

1 June 2007, N°46

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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June 2007 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alerts

Pakistan



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Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

- ↳ Burundi Talks between government and Palipehutu-FNL to resume early June on implementing September 2006 ceasefire agreement. Palipehutu-FNL leaders condition participation in talks on recognition as political party and their allocation of positions within government, parliament and army. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour called for strengthened judiciary in visit to Bujumbura 18-23 May. Government agreed in principle to transitional justice mechanisms for crimes during 12-year civil war: no amnesty for war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and other serious violations; national consultations to follow. Donors pledged \$665 million to 3-year economic recovery plan 25 May.

 - ["Government pledges transparency"](#), IRIN, 28 May 2007.
 - ["Burundi, UN agree on truth commission, tribunal"](#), Reuters, 23 May 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°120, [Burundi: Democracy and Peace at Risk](#), 30 Nov. 2006.

- ↳ Central African Republic Reports of continued clashes in north west between government forces, APRD rebels and bandits. Civilians regularly attacked and 2 aid workers abducted near Bozoum 19 May, released 27 May. UFDR rebels in north east agreed with UNICEF to release up to 400 child soldiers. ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo announced investigation into rapes and other violations during 2002-03 conflict between regime of former President Ange-Félix Patassé and former Army Chief of Staff François Bozizé.

 - ["Kidnapped health workers released but NGOs stay away"](#), IRIN, 29 May 2007.
 - ["In northwestern CAR, refugees flee bandits, rebels -- and soldiers"](#), AFP, 23 May 2007.
 - ["Prosecutor opens investigation in the Central African Republic"](#), ICC, 22 May 2007.

- ↳ Democratic Republic of Congo Congolese armed forces FARDC fought Rwandan FDLR rebels in Kivu, killing 40. Reprisal attacks by rebels on civilian populations 26-27 May killed at least 22. Insurgent Gen. Laurent Nkunda threatened to pull his troops from army units leading to increased tensions in North Kivu. In Ituri 223 fighters of Peter Karim's FNI militia joined disarmament program north west of Bunia. Independent candidate Kengo wa Dondo, former PM of Mobutu, elected President of Senate, beating President Kabila's candidate.

 - ["Rwanda rebels' in DR Congo raid"](#), BBC, 28 May 2007.
 - ["Demobilisation of ex-militias slowly taking root in northeast"](#), IRIN, 28 May 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°44, [Congo: Staying Engaged after the Elections](#), 9 Jan. 2007.

- ↳ Republic of Congo April peace agreement between former rebel group Conseil National de Résistance (CNR) and government potentially destabilised as CNR criticised government's decision to change post offered to leader Frédéric Bintsangou. President Nguesso stated CNR must disarm its militia and hand in weapons before it could be considered genuine political organisation.

- ["Ex-rebels accuse state of renegeing on deal"](#), IRIN, 14 May 2007.

- ↳ Rwanda President Paul Kagame stated intention to work with DR Congo to solve continued problem of FDLR rebels. FDLR clashed with DRC forces in North Kivu early May (see DRC above).
- ["Kagame seeks co-operation on rebels"](#), IRIN, 7 May 2007.

- ↳ Uganda Talks between government and LRA in Southern Sudanese capital of Juba resulted in 2 May agreement on comprehensive solutions to the conflict, second of 5 issues on agenda. Talks resumed 31 May to tackle contentious issue of accountability and reconciliation: government reportedly seeks LRA acknowledgement it committed atrocities and is willing to undergo traditional reconciliation ceremonies, while LRA wants ICC indictments of 4 leaders including Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti dropped before it will sign comprehensive agreement. While calm prevails in northern Uganda, LRA continues to target civilians in South Sudan, and have not assembled at Ri-Kwangba, along Sudan/DRC border, as required by revised cessation of hostilities agreement. UN WFP convoy attacked in north eastern Karamoja region 30 May leading to temporary suspension of food aid.
- ["Juba talks resume today"](#), *Monitor*, 31 May 2007.
- ["WFP suspends operations in northeast after ambush"](#), IRIN, 30 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°124, [Northern Uganda: Seizing the Opportunity for Peace](#), 26 Apr. 2007.

HORN OF AFRICA

- ↳ Chad President Idriss Deby and Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir signed reconciliation agreement at 3 May summit hosted by Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah. Agreement to stabilise Darfur and neighbouring region in Chad sees formation of joint border force, deployment of observers and cooperation with AU and UN. Observers doubt sincerity as each side continues to support proxy militias to destabilise the other, though N'djamena asked Darfur rebels to leave capital. Chad reiterated refusal of foreign peacekeeping force on eastern border because it fears neighbours may see foreign troops as threat. Government lifted state of emergency 25 May despite continuing violence in east.
 - ["State of emergency ends but troubles continue"](#), IRIN, 25 May 2007.
 - ["Complex conflict with no solution in sight"](#), *East African*, 15 May 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°111, [Chad: Back towards War?](#), 1 June 2006.
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- ↳ Ethiopia Violence reportedly escalated in Ogaden region as Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) claimed they killed up to 157 Ethiopian troops in joint attacks in east throughout month; denied by government. At least 16 killed in 2 grenade attacks in Ogaden 28 May: ONLF denied government accusation they were responsible. 3 *New York Times* journalists held for 5 days in Ogaden region, released 21 May.
 - ["16 killed in attacks in eastern Ethiopia, say officials"](#), AP, 28 May 2007.
 - ["Rebel eastern victory claims baseless – Bereket"](#), *Daily Monitor*, 23 May 2007.

- ↳ Ethiopia/Eritrea Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki called border security zone, which his troops occupy, “meaningless”, and blamed U.S. for 5-year border stalemate in 24 May independence-day speech.
 - “Eritrea blames U.S. for border impasse”, Reuters, 24 May 2007.
- ↳ Somalia UN’s chief humanitarian officer, John Holmes, called Somali humanitarian and refugee crisis worst in world. Up to 400,000 displaced by fighting between ousted Islamists and clan militias against Ethiopian troops and Transitional Federal Government forces. Some displaced reportedly returning to Mogadishu. UN food aid temporarily halted after ship attacked by pirates 19 May. PM Ali Mohammed Ghedi escaped unhurt after his convoy targeted by bomb in Mogadishu 17 May. U.S. and AU urged Ethiopia to keep forces in Somalia until full deployment of AU peacekeepers: Ethiopia and Uganda called for full deployment of AMISOM as pledged troops from Burundi, Ghana and Nigeria yet to arrive. 4 Ugandan peacekeepers killed by roadside bomb 16 May marking first targeted attack of peacekeepers. Ethiopian troops killed 5 civilians in aftermath of roadside bomb attack on army convoy in western town of Belet Weyne 30 May. National Reconciliation Congress to begin in Mogadishu 14 June amid concern over independence of organising committee and participant selection.
 - “No peace, more terror”, *Economist*, 31 May 2007.
 - “Ethiopian troops fire on passers-by, killing 5, after land mine blast”, AP, 30 May 2007.
 - “AU peacekeepers tested in Somalia”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 May 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°45, *Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*, 26 Jan. 2007.
- ↳ Somaliland (Somalia) President Dahir Rayale Kahin ruled out union with Somalia and welcomed Swedish recognition of Somaliland as “self-governing area” on development issues.
 - “Somaliland leader rules out reunion with Somalia”, Reuters, 2 May 2007.
- ↳ Sudan U.S. President Bush imposed largely symbolic new unilateral economic sanctions on Sudan 29 May and sought support for international arms embargo in response to Khartoum’s refusal to end conflict in Darfur. UN and AU drafted plans for 23,000-strong hybrid force to be approved by UNSC and AU Peace and Security Committee. SPLM initiative to unite Darfur rebel groups given support by UN and AU envoys Jan Eliasson and Salim Ahmed Salim 10 May. Office of UN High Commission for Human Rights reported Sudanese security forces killed more than 100 in indiscriminate attacks on villages in south Darfur January-March. Eastern rebels finally agreed on list of 3 candidates for government posts to allow delayed October 2006 peace plan to go forward. Key national census, set for November, may be postponed to January/February 2008. NCP and SPLM engaged in high-level meetings on status of 2005 CPA implementation and their political partnership; Abyei and oil issues remain unresolved.
 - “A little extra pressure”, *Economist*, 29 May 2007.
 - “UN-AU draw up plans for large Darfur force”, Reuters, 25 May 2007.
 - Comment by Pat Cox (Crisis Group), “Darfour : l’Europe doit agir”, *Libération*, 21 May 2007.
 - Comment by Joschka Fischer (Crisis Group), “The EU must act in Darfur”, *Haaretz*, 12 May 2007.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°125, *Darfur: Revitalising the Peace Process*, 30 Apr. 2007.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

- ↳ Zimbabwe First signs of movement for South African-led SADC mediation initiative after Pretoria arranged mid-month meeting between representatives of ZANU-PF and both factions of opposition MDC. Meetings scheduled early June to cement framework for further talks. Earlier visit by South African aides to Harare had secured President Mugabe’s grudging acceptance of initiative. Harassment of opposition continued with new wave of mass arrests 25 May, while power severely rationed in much of country to 4 hours/day. 1800 Zimbabweans living illegally in South Africa deported mid-month.
 - “Pretoria hosts secret Zimbabwe talks”, *Financial Times*, 21 May 2007.
 - “Zim’s white farmers report new land invasions”, *Mail & Guardian*, 23 May 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°122, *Zimbabwe: An End to the Stalemate?*, 5 Mar. 2007.

WEST AFRICA

- ↳ Cameroon Rival Oku and Mbessa villages in north west clashed over farm land 5 May; 5 killed, 60 homes destroyed.
 - “Clashes over land kill five in northwest Cameroon”, Reuters, 9 May 2007.
- ↳ Côte d’Ivoire Dismantling of militias, central measure of 4 March Ouagadougou accord, started 19 May after delays. Integration of military and census-taking for new elections yet to begin. Obstacles include budget constraints for retraining former fighters. President Laurent Gbagbo and PM Guillaume Soro publicly denied rumours of secret “deal”: their quick rapprochement has caused turmoil in G7 opposition alliance with Soro’s Forces Nouvelles accused by G7 of betraying their cause and siding with Gbagbo to secure political interests.
 - “New political climate favours pivotal identification process”, IRIN, 31 May 2007.
 - “Pro-government militias make symbolic start to disarmament”, IRIN, 21 May 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°40, *Côte d’Ivoire: Stepping Up the Pressure*, 7 Sept. 2006.
- ↳ Guinea Agreement reached between government and political parties to postpone legislative elections until year-end. Investigation into January/February army attacks on civilians cited 137 deaths – more than previously reported. Parliament voted to set up year-long commission to further investigate killings. Soldiers protested non-payment of salary corrupt high-ranking officials in several towns leaving 10 dead 2-15 May. President Lansana Conté dismissed defence minister, army chief of staff and 6 top officers in response. Army chief replaced by retired officer perceived as close associate of former army high-ranking officials. Violence subsided following meeting between Conté and soldiers 15 May. New Defence Minister General Mamadou Bailo Diallo pledged not to prosecute soldiers; talks started to determine pay settlement.
 - “Questions over how government will meet promises to army”, IRIN, 18 May 2007.
 - “Army protests pile pressure on Guinea’s Conte”, Reuters, 16 May 2007.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°121, *Guinea: Change or Chaos*, 14 Feb. 2007.

↳ Liberia Diamond mining relaunched 1 May after 6-year UN ban lifted in April. Major donors, including IMF, threatened to withdraw support if Financial Autonomy Act passed by legislature to grant the House and Senate right to administer own budget is made law.

- "Liberia relaunches diamond trade after embargo ends", Reuters, 1 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°107, *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*, 6 Apr. 2006.

↳ Mali Tuareg rebels led by insurgent chief Ibrahima Bahanga killed 2 military police in attack near Tinzaouatene in north east 11 May, first such raid since June 2006 peace deal. Attack possibly related to leadership quarrel among rebels in newly formed Democratic Alliance for Change ahead of 1st and 22nd July legislative elections. President Amadou Toumani Touré re-elected for second term with 70% in 29 April election. Coalition of opposition parties finally recognized Touré's victory after Constitutional Court rejected fraud complaints. Observers reported overall fair and clean vote despite isolated incidents of concern.

- "Tuareg rebels attack police post in northeast Mali", Reuters, 11 May 2007.
- "Touré victory was a walk in the park", *Nation*, 11 May 2007.

↳ Niger Parliament approved over \$60 million in extra funds to help confront northern Tuareg rebels threatening uranium mining and oil exploration. New Tuareg rebel group, Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice, claimed responsibility for recent violence as response to neglect of northern region by Niamey.

- "Aid workers in north threatened by carjacking, fresh landmines", IRIN, 22 May 2007.
- "New Touareg rebel group speaks out", IRIN, 17 May 2007.

↳ Nigeria Umaru Musa Yar'Adua inaugurated president 29 May after month of moderate protests over badly flawed April elections. Civil society groups called for national unity conference and re-run of elections within 18 months. Government warned disruption of 29 May ceremonies for new administration would be treated as "coup attempt". 7 opposition candidates filed separate petitions with Court of Appeal in Abuja, seeking annulment of results. Most major powers embraced new president despite conclusion by international observers elections not credible: German G8 presidency invited Yar'Adua to June summit with 5 other African leaders. Election of Goodluck Jonathan (an Ijaw from Bayelsa State in Niger Delta) as Vice-President did not dissuade Delta militants: attacks on oil pipelines and kidnappings of foreign workers and some Nigerians worsened; Jonathan's house attacked with explosives 16 May, 3 policemen killed. 10 killed in violent local council elections in Oyo state 24 May; 15 in gang violence linked to governor change in Rivers State 29 May.

- "Yar'Adua convenes first N/Delta summit", *This Day*, 1 June 2007.
- "The odds against Yar'Adua", *Daily Trust*, 27 May 2007.
- "New government, old problems", *Economist*, 24 May 2007.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°126, *Nigeria: Failed Elections, Failing State?*, 30 May



2007. After deeply flawed elections, Nigeria's new president must act urgently to pull the nation back from the brink of chaos. The electoral injustice in April 2007 is undermining the country's democratic status and weakening its position as a broker of peace across the African continent. President Yar'Adua should reach out to the opposition to form an inclusive government of national unity. No number of overtures will satisfy the opposition, including disillusioned citizens, unless his administration seriously confronts all the institutional failures that must be redressed if Nigeria is to escape collapse and widespread violence.

↳ Senegal Sporadic clashes erupted between rival factions of Movement of Casamance Democratic Forces in Sindian area north east of Ziguinchor. Campaigning began 13 May for 3 June legislative election; opposition groups pledged boycott over President Wade's refusal to change electoral process.

- "Panic ensues as fighting intensifies in Casamance", FOROYAA, 25 May 2007.
- "Civilians flee renewed violence in northern Senegal", VOA, 14 May 2007.

↳ Sierra Leone Presidential and legislative elections, slated for 28 July, postponed to 11 August due to insufficient preparation. Trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor by Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) scheduled to start 4 June at ICC premises in The Hague. Former rebel commander Issa Sesay, before SCSL on 18 charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and abducting UN peacekeepers, began testifying 3 May. Speaker of Parliament said SL may ask ECOWAS court of justice to settle dispute with Guinea over diamond-rich Yenga region, currently occupied by Guinea.

- "Who will be the next president?", *Independent* (Freetown), 21 May 2007.



Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

Crisis Group Asia Report N°133, *Central Asia's Energy Risks*, 24 May 2007.



Central Asia's oil and gas cannot solve the EU's energy dependence on Russia, but can destabilise the producing region unless governments use the revenues to promote good governance and rule of law. Despite the 12 May Russian-Central Asian gas agreement, a trans-Caspian gas pipeline is still possible, but it should not be seen as a cure-all. Western governments cannot ignore mismanagement and human rights abuses in the region in expectation of short-term gains.

↳ Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev ratified constitutional amendments increasing parliamentary powers and placing 2-term limit on future presidents but none on himself. U.S. praised changes as "ultimately" in right direction. Kazakh arrest warrant and extradition request issued for Nazarbayev's son-in-law, former deputy FM Rakhat Aliyev, envoy to Austria until dismissed 26 May, in connection with February abduction of 2 bank officials. Aliyev again said charges politically motivated, announced plans to run for president in 2012.

- "Kazakh president's son-in-law charged with abduction of two senior bank managers", AP, 23 May 2007.

- "Kazakhs pave way for president for life", BBC, 21 May 2007.

⇒ Kyrgyzstan Official medical report supported PM Atambayev's claim poisoned after receiving death threats over nationalisation of industrial plant. Atambayev's motorcade attacked by stone-throwing crowd after visits to 2 disputed gold mines in Talas province, several arrested. Parliament called on government to end agreement with U.S. to use Manas air base as controversy continued over December 2006 killing of Kyrgyz civilian by base guard. Explosion in newspaper offices in Osh 30 May investigated by police.

- "Kyrgyzstan leader 'was poisoned'", BBC, 30 May 2007.
- "Kyrgyz opposition runs out of steam", IWPR, 22 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°55, *Kyrgyzstan on the Edge*, 9 Nov. 2006.

⇒ Tajikistan Alleged Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan member Mirzoqodir Muminzoda sentenced to 11 years prison 8 May for terrorism, criminal activity and attempting to overthrow constitutional system.

- "Tajik leader attacks lavish weddings, funerals", Reuters, 24 May 2007.

⇒ Turkmenistan President Berdimuhamedov dismissed presidential security service head and former political ally Akmurad Rejepov 15 May; rail transport minister Orazberdy Khudovberdiyev and Ashgabat Mayor Orazmyrat Esenov 22 May. Subsequent purges and arrests in security sector reported. President announced military reform program and new ministry to manage emergencies. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour described 3-4 May visit "very promising".

- "Turkmen president dismisses 2 senior officials", AP, 22 May 2007.
- "New president modifying Niyazov's neutrality policy", RFE/RL, 11 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°60, *Turkmenistan after Niyazov*, 12 Feb. 2007.

⇒ Uzbekistan Rights activist Umida Niyazova sentenced to 7 years prison 1 May; sentence suspended 8 May after confession of all charges including smuggling. Reports that activist Gulbahor Turayeva's 6-year sentence increased by nearly 6 years denied by authorities. EU extended sanctions imposed after 2005 Andijon uprising, but dropped 4 of 12 officials on visa ban list.

- "Uzbekistan rejects EU criticism", BBC, 16 May 2007.
- "Uzbek case highlights ongoing use of 'forced confessions'", RFE/RL, 9 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°54, *Uzbekistan: Europe's Sanctions Matter*, 6 Nov. 2006.

SOUTH ASIA

⇒ Afghanistan Taliban military commander Mullah Dadullah killed 13 May in Kandahar after reportedly arriving from Pakistan: highest-ranking Taliban to be killed since 2001. 3 bombs in Kandahar followed killing, 1 targeting governor. Border clashes between Afghan and Pakistani forces killed over 12 mid-month; Kabul protested to UN over Pakistani incursions. In response to further 21 civilian deaths reported during U.S. airstrikes 9 May in Helmand, parliamentary upper house passed motion calling for negotiation with Taliban and withdrawal date for foreign forces; resolution unlikely to pass. UN said 380 civilians dead in first 4 months of year; U.S. maintained toll lower than Afghan authorities insist. Attack on

German soldiers in Kunduz 19 May killing 3 Germans, 7 Afghans raised concern over potential German withdrawal. Possibility of further instability in north highlighted by clashes in Shiberghan 29 May that killed 8 after protests by supporters of Uzbek warlord Dostum.

- Comment by Nick Grono and Joanna Nathan (Crisis Group), "Defeating Afghanistan's drug fix", *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 May 2007.
- "Afghan city tense after protests", BBC, 29 May 2007.
- "Afghans say U.S. airstrikes killed 21 civilians", *New York Times*, 10 May 2007.
- For background, see Asia Briefing N°59, *Afghanistan's Endangered Compact*, 29 Jan. 2007.

⇒ Bangladesh Awami League (AL) head Sheikh Hasina returned to Dhaka from London 7 May after caretaker government's efforts to exile her failed. Former PM and BNP President Khaleda Zia also resisted pressure to leave country. Ban on all political activity remains in place. Crackdown on corruption continued with arrests of senior politicians, including AL secretary general and BNP figures such as former interior minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury. Government asked for army's help in cleaning up voter registration list, with reported 12 million duplicate or fake names, ahead of elections now pledged by end 2008, but Election Commission still unclear on process. 2006 Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus dropped plans to form new political party, citing poor public response. Army chief insisted that army not interested in involvement in politics and had already withdrawn from many local bases established in January emergency.

- "No chance for military involvement in politics", *Daily Star*, 24 May 2007.
- "Bangladeshi exile plan backfires", *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°121, *Bangladesh Today*, 23 Oct. 2006.

⇒ India (non-Kashmir) Violence spiked again in Assam state, as suspected United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) rebels launched further attacks, including series of market bombings, and ethnic clashes broke out in east. Bombing by Maoists in Chhattisgarh killed 10 policemen 29 May.

- "Five killed in clashes in India's Assam state", Reuters, 14 May 2007.

⇒ Kashmir Talks in Islamabad 17-18 May on Sir Creek boundary dispute failed to produce any agreement after exchange of survey maps. General strike observed 21 May in Indian Kashmir to mark anniversary of killings of 2 separatist leaders. Several separatists and Indian troops killed in clashes along Line of Control.

- "India, Pak made progress on Kashmir: Musharraf", *The Hindu*, 19 May 2007.
- "Five killed in clashes in Indian Kashmir", AFP, 9 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°51, *India, Pakistan and Kashmir: Stabilising a Cold Peace*, 15 June 2006.

⇒ Nepal Tensions continued in south as moderate Madhesi activists came closer to talks with government but fringe groups stepped up violent campaign and major parties resisted concessions. Government agreed to pay salary to former rebel fighters, one of conditions Maoists set before allowing UN verification of combatants to proceed. Maoists vowed to return

seized land and property but yet to do so; affiliated Young Communist League also promised better behaviour but continued illegal activities. Madhesi parliamentarians continued to block business. Maoists maintained pressure for immediate declaration of republic; Nepali Congress student wing elected pro-republican president, adding to pressure on leadership to adopt anti-monarchy line. Constituent assembly polls postponed to late November.

- ["Nepal ex-rebels get allowances in key political deal"](#), Reuters, 21 May 2007.
- ["South Nepal bomb wounds 15 people"](#), AP, 14 May 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°132, [Nepal's Maoists: Purists or Pragmatists?](#), 18 May 2007. Nepal's Maoists have developed a more moderate strategy, and their entry into democratic politics and work alongside mainstream parties to force the king from power in April 2006 have brought them new influence and opportunities. However, some Maoists fear they have traded in their principles and military power for little tangible advantage, and are threatening a new mass movement. If the mainstream parties are committed to the peace agreement, Maoists leaders will find it much easier to persuade their followers that compromise is the best way forward.



- ↙ ↘ Pakistan Instability and violence intensified as President Musharraf's crisis deepened. Supporters of suspended Chief Justice Iftikhar Hussain Chaudhry continued protest against Musharraf's rule, including 6 May procession from Islamabad to Lahore by tens of thousands. Over 40 killed in street violence 12 May after members of Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) party, Musharraf's local coalition partner, attacked opposition supporters of Chief Justice. Police failed to intervene and government refused enquiry. Hearing on Chaudhry's suspension referred to Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), but hearing delayed until Supreme Court rules on SJC's competence in matter. Musharraf ruled out return of former PMs Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif before end-year elections. Bhutto and Sharif insist they will return. Over 25 killed in 15 May suicide bombing in Peshawar hotel; 10 in 29 May car bombing outside courthouse. Border clashes in Paktia province involving Pakistani and Afghan forces led to deaths of over 12 Afghans, as well as 1 U.S. and 1 Pakistani soldier killed by suspected local militia. Clashes followed NATO meeting on easing border tensions.
 - ["Pakistan's suspended justice tells of facing down Musharraf"](#), *New York Times*, 30 May 2007.
 - ["Many killed in Pakistan bombing"](#), BBC, 15 May 2007.
 - ["Growing influence of Pakistani leader without a party"](#), *Financial Times*, 8 May 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°130, [Pakistan: Karachi's Madrasas and Violent Extremism](#), 29 Mar. 2007.

- ↙ Sri Lanka Fighting continued in north and east - dozens killed, primarily in continued government assault on rebel positions. LTTE rebels attacked naval base on Jaffna peninsula 24 May, killing at least 10 sailors. Maldives military sank Indian vessel reportedly hijacked by LTTE and took 5 prisoners south of Maldives archipelago 17 May in first direct involvement in conflict. LTTE suspected of 24 and 28 May bomb attacks in Colombo killing 9. Sri Lankan air force reportedly ordered 5 Russian Mig 29 fighter jets to combat new air threat from LTTE; Colombo's civilian airport announced

suspension of all further night flights. ICRC announced pull-back 23 May from front line in Vavuniya district, citing increased safety concerns for staff. UK declared will withhold half of promised debt relief until human rights and military spending concerns are addressed; U.S. also suspended some aid and urged Colombo to control paramilitaries.

- ["Tamil rebels launch naval attack"](#), BBC, 24 May 2007.
- ["Sri Lanka sinks into lawlessness"](#), AFP, 22 May 2007.
- ["Tigers with wings"](#), *Economist*, 3 May 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°134, [Sri Lanka's Muslims: Caught in the Crossfire](#), 29 May 2007. Immediate steps should be taken to ensure the security and political involvement of Sri Lanka's Muslims, whose views must be taken into account if a lasting peace settlement is to be achieved. They are the forgotten party in the Sri Lankan conflict: they have been victims of massacres, ethnic cleansing and forced displacement over the past two decades, largely by the LTTE, and have been sidelined at successive peace talks. The government needs to address the Muslim issue more directly, as part of a comprehensive political proposal that offers real devolution.



NORTH EAST ASIA

- ↙ North Korea No movement by Pyongyang on February pledge to shut Yongbyon reactor. 6-party talks on hold as difficulties in unfreezing Banco Delta Asia funds continued. After test run of cross-border rail links saw first trains to cross border region in over 50 years, end-month Seoul-Pyongyang bilateral talks ended without agreement as Seoul withheld dispatch of 400,000-tonne food aid. North Korea fired short-range missiles into East Sea 25 May in "annual military exercise".
 - ["Korea talks break up without deal"](#), BBC, 1 Jun. 2007.
 - ["Gov't confirms North fires short range missiles into East Sea"](#), *Chosun Ilbo*, 25 May 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°62, [After the North Korea Nuclear Breakthrough: Compliance or Confrontation?](#), 30 Apr. 2007.

- ↙ Taiwan Strait U.S. urged Taipei to pass long-stalled defence spending bill allowing it to purchase U.S. missiles. Mainland China and Taiwan each held high-profile simulations of cross-strait attack.
 - ["Taiwan urged to pass defence bill"](#), BBC, 3 May 2007.


SOUTH EAST ASIA

- ↙ Indonesia Rise in violent incidents in Aceh continued, including armed robberies and grenade attacks. Tensions with Jakarta grew over disagreements over province's share in oil and gas revenues.
 - ["Aceh rights activists push for truth and reconciliation commission"](#), *Jakarta Post*, 12 May 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°63, [Indonesia: Jemaah Islamiyah's Current Status](#), 3 May 2007. JI remains focused on its long-term goal of establishing an Islamic state, and is building and consolidating its 900-strong base. For now at least, it is unlikely to be interested in large, expensive operations targeting foreign civilians. Assassinations of police, prosecutors and others...



...may be more cost-effective and consistent with organisational objectives. Indonesian police have done a good job of identifying and detaining JI members responsible for violence but the government needs to pay more attention to prisons, including what goes on inside, visitors and the materials they bring, and pre- and post-release programs.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°64, 
Indonesia: Decentralisation and Local Power Struggles in Maluku, 22 May 2007. The proposed division of a district in a remote corner of the Indonesian archipelago could lead to conflict unless government officials pay careful attention to latent communal tensions, equitable distribution of development funds and even-handed prosecution of corruption. Dividing South East Maluku district, with the town of Tual becoming a new municipality, may create disputes over boundaries and access to resources that could take on a communal cast, given past conflict in the area.

➤ Myanmar/Burma Ruling junta signed deal with Russia to build small nuclear research reactor. Peace talks between Shan State Army and government 22 May failed to produce any concrete statement. Despite pressure from ASEAN, EU, U.S. and UNHCHR, Myanmar renewed detention order on democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi for another year 26 May. U.S. earlier renewed sanctions, accusing regime of becoming "more brutal".

- "Do you want to be in my gang? Myanmar and the nuclear club", *Economist*, 16 May 2007.
- "Burmese junta bans civil organizations - Htet Aung", Irrawaddy, 16 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°58, *Myanmar: New Threats to Humanitarian Aid*, 8 Dec. 2006.

➤ Philippines National legislative elections 14 May marred by fraud allegations and violence, though number of incidents lower than in 2004. 114 killed in poll-related violence since January. Polling postponed until 26 May in Lanao del Sur province after persistent armed clashes obstructed voting, while "mass fraud" under investigation in neighbouring Maguindanao. Jailed MNLF leader Nur Misuari lost bid for Sulu governorship. 8 militants with links to Abu Sayyaf surrendered in Manila; government alleged group was planning new Manila bomb attacks.

- "Fraud inquiry launched into Philippines poll count", *Financial Times*, 23 May 2007.
- "2 Filipino Jemaah Islamiyah affiliates killed in raid", AP, 24 May 2007.
- "Rebels plotting attacks on Manila surrender - army", AlertNet, 17 May 2007.

➤ Thailand Violence continued in the south with continued militant attacks on civilians, police and military forces. Mass protest by Muslim villagers over martial law detentions shut down Betong-Yala road for over a week from 3 May; Buddhist residents held 3-day counter-protest 6 May. Anti-government protests continued in Bangkok, where 3 radio stations broadcast messages by deposed PM Thaksin; 1 subsequently shut down. Constitutional Tribunal announced verdicts on electoral malfeasance cases 30 May: Democrat Party acquitted, Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) executives found guilty. TRT dissolved and all 111 party executives banned from politics for 5 years. 200 TRT supporters protested on night of decision, 3,000 next day. Draft

constitution still under discussion by cabinet ahead of national referendum.

- "Thailand's Thaksin banned from politics", *Financial Times*, 30 May 2007.
- "Thai PM seeks peaceful end to southern conflict", AlertNet, 12 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°129, *Southern Thailand: The Impact of the Coup*, 15 Mar. 2007.

➤ Timor-Leste Jose Ramos-Horta scored landslide victory in 9 May second round presidential elections with 69%; sworn in 20 May. Fretilin candidate "Lu-Olo" Guterres conceded defeat and encouraged supporters to accept results. Campaign period relatively peaceful, elections pronounced generally free and fair, but accusations of electoral fraud, voter intimidation and vote-buying persisted. 14 parties to contest 30 June parliamentary election, although only 4 expected to win seats: Fretilin, CNRT (headed by Xanana Gusmao), PD, and ASDT/PSD coalition. Clashes between CNRT and Fretilin supporters reported 31 May. Court of Appeal upheld 7 and half year sentence against former interior minister, Rogerio Lobato, for arming civilians in 2006 violence.

- "East Timor violence causes injuries", *Age*, 31 May 2007.
- "Ramos-Horta declared ETimor president as violence flares", AFP, 16 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°120, *Resolving Timor-Leste's Crisis*, 10 Oct. 2006.

PACIFIC

➤ Fiji State of emergency lifted 31 May 2007, in keeping with EU aid conditions. Finance minister said elections due June 2010; date that fails to satisfy March 2009 EU roadmap deadline. Continued reports of harassment of members of pre-coup administration.

- "Bainimarama reacts to Chaudhry's election date", *Fiji Times*, 23 May 2007.

➤ Tonga Preliminary hearings held in sedition trial of 5 pro-democracy activists involved in November riots, as state of emergency extended for sixth month.

- "Tonga's first parliament session to focus on three key issues", Radio NZ International, 29 May 2007.

Europe

➤ Albania President Moisiu urged governing and opposition parties to focus on reform and seek consensus over presidential selection; current term ends 24 July.


- "Albanian president tells main parties to quit quarrelling, focus on reforms", South East European Times, 22 May 2007.

➤ Bosnia & Herzegovina Slovak diplomat Miroslav Lajcak to succeed Christian Schwarz-Schilling as High Representative from 1 July. Lajcak's announcement would use "Bonn Powers" to govern BiH challenged by Republika Srpska PM Dodik. BiH Presidency member Silajdzic and Dodik visited U.S. to discuss constitutional reform but no major progress achieved.

- "Slovak for Bosnia high representative", ISN, 16 May 2007.
- "U.S. and European Union tell Bosnia to stop nationalistic rhetoric and start reforms", AP, 16 May 2007.

- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°180, *Ensuring Bosnia's Future: A New International Engagement Strategy*, 15 Feb. 2007.

- Kosovo International community remained divided over UNSC resolution on final status; Russia rejected U.S.- and EU-backed draft resolution, insisting status decision must be acceptable to Belgrade. U.S. Sec. State Rice's mid-May visit to Moscow and 18-19 May EU-Russia summit failed to resolve differences. NATO warned further delay on status could trigger violence in province. Serbian police arrested nationalists in Krusevac protesting against possible Kosovo independence 5 May.
 - "Russia rebuffs West over Kosovo", BBC, 1 June 2007.
 - "Gathering of Serbian nationalists on Kosovo raises dark specter", *International Herald Tribune*, 6 May 2007.

Crisis Group Europe Report N°182  *Kosovo: No Good Alternatives to the Ahtisaari Plan*, 14 May 2007. The Security Council needs to decide Kosovo's status within the next weeks or risk reigniting violence that would again destabilise the Balkans. The recommendation of UN Envoy Martti Ahtisaari for "supervised independence" and his detailed implementation proposals are the best that can be achieved. Serbia's private preference for partitioning the province north of Mitrovica would be immensely damaging. The diplomatic lineup in New York has shifted strongly in favour of the Ahtisaari plan. The Council should pass a resolution endorsing the plan, with only such non-critical modifications as may help persuade the main hold-out, Russia, not to veto.

- Macedonia Ethnic Albanian Party for Democratic Prosperity joined ruling coalition 20 May. Main ethnic Albanian Democratic Union for Integration ended parliament boycott 29 May.
 - "DUI returns to Macedonian Parliament, DPA remains in government", *South East European Times*, 30 May 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°41, *Macedonia: Wobbling toward Europe*, 12 Jan. 2006.

- Serbia Parliament approved new government led by acting PM Kostunica, minutes before constitutional deadline 15 May. Coalition includes Democratic Party (DS), Democratic Party of Serbia, G-17 and New Serbia party. Parliamentary Speaker Tomislav Nikolic, from ultranationalist Radical Party, resigned after 5 days in post; Oliver Dulic (DS) elected in place. 31 May arrest of war crimes suspect General Zdravko Tolimir seen as positive signal to EU. Special Court for Organised Crime sentenced 12 men, including former police officers, to 8-40 years for 2003 assassination of PM Djindjic.
 - "Serbs snatch war-crimes general in gesture to West", *AlertNet*, 1 June 2007.
 - "Serbia's parliament endorses new government, keeping Radicals at bay", AP, 15 May 2007.

Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°46,  *Serbia's New Government: Turning from Europe*, 31 May 2007. The EU and U.S. have fundamentally misinterpreted Serbian politics for years and now face the prospect of living indefinitely with a highly nationalist government that is turning away from Europe. The West for years wrongly saw the domestic struggle as one about democracy, but the dividing line has been between adherents of Western values and European integration and those emphasising a virulent nationalism.

CAUCASUS

- Armenia Ruling Republican Party won 64 seats of 131 in 12 May parliamentary elections. Pro-presidential parties, Prosperous Armenia and Armenian Revolutionary Federation, won 24 and 15 seats; opposition parties, Rule of Law and Inheritance, 10 and 7. Alliance Party and 9 independent MPs also won seats. OSCE observers said elections "clear improvement" despite shortcomings. Opposition complained of pre-poll intimidation including 7 May arrest of campaigner.

- "Talks on new government enter third week", RFE/RL, 31 May 2007.
- "Claims of official harassment mar ballot", IWPR, 10 May 2007.

- Azerbaijan Pressure on independent media intensified. Editor-in-chief and journalist of weekly *Sanat* sentenced 3-4 years on charges of inciting ethnic, racial and religious hatred for article allegedly critical of Islam 4 May. Editor and reporter of opposition *Mukhalifat* sentenced 2.5 years for libel on charges pressed by Jalal Aliyev, President Aliyev's uncle, 16 May; activists said case attempt to silence exposure of corruption cases. Office of largest opposition dailies, *Gundelik* and *Realny Azerbaijan*, closed by authorities citing "lack of safety mechanisms" 20 May. Authorities said would no longer cooperate with Reporters Without Borders, saying organisation biased. EU and OSCE condemned deteriorating media situation.

- "Azerbaijan tops the charts for number of imprisoned journalists", *Eurasianet*, 22 May 2007.
- "Journalists jailed in Azerbaijan", BBC, 4 May 2007.

- Chechnya (Russia) 3 police and 3 suspected militants killed in 6 May clash in southern Vedeno district.

- "The turning point that wasn't", RFE/RL, 11 May 2007.

- North Caucasus (non-Chechnya) Violence in Dagestan continued: at least 3 militants reported dead in police raid 12 May; railroad official survived car-bomb 14 May; 2 bystanders killed by police chasing suspect 21 May.

- "3 civilians, 1 policeman wounded in gunbattle with militants in southern Russia", AP, 22 May 2007.
- "Bomb seriously injures railroad official, police officer in troubled southern Russian region", AP, 14 May 2007.

- Georgia President Saakashvili appointed alternative de facto South Ossetian leader Dmitri Sanakoev as head of recently created temporary administrative unit for region 10 May. Deterioration of security situation followed: heavy military equipment observed in conflict zone; de facto police held OSCE and Joint Peacekeeping Forces officers at gunpoint 7 May and closed access roads between de facto-administered and Georgian-administered areas. Shelling occurred between Georgian and Ossetian positions north and south of Tskhinvali. De facto leader Eduard Kokoity said Tskhinvali would consider withdrawing from peace process if Tbilisi continued to undermine negotiating format by promoting "puppet government". Russia also criticised promotion as potentially destabilising. Abkhaz de facto authorities released 3 Georgian students arrested March. In exchange, Abkhaz officials demanded Georgia free ethnic Georgian de facto official David Sigua in Gali district missing, feared dead, since February. Former MP and leader of Language Motherland Faith movement Guram Sharadze shot dead in Tbilisi 20 May; suspect detained but motive unknown. Ombudsman Subari

delivered critical human rights report to Parliament 25 May after earlier recommendation senior Ministry of Internal Affairs official be suspended; Opposition welcomed findings; ruling National Movement dismissive.

- [“Georgia pushes for closer ties with “alternative” South Ossetian leader”](#), Eurasianet, 17 May 2007.
- [“South Ossetia: “presidents” step up struggle”](#), IWPR, 17 May 2007.
- For background, see Europe Report N°179, [Abkhazia: Ways Forward](#), 18 Jan. 2007.

- ↳ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Minsk Group Co-chairmen held separate consultations with Armenian and Azerbaijani FMs 11 May, focusing on Yerevan and Baku’s responses to group’s latest proposals on outstanding differences. Russian co-chair Merzlyakov said meetings “productive”. Presidents Kocharian and Aliyev to meet at 10 June CIS summit in St Petersburg. Azerbaijani soldier reportedly killed by NK forces sniper near Agdam region 11 May.
 - [“The wannabe nation of Nagorno-Karabakh”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 30 May 2007.
 - [“Mediators report more progress in Karabakh talks”](#), Armenia Liberty, 24 May 2007.

EASTERN EUROPE

- ↳ Belarus Opposition coalition, Political Council of United Pro-democratic Forces, voted out leader Alexander Milinkevich; 4 co-leaders to serve on rotating basis. 2 opposition activists serving 3-year sentences for organising 2005 mass protests released early 22 May, for good behaviour. Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad, on 21-22 May visit, granted Belarus Iranian oil reserve access; President Lukashenko said signalled “strategic partnership”. Belarus denied seat on UN Human Rights Council; outvoted in favour of Bosnia & Herzegovina 18 May.
 - [“Milinkevich voted out of Belarusian opposition coalition”](#), RFE/RL, 28 May 2007.
 - [“Two Belarusian opposition leaders sentenced to 3 years in prison freed early”](#), AP, 22 May 2007.
- ↳ Moldova President Voronin met Russian national security council deputy leader Zubakov 23 May to discuss reopening talks on Transdnistria. EU hosted talks on fresh negotiations 25 May, Talks reported to resume June. Moscow denied April leaked document allegation that it had presented planned bilateral settlement. De facto Transdnistrian MP Emelyanov shot dead 27 May in unclear circumstances.
 - [“EU seeks to revive talks on Transdnister...”](#), RFE/RL Newswire, 29 May 2007.
 - [“Moldova says Russia ‘key’ to Transdnister settlement”](#), RFE/RL Newswire, 25 May 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°175, [Moldova’s Uncertain Future](#), 17 Aug. 2006.
- ↳ Ukraine President Yushchenko and PM Yanukovich agreed 27 May to hold early parliamentary elections 30 September. Deal followed rapid escalation of political tensions which saw Yushchenko take control of interior troops 25 May in response to occupation of newly appointed, and sacked, Prosecutor-General Piskun’s office by Interior Minister Tsushko and interior troops. Latter tried to prevent Piskun’s dismissal by Yushchenko. President dismissed 3 Constitutional Court judges late April-early May on charges of procedural and ethics violations; chairman of Court resigned 17 May.

Month-end Yushchenko threatened to call snap elections if reconvened parliament missed 1 June deadline to pass legislation needed for September elections.

- [“Ukraine leader warns of snap poll”](#), BBC, 31 May 2007.
- [“Yushchenko places Ukraine’s interior troops under presidential command”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 25 May 2007.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

- ↳ Basque Country (Spain) 27 May local elections saw moderate Basque Nationalist Party retain dominance in municipalities; pro-Basque Naforra Bai party came second in regional poll in neighbouring Navarre. Run up saw low-level violence and protests against exclusion of many Basque nationalist lists. Constitutional Court confirmed Supreme Court bar of 246 Basque Nationalist Socialist and 133 Basque National Action candidates as continuation of banned Batasuna Party. Bilbao rally protested decision 12 May. Home-made car-bomb targeting local socialist party candidate Jose Antonio Elola failed to detonate in Zarautz 24 May. ETA member Jon Biezobas sentenced to 30 years for 1996 assassination of former head of Constitutional Court Francisco Tomás y Valiente. Government denied media reports diplomats had met ETA members in April.
 - [“Resultados municipales 2007”](#), *El Pais*, 1 June 2007.
 - [“The peace test”](#), *Economist*, 24 May 2007.
 - [“Spain’s Constitutional Court upholds election ban on Basque separatist candidates”](#), AP, 11 May 2007.
- ↳ Cyprus Ankara rejected claims Turkey blocking plans to enhance EU-NATO cooperation in Kosovo but insisted on exclusion of Republic of Cyprus from future Kosovo police mission.
 - [“Turkey blocking NATO-EU cooperation on Kosovo”](#), AlertNet, 22 May 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°171, [The Cyprus Stalemate: What Next?](#), 8 Mar. 2006.
- ↳ Northern Ireland (UK) Devolved power-sharing government resumed under leadership of First Minister Ian Paisley (DUP) and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness (Sinn Fein) 8 May. Paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) declared 3 May renouncing violence and ceasing to exist as a terrorist organisation. Arms decommissioning body said UVF pledge to keep weapons “beyond reach” did not meet legal requirements; urged weapon destruction. 3 Sinn Fein representatives took seats on Policing Board.
 - [“Historic return for NI Assembly”](#), BBC, 8 May 2007.
 - [“UVF urged to destroy its weapons”](#), BBC, 3 May 2007.
- ↳ Turkey Constitutional Court declared parliamentary vote in favour of presidential candidate Abdullah Gul unconstitutional 1 May. Gul withdrew candidacy but uncertainty grew as government called early parliamentary elections for 22 July and parliament passed constitutional reform package including provisions for popular election of president. President Sezer vetoed package 25 May; parliament readopted election provisions 31 May. Further anti-government/pro-secular rallies held in Izmir, Manisa, Samsun and Denizli. Suicide bomber killed 6 in Ankara 22 May; police said dead suspect had PKK ties. Casualties in clashes between armed forces and PKK continued, including 7 soldiers in mine explosion 24 May and 10 rebels 29 May. PM Erdogan signalled parliament ready to support any military decision to launch cross-border attack on PKK in Northern Iraq amid military build-up on border. Ankara

warned U.S. against further airspace violations after 2 U.S. fighter jets entered Turkish airspace over Iraq border 24 May.

- "Turkey-Iraq border tension grows", BBC, 30 May 2007.
- "Turkey asks US not to violate its airspace again", AlertNet, 29 May 2007.
- "Turkey president vetoes vote plan", BBC, 25 May 2007.

Latin America / Caribbean

↳ Bolivia Constitutional Court (TC) and President Morales at loggerheads over Supreme Court judge appointments, as government seeks to push through corruption charges against former President Sánchez de Lozada. Morales accused of attempting to dismantle TC after filing breach of legal duty charges against its justices; lower House of Congress (with pro-Morales majority) to rule whether accusation has merit. 600 landless peasants occupied Madidi National Park in Apolo 17 May, demanding development in the region and more equitable land rights. Protestors vowed to mobilise additional 10,000 Apolo inhabitants if government does not heed their call.

- "Morales denunciará al Constitucional boliviano ante la ONU y la OEA", *El País*, 17 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°13, *Bolivia's Reforms: The Danger of New Conflicts*, 8 Jan. 2007.

↳ Colombia President Alvaro Uribe said will unilaterally release 300 FARC guerrillas in hopes of reciprocal liberation of hostages; FARC called move "smokescreen" and reiterated demilitarisation of Florida and Pradera municipalities prerequisite for hostages/prisoner swap negotiations, but up to 300 guerrillas have reportedly accepted. While armed forces announced killing of 18 guerrilla fighters in 4 separate incidents 20 May, attacks by FARC killed 22 soldiers and police in month. Reports of possible French role in negotiation as 1 senator said release of Ingrid Betancourt "imminent". Head of National Police, chief of police intelligence agency, and 10 other police generals sacked 14 May after media leaked reports of series of illegal tapping operations. Taps showed imprisoned paramilitary commanders running outside criminal operations under lax conditions; other taps targeted politicians and journalists.

- "Ingrid Betancourt espera un gesto de las FARC", *El País*, 1 Jun. 2007.
- "Algo huele raro", *Semana*, 19 May 2007.
- Comment by Markus Schultze-Kraft, "El lado oscuro de la desmovilización paramilitar", *El Tiempo*, 30 Apr. 2007.

Crisis Group Latin America Report N°20, *Colombia's New Armed Groups*, 10 May 2007. Following demobilisation of the paramilitaries, Colombia is threatened by the rise of new illegal armed groups heavily involved in drugs and other illegal activity. There is extensive, disturbing evidence that paramilitary DDR is being undermined by new groups, some of which have established drug business ties with insurgents who continue to fight the government. At risk are the success of the government's demobilisation strategy and the reintegration of some 32,000 paramilitary fighters and their support networks.

↳ Ecuador President Correa began campaigning for Constituent Assembly Elections due 30 September, said his party seeks control of 80% of seats.

- "Ecuador's political volcano", BBC, 28 April 2007.

↳ Haiti Security remained volatile in Gonaives with killing of local radio administrator Alix Joseph 16 May and arrest of gang leader and former Artibonite resistance front member "Ti Will" 26 May. 2 policemen killed 20-21 May in Port-au-Prince and radio journalist/artist François Latour kidnapped and killed 23 May though overall kidnappings continued to decline.

- "Ray of light in Cite Soleil", *Chicago Tribune*, 10 May 2007.

Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°15 *Haiti: Prison Reform and the Rule of Law*, 4 May 2007. Haiti's tenuous steps toward police and judicial reform cannot succeed unless the overcrowded, insecure prison system is also overhauled. More than 5,000 prisoners are jammed into a tiny fraction of internationally-recommended minimum space, but only 10% have been convicted; many have yet to be charged. A dangerous cycle has begun of "managing" the crisis through uncontrolled releases, even acceptance of escapes, which adds to the broader problems of impunity and insecurity that have undercut confidence in rule-of-law. The Préval government and donors should urgently finance and build secure prisons, hire more guards and put the most dangerous offenders in maximum security cells.

↳ Venezuela Government forced closure of private channel RCTV, consistently critical of President Chávez's policies, after refusing to renew its licence 27 May, prompting large-scale protests. Orinoco Belt oil-production facilities formally nationalised 2 May; Chávez said banking sector to follow.

- "Chávez silences critical TV station - and robs the people of their soaps", *Guardian*, 23 May 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 Dramatic surge in Israeli-Palestinian and internal Palestinian conflict, with direct participation of Hamas in both. November 2006 Gaza ceasefire in ruins with air strikes and rocket attacks escalating after 15 May Israeli decision to respond to continued attacks from Gaza. Sustained attacks on Sderot and nearby towns on Gaza border killed 2 Israelis 21/27 May. More than 40 Palestinians killed by Israeli airstrikes in month. Israeli PM Olmert stated Israel will no longer "coordinate our actions with those of Hamas", suggesting Israeli attacks to continue even if rocket attacks stop. Palestinian Education Minister Nasser al-Shaer and cabinet member Wasfi Kabha among 33 Hamas officials arrested by Israeli forces in West Bank. Olmert resisted military pressure to commit ground forces in Gaza. FM Tzipi Livni joined calls for Olmert resignation 2 May. Coalition government in doubt as 28 May Labour party primaries led to defeat of leader Amir Peretz; 2nd round vote due 12 June between former PM Ehud Barak and former intelligence chief Ami Ayalon – both reportedly hold position that Olmert must resign for Labour to remain in coalition. Factional clashes in Gaza killed 50 in month. Growing chaos created new openings for radical salafists with agenda opposed to that of both Fatah and

Hamas. Egyptian-mediated Fatah-Hamas talks began end May. Video of captive BBC journalist Alan Johnston released 1 June by Army of Islam.

- "Jihadist groups fill a Palestinian power vacuum", *International Herald Tribune*, 30 May 2007.
- "Olmert hints at attacks against senior Hamas officials", *Daily Star*, 28 May 2007.
- Comment by Rob Malley (Crisis Group) and Hussein Agha, "The chance of a deal is now the object of futile bartering", *Guardian*, 18 May 2007.
- For background, see *After Mecca: Engaging Hamas*, Crisis Group Middle East Report N°62, 28 Feb. 2007.

Lebanon Worst internal fighting since end of civil war in 1990 erupted from 19 May. Army battled with Islamist militant group Fatah al-Islam after security forces targeted it for criminal activity; 79 killed in ensuing clashes in Tripoli and nearby Palestinian refugee camp Nahr al-Bared; 25,000 refugees reportedly fled camp. Damascus denied allegations of involvement. 20 Fatah al-Islam members, including 1 Syrian, charged with terrorism 30 May. UNSC voted 31 May to establish international tribunal to try suspects in killing of former PM Rafik Hariri under Chapter VII (allowing military enforcement); supported by PM Fouad Siniora but denounced by Hezbollah as foreign interference.

- "Hezbollah and Syria denounce UN over tribunal for Hariri killing", AP, 31 May 2007.
- "Clerics mediate as army tightens grip on Nahr al-Bared", *Daily Star*, 29 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°20, *Lebanon at a Tripwire*, 21 Dec. 2006.

Syria Parliament nominated President al-Assad for second term, endorsed in 27 May referendum with 97% of vote. Syrian FM Walid Muallem and U.S. Sec. State Rice met on sidelines of regional conference on Iraq in Egypt 3 May in highest-level contact in 2 years. Dissident Kamal Labwani and prominent political writer Michel Kilo sentenced to 12 and 3 years in prison respectively.

- "Assad's unsurprising victory", *Economist*, 30 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°63, *Restarting Israeli-Syrian Negotiations*, 10 Apr. 2007.

GULF

Bahrain Police clashed with supporters of Shiite opposition movement Haq (Right) in Nuwaidrat, Maamer and several Shiite villages 20-21 May. Violence sparked by police break-up of demonstration over planned trials of Haq leader Hassan Mushaima and executive director of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, on security charges including calling for overthrow of regime. King Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa ordered public prosecution to withdraw its case 19 May.

- "Three policemen injured in third day of Bahrain violence", *Khaleej Times*, 22 May 2007.

Iran International Atomic Energy Agency reported to UN Security Council 23 May that Iran expanded its uranium enrichment in defiance of UN demands. Washington called for tough international action and expanded sanctions while 9 U.S. warships deployed to Gulf for exercises. U.S. and Iran held talks at ambassadorial level 28 May in Baghdad, highest-level talks in almost 30 years. U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker and

Ambassador Hassan Kazemi Qumi exchanged respective positions on Iraq security. Tehran started campaign of intimidation of journalists, scholars and activists: U.S.-Iranian scholars Haleh Esfandiari and Kian Tajbakhsh imprisoned and accused of "spying"; another activist Ali Shakeri believed to be in detention; 2 dual-nationality journalists barred from leaving country.

- "End Harassment of Dual-Nationals", Human Rights Watch, 31 May 2007.
- "U.S. engages in rare talks with Iran on Iraq security", *International Herald Tribune*, 28 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°21, *Iran: Ahmadi-Nejad's Tumultuous Presidency*, 6 Feb. 2007; and Report N°51, *Iran: Is There a Way Out of the Nuclear Impasse?*, 23 Feb. 2006.

Iraq Both houses of U.S. Congress passed compromise bill 25 May allocating \$100bn new funding for Iraq war; no timetable given for U.S. troop withdrawal following President Bush's veto threat. International Ministerial Conference on Iraq held in Sharm al-Sheikh 3 May. Foreign Ministers of Iraq, its 6 neighbours, Egypt, Bahrain and G-8/P-5, heads of UN, Arab League and Organisation of the Islamic Conference, issued 19-point final consensus statement 4 May but no real progress made beyond initial 10 March meeting in Baghdad. Ambassador-level talks between U.S. and Iran on security situation in Iraq held 28 May. Violence continued throughout Iraq. U.S. troops suffered third worst month since 2003 with over 120 killed. U.S. announced additional deployment of 3,000 troops in Diyala province where use of suspected chlorine bombs continued with 30 killed 16 May. 45 killed by suicide truck bombing of offices of Kurdistan Democratic Party in northern town of Makhmur 13 May.

- Comment by Joost Hilterman and Peter Harling (Crisis Group), "Eyes Wide Shut", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 2007.
- "A grim milestone in Iraq", *Time*, 30 May 2007.
- "Bush may turn to UN in search for Iraq solution", *Guardian*, 23 May 2007.
- Comment by Joost Hiltermann (Crisis Group), "Kirkuk and the Kurds: A Difficult Choice Ahead", *Al-Hayat*, 22 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°64, *Iraq and the Kurds: Resolving the Kirkuk Crisis*, 19 Apr. 2007; and Report N°60, *After Baker-Hamilton: What to Do in Iraq*, 19 Dec. 2006.

Saudi Arabia King Abdullah held Iraq talks with U.S. Vice-President Cheney in Riyadh 12 May. Riyadh earlier announced arrests of 172 al-Qaeda operatives in recent months.

- "Cheney meets Saudi king", Reuters, 13 May 2007.

Yemen Clashes continued between government and rebel forces in north western Saada province. Army backed by tribesmen retook town of Qalaa and government building in Razih area from Shiite rebels Yemen accuses Iran and Libya of supporting; 60 reportedly killed 13 May. Suspected Islamists killed 12 police in ambush 21 May.

- "Shell hits gas station, 6 dead in Yemen rebel area", Reuters, 31 May 2007.
- "Twelve policemen killed in Yemen ambush", *Middle East Online*, 24 May 2007.

NORTH AFRICA

Algeria Up to 18 soldiers and 22 Islamist rebels killed in fresh clashes before 17 May parliamentary polls. Bomb attack

16 May in Constantine killed policeman. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb called for boycott of elections 14 May, but feared election-day violence did not materialise. Ruling coalition won reduced majority, losing 67 seats, with lowest ever turnout of 35%. Security forces reportedly arrested 12 suspected Islamic militants linked to 11 April triple suicide bombings in Algiers, and seized large quantities of explosives.

- [“Algeria: security forces dismantle group allegedly linked to deadly April terror bombings”](#), AP, 19 May 2007.
- [“Algeria ruling coalition wins legislative polls”](#), Reuters, 19 May 2007.
- [“Violence ahead of Algeria polls”](#), BBC, 14 May 2007.

⇒ Egypt Supreme Administrative Court overturned earlier ruling against presidential order to try 40 Muslim Brothers before military court. At least 87 Brothers reportedly arrested, including 30 in Dakhaliya 22 May, allegedly after group named 2 candidates in province for 11 June elections for upper house of parliament. Total 19 Brothers reported to be running in vote. Around 135 al-Jihad members, active in 1990s, released from prison after renouncing violence. Clashes between Christians and Muslims over church construction next to local mosque injured 10 in Bamha, south of Cairo.

- [“Court says it’s OK for military trial of Muslim Brotherhood members”](#), AP, 14 May 2007.
- [“10 injured in clash between Muslims and Christians in Egypt”](#), AP, 11 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°61, *Egypt’s Sinai Question*, 30 Jan. 2007.

⇒ Mauritania Trial of 21 suspected Islamist militants began 21 May. Suspects accused of trying to set up wing of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (formerly GSPC) with aim of threatening security “inside and outside” state.

- [“Mauritania accuses one terror-case defendant of close ties to Osama Bin Laden”](#), AP, 23 May 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°53, *Political Transition in Mauritania: Results and Prospects*, 24 Apr. 2006.

⇒ Morocco Security forces announced break-up of recruitment network for al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb 6 May; 20 arrested. Courts continued to examine those suspected of links to March, April suicide bombers.

- [“Casablanca bombings: Six terror suspects appear before the examining magistrate”](#), MAP, 14 May 2007.
- [“Morocco breaks up al Qaeda recruiting gang”](#), Reuters, 6 May 2007.

⇒ Western Sahara Police clashed with students in Moroccan capital Rabat staging sit-in for independence in Western Sahara 17 May amid reports of student-police clashes and arrests in other towns. 7 Marrakech University students given 8-12 month sentences 25 May.

- [“Moroccan cops arrest rights campaigners”](#), AP, 21 May 2007.
- [“Moroccan police clash with students seeking independence for Western Sahara”](#), AP, 17 May 2007.

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