; government said it will seek non-Australian replacement. PM Sogavare accused Canberra of bullying in its move to block rearming of Solomons’ police force and signalled further intention to reduce role of Australian-led RAMSI assistance mission.

- [“Solomons PM accuses Australia of bullying”](#), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 Jan. 2007.

⇒ Tonga Government announced 1-month extension of state of emergency imposed following November 2006 riots; cited threat of more instability. 2 leading pro-democracy MPs detained, charged with sedition in connection with riots.

- [“Tonga emergency period extended to February”](#), Radio New Zealand, 12 Jan. 2007.

## Europe

### BALKANS

⇒ Albania President Moisiu set local elections for 18 February after parties compromised on changes to constitution and electoral code: voters must produce 2 identity documents at polls.

- [“Albanian parties end standoff over elections”](#), BIRN, 18 Jan. 2007.
- For most recent report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°153, *Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?*, 25 Feb. 2004.

⇒ Bosnia & Herzegovina High Representative Schwarz-Schilling announced he would step down by 30 June but began openly lobbying for OHR to remain open longer, causing confusion in BiH and international community. Republika Srpska (RS) PM Dodik threatened to bring 200,000 demonstrators to streets if international community tries to remove him. Tripartite presidency nominated Nikola Spiric from RS governing party SNSD as next PM. In Federation (FBiH), Bosniak Party of Democratic Action (SDA), Party for BiH and Croatian Democratic Union agreed to form coalition entity government; SDA nominated former Transport Minister Nedžad Brankovic to be FBiH PM.

- [“Schwarz-Schilling exit leaves Bosnia in disarray”](#), BIRN, 24 Jan. 2007.
- [“EC reiterates that sealing of SAA in June depends largely on BiH police reform”](#), *Southeast European Times*, 16 Jan. 2007.
- For most recent Crisis Group report, see Europe Report N°164, *Bosnia’s Stalled Police Reform: No Progress, No EU*, 6 Sept. 2005.

⇒ Kosovo UN envoy Ahtisaari expected to recommend heavily qualified independence in status settlement proposal without explicit use of the word “independence”. Proposal discussed behind closed doors with Contact Group 26 January and to be presented to Belgrade and Pristina 2 February. Kosovar Albanians mostly reassured by available news of confidential document, but worried by prospect of Kosovo Serb “autonomy”; war veterans and “Self Determination” movement announced Pristina protest against proposal for 10 February. Concern that Russia may veto or prevent Security Council consideration of status until government formed in Belgrade, where coalition talks could last until May, or fail altogether. Further Belgrade-Pristina talks to be called in February. President Tadic expected to meet Ahtisaari in Belgrade; PM Kostunica refusing until new Serbian government formed. In Kosovo, co-governing LDK weakened by defection of Nexhat Daci to found new LD party 12 January. Kosovo police service officer shot dead near Serb village Babin Most 3 January; suspect escaped to Belgrade where received by PM Kostunica, who denounced alleged KPS brutality.

- [“NATO to step up security ahead of U.N. proposal on Kosovo’s status”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 30 Jan. 2007.
- [“UN presents key plan for Kosovo”](#), BBC, 26 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°177, *Kosovo Status: Delay Is Risky*, 10 Nov. 2006, and Briefing N°45, *Kosovo’s Status: Difficult Months Ahead*, 20 Dec. 2006.

➤ Macedonia Ethnic Albanian Democratic Union for Integration and Party of Democratic Prosperity continued boycott of parliament, accusing ruling coalition of violating 2001 Ohrid Agreement provisions on minority representation. Meanwhile, coalition member Democratic Party of Albanians won municipal elections in predominantly Albanian Saraj. UN Mediator Matthew Nimitz conveyed Greek claims that decision to rename Skopje's airport after Alexander the Great violated bilateral interim agreement.

- ["Macedonian airport lifts name dispute to new heights"](#), BIRN, 18 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°41, [Macedonia: Wobbling toward Europe](#), 12 Jan. 2006.

➤ Serbia Parliamentary elections held 21 January: Serbian Radical Party led with 28% of vote followed by President Tadic's Democratic Party (23%) and PM Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia (16%). President Tadic began consultations on forming coalition; stance of smaller parties (G17+, SPS and Liberal Democrats) may be crucial. Kostunica insisted on retaining PM post, announced would not meet UN envoy Ahtisaari on 2 February (see Kosovo), and threatened to sever diplomatic ties with countries that recognise Kosovo independence, making policy precondition for entering a governing coalition. Parties have nearly 4 months to form government. Hungarian, Bosniak, Roma and Presevo Valley Albanian parties all gained parliament seats.

- ["Serb elections complicate Kosovo issue"](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 Jan. 2007.
- ["Election deals blow to Serbia's main centrist parties"](#), BIRN, 22 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°44, [Serbia's New Constitution: Democracy Going Backwards](#), 8 Nov. 2006.

## CAUCASUS

➤ Armenia European Court of Human Rights ruled 2002 arrest of opposition activist Armen Mkrtchian illegal, undermining legality of massive detentions in aftermath of 2003 presidential elections. Parliamentary elections set for 12 May.

- ["European court faults Yerevan in landmark ruling"](#), *Armenia Liberty*, 11 Jan. 2007.
- ["Potato Democracy"](#), IWPR, 4 Jan. 2007.

➤ Azerbaijan European Court of Human Rights ordered Baku to compensate opposition leader Sardar Jalaloglu for torture during post-election arrest in 2003. Appeals court freed opposition website editor Bakhtiyar Hajiev day after sentenced for launching public campaign against energy price increases. Baku police forcefully dispersed unsanctioned protest against increases, detained 15 activists 26 January. National Security Ministry arrested 16 for alleged plan to overthrow government 15 January.

- ["Azerbaijan alleges plot against the government"](#), RFE/RL, 18 Jan. 2007.
- ["Drastic price hikes in Azerbaijan fuel tension"](#), Eurasianet, 16 Jan. 2007.
- For most recent Crisis Group report, see Europe Briefing N°40, [Azerbaijan's 2005 Elections: Lost Opportunity](#), 21 Nov. 2005.

➤ Chechnya (Russia) 5-month amnesty ended 15 January; Russia claimed over 500 rebel surrenders. In

clash outside Grozny 1 police officer and 1 suspected rebel killed 22 January. In clashes in southern Gudermes, 4 soldiers and 1 rebel killed 29 January. European Court of Human Rights found Russian military guilty in Chechen torture case; President Putin said ruling "political".

- ["European Court convicts Russian forces of torture in Chechnya"](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 Jan. 2007.
- ["Russia trumpets amnesty as blow to Chechnya rebels"](#), AlertNet, 15 Jan. 2007.

➤ North Caucasus (non-Chechnya) In Dagestan, police killed 3 suspected rebel leaders in raid 11 January. Mufti of Ingushetia Isa Khamkhoyev seriously wounded in attack by unidentified gunmen 31 January.

- ["Muslim leader in Russia region wounded"](#), *Washington Post*, 31 Jan. 2007.
- ["Russian police kill Dagestan rebel leader -official"](#), AlertNet, 11 Jan. 2007.

➤ Georgia Signs of thaw with Russia after return to Tbilisi of Russian ambassador, absent since September 2006. In Abkhazia, deaths of 4 policemen in December and January incidents raised tensions, but unclear whether attacks criminal or political; UN-led Joint Fact Finding Group reconvened to investigate. Shooting reported in South Ossetia 28-30 January.

- ["Shooting reported in tense Georgian breakaway region; no injuries reported"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Jan. 2007.
- ["Russia seeks to mend Georgia ties"](#), BBC, 24 Jan. 2007.

Crisis Group Europe Report N°179, [Abkhazia: Ways Forward](#), 18 January 2007. Unless Georgia and Abkhazia make a genuine effort to resume talks and cooperation, new fighting could erupt in 2007. Diplomacy has been frozen since mid-2006, when Georgia launched a military operation in the Kodori valley and Russian-Georgian relations deteriorated. In this fragile situation, neither side should take steps the other could interpret as provocative. Instead of trying to negotiate the main political issues, they should focus on making practical progress in a few areas where this seems possible in order to build confidence.



➤ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Armenian and Azerbaijani FMs Oskanian and Mammadyarov held new round of talks in Moscow 23 January. OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs visited Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh 24-26 January, urging parties to sustain negotiations' momentum and prepare publics for compromises. 1 Azeri and 1 Armenian soldier allegedly killed near NK in month.

- ["Armenian, Azerbaijani foreign ministers meet on Karabakh"](#), RFE/RL, 23 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°167, [Nagorno-Karabakh: A Plan for Peace](#), 11 Oct. 2005.

## EASTERN EUROPE

➤ Belarus Local elections held 14 January; opposition under intense pressure from authorities: leader Alyaksandr Milinkevich detained twice, at least 30 activists arrested, and only 200 opposition candidates registered. Decision to expel Belarusian Helsinki Committee from state-owned offices reversed, apparently under EU and U.S. pressure.



Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly President Rene van der Linden called for political prisoner releases and dialogue during 3-day visit. Minsk signed defence cooperation memorandum with Iran 22 January. Relations with Russia cooled after first gas then oil supplies subject of dispute between Minsk and Moscow: Druzhba pipeline briefly shut down 8-10 January.

- [“Belarus vows to increase military cooperation with Iran, rebuffing U.N. sanctions”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Jan. 2007.
- [“Lukashenka says Russia trying to take over Belarus”](#), RFE/RL, 14 Jan. 2007.

↳ Moldova Standoff over disputed checkpoint, reportedly involving 100 Moldovan and Transdniestrian police, defused after Joint Control Commission set up extra peacekeeping checkpoint, and removed Moldovan and Transdniestrian posts on Dubossary-Rybnitsa road 13 January. Breakaway authorities released 2 Moldovan police briefly detained for planning assassinations in Tighina.

- [“Romania lobbies for EU entry ‘perspective’ for Moldova”](#), EU Observer, 31 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°175, [Moldova’s Uncertain Future](#), 17 Aug. 2006.

↳ Ukraine President Yushchenko again to veto bill reducing his powers. FM Tarasyuk resigned, citing obstruction of his work by PM Yanukovich and governing coalition, including temporary freezing of ministry accounts in January. Thousands of Crimean Tatars protested in Simferopol 22 January, demanding Crimean regional government meet their land claims.

- [“Ukraine minister quits amid row”](#), BBC, 30 Jan. 2007.
- [“Ukrainian government restores funding to Foreign Ministry, official says”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Jan. 2007.

## WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

↳ Basque Country (Spain) ETA confirmed responsibility for December Madrid airport bombing, but said March 2006 permanent ceasefire still in force. ETA also suspected over explosives found near Amorebieta, Basque country. In unusual step, separatist Batasuna party called on ETA to maintain ceasefire and joined Bilbao peace march. Mass peace rallies held in Madrid and Bilbao 13 January despite boycott by Popular Party. PM Zapatero told special parliament session he had erred in predicting peace progress just before attack. Basque Premier Juan Jose Ibarretxe testified in court over April meeting with Batasuna 31 January. Supreme Court declared Jarrai, Haika and Segi youth groups “terrorist”, citing links to ETA, and increased prison sentences of 23 activists. Youth protesting ruling clashed with police and attacked Socialist party offices in Basque Country and Navarra.

- [“ETA’s farewell to peace”](#), openDemocracy, 18 Jan. 2007.
- [“Basque militants will join 2 peace rallies in Spain”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 11 Jan. 2007.

↳ Corsica Interior Minister Sarkozy pledged end to violence and €1 billion investment in island shortly after separatist killed in botched bomb attack, and banks and tax office bombed. Riot police injured after protestors threw explosives at nationalist march in Bastia 13 January.

- [“Homemade explosives injure riot police in clash with Corsican nationalists”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 13 Jan. 2007.
- [“Sarkozy condemns Corsica bombers”](#), BBC, 5 Jan. 2007.

↳ Cyprus Turkish Cypriots dismantled controversial footbridge 9 January in effort to ensure opening of green-line crossing on Nicosia’s Ledra Street, divided since 1963; EU has pledged €100,000 for project. Turkish military had criticised move, but dropped objection after President Talat met Chief of Staff in Ankara. EU governments agreed to pursue special conditions for trade with Turkish Cypriots “without delay”.

- [“Turks protest at Cyprus oil move”](#), BBC, 30 Jan. 2007.
- [“EU foreign ministers agree to pursue trade with northern Cyprus”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 22 Jan. 2007.
- [“Turkish Cypriots tear down controversial bridge in Nicosia”](#), Southeast European Times, 10 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°171, [The Cyprus Stalemate: What Next?](#), 8 Mar. 2006.

↳ Northern Ireland (UK) Sinn Fein convention voted to end opposition to Police Service of Northern Ireland 28 January. British and Irish PMs Blair and Ahern hailed step as removing key impediment to power-sharing between party and Democratic Unionists (DUP) and reaffirmed 7 March legislative elections date. DUP leader Ian Paisley must now convince party hardliners to share power. Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams expressed desire to meet and persuade commanders of 3 Republican paramilitary groups to disarm. NI Police Ombudsman confirmed police had colluded with loyalist UVF informants connected to 10 murders and over 50 other serious crimes; called for reopening of several murder investigations.

- [“The triumph of the extremes”](#), *Guardian*, 31 Jan. 2007.
- [“NI police colluded with killers”](#), BBC, 22 Jan. 2007.
- [“IRA wants dissidents to end violence”](#), AP, 18 Jan. 2007.

↳ Turkey Editor of Turkish-Armenian weekly *Agos Hrant Dink* shot dead in Istanbul 19 January. Arrested suspects reportedly identified as motive Dink’s insulting of “Turkishness” for which indicted in 2006 under penal code article 301 - for piece calling for Armenian-Turkish reconciliation. PM Erdogan and most party leaders did not attend public funeral march in which tens of thousands participated, though government signalled possible change to article 301 following domestic and international pressure. Allegations that police ignored intelligence on plot being investigated. Clashes in south east left 1 soldier and 3 PKK rebels dead. Erdogan called for concrete measures against PKK in Northern Iraq, and again asserted Turkey’s right to combat terrorism. Suspected leader of al-Qaeda national operations among 48 arrested in raids.

- [“Hrant Dink’s funeral”](#), openDemocracy, 24 Jan. 2007.
- [“Turk PM asserts right to intervene in Iraq, raps US”](#), AlertNet, 12 Jan. 2007.



## Latin America / Caribbean

↳ Bolivia More violence sparked by moves for autonomy in east; at least 2 killed in new clashes in Cochabamba between supporters of President Morales and *autonomistas*, prompted by Cochabamba governor’s call for autonomy referendum by

mid-February. Government proposed compromise on voting rules standoff in Constituent Assembly but no agreement reached with opposition.

- Comment by Mark L. Schneider (Crisis Group), [“Bolivia: Reach a Compromise”](#), *Miami Herald*, 25 Jan. 2007.
- [“Evo Morales, un año después”](#), *El País*, 23 Jan. 2007.
- [“Threat to scrap Bolivian constitutional body”](#), *Financial Times*, 12 Jan. 2007.

Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°13, [Bolivia’s Reforms: The Danger of New Conflicts](#), 8 January 2007. Growing instability could lead to future violence if leaders fail to negotiate an end to the current standoff. Representatives of peasant families and large landowners should publicly condemn violence, the government should stop using attacks on elites to rally indigenous support, and the eastern region civic groups should stop their separatist threats. International mediators should be called on to help bridge the disputes at the constituent assembly, and to help wade through the complicated technical aspects of land management disputes. Only when these first steps are made will this government have a chance to move the country toward greater social cohesion, economic progress and equity. Otherwise there is a real risk of Bolivia’s gradual disintegration.



Colombia 6-year FARC hostage and former government minister Fernando Araujo freed in course of military action 5 January in blow to FARC bargaining power on long-discussed hostage swap; FARC attacks continued with 5 police killed in Putumayo 14 January. Former paramilitary leader Salvatore Mancuso admitted in trial to orchestrating more than 300 murders and named government figures who sought paramilitary backing for 2001 campaigns. President Uribe agreed to joint mechanism with OAS supervision of coca crops along Colombia’s border with Ecuador after recent dispute over aerial spraying.

- [“Un nuevo capítulo en el escándalo de la ‘parapolítica’ colombiana”](#), *El País*, 26 Jan. 2007.
- [“Colombian government is ensnared in a paramilitary scandal”](#), *New York Times*, 21 Jan. 2007.
- [“El documento secreto de Ralito”](#), *El Tiempo*, 18 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°11, [Tougher Challenges Ahead for Colombia’s Uribe](#), 20 Oct. 2006.

Ecuador President Rafael Correa inaugurated 15 January; immediately announced plans to convene Constituent Assembly to rewrite constitution. Move requires support of popular referendum Correa wants held 18 March, but election court said Congress must first approve. Correa’s supporters stormed Congress 30 January forcing suspension of legislative session, demanding it approve calling of referendum, but opposition lawmakers vowed to block a process designed to curb their influence.

- [“Ecuador, en pie de lucha por la Asamblea Constituyente”](#), *El Tiempo*, 30 Jan. 2007.
- [“Ecuador electoral court bounces constitution question to Congress, Correa protests”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Jan. 2007.
- [“Magical mystery tour”](#), *Economist*, 18 Jan. 2007.

Haiti MINUSTAH peacekeepers continued effort to weed out gangs from Cité Soleil slum, arresting 62 alleged gang

members since 1 January. 4 gang members killed in clashes 24 January; peacekeepers took control of building they plan to use as new operations centre. President René Prével in annual address to parliament cited drug trafficking as primary cause of instability; accused U.S. and other “drug-consuming” states of failing to tackle drug trade.

- [“Clashes in Haiti leave at least five dead, 12 wounded”](#), AFP, 25 Jan. 2007.
- [“L’état se resserre sur Cité Soleil”](#), *Le Nouvelliste*, 24 Jan. 2007.

Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°14, [Haiti: Justice Reform and the Security Crisis](#), 31 January 2007. Haiti’s weak and dysfunctional justice system is no match for the kidnappings, drug trafficking and organised crime perpetrated by armed gangs. Prisons are overrun with inmates, the judiciary is encumbered by incompetence and corruption, the legal code is antiquated, judges are not independent, case management is poor and indigent defendants rarely have counsel. The government, with sustained international help, must demonstrate genuine political will or the fragile democracy’s stability could be at serious risk.



Venezuela President Hugo Chávez granted power to rule by decree for 18 months in 31 January parliamentary vote. Chávez promised period of “maximum revolution” to establish “21<sup>st</sup>-century socialism” and reshuffled cabinet. He earlier announced opposition RCTV television network would not have its license renewed in March, prompting concerns about crackdown on dissent.

- [“In Venezuela, Chavismo is dissected by fans and foes”](#), *New York Times*, 24 Jan. 2007.
- [“Chávez shifts up a gear in his drive for ‘21st-century socialism’”](#), *Financial Times*, 9 Jan. 2007.



## Middle East / North Africa

### EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Israel/Occupied Territories Assassinations and clashes between Hamas and Fatah reached unprecedented levels late January, with over 30 dead. Ceasefire announced 30 January but overshadowed by continued failure to reach political agreement, post-ceasefire killing of Hamas commander, and sporadic attacks on Hamas and Fatah officials. Key meeting between Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas political chief Khaled Meshaal in Damascus 21 January failed to produce agreement. Israel transferred \$100m in Palestinian tax revenues to Abbas, representing one sixth of amount withheld since Hamas elected in January 2006, after U.S. Sec. State Rice held meetings with Palestinian and Israeli leaders and announced plans to host summit with Abbas and Israeli PM Olmert early February. Suicide bomber killed 3 in Eilat 29 January in first such attack in 9 months; Islamic Jihad, al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and previously unknown group – Army of Believers – claimed responsibility. Israel stated it would pursue militants while maintaining Gaza ceasefire. Israel’s military chief Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz resigned over conflict with Hizbollah, to be replaced by Maj. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi.

- [“Palestinian truce holds despite sporadic attacks”](#), AlertNet, 31 Jan. 2007.
- [“From bad to worse”](#), *Economist*, 29 Jan. 2007.
- [“Disengaged Occupiers: The Legal Status of Gaza”](#), Gisha, 17 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°58, [The Arab-Israeli Conflict: To Reach a Lasting Peace](#), 5 Oct. 2006; and Middle East Initiative, [“Global Leaders Call for Action on Arab-Israeli Settlement”](#), 4 Oct. 2006.

Lebanon Political stalemate between western-backed Siniora government and opposition led by Hizbollah descended into violence. Clashes erupted in central and northern Lebanon between Hizbollah and Sunni opponents while opposition demonstrations in central Beirut turned violent as rival Sunni government supporters and Shiite opponents at Beirut’s Arab University clashed 25 January; 4 killed and more than 150 injured. 3 died in clashes amid general strike called by Hizbollah 23 January. Opposition pulled its demonstrators off streets 25 January amid fears of escalation. Iran and Saudi Arabia emerged as mediators in dispute but compromise proposals rejected by both sides. Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa expected to return to Lebanon early February to resume negotiation on package that includes enlarged cabinet and “neutral” minister in exchange for agreement on international tribunal; would reduce Hizbollah ability to block government but also remove government’s two-thirds majority. Paris (III) donors conference saw \$7.6bn pledged to help long-term recovery from 2006 conflict between Hizbollah and Israel.

- [“Diplomacy raises hopes for solution in Lebanon”](#), *Daily Star*, 1 Feb. 2007.
- [“Money can’t close the sectarian divide in Lebanon”](#), *Independent*, 26 Jan. 2007.
- [“Don’t blink first”](#), *Economist*, 25 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°20, [Lebanon at a Tripwire](#), 21 Dec. 2006.

Syria Iraqi President Jalal Talabani met President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus, first high-level visit since diplomatic relations reestablished November 2006. U.S. President Bush again accused Syria of allowing terrorists and insurgents to move in and out of Iraq, while U.S. Treasury imposed financial restrictions on 3 Syrian government entities allegedly involved in developing “non-conventional weapons and the missiles to deliver them”. Israeli newspapers reported unofficial peace talks between Israel and Syria between 2004 and 2006.

- [“Why can’t they just make peace?”](#), *Economist*, 18 Jan. 2007.
- [“U.S. Treasury moves to clamp down on Syrian entities accused of spreading weapons”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 4 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°39, [Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria](#), 12 Apr. 2005.

## GULF

Iran Increasing signs of disaffection with President Ahmadi-Nejad’s domestic and foreign policies: newspapers, including one closely affiliated with Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, warned Ahmadi-Nejad to stay out of nuclear diplomacy, and at least 150 members of Iran’s 290-member parliament signed petition summoning him to explain his policies. Tehran’s nuclear stance remained confrontational; announced missile tests and barred 38 of

approx. 200 people listed by IAEA as potential inspectors. U.S. increased pressure, announcing deployment of second aircraft carrier in Persian Gulf, detaining 5 Iranians in northern Iraq alleged to be associated with Revolutionary Guard, and placing restrictions on Iranian financial institutions. Iranian authorities hanged 4 Arab separatists convicted of bombings in south, defying calls by UN and NGOs to rescind death sentences and conduct fair trials.

- [“Bush’s rattle Iran policy”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 31 Jan. 2007.
- [“A president under fire at home”](#), *Economist*, 18 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°51, [Iran: Is There a Way Out of the Nuclear Impasse?](#), 23 Feb. 2006.

Iraq U.S. President Bush outlined new Iraq Strategy 11 January amid continuing widespread violence. Plan sees “surge” of 21,500 troops mostly to Baghdad but also restive Anbar province. U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee rejected new policy as “not in the national interest” in non-binding vote 24 January. U.S. suffered worst single-day losses 20 January with 25 killed, just as additional 3,000 troops arrived in Baghdad. Iraqi and U.S. troops engaged militants belonging to previously unknown Islamic cult 28-29 January near Najaf; interior ministry claimed over 200 members killed including group’s leader. Botched executions of Saddam Hussein late December and former head of secret police Barzan al-Tikriti 15 January led to further anger from former regime’s followers and Sunni community. PM Nouri Maliki received boost as parliament, including MPs allied to radical Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, voted for his new Baghdad security plan; aims to disarm militias and insurgents regardless of religious or political affiliation.

- [“US ‘victory’ against cult leader was ‘massacre’”](#), *Independent*, 31 Jan. 2007.
- [“Battle shows strength of splintering militias in Iraq”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 31 Jan. 2007.
- [“May the government at last rein in the Shia militias?”](#), *Economist*, 25 Jan. 2007.

Yemen Police killed al-Qaeda suspect in shoot out 15 January. Government said it increased security measures against infiltration of Islamists from Somalia.

- [“Yemen police kill suspected al-Qaeda fugitive in Shootout”](#), DPA, 15 Jan. 2007.

## NORTH AFRICA

Algeria Leader of Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) Abu Musab Abdulwadood issued internet call for orders from al-Qaeda to attack foreign and government targets. GSPC attack on Batna province military checkpoint left 10 rebels, 4 soldiers and guard dead 29 January.


- [“Islamic militants kill five in Algeria”](#), Reuters, 30 Jan. 2007.
- [“Algerian group issues threat”](#), Al Jazeera, 10 Jan. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°29, [Islamism, Violence and Reform in Algeria: Turning the Page](#), 30 July 2004.

- Egypt Clampdown on Muslim Brothers continued: at least 21 arrested and 6 senior members accused of money laundering “for terrorist purposes”. 16 senior members, including several held on money laundering charge, released 29 January. New charges against jailed opposition leader Ayman Nour dismissed by Cairo Court; U.S. and rights groups appealed for his release. Case against blogger Abdel Kareem Nabil, accused of sedition and insulting Islam and president, began 18 January. Al-Jazeera journalist released on bail after detention for “fabricated” footage of police torture. Parliament voted in favour of presidential reform package to amend 34 constitutional articles; Muslim Brothers voted against, saying changes “superficial”.
  - “Mubarak steps up fight on Muslim Brotherhood”, *Financial Times*, 30 Jan. 2007.
  - “Egyptian court refuses to release on bail a blogger accused of sectarian strife and insulting Islam”, *International Herald Tribune*, 25 Jan. 2007.

- Mauritania Municipal councillors voted in first round of Senate elections 21 January; no party gained clear majority. Opposition Coalition of Forces for Democratic Change requested African Union monitors for 11 March presidential election. Police arrested 3 suspected Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) members accused of 2005 army barracks attack.
  - “No clear winners in Mauritania poll”, Independent Online, 24 Jan. 2007.
  - “Mauritania arrests 3 suspected members of Algerian militant group”, AP, 10 Jan. 2007.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°53, *Political Transition in Mauritania: Results and Prospects*, 24 Apr. 2006.
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