

1 May 2007, N°45

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 some 130 staff members across five continents, who already report on nearly 60 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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May 2007 Watchlist



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Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

➡ Burundi After March suspension of participation in joint ceasefire monitoring mechanism, Palipehutu-FNL rebels agreed to hold talks with government to address outstanding concerns, including FNL role in armed forces, government. Talks still pending at month end due to venue disagreement. Hussein Radjabu – ousted ruling CNDD-FDD party chairman – arrested on allegations of destabilising nation 27 April.

- [“Burundi arrests former ruling party boss”](#), Reuters, 27 Apr. 2007.
- [“Burundi to hold new talks with FNL rebels-mediator”](#), Reuters, 4 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°120, [Burundi: Democracy and Peace at Risk](#), 30 Nov. 2006.

➡ Central African Republic Rebel Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) signed peace deal with government 13 April establishing ceasefire in north east. Government forces raided villages in north west 17-19 April, killing 1 in Mann, causing thousands to flee. Rebel Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and Democracy (APRD) attacked army convoy 24 April south of Paoua killing 1 soldier.

- [“Thousands flee fighting in Central African Republic”](#), Reuters, 21 Apr. 2007.
- [“Central African nation to sign peace deal with rebels”](#), AP, 13 Apr. 2007.

➡ Democratic Republic of Congo Political deterioration continued after heavy March fighting as opposition Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) leader Jean-Pierre Bemba flew to Portugal 11 April with permission from senate for 60-day absence. Public prosecutor called on senate to lift Bemba’s immunity 12 April. MLC suspended participation in lower house of parliament 14 April due to intimidation and harassment including looting of MLC headquarters, homes of several MLC leaders. Opposition returned to parliament 25 April after President Joseph Kabila agreed to discuss concerns. Fighting between militias and army intensified in Kivus as Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) continued offensive against Rwandan FDLR and Rasta rebels, killing 22 near Uganda border 27 April. Rebel FNI leader Peter Karim handed himself in 7 April for integration into army as colonel along with 7 officers. UNSC extended MONUC mandate through 15 May allowing more time to discuss France’s draft resolution. Burundi, Rwanda, DRC and Uganda adopted joint military strategy 19 April to fight rebel groups in Great Lakes region, but DRC said no foreign forces to operate in its territory.

- Comment by Jason K. Stearns (Crisis Group), [“Congo’s Peace: Miracle or Mirage?”](#), *Current History*, 23 Apr. 2007.
- [“With Bemba away, Congo opposition fights to survive”](#), Reuters, 19 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°44, [Congo: Staying Engaged after the Elections](#), 9 Jan. 2007.

➡ Rwanda Government filed case against France in International Court of Justice: seeks declaration France violated diplomatic immunity of President Paul Kagame and

others by issuing arrest warrants for alleged involvement in 1994 assassination of then-president Habyarimana. Brussels court opened trial of former Rwandan Maj. Bernard Ntuyahaga for 1994 killing of 10 Belgian peacekeepers. Rwandan military high court upheld genocide conviction and life sentence for Hutu general Laurent Munyakazi 27 April.

- [“Rwandan denies role in Belgian peacekeeper murders”](#), Reuters, 23 Apr. 2007.
- [“Rwanda takes France to UN court”](#), BBC, 18 Apr. 2007.

➡ Uganda Significant steps taken to get peace process back on track. In mid-April meeting chaired by UN Special Envoy, former Mozambique President Joaquim Chissano, government and LRA leaders renewed cessation of hostilities through end June, agreed to restart Juba talks 26 April under southern Sudanese VP Riek Machar’s mediation. 2 groups of rebel fighters in southern Sudan to converge in Ri-Kwangba; African Union, DRC and UN officials to help verify. LRA demanded 12-month suspension of International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrants against leaders to complete peace process.

- [“Uganda relents to northern rebels”](#), BBC, 26 Apr. 2007.
- [“Renewed truce raises optimism over future talks”](#), IRIN, 16 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°41, [Peace in Northern Uganda?](#), 13 Sept. 2006.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°124, [Northern Uganda: Seizing the Opportunity for Peace](#), 26 April 2007. The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and Uganda resumed peace talks 26 April but for this step toward ending one of Africa’s most brutal wars to produce lasting peace, it must be folded into a comprehensive strategy. The UN Special Envoy, former Mozambique President Chissano, needs more backing, especially from the U.S. and UK, and should be empowered to offer security guarantees directly to reclusive LRA leader, Joseph Kony. A more inclusive follow-on forum is also required to address conditions that have created a cycle of conflict in northern Uganda. Contingency planning is needed to guard against destabilisation in Congo and southern Sudan if the peace opportunity is lost.



HORN OF AFRICA

➡ Chad Chadian and Sudanese troops clashed in Darfur 9 April, first battle between armies amid rising tensions. 17 Sudanese, 9 Chadian soldiers and many rebels reported killed. After denials, Chad admitted crossing border “in pursuit” of rebels: said wants peace but will defend against rebels and Janjaweed militias crossing into Chad. Libya and Eritrea reportedly deployed border observers to lower tensions, defuse calls for UN force in eastern Chad. Death toll up to 400 in 31 March attacks on villages in eastern Chad by Sudanese and local Janjaweed militia aided by Chadian rebels.

- [“Chad admits battle inside Sudan”](#), BBC, 10 Apr. 2007.
- [“‘Apocalyptic scene’ after Chad raid”](#), BBC, 10 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°111, [Chad: Back towards War?](#), 1 June 2006.

➡ Ethiopia Attack on oil field in remote Ogaden region 24 April killed 74, including 9 Chinese. Ogaden National Liberation Front claimed responsibility; Ethiopia blamed Eritrea. Addis denied reinforcing troops in Mogadishu 6 April, said civilian casualties and instability exaggerated 24 April. High Court

released 25 journalists and opposition supporters for lack of evidence, dismissed charges against others, in controversial trial following disputed 2005 elections.

- [“Scores die in Ethiopia oil attack”](#), BBC, 24 Apr. 2007.

➡ Ethiopia/Eritrea Tensions persist as accusations traded. Ethiopia said killed 23 Eritrean-backed rebels, captured 18, received surrender of 112. Kenya announced effort to begin intense diplomacy between rivals. Eritrea suspended membership in regional Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) 21 April over Somalia policy rifts.

- [“Kenya to begin shuttle diplomacy between rivals Eritrea and Ethiopia”](#), Voice of America, 17 Apr. 2007.
- [“Ethiopia says killed 23 Eritrean-backed rebels”](#), Reuters, 3 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Africa Report N°101, [Ethiopia and Eritrea: Preventing War](#), 22 Dec. 2005.

➡ Somalia Fighting raged in Mogadishu after tentative ceasefire early month. Transitional Federal Government and Ethiopian troops stepped up offensive against Islamist insurgents and Hawiye clan militia 18 April. Violence appeared to level off and PM Ali Mohamed Ghedi claimed victory 26 April, but situation fragile. Some 400 killed in 9 days, up to 400,000 displaced since February. Heavy clashes in southern port town Kismayo 23 April between army troops that splintered into clan militias left up to 25 dead. Deputy PM Hussein Aideded of Hawiye clan in Eritrea with other MPs 19 April: announced alliance opposed to Ethiopia’s presence in Mogadishu, accused troops of genocide. Somali parliament voted 17 April to expel MPs in Asmara. Peace talks between Hawiye clan elders and Ethiopian commanders still pending. National reconciliation congress set 16 April postponed. Still only 1200 Ugandans of 8000 planned AU peacekeepers deployed. Ugandan killed 31 March after mortars hit AU base.

- [“Insurgent leaders call for resistance against Somali government”](#), AP, 30 Apr. 2007.
- [“Ethiopian tanks pound Mogadishu”](#), BBC, 24 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°45, [Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead](#), 26 Jan. 2007.

➡ Somaliland Fighting between Puntland and Somaliland forces mid-April around Dhahar, city within Somaliland’s post-independence boundaries, left 1 dead. Puntland retook city. Somaliland defence minister sacked 15 April.

- [“Fighting flares between Somaliland, Puntland”](#), Reuters, 15 Apr. 2007.

➡ Sudan Government of Sudan agreed 16 April to “heavy support package” to allow up to 3000 UN personnel into Darfur to support 7000 AU troops there, but Khartoum continued to resist deployment of 20,000 AU/UN hybrid force. Agreed package includes attack helicopters and armoured personnel carriers. Agreement followed debate of increased sanctions, week of visits to Khartoum by Chinese envoy Zhai Jun, SA President Thabo Mbeki and U.S. Dep. Sec. State John Negroponte. China involvement deemed key, though Khartoum had already committed to deal last November. U.S. stated 23 April that Khartoum must agree to hybrid force in matter of weeks or face tougher economic sanctions. Existing UNMIS force given 6-month extension 30 April. 5 AU Senegalese peacekeepers killed near Chad border 1 April in deadliest attack since 2004 deployment; 2 further deaths saw deadliest month for AU. Senegal threatened 13 April to pull out

500-strong contingent unless support provided. Leaked UN report accused Khartoum of flying arms and equipment into Darfur, disguising planes as UN aircraft, in violation of arms embargo. Rebels reported government air strike against Jemmeiza village and further 73 killed in northern Darfur. Transitional Darfur Regional Authority inaugurated 24 April as step in implementation of 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement.

- [“Too few, too late”](#), *Economist*, 19 Apr. 2007.
- [“UN accuses Sudan over weapons”](#), BBC, 19 Apr. 2007.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°125, [Darfur: Revitalising the Peace Process](#), 30 April 2007. With security in Darfur continuing to deteriorate, and the 2006 peace agreement (DPA) a failure, the international community must think creatively to secure a lasting settlement. More peacekeepers on the ground and an effective ceasefire are essential but so is revitalising the neglected political process through a joint African Union/UN mediation that begins by helping the rebels unify so they can negotiate coherently; broadens participation; and strengthens the negotiating structure. Khartoum will seek military victory and defy its obligations until it faces multilateral punitive measures. Without intense international engagement and cooperation, the crisis will continue ravaging Darfur and destabilising the entire region.



SOUTHERN AFRICA

➡ Zimbabwe No public signs of progress for SADC initiative led by South Africa President Mbeki to mediate between President Mugabe and opposition MDC. Ruling ZANU-PF reportedly took steps to consolidate chance of success in harmonised presidential and parliamentary elections now due March 2008. MDC factions led by Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara submitted shared roadmap to Pretoria, calling for transitional government and new constitution leading to free and fair elections. Crackdown on civil society continued: all NGO licences revoked, protests repeatedly broken up, arrests continued. EU added 5 deputy ministers to list of targeted sanctions against ZANU leaders.

- [“Zimbabwe Army’s deserters underscore country’s troubles”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 Apr. 2007.
- [“Mbeki’s Zim mission falters”](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 20 Apr. 2007.
- [“Mugabe hits out at opposition ‘anarchists’”](#), *Financial Times*, 18 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°122, [Zimbabwe: An End to the Stalemate?](#), 5 Mar. 2007.

WEST AFRICA

➡ Côte d’Ivoire Peace further consolidated as Guillaume Soro sworn in as PM 4 April. Transitional government announced 11 posts for President Laurent Gbagbo’s party and allies, 7 for Soro’s New Forces and 5 each for opposition RDR and PDCI. Gbagbo, Soro, French and UN troops agreed to December deadline for withdrawing foreign troops from buffer zone. Increase in violence around zone reported late April. President Gbagbo signed amnesty law 13 April for national security offences committed during conflict, excluding crimes against humanity, war crimes and economic crimes. World Bank agreed 20 April to lend \$100 million for disarmament of former combatants in exchange for repayment of debt interest.

- [“Ivory Coast president, rebel chief start dismantling buffer zone”](#), AP, 16 Apr. 2007.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°40, *Côte d'Ivoire: Stepping Up the Pressure*, 7 Sept. 2006.

➤ Guinea PM Lansana Kouyaté led ministerial delegation to France and Belgium 14-22 April. EU called for investigation into violence committed during January-February civil unrest. Head of National Assembly El Hadj Aboubacar Somparé called for investigation 5 April into excessive use of force by military in January-February. Hundreds of traders attacked and set fire to police station in Kindia in reaction to alleged police brutality 23 April.

- "Première tournée internationale", RFI, 17 Apr. 2007.
- Comment by Donald Steinberg (Crisis Group), "Blood Aluminum?", allAfrica.com, 3 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°121, *Guinea: Change or Chaos*, 14 Feb. 2007.

➤ Guinea-Bissau Planned demonstrations suspended early month as President Vieira began political consultations, dissolved government and appointed consensus candidate Martinho Ndafo Cabi of opposition PAIGC PM 9 April. Cabi promised to hold legislative elections next year, named new opposition-dominated government 17 April. Justice, foreign affairs, internal ministries assigned to close Vieira associates.

- "Un gouvernement de sortie de crise", RFI, 18 Apr. 2007.
- "New prime minister named", IRIN, 11 Apr. 2007.

➤ Liberia Member of opposition Liberian Action Party Alex Tyler elected speaker of House 5 April. Head of National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR) appealed for \$18 million for remaining 23,000 ex-combatants not included in donor-funded programs. President Johnson Sirleaf issued executive order 12 April transferring full responsibilities from UNDP to NCDDRR. Government announced plan 17 April to train Quick Reaction Unit to assume duty upon UNMIL's departure in response to public riots. UNSC lifted 6-year-old diamond ban, lauded country for meeting demands of Kimberley Process 27 April. Government signed military agreement with U.S. 18 April.

- "U.N. lifts Liberia diamond ban", Reuters, 27 Apr. 2007.
- "Ellen extends NCDDRR program", *Inquirer*, 18 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°107, *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*, 6 Apr. 2006.

➤ Niger Attack on French-run uranium mine in north 20 April, 1 soldier dead. Movement of Nigerians for Justice blamed.

- "Suspected Tuareg rebels attack Niger uranium mine", Reuters, 20 Apr. 2007.

➤ Nigeria Tensions and discontent heightened following presidential, parliamentary and governorship elections marred by violence, fraud and serious logistical problems. Action Congress candidate Atiku Abubakar ran in 21 April presidential poll only after Supreme Court overturned prior disqualification 16 April. Umaru Yar'Adua of ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) declared winner in landslide. International observers, local monitors and civil society criticised results. Opposition rejected, called for interim government, new elections and mass protests 1 May. Re-run of annulled polls 28 April consolidated PDP victory, but fraud, low turnout reported. Political violence in 10 states before and during 14 April governorship and state legislature elections caused over 60 deaths, with 2 major police stations razed in Port Harcourt. PDP won 27 of 36 governorships and 26 state legislatures;

protests and violent suppression followed, some 10 dead. Over 15 killed during presidential polls including 9 policemen in Nassarawa. In north, 13 April assassination of radical Muslim cleric, Jaafar Adam, and 2 aides in mosque in Kano suburb triggered 17 April attack on police station by fundamentalists with 12 policemen killed. Police reinforced by army 18 April and heavy fighting reportedly left 25 dead.

- "Elections disappoint, and Nigerians too beaten down to rise up", AP, 23 Apr. 2007.
- Comment by François Grignon (Crisis Group), "Nigeria: Urgent Action Needed to Rescue Elections", allAfrica.com, 17 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°123, *Nigeria's Elections: Avoiding a Political Crisis*, 28 Mar. 2007.

➤ Senegal President Abdoulaye Wade sworn in for second 5-year term 3 April despite opposition accusations of doctored voter lists and vote buying. Observers declared polls fair. 12 opposition parties vowed to boycott June legislative elections

- "Election boycott threatens Senegal's democratic reputation", Voice of America, 12 Apr. 2007.

➤ Sierra Leone MP and speaker, Justice Edmond Cowan, announced parliament to be dissolved on 25 June ahead of 28 July parliamentary and presidential elections. Elections groups warned limited time between dissolution and polls would cause prejudice, pose logistical difficulties. Earlier dissolution urged.

- "Sierra Leone: Dissolve Parliament or Risk Crisis – IEMG", Concord Times, 16 Apr. 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 Journalist Oralghaysha Omarshanova missing since 30 March after covering Almaty province clashes between ethnic Chechens and Kazakhs.

- "Authorities search for missing journalist", RFE/RL, 20 Apr. 2007.

➤ Kyrgyzstan Forceful police intervention ended 11-19 April opposition protests after Interior Minister Nogoybayev was attacked when urging crowd dispersal. Omurbek Subanaliev and Omurbek Abdrakhmanov, aides of opposition leader Feliks Kulov, arrested and charged with organising "mass unrest". Protracted struggle between president and parliament over reforming constitution continued. Parliament approved 2 appointments to Constitutional Court providing quorum to review proposals. Former president Akayev's daughter Bermet denied permission to stand in 29 April by-election in Kemin, leading to confrontation between supporters and authorities.

- "Kyrgyz rally ends in disarray", IWPR, 22 Apr. 2007.
- "Kyrgyz protesters clash with police", Reuters, 19 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°55, *Kyrgyzstan on the Edge*, 9 Nov. 2006.

➤ Tajikistan Arrests and convictions of alleged Islamist radicals continued in Northern Sughd province: 10-year sentence for suspected Hizb ut-Tahrir member; 18-19 years for

3 suspected Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) members; 7 years to life for further 11 IMU members. Charges include bomb attacks and border incursions.

- [“Tajik court convicts 11 members of a militant group linked to al-Qaeda”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Apr. 2007.
- [“Is Dushanbe pursuing an Uzbek political model?”](#), RFE/RL, 19 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, [“Tajikistan’s Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?”](#), 19 May 2004.

↳ Turkmenistan President Berdimuhammedov dismissed Interior Minister Rahmatov on corruption accusations.

- [“President pushes ahead with education and agricultural reform”](#), IRIN, 4 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°60, [“Turkmenistan after Niyazov”](#), 12 Feb. 2007.

↳ Uzbekistan EU delegation held talks with Uzbek officials ahead of EU decision, due May, on continuing sanctions. Tashkent refused to meet UN Rights Commissioner Louise Arbour on regional tour. Arrests and detention of journalists, rights activists and religious dissenters continued. Delayed trial of jailed rights activist Umida Niyazova began 30 April. Journalist Jamshid Karimov’s confinement to psychological hospital, since September 2006, extended further 6 months. Human Rights Watch representative granted 3-month accreditation after reversal of initial decision to expel.

- [“U.N. rights commissioner barred from Uzbekistan during Central Asia tour”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 25 Apr. 2007.
- [“Drive for Central Asia strategy could shape Uzbekistan policy”](#), RFE/RL, 20 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°54, [“Uzbekistan: Europe’s Sanctions Matter”](#), 6 Nov. 2006.

SOUTH ASIA

↳ Afghanistan President Karzai and Pakistan President Musharraf signed pact to fight terrorism in Istanbul 30 April as war of words between 2 on fight against militants eased somewhat. Amid continued concern about targeting civilians, U.S. State Dept. said 2006 saw 53% increase in terrorist attacks against noncombatants while rights group reported suicide attacks killed 8 times as many civilians as combatants in 2006. NATO forces took control of strategic southern town Sangin after coordinated ground and air bombing campaign in push around Kajaki dam, site of important electricity works. Heavy fighting in Herat province at month-end included NATO attack that killed 6 civilians, prompting large anti-U.S. protests. Australia announced plans to increase troop contribution by 400 to 950 by mid-year; new forces to deploy to Uruzgan. President Karzai admitted holding reconciliation talks with some Taliban leaders, ruled out talks with foreign Taliban or Mullah Omar. Taliban kidnappers of 2 French aid workers (and 3 local staff) conditioned release on withdrawal of French troops, but released French woman 28 April.

- [“Karzai, Musharraf in terror vow”](#), BBC, 30 Apr. 2007.
- [“Civilians Bear Cost of Escalating Insurgent Attacks”](#), Human Rights Watch, 16 Apr. 2007.
- [“Relief at last for hard-pressed Fusiliers”](#), *Guardian*, 11 Apr. 2007.
- Comment by Nick Grono (Crisis Group), [“How to Beat the Taliban”](#), *The Australian*, 9 Apr. 2007.

- For most recent report, see Asia Briefing N°59, [“Afghanistan’s Endangered Compact”](#), 29 Jan. 2007.

↳ Bangladesh Interim government crackdown on alleged corruption reached highest levels of political elite. Former PM and head of Awami League Sheikh Hasina charged with murder but allowed to return from holiday after initial attempt to force exile. BNP leader Khaleda Zia resisted pressure to take exile in Saudi Arabia. Over 100,000 reported arrested since January, 79 reported killed in custody. 3 bombs detonated 1 May at train stations in major cities, group called “new al Qaeda” claimed responsibility. Army chief General Ahmed made 2 April speech calling for “own brand of democracy”, blasting decades-long failure of political parties. World Bank released \$200m in withheld funds in sign of support for interim government.

- [“Bangladesh’s ‘Begums’ face exile”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 Apr. 2007.
- [“79 killed in custody in 3 months”](#), *New Age*, 3 Apr. 2007.
- [“Bangladesh to have own brand of democracy”](#), *Daily Star*, 3 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°121, [“Bangladesh Today”](#), 23 Oct. 2006.

↳ India (non-Kashmir) In Assam, state government said prepared to enter peace talks with United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), rebel group blamed for dozens of deaths this year. 3 shot dead in Manipur state 23 April, likely People’s United Liberation Front in-fighting. Naxalites in Jharkhand state killed 8 members of breakaway faction in gun battle 10 April. In Chhattisgarh, Maoists killed 2 farmers apparently for selling land to steel company; police killed 2 Maoists in targeted strike 15 April; state extended ban on Maoist party.

- [“Assam offers to hold peace talks with ULFA”](#), IAN, 19 Apr. 2007.
- [“Maoists kill eight breakaway rebels”](#), Gulf News, 11 Apr. 2007.

↳ Kashmir Indian authorities said violence in India-controlled Jammu & Kashmir fell two-thirds in 2006 to lowest level in 17 years. No agreement in 11th round of talks between New Delhi and Islamabad on Siachen Glacier issue. New Delhi hosted 24 April roundtable on Kashmir, but separatist parties stayed away as talks skirted subject of territory. Thousands protested in Srinagar 16 April in response to continued civilian casualties at hands of Indian police forces.

- [“Little hope ahead of Kashmir-Delhi peace talks”](#), Reuters, 24 Apr. 2007.
- [“Thousands protest civilian deaths in Indian Kashmir”](#), Reuters, 16 Apr. 2007.
- [“Kashmir violence falls to all time low –official”](#), Reuters, 1 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°51, [“India, Pakistan and Kashmir: Stabilising a Cold Peace”](#), 15 June 2006.

↳ Maldives Opposition MDP chairman claimed beaten when detained after 16 April Male demonstrations against alleged wrongful death of man detained on drugs charges.

- [“Row over Maldives ‘custody death’”](#), BBC, 16 Apr. 2007.

- Nepal Election commission said 110-day lead time needed to prepare for constituent assembly elections, effectively postponing proposed June polls to mid-autumn. Following Maoist arms registration, Nepalese army weapons stored 10-12 April; next phase verification of fighters. Maoists issued ultimatum calling for declaration of republic by 21 May, threatening mass civil disobedience if not met. Political deadlock over new polls date and Maoist deadline stalling verification and disrupting legislature sessions. Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MJF) called 72-hour strike 23 April, renewing calls for greater representation for Tarai plains. But MJF registered as political party, said would join electoral process. Army 21-gun salute for king on anniversary of end to royal rule and reports of meeting between king and army chief of staff raised new controversy over monarchy, effectively suspended by interim constitution.
- "Maoists give ultimatum to Nepal govt", *Times of India*, 29 Apr. 2007.
 - "Nepal commission delays elections", BBC, 13 Apr. 2007.
 - "Strike hits life in eastern Nepal", *Hindu*, 23 Apr. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°128, *Nepal's Constitutional Process*, 26 Feb. 2007.

- Pakistan Internal security concerns rose after 28 April suicide bombing killed 30 and wounded interior minister at Peshawar political rally; prime suspects militants linked to al-Qaeda. Fighting between rival groups of pro-Taliban tribesmen continued in South Waziristan. Islamabad admitted military involvement for first time: supported Pakistani Taliban commander Mullah Nazir against rival pro-Taliban group allied with Uzbek fighters. Nazir now consolidating control over South Waziristan. Controversy deepened over March suspension of top judge Iftikhar Chaudhry, who faced hearing before panel of judges he claimed biased; protests called for President Musharraf's resignation over issue. 90 Baloch members of Jundallah militant group arrested by Tehran in crackdown after spike in Baloch attacks last month.
- "Pakistani tribes fight alleged al-Qaida allies", *Chicago Tribune*, 24 Apr. 2007.
 - "Ethnic spat heats up Pakistan-Iran border", *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 Apr. 2007.
 - "Musharraf faces calls to resign", *Financial Times*, 18 Apr. 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°131, *Discord in Pakistan's Northern Areas*, 2 Apr. 2007. Unless Pakistan takes steps to provide meaningful autonomy and basic political rights to the Northern Areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, sectarian radicalism will increase. Tensions are growing, and an institutional void has developed, leaving room for religious organisations with extremist tendencies to expand their influence. Pakistan should extend meaningful autonomy to the Federally Administered Northern Areas, or grievances will mount. The government should implement the Supreme Court's recommendations and extend constitutional rights to the region's people.

- Sri Lanka Scores of LTTE fighters and government troops killed in clashes in north and east throughout month. Fierce fighting reported on new Mannar front in north west. Further aerial attacks by LTTE increased fears of undetected

attacks: 6 troops killed in attack on northern Palili air base 24 April, and though little damage reported after attack on oil facility near Colombo 29 April, airport closed briefly and some airlines withdrew flights. Defence Sec. Gotabhaya Rajapakse vowed to continue military offensive saying ceasefire had "no meaning". Rebels maintained agreement only basis for future talks but current climate precluded negotiations. More than 30 killings reported in northern town of Vavuniya. Local and international rights groups said hundreds disappeared since January, expressed alarm at deteriorating press freedom including forced closure of newspapers. Colombo said unnamed diplomats interfering in local politics, threatened action. International Commission of Jurists criticised government investigation into killing of 17 aid workers August 2006 for bias and lack of transparency.

- "Tigers air attack rattles Colombo", *Financial Times*, 30 Apr. 2007.
- "Top Sri Lankan defense official says cease-fire has 'no meaning'", AP, 12 Apr. 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 6-party talks still on hold as North Korea failed to shut Yongbyon reactor by 14 April deadline. Washington initially said willing to give Pyongyang some leeway on timing, but President Bush said patience "not unlimited" and, with Japan, threatened new sanctions during visit by PM Abe. \$25m frozen funds in Macau bank remained unreleased due to difficulties finding banks to take funds from designated money-laundering concern. Seoul sent negotiator Chun Yung-woo to Washington 23 April to discuss technical issues related to unfreezing funds and resumed food aid.
- "Further sanctions threat for N Korea", *Financial Times*, 27 Apr. 2007.
 - "N Korea sharpens tongue to counter US 'sweet talk'", *Financial Times*, 25 Apr. 2007.
 - "North Korea misses important deadline", *New York Times*, 15 Apr. 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°62, *After the North Korea Nuclear Breakthrough: Compliance or Confrontation?*, 30 April 2007. The 13 February breakthrough in which North Korea agreed to dismantle its Yongbyon nuclear facility and admit IAEA inspectors in exchange for energy aid and security assurances was a vital first step toward denuclearisation. However, the agreement is ambiguous, and important points require further negotiation. The U.S. and its partners should adopt a multi-step strategy offering specific rewards for actions in order to convince the North ultimately to give up its nuclear weapons. The plan must be backed with a credible threat of coercive measures if Pyongyang reneges at any stage.

- Taiwan Strait During annual military exercises 25 April, Taiwan made first open declaration they would fire missiles at mainland if attacked. Pro-independence think-tank promoted idea of interim "second republic" constitution in absence of democratic process with China; plan rejected by opposition KMT as clear independence move. During visit of KMT delegation to Beijing, Chinese President Hu Jintao

urged closer ties. Trial of opposition leader Ma Ying-jeou began 3 April; outcome expected to influence upcoming presidential elections.

- [“We will fire missiles at China, says Taiwan”](#), Reuters, 25 Apr. 2007.
- [“Taiwan presidential hopeful on trial in, outside court”](#), Reuters, 31 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°42, [China and Taiwan: Uneasy Détente](#), 21 Sept. 2005.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

- ◀ Indonesia Jakarta began clarification of power-sharing arrangement with Aceh government. Home Affairs ministry's draft regulation gave Jakarta lead role in 31 policy areas and broad authority over regional issues; Governor Yusuf protested. World Bank report said March most violent since tsunami in Aceh, highlighting recent rising local tensions. Strike at Freeport mine 18-21 April caused 20% hit to production; management agreed to demands for better pay, local development initiatives. West Irian Jaya formally renamed West Papua 18 April; governors and MRP agreed to implementation of Special Autonomy Law.
 - [“Aceh governor warns govt over draft regulation”](#), *Jakarta Post*, 21 Apr. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°61, [Indonesia: How GAM Won in Aceh](#), 22 Mar. 2007.

- ◀ Myanmar/Burma Continued Burmese offensive on Karen National Union (KNU) forces killed over 17, displaced hundreds over Thai border. Army reportedly seized 4 major rebel bases. In first application of February agreements with International Labour Organisation, 2 state officials convicted of using forced labour sentenced to 6 months' prison. UN humanitarian affairs deputy Wahlstrom met senior officials in attempt to resolve growing humanitarian access crisis. Myanmar and North Korea signed agreement 26 April to normalise relations during visit by North Korean delegation, while India announced increased military aid and cooperation.
 - [“Myanmar seizes key rebel bases”](#), AFP, 12 Apr. 2007.
 - [“Myanmar jails 2 officials for forcing villagers to repair roads”](#), *Hindu*, 31 Mar. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°58, [Myanmar: New Threats to Humanitarian Aid](#), 8 Dec. 2006.

- ◀ Philippines Fighting escalated between factions of MNLF rebels allied with Abu Sayyaf militants on Jolo island. 11 April rebel mortar attack on marine base sparked army retaliation against rebel bases; MNLF beheading of 6 government workers followed. Organisation of Islamic Countries, mediator of failed 1996 Manila-MNLF peace agreement, called for end to fighting ahead of scheduled July talks in Jeddah. Violence rose ahead of May polls.
 - [“Beheadings repulse Philippines, army on offensive”](#), Reuters, 20 Apr. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°110, [Philippines Terrorism: The Role of Militant Islamic Converts](#), 19 Dec. 2005.

- ◀ Thailand Situation in south remained volatile: month included burning of Buddhist woman in Yala, shooting by soldiers of 3 Muslim youths. Confidence in interim government continued to fall as disparate political groups

held rallies criticising government. First draft of new constitution completed 17 April; many points of contention ahead of September referendum, including provisions giving coup leaders amnesty.

- [“Draft Thai constitution draws criticism”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°129, [Southern Thailand: The Impact of the Coup](#), 15 Mar. 2007.

- ◀ Timor-Leste First round of presidential elections held 9 April: after 82% turnout, Fretilin candidate Francisco “Lu Olo” Guterres (28%) will face José Ramos Horta (22%) in second round 9 May. Limited campaign-related violence between Fretilin and other supporters in Viqueque and Dili, observers declared polls generally free and fair and devoid of violence. Losing candidates complained of irregularities and intimidation at poll; in Baucau, number of votes exceeded registered voters by factor of 3. Efforts to capture ex-army rebel Alfredo Reinado called off 23 April by Ramos. Sporadic clashes in Dili in late April, but security situation relatively stable.
 - [“Timor-Leste: Alkatiri acusa Ramos Horta de ser um ditador”](#), *Diário Digital*, 24 Apr. 2007.
 - [“East Timor's acting prime minister halts search for fugitive rebel soldier”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Apr. 2007.
 - [“East Timor resumes talks with rebels”](#), Reuters, 19 Apr. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°120, [Resolving Timor-Leste's Crisis](#), 10 Oct. 2006.

PACIFIC

- ◀ Fiji Ministerial delegation sent to Brussels to unfreeze EU aid delivered promise to lift state of emergency in May and hold parliamentary elections by March 2009, 1 year earlier than initially promised. UN fact-finding mission visited country.
 - [“UN team preparing report on Fiji”](#), *Age*, 27 Apr. 2007.
- ◀ Tonga State of emergency extended by 1 month for 6th time since 17 November riots in capital. MP Akilisi Pohiva said continued ban on political gatherings could prompt return to violence.
 - [“Tonga MP warns continuing state of emergency could lead to more violence”](#), *Radio New Zealand*, 16 Apr. 2007.



BALKANS

- ◀ Albania FM Besnik Mustafaj resigned; PM Berisha denied subsequent reshuffle would destabilise government.
 - [“Foreign minister's departure takes Albania by surprise”](#), *BIRN*, 30 Apr. 2007.
- ◀ Bosnia & Herzegovina Justice Ministry announced revoking citizenship of 367 mujahideen naturalised after fighting alongside Bosniak soldiers during war: must leave or face deportation. High Rep. Schwarz-Schilling agreed with federal and entity PMs to form coordinating body on conditions in Srebrenica; relations between Republika Srpska (RS) and

Federation deteriorated as tensions rose over returnees and area's status. RS parliament adopted resolution allowing entity to organise referendum on BiH police reform 11 April. Office of High Representative warned move would set back BiH progress.

- ["Bosnia vs Serbia: The evidence scandal"](#), ISN, 24 Apr. 2007.
- ["Bosnia revokes citizenship of Islamic ex-soldiers"](#), Reuters, 11 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°180, [Ensuring Bosnia's Future: A New International Engagement Strategy](#), 15 Feb. 2007.

➤ Kosovo U.S. Under Sec. State Burns said 17 April U.S. will support Kosovo independence declaration after UNSC enabling resolution. U.S. mooted June deadline for resolution, yet further delay likely as Russia stepped up rhetoric against Ahtisaari plan and member state objections prevented forceful EU advocacy of supervised independence. UN Envoy Ahtisaari presented proposals in closed UNSC session. Amid major disagreements, Council sent fact-finding mission to Belgrade and Kosovo 25-28 April. To mark visit, displaced Kosovar Serbs protested on Serbian side of Kosovo boundary 26 April. Kosovo Assembly approved Ahtisaari plan 2 April. Kosovo Unity team signed declaration, on U.S. urging, at civil society-initiated 13-15 April meeting in Pocantico in U.S., pledging cooperation with international community to create multi-ethnic state. Preliminary conclusions of international investigation into February protestor deaths defined killings as criminal, focused on role of Romanian police contingent but did not name specific officers.

- ["UN team seeks Kosovo information"](#), BBC, 25 Apr. 2007.
- ["Russia, Kosovo clash over independence plan"](#), Reuters, 24 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°177, [Kosovo Status: Delay Is Risky](#), 10 Nov. 2006.

➤ Macedonia Party for Democratic Prosperity to become second ethnic Albanian party in governing coalition. Former Interior Minister Boskovski and senior police officer Johan Tarculovski on trial for war crimes in Hague 16 April, charged with 2001 murder of 7 ethnic Albanians in Ljuboten. Culture Minister Ilirijan Bekiri resigned after public outcry over attempt to censure theatre.

- ["War crimes trial of Macedonian ex-minister begins"](#), Reuters, 16 Apr. 2007.
- ["Macedonian Minister steps down after attempt to ban play"](#), Southeast European Times, 9 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°41, [Macedonia: Wobbling toward Europe](#), 12 Jan. 2006.

➤ Serbia Suspected Wahhabi militant Ismail Prentic shot dead 20 April in police raid on group accused of planning suicide bombings in Sandzak. Talks on formation of coalition government continued. Democratic Party called for resumption of parliament constituent session and election of parliamentary speaker. Liberal Democratic Party merged with Civil Alliance of Serbia 7 April. Assassination attempt against journalist Dejan Anastasijevic 14 April.

- ["One dead, two wounded in Serb anti-terrorist raid"](#), Reuters, 20 Apr. 2007.
- ["DS urges resumption of Serbian Parliament's constituent session"](#), Southeast European Times, 10 Apr. 2007.

- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°44, [Serbia's New Constitution: Democracy Going Backwards](#), 8 Nov. 2006.

CAUCASUS

➤ Armenia Defence Minister Serzh Sarkisian appointed PM 4 April. Campaign for 12 May parliamentary elections began amid several apparently election-related violent incidents including 12 April attack on Prosperous Armenia Party local offices. Assassination attempt 3 April on Gyumri mayor killed 3.

- ["Violent start to Armenian election campaign"](#), IWPR, 12 Apr. 2007.
- ["Possible Armenian presidential hopeful becomes new PM"](#), Reuters, 4 Apr. 2007.

➤ Azerbaijan Intimidation of independent media continued as Eynulla Fatullayev, editor of 2 largest independent newspapers, sentenced to 2.5 years prison for article allegedly insulting Azeri refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh. Rights and media groups said case politically motivated. Journalist for Fatullayev papers attacked by unknown assailants. Former Health Minister Ali Insanov sentenced to 11 years on corruption charges. Supporters also say politically motivated. Police arrested 11 alleged Islamist extremists in Baku 12 April.

- ["Former Azerbaijani minister sentenced to 11 years"](#), RFE/RL, 20 Apr. 2007.
- For most recent Crisis Group report, see Europe Briefing N°40, [Azerbaijan's 2005 Elections: Lost Opportunity](#), 21 Nov. 2005.

➤ Chechnya (Russia) Ramzan Kadyrov inaugurated as president 5 April. Helicopter crashed, killing at least 18 servicemen; military did not confirm cause of crash. European Court of Human Rights found Russia culpable in disappearance of Shakhid Baysayev during military sweep in 2000, awarded widow damages.

- ["Helicopter shot down in Chechnya, 18 dead-reports"](#), Reuters, 27 Apr. 2007.
- ["Kadyrov inaugurated as Chechen president"](#), RFE/RL, 5 Apr. 2007.

➤ North Caucasus (non-Chechnya) Deputy Chief Prosecutor of Dagestan Abdu Basir Omarov found dead 1 April. Special forces soldier killed in shootout with rebels 18 April. 2 suspected militants killed in police raid 23 April.

- ["Was Dagestan's amnesty a fiction?"](#), IWPR, 5 Apr. 2007.
- ["Beslan memorial plan angers Russian Muslim leader"](#), Reuters, 4 Apr. 2007.

➤ Georgia President Saakashvili outlined new peace proposal on South Ossetia 23 April linked to new law on region passed by parliament 13 April. Plan, aiming to create conditions for "European-style autonomy" for region, rejected by de facto Tskhinvali authorities. Informal Joint Control Commission meetings failed to reach agreement on next steps after disagreement over new Georgian police check-points in Kekhvi and Tamarasheni villages. On Abkhazia, PM Noghaideli presented new settlement proposal to UNSC based on recognition of Georgia's territorial integrity. Abkhaz de facto FM Shamba rejected future status within Georgia. UNSC unanimously adopted resolution calling for restraint from both

sides in upper Kodori gorge. UNOMIG mandate extended to 15 October.

- ["Georgia promotes its conflict-resolution plan"](#), Eurasianet, 24 Apr. 2007.
- ["Georgia devises new plan for South Ossetia"](#), IWPR, 6 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Europe Report N°179, *Abkhazia: Ways Forward*, 18 Jan. 2007.

➤ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Armenian and Azerbaijani FM's met for "constructive" talks in presence of Minsk Group chairmen in Belgrade 18 April. De facto NK authorities set presidential election for 19 July.

- ["Azerbaijan postpones high-level U.S. visit over wording on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict"](#), AP, 22 Apr. 2007.
- ["Armenian official says deal on disputed territory close, Azerbaijan less upbeat"](#), AP, 20 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°167, *Nagorno-Karabakh: A Plan for Peace*, 11 Oct. 2005.

EASTERN EUROPE

➤ Belarus Opposition activist Andrei Kilmau arrested 3 April for online article criticising President Lukashenko: first arrest for online dissidence.

- ["Opposition activist arrested for article posted online"](#), Reporters Without Borders, 20 Apr. 2007.
- ["Russia mulls new oil pipeline project to bypass Belarus", Poland"](#), RIA Novosti, 12 Apr. 2007.

➤ Moldova Leaked document signalled joint declaration by President Vladimir Voronin and Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov recognising TD government and leadership for first time. Plan sees TD gaining top deputy ministers in government. Voronin's shift reportedly engineered by Moscow.

- ["A thaw in the river"](#), *Economist*, 19 Apr. 2007.
- ["Voronin pressured to accept Russian settlement plan for Transnistria"](#), Eurasia Daily Monitor, 13 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°175, *Moldova's Uncertain Future*, 17 Aug. 2006.

➤ Ukraine Following March defection of 11 MPs to ruling coalition, President Yushchenko issued decree 2 April dissolving parliament and setting early elections 27 May. PM Yanukovich refused to obey. Supporters of both staged major demonstrations. While Constitutional Court considered legality, with 5 of 18 judges threatening to quit citing "gross pressure" from PM's allies, Yushchenko issued second decree 26 April setting elections for June. Yanukovich again challenged as unconstitutional. Parliament voted 30 April for simultaneous parliamentary and presidential elections to be held by 9 December.

- ["Ukraine PM opposes new poll move"](#), BBC, 26 Apr. 2007.
- ["Kyiv quiet as signs of political compromise emerge"](#), RFE/RL, 21 Apr. 2007.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➤ Basque Country (Spain) 3 explosive devices caused damage in south west France 18 March; no immediate claim but ETA suspected. ETA told media ready to make "firm commitments" to non-violence if "attacks" on Basque homeland end. In run up to 27 May municipal elections, high court judge declared Basque National Action (ANV) party legal

29 April. Supreme Court hearing on eligibility of newly formed Patriotic Socialist Union (ASB), also accused of ETA links, scheduled for 16 May.

- ["Spanish opposition decries judge's Basque party move"](#), Reuters, 29 Apr. 2007.
- ["Eta 'renews commitment to peace'"](#), BBC, 8 Apr. 2007.

➤ Cyprus Cypriot MEP Marios Matsakis arrested on Akrotiri British sovereign base during European Parliament group visit, for outstanding fine for causing criminal damage at base. UN published inter-communal public opinion survey.

- ["Cypriot poll: Island's divided Greeks, Turks don't expect quick reunification"](#), AP, 24 Apr. 2007.
- ["British army in Cyprus arrests MEP"](#), 12 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°171, *The Cyprus Stalemate: What Next?*, 8 Mar. 2006.

➤ Northern Ireland (UK) 4 main party leaders announced distribution of ministerial portfolios in new executive due to convene 8 May. Additional DUP councillors resigned in protest of March agreement to share power with Sinn Fein (SF). Youth violence in West Belfast saw intervening police attacked 11 April. SF named 3 nominees, including 1 ex-convict, to Policing Board after holding first ever talks with board.

- ["SF policing board nominees named"](#), BBC, 23 Apr. 2007.
- ["New assembly cabinet takes shape"](#), BBC, 2 Apr. 2007.

➤ Turkey Armed forces issued web statement 27 April, warning would resist "mounting" efforts to undermine secular republic. Constitutional Court decision on constitutionality of first round vote on ruling AK Party presidential nominee FM Abdullah Gul due 1 April. Gul's nomination ended months of speculation that PM Erdogan would run, but constitutional objection brought by opposition Republican People's Party, hoping to trigger early parliamentary elections. 300,000 demonstrated in defence of secularism in Ankara 14 April; additional million protested 29 April in Istanbul. Army chief of staff Buyukanit announced military ready to attack PKK in Northern Iraq, pending political decision, 12 April. Military reported at least 11 soldiers and 38 rebels killed in clashes in 4 weeks to 21 April; further clashes left at least 2 soldiers, 5 rebels dead. 3 Christians working in publishing house in Malatya, including 1 German, killed 18 April. 5 students charged, further arrests. Attempted assassination of Higher Education Council President Tezic 25 April. Government presented EU accession road map 17 April; EU declined to approve FM Gul's proposed 2013 accession date. At least 580 detained during May Day protests in Istanbul.

- ["Protests in Turkey highlight old tensions between secularism and Islam"](#), AP, 29 Apr. 2007.
- ["Turkey FM loses presidential vote"](#), BBC, 27 Apr. 2007.
- ["Ten arrested over Turkey murders"](#), BBC, 19 Apr. 2007.



Latin America / Caribbean

➤ Bolivia Clashes 18 April between military guards and demonstrators demanding greater share in profits from Margarita gas field killed 1 and injured 20; protesters held 58 police officers hostage for 24 hours. Constituent Assembly

delegates gathered more than 3000 proposals for new constitution.

- ["Bolivia braced for more unrest over gas field"](#), *Financial Times*, 20 Apr. 2007.
- ["Bolivia reduce sus exportaciones de gas a Argentina y a Brasil por las violentas protestas"](#), *El País*, 20 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°13, ["Bolivia's Reforms: The Danger of New Conflicts"](#), 8 Jan. 2007.

Colombia ELN rebels agreed "experimental" ceasefire with Bogotá 18 April after negotiations in Cuba, but details unclear. Leading human rights activist Judy Vergara Correa murdered in Medellín, allegedly in response to campaign against criminal activity by local demobilised paramilitaries. Parapolitics scandal continued to widen: opposition Senator Gustavo Petro accused President Uribe of authorising local militias when governor of Antioquia in mid-1990s. In signs of growing concern in Washington, U.S. Senate subcommittee froze \$55 million in aid, former vice-president Al Gore refused to appear with Uribe at Miami climate change conference. Government alleged FARC responsible for explosion in Cali police headquarters, possible sign of strategic return to targeting urban centres; FARC denied involvement.

- ["Colombia backs ELN ceasefire plan"](#), BBC, 18 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°11, ["Tougher Challenges Ahead for Colombia's Uribe"](#), 20 Oct. 2006.

Ecuador President Correa's proposed constituent assembly received strong mandate with 81% approval in popular referendum 15 April (turnout 71%). Elections for representatives expected 30 September. But political divisions deepened further as Supreme Court ruled March dismissals of 57 Congressmen unconstitutional and pro-Correa Congressmen then moved to sack 9 judges. 4 of 24 opposition lawmakers accused of treason sought political asylum in Colombia, amid heightened political tension between 2 countries, but relations normalised at month-end with return of Ecuadorean ambassador to Bogotá.

- ["Ecuador's Congress sacks judges"](#), BBC, 24 Apr. 2007.
- ["El Constitucional de Ecuador devuelve sus cargos a 51 diputados opositores"](#), *El País*, 23 Apr. 2007.
- Comment by Markus Schultze-Kraft (Crisis Group), ["Una propuesta constructiva"](#), *El Tiempo*, 9 Apr. 2007.

Haiti Security improved with gang arrests up and kidnappings down. Pursuit of gang members continued with arrest of 600 in last 2 months; trials of major gang leaders pending. MINUSTAH figures show 18 kidnappings in March, lowest since April 2006. Journalist and regional leader of opposition Fanmi Lavalas party (FL) Johnson Edouard murdered 12 April in Gonaives.

- ["Arrest of gang members aids peace in Haiti"](#), AP, 14 Apr. 2007.
- ["Former suspect in slaying of Haiti's best-known journalist shot to death"](#), AP, 5 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°14, ["Haiti: Justice Reform and the Security Crisis"](#), 31 Jan. 2007.

Peru Authorities regained control of major roads 25 April after roadblocks by coca farmers protesting eradication programme erupted in violence twice in month. 1 killed, 5 injured in central Peru after suspected Shining Path ex-rebels attacked crop

destruction team. President Alan Garcia announced plan for aerial bombardment of drug trade infrastructure, declared state of emergency in 3 provinces.

- ["Peruvian anti-coca team fired upon"](#), PressTV, 14 Apr. 2007.
- ["Peru to bomb Amazon cocaine labs"](#), BBC, 3 Apr. 2007.

Venezuela In 11 April address to armed forces, President Hugo Chávez asked military to adopt socialism "without ambiguities", removing any pretext of armed forces' political independence. Chávez threatened to withdraw from OAS over prospect of sanctions after Caracas failed to renew independent RCTV's broadcast licence. Chavista program increasingly ideological with businesses ordered to provide 4 hours weekly training in Marxism. Inflation and food shortages remained chronic.

- ["Hugo Chávez: yo, el supremo"](#), openDemocracy, 13 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°19, ["Venezuela: Hugo Chávez's Revolution"](#), 22 Feb. 2007.



Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Israel/Occupied Territories 5-month-old Gaza ceasefire at risk as Hamas militants fired rockets and mortar shells into Israel 24 April. Attacks came in response to 9 killed by Israeli army in West Bank raids 21/22 April. Israeli troops killed 3 Hamas fighters on Gaza-Israel border 28 April. Insecurity in occupied territories continued – highlighted by ongoing Gaza kidnapping of BBC journalist Alan Johnston – despite Palestinian Authority efforts. President Abbas ordered formation of national security council 15 April. PM Haniya's security plan approved by cabinet 14 April. Israel welcomed elements of renewed 2002 Saudi peace initiative, rejected others and invited direct talks with Arab states. Outlines of possible Hamas-Israel prisoner swap emerged but progress difficult to judge. Israeli PM Ehud Olmert and President Abbas met in Jerusalem 15 April, first of biweekly meetings agreed to during March visit of U.S. Sec. State Condoleezza Rice. Interim report by Israeli commission criticised Olmert's handling of Lebanon war 30 April.

- ["Israel PM 'will remain in office'"](#), BBC, 30 Apr. 2007.
- ["The variable price of freedom"](#), *Economist*, 12 Apr. 2007.
- ["Hamas militants declare end to cease-fire with Israel"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Apr. 2007.

Lebanon Political tensions escalated. MP Saad Hariri's Future Movement issued statement 16 April questioning legitimacy of Hezbollah's arms. Impasse intensified over tribunal to address 2005 assassination of former PM Rafiq Hariri, prompting U.S. suggestion UNSC impose tribunal, and interventions by Russian deputy FM, UN counsel and UNSG Ban Ki-moon. Controversy building over procedures for September presidential elections.

- ["Divided Lebanese leaders set sights on battle for presidency"](#), *Daily Star*, 23 Apr. 2007.
- ["Russia, U.N. in diplomatic push to try to break impasse over tribunal in Hariri killing"](#), AP, 17 Apr. 2007.

- Comment by Nadim Hasbani (Crisis Group), [“Liban: crise politique sur fond d’un nouveau partage du pouvoir”](#), *Politique Etrangère* (IFRI), 4 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°20, [Lebanon at a Tripwire](#), 21 Dec. 2006.

- Syria Syrian-American businessman, Ibrahim Suleiman, appeared before Israeli parliament foreign affairs committee 12 April to encourage peace talks. Lawmakers reacted positively. Official Israeli position still insists Syria end support for Hamas and Hizbollah as precondition. High-profile U.S. delegations to Damascus continued with 4 April visit by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Bush administration criticised visit and stepped up condemnation of Syria after 24 April sentencing of human rights leader and 22/23 April parliamentary elections: low turnout reported, ruling Baath Party won overwhelming majority.
- [“Syrians vote for new parliament but critics say election is a farce”](#), AP, 22 Apr. 2007.
 - [“Syrian businessman makes peace appeal to Israeli lawmakers”](#), AP, 12 Apr. 2007.
 - Comment by Robert Malley (Crisis Group), [“Forget Pelosi. What about Syria?”](#), *Los Angeles Times*, 11 Apr. 2007.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°63,  [Restarting Israeli-Syrian Negotiations](#), 10 April 2007. Israel should seize the opportunity to renew peace negotiations with Syria while there is a real chance of success. Damascus has signalled it wants to negotiate and is prepared to do so without preconditions. Israel, however, has conditioned any dialogue on a broad change in Syria’s policy: cutting ties to Hamas, halting assistance to Hizbollah and fundamentally altering its relationship with Iran. Quartet members should press for renewed Syrian-Israeli negotiations. What Israel demands could potentially be achieved, but only as part of a final deal, not as a precondition for it.

GULF

- Iran Standoff over 15 UK navy personnel captured March ended swiftly with release 5 April. President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad “pardoned” British sailors, gave medals to Iranian captors. Tehran continued bullish nuclear stance, announcing it could enrich uranium on “industrial scale”. EU imposed sanctions 23 April, beyond UN measures, with total arms embargo and increased travel ban list. Ahmadi-Nejad responded by repeating vow not to halt nuclear program. EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana held talks with Iran’s top nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani 25 April, urged direct U.S. engagement with Tehran. U.S. continued to hold 5 Iranians captured in Iraq in January, expressed concern over possible Iranian role in Afghanistan after Iranian arms intercepted.
- [“Solana urges US to talk to Iran”](#), BBC, 28 Apr. 2007.
 - [“Sailing into troubled waters”](#), *Economist*, 4 Apr. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°21, [Iran: Ahmadi-Nejad’s Tumultuous Presidency](#), 6 February 2007; and Report N°51, [Iran: Is There a Way Out of the Nuclear Impasse?](#), 23 Feb. 2006.

- Iraq Suicide attacks and fatalities increased as U.S. military surge lost momentum. Over 200 killed, almost all Shiite civilians, in 5 suicide bombs in Baghdad on 18 April. Suicide bomb in parliament within fortified Green Zone killed 1 MP 13 April, while suicide attack on patrol base near Baqouba 24 April

killed 9 U.S. soldiers. Additional car blasts in Baqouba, Ramadi, Mosul 24 April killed 40, in Karbala 28 April killed 55. Sectarian tensions flared in Mosul 22 April as gunmen killed 23 members of Yazidi minority. Muqtada al-Sadr, whereabouts still unknown, organised mass demonstration in Najaf 9 April, demanding timetable for withdrawal of U.S. troops: days later 6 Sadr cabinet members resigned over differences with PM Nuri al-Maliki. Maliki has not supported withdrawal timetable, but ordered halt to U.S. project to build wall around Sunni enclave of Adhamiya. New U.S. envoy, Ryan Crocker, gave first briefing in Baghdad, supported wall project. U.S. Congress approved Iraq spending bill calling for troop withdrawal start by 1 October. U.S. President Bush expected to veto.

- [“US troops die in new Iraq attack”](#), BBC, 25 Apr. 2007.
- [“As lethal as ever”](#), *Economist*, 19 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°60, [After Baker-Hamilton: What to Do in Iraq](#), 19 Dec. 2006.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°64,  [Iraq and the Kurds: Resolving the Kirkuk Crisis](#), 19 April 2007. The northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk and its oil-rich region today resemble a miniature Baghdad. Two factors are responsible: Kurdistan Regional Government insistence on a status referendum to incorporate Kirkuk by year’s end, despite bitter Arab and Turkoman opposition; and exploitation by Jihadi fighters, who find fertile ground for chaos by exacerbating communal tensions. The Bush administration, which has largely ignored Kirkuk, must press Kurds, Baghdad and Turkey alike to adjust policies; otherwise civil war could well spread to the Kurdish region and any anticipated gains from the U.S. surge in Baghdad be destroyed.

- Saudi Arabia Riyadh further consolidated claim to regional leadership, identifying Iran nuclear program as regional crisis 14 April. FM claimed ties to U.S. healthy despite Saudi statement at March Arab League summit that U.S. presence in Iraq is “illegitimate occupation”.
- [“Saudi king describes the Iranian nuclear program as new crisis, burden for region”](#), AP, 14 Apr. 2007.
- Yemen Government reported 9 April 25 troops and 20 Shiite rebels killed in continued fighting in northern Saada province. Rebels say fatality figures inflated. Government accused of laying anti-personnel mines: at least 60 admitted to hospital with related injuries.
- [“Yemen: Government accused of planting landmines”](#), IRIN, 11 Apr. 2007.
 - [“Yemen says 25 troops, 20 rebels killed in clashes”](#), Reuters, 9 Apr. 2007.

NORTH AFRICA

- Algeria Algiers hit by 3 bombings 11 April: 33 killed, 222 wounded. Attacks claimed by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (formerly GSPC), directed at PM’s office, police station and gendarmerie office, worst in capital in decade. PM Abdelaziz Belkhadem vowed national elections scheduled 17 May to proceed despite attacks. 80 Islamists with suspected links to al-Qaeda in Iraq arrested. Countrywide demonstrations 17 April affirmed local support for policy of national reconciliation.
- [“Algeria holds 80 with alleged Iraq link”](#), Reuters, 22 Apr. 2007.

- "Death toll in Algeria bombings hits 33", AP, 12 Apr. 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 Muslim Brotherhood announced would field 20 candidates in June elections for Shura Council (upper house of parliament). Mass arrests of members continued; 26 April trial of 40 members on terrorism and money laundering charges adjourned to June. State Security Emergency Court sentenced Mohammed el-Attar to 15 years on charges of spying for Israel. Police injured in clashes with hundreds of Bedouin tribesmen attempting to cross Sinai border into Israel. Men believed to be fleeing potential police crackdown on tribesmen protesting 2 Bedouin deaths in earlier police chase.

- "Court convicts Egyptian-Canadian man of spying for Israel, sentences him to 15 years in prison", AP, 21 Apr. 2007.
- "Muslim Brotherhood to field candidates in elections, crackdown against them continues", AP, 15 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Middle East/North Africa Report N°61, *Egypt's Sinai Question*, 30 Jan. 2007.

➤ Mauritania Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi installed president 19 April. Former central bank governor Zein Ould Zeidane named PM. Mauritania readmitted to African Union 10 April ending suspension since August 2005 coup. Mauritanian court indicted 6 suspected of links to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (formerly GSPC) 11 April.

- "Mauritanian president names new-look, technocrat government", Reuters, 30 Apr. 2007.
- "Mauritania readmitted to African Union", AFP, 10 Apr. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°53, *Political Transition in Mauritania: Results and Prospects*, 24 Apr. 2006.

➤ Morocco Attacks by 2 suicide bombers near U.S consulate in Casablanca 14 April followed death of 4 militants during police raid.

- "New suicide attacks hit Morocco", BBC, 14 Apr. 2007.
- "Is Al Qaeda's influence spreading to Morocco?", *Christian Science Monitor*, 6 Apr. 2007.

➤ Western Sahara Moroccan government and Polisario Front presented peace plans to UN early April: Morocco plan rules out independence but proposes autonomy and local powers; Polisario plan calls for vote on self determination but offers possibility of cooperation with Morocco. Both plans declare willingness to hold direct talks. UNSC supported moves, requested UNSG to set up negotiations under his auspices, and extended UN Mission in Western Sahara to 31 October. Saharawi activist reportedly arrested and beaten by Moroccan police in El Aaiún 17 April.

- "Security Council 'enthusiastic' about negotiations on Western Sahara", AP, 20 Apr. 2007.
- "Moroccan police 'beat human rights activist' in Western Sahara", AP, 18 Apr. 2007.

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