

CrisisWatch

A monthly bulletin on current and potential conflicts
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October 2015 – Trends

↓ Deteriorated situations

[Central African Republic](#), [Israel/Palestine](#), [Macedonia](#), [Republic of Congo](#),
[South China Sea](#), [Turkey](#)

↑ Improved situations

[Iran](#)

November 2015 – Watchlist

💣* Conflict risk alerts

[Turkey](#)

☰ Conflict resolution opportunities

CrisisWatch summarises 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 sources. It 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. It identifies situations where, in the coming month, there is a risk of new or significantly escalated conflict, or a conflict resolution opportunity (noting that in some instances there may be both). It also summarises Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers published the previous month.

Arrows and alerts: Up, down and side arrows signify, respectively, improved, deteriorated or unchanged situations. Conflict Risk Alerts (identified with bombs) or Conflict Resolution Opportunities (with doves) are used in addition to arrows: a bomb signifies a risk of escalated violence; a dove an opportunity to advance peace. Both bombs and doves tend to be used where events are moving fast.

Global Trends and Opportunities – October 2015

As armed conflicts in **Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen**, and elsewhere continued to inflict much suffering and instability around the world, the heads of the UN and International Committee of the Red Cross issued an [unprecedented joint warning](#) about the impact of today's conflicts on civilians and called on states to redouble their efforts to find sustainable solutions to conflicts. Welcoming the call to action, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, President & CEO of the International Crisis Group, said: "It is imperative that the world do much more to respond to early warning signs and prevent wars breaking out in the first place".

Other **October** trends saw Turkey's republic faced with the deadliest attack in its history, and tensions and violence rising further around Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade. Deadly communal violence prompted the Central African Republic's transitional government to delay elections until mid-December, and a referendum in Congo-Brazzaville, held amid a crackdown on the opposition, paved the way for the president to seek a third term. In Asia, tensions between China and the U.S. rose after an American warship sailed through disputed South China Sea waters. In a positive step for world peace, Iran's July nuclear deal was formally adopted on 18 October.

Escalating tensions at **Jerusalem's** Holy Esplanade saw a surge in violence, triggered by revived Israeli limitations on Muslim entry to al-Aqsa Mosque and Palestinian stone-throwing at Israel security forces to prevent entry of religious Jews. [Crisis Group is concerned](#) that the rising violence that has spread across the rest of the West Bank and into Israel could worsen. In our [June report on the Holy Esplanade](#) we called for the status quo arrangement that has mostly kept the peace since Israel captured East Jerusalem in 1967 to be shored up to avoid a repeat of the unrest seen in mid-2014. The Jordanian-Israeli understandings mediated by the U.S. in October are a positive but partial step in that direction: they boost Jordan's role at the site but address only the esplanade when the drivers of violence are broader, and they continue to exclude Palestinians from administering the esplanade.

A suicide bomb attack on 10 October on an Ankara peace rally in **Turkey** led by leftist groups and the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) was blamed on the Islamic State (IS). Killing 102 people and injuring 240, the attack fed into growing tensions between the government and Kurdish political groups ahead of the 1 November repeat elections, and underlines the increased risk of further IS-related violence. Despite the insurgent Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)'s announcement of an "inaction" immediately following the bombing, the government pledged to continue military operations against the group. In the Balkans, there was increasing concern over the fate of the July EU-brokered agreement between **Macedonia's** government and opposition to resolve the country's political crisis, after talks on implementing the deal stalled.

In Asia, **South China Sea** tensions increased as a U.S. navy warship sailed within twelve nautical miles of an artificial island constructed on Subi reef, claimed and held by China, on 27 October. China's defence ministry said a missile destroyer and a patrol

vessel had warned the U.S. ship to leave. Its foreign ministry said the American warship had entered its waters “illegally” (although since the reef was originally submerged at high tide it would not be entitled to a twelve-nautical mile territorial sea). On 31 October the Chinese navy released photos of Chinese armed fighter jets training in the South China Sea.

In Africa, a number of countries witnessed election-related tensions and violence. In **Congo-Brazzaville**, the population overwhelmingly voted for a constitutional amendment to eliminate the two-term presidential limit, paving the way for President Nguesso to seek a third term. The move followed a violent crackdown on the opposition, and triggered a series of protests in late October. Meanwhile, the situation deteriorated in the **Central African Republic** where deadly communal violence left dozens dead in Bangui in September and October, and prompted the transitional government of transition President Samba-Panza to delay presidential and parliamentary elections until mid-December. In [Crisis Group’s commentary “Avoiding an Electoral Flare-up”](#), we warned that armed groups were assembling and attempting to march on the capital, Bangui, to provoke violent confrontations, and we called for the elections to be held in 2016 so as to allow disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes to take place.

With its gruelling review in Tehran and Washington completed, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on **Iran’s** nuclear program was formally approved by all sides on 18 October. As such, July’s historic agreement became effective and the participants – the P5+1/EU3+3 and Iran – began implementing their commitments under the deal.

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Africa

Central Africa

➔ **Burundi** Despite early Oct creation of Inter-Burundi Dialogue Commission to oversee dialogue between govt and opposition, daily violence continued, especially in Bujumbura where corpses were found on streets throughout month. Some twenty civilians killed 3 and 13 Oct in shootings, clashes with security forces. Armed groups mid-Oct repeatedly attacked police positions in Bujumbura, reportedly killing a dozen policemen. Opposition Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (MSD) party representative found dead 18 Oct following 17 Oct arrest. Relations with Rwanda continued to deteriorate: FM Alain Nyamitwe 1 Oct accused Rwanda of training rebels to destabilise country; police 18 Oct reportedly killed six arrested Rwandans. Govt 7 Oct expelled Désiré Nyaruhirira, first counsellor of Rwandan embassy, for “creating insecurity”; 9 Oct asked Belgium to replace its ambassador. International pressure on govt and authorities increased: UNSC 28 Oct urged stakeholders to pursue dialogue; UN rights chief Zeid 23 Oct expressed concern over “rapidly worsening” security and rights situation; EU 1 Oct imposed sanctions on three security officials and former general, 26 Oct invited govt to talks, threatened aid suspension if talks fail; AU 17 Oct adopted targeted sanctions, decided to launch investigation into rights violations, called for peace talks outside Burundi and preparation of African-led peace mission in case of deterioration.

- Thierry Vircoulon, [“Insights from the Burundian Crisis \(I\): An Army Divided and Losing its Way”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 2 Oct. 2015.
- [“EU calls on Burundi to hold talks on human rights violations”](#), *Guardian*, 22 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Cameroon** Sixteen small-scale Boko Haram (BH) attacks on border towns in Far North particularly around Mora, in Mayo Sava division and near islands of Lake Chad left 40 civilians and two soldiers dead, dozens of women abducted, several villages burned. Attacks included: fifteen killed 21 Oct in Doulo, eight killed 22 Oct in Kerawa and six killed following day when BH temporarily seized control of town; four killed 24 Oct in Kangawa. Armed forces killed dozens of BH fighters during clashes in Far North, pursued them into Nigeria. Suicide attacks continued: twin suicide bombings in Kerawa and Kangaleri 11 Oct left at least nine dead, injured 29. U.S President Obama 14 Oct said 3,000 U.S. troops and several surveillance drones to be deployed in Cameroon’s Garoua, Northern region, to counter BH; Cameroon presidency 16 Oct confirmed operation but amid public criticism said U.S. forces will not have combat mission but instead provide support to Cameroon security forces. New cabinet announced 2 Oct, twelve new ministers appointed.

- [“L’armée reprend la ville de Kerawa à Boko Haram”](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 23 Oct. 2015.

⚠ **Central African Republic** Deadly communal violence sparked late Sept continued, leaving dozens dead and prompting govt to delay elections: over 70 killed and tens of thousands displaced in capital Bangui after late-Sept killing of Muslim motorcycle taxi driver. Govt organised national consultations throughout Oct to restore dialogue but some armed groups and political parties boycotted discussions. President Samba-Panza late Oct reshuffled cabinet, replaced defence, public security and justice ministers.

French Sangaris forces and to a lesser extent UN peacekeepers 11 Oct clashed near Sibut with ex-Seleka rebels attempting to march on capital. One peacekeeper killed, another injured early Oct near Bangui; at least one killed, ten injured in Bangui's PK5 district 15 Oct; seven UN police ambushed in SW Boali 18 Oct, taken hostage for several hours; armed men 26 Oct attacked Ali Darassa Union for Peace in Central Africa (UPC) delegation in Bangui, triggering reprisals against Christians in PK5. Religious and political leaders also targeted by militias: evangelical fellowship president early Oct escaped murder attempt; National Transitional Council (CNT) VP Léa Koyassoum Doumta briefly abducted by anti-balaka 18 Oct. UNSC 20 Oct said ready to impose fresh round of sanctions on those responsible for recent upsurge in violence. Transitional govt 1 Oct announced elections scheduled for 18 Oct delayed, election commission scheduled new date of 13 Dec. President of election commission resigned 8 Oct.

- Thierry Vircoulon and Thibaud Lesueur, [“Central African Republic: Avoiding an Electoral Flare-up”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 19 Oct. 2015.
- [“Central African Republic schedules fresh polls elections after cancelling October poll”](#), *Guardian*, 29 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Chad** Boko Haram (BH) attacks continued: suspected BH militants 6 Oct killed eleven Chadian soldiers in attack in Kaiga Ngouboua near Nigerian border; at least 41 killed 10 Oct in coordinated suicide bombings in Baga Sola town on Lake Chad and nearby refugee camp. Govt early Oct announced new austerity measures as economic downturn continued. President Déby 5 Oct met French counterpart to discuss Central African Republic crisis; 11 Oct met Libyan General Haftar to discuss Libya. Déby 24 Oct arrested and dismissed his brother Salaye Déby, accused of corruption/embezzling, from position as Director of Customs.

- [“Lake Chad’s Baga Sola town hit by suicide bombers”](#), BBC, 10 Oct. 2015.

➔ **DR Congo** Political tensions continued ahead of 2016 elections following break-up of ruling majority in Sept with exclusion of “G7” group of parties: Moïse Katumbi resigned from post as governor of Katanga province 29 Sept; newly-formed “G7” parliamentary opposition platform 10 Oct announced participation in elections. Electoral Commission (CENI) President Malu Malu resigned 10 Oct citing health reasons, to be replaced with Corneille Nangaa Yobeluo; appointment not consensual, not accepted by Catholic Church and criticised by civil society and opposition parties. Attacks on civilians, Congolese armed forces (FARDC) and MONUSCO attributed to Allied Defence Forces (ADF) rebels continued north of Beni in Oicha Eringeti area 12 and 26 Oct; change of tactics with more complex, coordinated attacks. N Kivu governor early Oct accused MONUSCO of killing civilians during operation against armed group Nduma Defence of Congo (NDC).

- [“Moïse Katumbi sait-il vraiment ce qu’il veut?”](#), *Le Monde*, 8 Oct. 2015.

↓ **Republic of Congo** Constitutional referendum to eliminate two-term presidential limit held 25 Oct following late-Sept referendum call by President Nguesso; some 92% voted in favour of constitutional amendment, with voter turnout reported at 72%. Opposition coalition Republican Front for the Respect of Constitutional Order and Democracy (FROCAD) 27 Oct rejected referendum results, disputed voter turnout rate, stating nearly all opposition supporters boycotted referendum. Referendum followed series of opposition protests and crackdown on opposition leaders: opposition FROCAD and Initiative for Democracy in Congo (IDC) leaders 18 Oct forbidden from

leaving country following 17 Oct protests in Pointe Noire; six FROCAD leaders arrested 20 Oct during press conference amid intensifying violence in Brazzaville and Pointe Noire; former opposition Minister Guy Parfait Kolelas placed under house arrest 29 Oct. Authorities reported some four killed and several wounded throughout month in clashes between police and protesters; opposition leader 21 Oct alleged over twenty killed in protests; opposition gathered 30 Oct to commemorate those killed.

- [“Opposition in Congo Brazzaville rejects referendum result”](#), VOA, 27 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Rwanda** Parliament’s lower house 29 Oct approved draft amendments to constitution reducing presidential term from seven to five years, with limit of two terms, but voted to make exception for President Kagame should he choose to run again.

- [“Rwanda parliament votes to allow Kagame third term”](#), AFP, 29 Oct. 2015.

Horn of Africa

➔ **Eritrea** UNSC 23 Oct adopted resolution re-imposing sanctions after UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea 20 Oct reported govt violated previous UN resolutions, including by supporting armed groups in region. FM Osman Saleh Mohammed 23 Oct protested sanctions.

- [“Eritrea renews appeal on UNSC to rescind sanctions”](#), Sudan Tribune, 25 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Ethiopia** Following May elections in which ruling EPRDF and allied party won all parliamentary seats, PM Desalegn re-elected 5 Oct for first full term after assuming role after former PM Zenawi’s death in 2012. Desalegn 7 Oct formed new govt of technocrats. Five Ethiopian dissident groups in exile 24 Oct announced formation of “People’s Alliance for Freedom and Democracy” to challenge EPRDF rule. Nine bloggers and journalists detained since April 2014 cleared of terrorism charges 16 Oct.

- [“Ethiopia opposition groups say they are uniting for change”](#), AP, 25 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Kenya** Teacher kidnapped 16 Oct by gunmen in Hagardera refugee camp, rescued in Somalia in joint security operation between Kenyan Administration Police and neighbouring Jubaland Interim Administration. Communal violence re-erupted in NE: several killed in clashes between Garre and Dagodia clans along border between Wajir and Mandera counties; Ajuraan and Dagodia clans in Wajir clashed late Oct, at least four killed; incidents of intercommunal violence 14-27 Oct in Meru and Isiolo counties left at least eight dead, large numbers of livestock stolen; Turkana and Pokot communities clashed late Oct in Turkana county, at least seven killed, over 300 livestock stolen.

- [“Kidnapped Kenyan teacher rescued in Somalia in joint operation”](#), Daily Nation, 16 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Somalia** Second round of national consultative forum held 19-20 Oct to discuss general election when Somali Federal Govt (SFG) mandate ends in 2016; SFG President Hassan underlined commitment to ensure electoral process is broad, inclusive and transparent; regional consultations across six federal states to begin Nov before forum reconvenes mid-Dec. Impasse within SFG continued: parliamentary speaker 13 Oct attempted to diffuse impeachment motion brought against President Hassan in Aug, proposed investigative report instead; several MPs rejected his intervention, stated intention to move forward with impeachment. Tensions over state formation pro-

cess continued including ongoing dispute between rival factions over Galmudug Interim Administration and clan-based clashes mid-Oct in Hiiraan's capital Beledweyne that killed ten. Al-Shabaab regained footholds across south-central Somalia regions, but suffered reverses around Diinsoor and Bardere mid-October. High-ranking Al-Shabaab leader Abdulqadir Mumin 23 Oct officially pledged allegiance to Islamic State (IS); Al-Shabaab reportedly arrested 30 IS sympathisers.

- ["Somalia National Consultative Forum for 2016 elections launched today"](#), *Raxanreeb*, 19 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Somaliland** Tensions rose within ruling Kilmiye party ahead of congress scheduled to start 10 Nov to determine party leadership and presidential candidate: all candidates bar lead candidate Musa Bixi met 16 Oct, called for independent committee to oversee upcoming congress; meeting dispersed by police. Several elections officials arrested 18 Oct by Puntland police in Badham region; reportedly released next day. Increase in raids and armed clashes on eastern and western borders including 7 Oct attack by small armed group on governor's house in Borama in west, twenty arrested.

- ["Puntland released arrested officials"](#), *Sahal News*, 19 Oct. 2015.

New Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°113, [Somaliland: The Strains of Success](#), 5 Oct. 2015.

Somaliland's clan-based democracy has consolidated a state-like authority, kept the peace and attracted donors. But the territory now needs to reform its political bodies, judicial institutions and international engagements to protect itself from continued fragility in Somalia – which rejects Somaliland's independence claims – and civil war in nearby Yemen.

➔ **South Sudan** President Kiir 2 Oct unilaterally created additional eighteen states; keeping most oil-producing areas under pro-govt leadership; Kiir will appoint all governors and state MPs. Kiir-led SPLM National Liberation Council 16 Oct dissolved SPLM structures, removed all SPLM officials from positions; said SPLM/A-IO and SPLM-FD must return to Juba to be included in years-delayed SPLM convention, now set for Nov. SPLA-IO 26 Oct signed transitional security agreement, govt signed last month. IGAD 26 Oct appointed former Botswana president, Festus Mogae, as Chair of peace implementation monitoring mechanism "JMEC". Conflict intensified in Western and Central Equatoria, particularly around Mundri. SPLA-IO 27 Oct merged with Equatorian armed group, REMNASA. African Union 28 Oct released report of inquiry into wartime atrocities; documented mass killings, rapes and forced cannibalism.

- Casie Copeland, ["South Sudan Conflict: Britain Must Keep Up the Political Pressure to Protect a Fragile Peace"](#), *Independent*, 1 Oct. 2015.
- ["South Sudan's rival parties sign security arrangements"](#), *Sudan Tribune*, 26 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Sudan** Opposition National Dialogue (ND) conference started 10 Oct in Khartoum: majority of political opposition and armed groups boycotted conference despite intense govt lobbying. President Bashir 10 Oct expressed readiness to extend two-month ceasefire announced 22 Sept into permanent cessation of hostilities if armed opposition participates in ND. Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) 4 Oct prevented two opposition leaders from travelling to Paris to attend opposition talks with Western envoys; 28 Oct arrested three opposition figures. Govt continued to reject AU call to hold pre-dialogue preparatory meeting with armed and opposition groups in Addis Ababa. Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) 16 Oct reportedly deployed some 300 troops to Aden in Yemen as part of Saudi-led "Decisive Storm" operations against Huthi rebels.

- [“Sudan’s Bashir urges rebels to resume talks, only one notable group shows up”](#), Reuters, 10 Oct. 2015.
- ➔ **Uganda** Police 10 Oct denied permission for planned opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) rally in Rukungiri and prevented convoy from traveling to south west, FDC politicians including presidential candidate Kizza Besigye briefly detained. Female politician became undressed in public while being dragged along ground by police officers while resisting arrest; police rejected any accusations of wrongdoing. Police 15 Oct blocked Besigye and FDC MP Ssemujju Nganda residences to prevent another planned rally in east. National Resistance Movement (NRM) local govt primaries held 12 Oct amid violent intimidation and harassment of supporters and candidates by rival factions and partisan security forces; two men killed, local councillor’s house torched in Butaleja district. Scores injured early Oct in clashes between Karamajong and Turkana over access to Kobebe watering point in Moroto district; army intervened to quell violence.
- Magnus Taylor, [“Game On Between Uganda’s Former Liberation War Allies”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 7 Oct. 2015.
- [“Main opposition leader accuses Ugandan police of brutality”](#), VOA, 13 Oct. 2015.

Southern Africa

- ➔ **Madagascar** National Assembly 9 Oct passed bill to establish Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) composed of nine permanent members; CENI inaugurated 29 Oct. Opposition MAPAR coalition and VP-Malagasy Miara Miainga (VPMMM) boycotted vote, said proposed composition is anti-constitutional. PM Ravelonarivo 10 Oct announced plan to reform security sector.
- [“Assemblée nationale – La loi sur la CENI adoptée sans encombre”](#), L’Express de Madagascar, 9 Oct. 2015.
- ➔ **Mozambique** Renamo leader Dhlakama 4 Oct said he is prepared to resume dialogue with govt following Sept Renamo-police clashes. Security forces 9 Oct detained Dhlakama at his home for several hours immediately following his return from hiding; disarmed and arrested his sixteen bodyguards. Low-scale clashes between security forces and Renamo gunmen continued with incidents reported early-Oct in Manica and Tete provinces, reports of casualties not confirmed. Ruling Frelimo 21 Oct called for urgent disbandment and disarmament of Renamo.
- [“Mozambique’s opposition leader released after being held by police in his home”](#), Reuters, 9 Oct. 2015.
- ➔ **Zimbabwe** First Lady Grace Mugabe early Oct began series of controversial countrywide rallies ahead of ZANU-PF’s Dec convention in context of rampant factionalism and continued uncertainty surrounding President Mugabe’s successor. Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa received support from international financial institutions for plan to pay back \$1.4bn in debt arrears, but faces robust criticism from other cabinet ministers for submitting to IMF, raising question about govt’s commitment to deliver promised economic reforms.
- [“Mujuru centre of gravity for the opposition forces”](#), Zimbabwe Independent, 23 Oct. 2015.

West Africa

➔ **Burkina Faso** Stability restored following mid-Sept coup: transitional govt 14 Oct announced elections planned for 29 Nov, following 13 Oct installation of commission of inquiry into coup; commission indicted 23 for involvement. Coup leader General Gilbert Diendéré surrendered and arrested 1 Oct, subsequently charged with crimes against humanity, attack on security of state and treason. Commission of inquiry 7 Oct accused Diendéré and former FM General Djibril Bassolé – arrested late-Sept for allegedly planning attack in SW – of colluding with jihadi groups to destabilise country. Unidentified gunmen 9 Oct attacked gendarmerie station in Samorougouan, near Malian border; three gendarmes, one attacker and one civilian killed; govt said attack part of “destabilisation attempt”. Result of former President Sankara’s autopsy and ballistic examination released 13 Oct; body reportedly “riddled with bullets” from military weapons.

- [“Le premier tour des élections présidentielle et législatives fixé au 29 novembre”](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 14 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Côte d’Ivoire** Presidential elections held 25 Oct, observers reported peaceful conditions and credible results despite logistical challenges. Incumbent President Ouattara re-elected in first round with 83.7%; main contender Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) leader Pascal Affi Nguessan finished with only 9.3%. Controversy over turnout figures, officially at 52.86%. Presidential candidates former National Assembly President Mamadou Koulibaly and former FM Amara Essy 13 Oct, and PDCI dissident former PM Charles Konan Banny 23 Oct, withdrew from presidential race denouncing poor organisation of polls and possible fraud. Govt continued to limit freedom of assembly: opposition figure David Samba convicted 2 Oct, sentenced to six months’ jail for calling for protests against President Ouattara’s candidacy; rights group Amnesty International 7 Oct denounced arbitrary arrests, illegal detention of opponents and “climate of fear” ahead of elections.

- Rinaldo Depagne, [“Côte d’Ivoire: The illusion of stability”](#), Daily Maverick, 24 Oct. 2015.
- [“Élections en CDI: le pays va-t-il oublier ses vieux démons ?”](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 23 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Guinea** Presidential elections held 11 Oct amid continued disputes over implementation of Aug agreement on electoral preparations. Electoral Commission 17 Oct announced incumbent President Condé won with almost 58%; main challenger Cellou Dalein Diallo secured 31%. Constitutional Court (CC) 31 Oct validated President Condé’s re-election. Sporadic violence before and after election left thirteen dead, but polls largely peaceful. Opposition criticised electoral process and denounced massive fraud; govt rejected all accusations. Most observation missions noted organisational problems but said issues do not invalidate vote; EU mission more cautious. Diallo 17 Oct said he would not appeal to CC, may eventually call for peaceful demonstrations. Three of eight presidential candidates 27 Oct filed appeals to CC protesting results.

- [“Trois personnes tuées par les forces de sécurité à Conakry”](#), AI, 22 Oct. 2015.

New Crisis Group Africa Report N°232, [The Politics Behind the Ebola Crisis](#), 28 Oct. 2015.

West Africa is still paying the price for its poor response to the Ebola epidemic. Where an early response could have prevented the worst, failures on all levels allowed Ebola to spread, exposing a deep rift between the population and political class of the countries affected.

Unless all actors learn from the crisis, a similar disaster may be just a matter of time.

➔ **Guinea-Bissau** Tensions between President Vaz and former PM Pereira persisted following Pereira's mid-Aug dismissal. Cabinet agreed 12 Oct, with notable vacancies for posts of minister of internal administration and minister of natural resources, following initial rejection by President Vaz of cabinet list proposed by Pereira's ally PM Correia and ensuing constitutional dispute over authority to designate ministers. Former Chief of Staff Zamora Induta indicted by military justice over Oct 2012 attack on military barracks near Bissau airport in attempted coup.

- ["Nouveau gouvernement en Guinée-Bissau"](#), BBC, 13 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Mali** Peace agreement to end local/communal conflicts in Kidal region signed 11 Oct between Ifoghas and Imghad tribal leaders in Anéfis, following series of talks late-Sept with pro-govt armed groups, armed Tuareg coalition Coordination of the Movement of Azawad (CMA), and govt ministerial delegation. Negotiations with other communities implicated in conflict continued until mid-Oct with other inter-communal agreements signed. Govt 6 Oct sent technical team to Kidal to evaluate region's education, health and energy needs; govt and CMA 1 Oct exchanged prisoners as confidence building measure. DDR process began early Oct as Technical Security Committee (CTS) conducted first reconnaissance mission for cantonment sites in Gao and Timbuktu region. Attacks on security forces continued mainly in central region, including 1 Oct attack on armed forces convoy and 13 Oct attack on civilian convoy with security forces escort. Army 28 Oct reportedly killed seven jihadis in Mopti region near border with Burkina Faso.

- ["Nord du Mali: paix tribale à Anéfis"](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 19 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Niger** Boko Haram (BH) attacks continued in SE; govt 14 Oct reinstated state of emergency in Diffa region. BH 3 Oct attacked security forces (FDS) base in Bosso village, two soldiers killed. Suicide attack 4 Oct in Diffa killed one police and five civilians. ECOWAS delegation 5-9 Oct met with govt officials, civil society representatives, opposition leaders and religious spokesmen, stressed need for peaceful political process ahead of planned 2016 presidential and local elections.

- ["Niger imposes state of emergency on region hit by Boko Haram"](#), Reuters, 15 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Nigeria** Military reported further gains in ongoing counter-insurgency campaign against Boko Haram (BH); 11 Oct warned insurgents to surrender or face serious consequences. BH attacks on remote communities continued: insurgents 6 Oct attacked and looted part of Geidam town in Yobe state; army repelled 7 Oct attack on Gubio town in Borno state, seven civilians killed. Army same day repelled BH attack on 120 Task Force Battalion HQ in Damaturu, Yobe, over 100 insurgents reportedly killed. Army 27 Oct reportedly killed at least 30 BH fighters, freed some 338 captives. BH suicide bombings continued in Abuja, and Adamawa, Yobe and Borno states, killing over 100. Govt and BH affiliate group clashed 13 Oct in Okene Kogi state 200km south of Abuja fuelling concerns over geographic shift of BH attacks and govt's ability to defeat insurgency. Intelligence services 24-25 Oct arrested some 45 suspected BH in Lagos; arrested Biafra separatist leader 17 Oct and dozens of supporters 19-20 Oct. Unknown gunmen 9 Oct killed oil worker in attack on military Joint Task Force sentry post at Kolo Creek Flow Station in Bayelsa state, Niger Delta region. Senate 29 Oct completed confirmations of all 36 ministers nominated by President Buhari.

- EJ Hogendoorn, ["Boko Haram's Evolution: How It Got This Far, and How to Stop It"](#), OpenCanada, 21 Oct. 2015.

Asia

North East Asia

➔ **China (internal)** Govt 1 Oct blamed Xinjiang separatists for 18 Sept attack at Sogon coal mine in which at least 60 people reported killed; authorities continue to seek perpetrators, have identified seventeen suspects from three Uighur families.

- [“Crackdown breeds Uighur resentment of China’s deserving Han heroes”](#), *Financial Times*, 16 Oct. 2015.

➔ **China/Japan** China and Japan 14 Oct launched high level political dialogue, Japanese PM Abe said relations must move away from “excessive focus” on past. Abe and visiting Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi agreed to operationalise a maritime crisis management mechanism as soon as possible. Abe 17 Oct made ritual offering to controversial Yasukuni Shrine; large delegation of politicians visited shrine next day. Japan showcased warships 18 Oct, joined by navy vessels from U.S., India, South Korea, Australia, France. China 22 Oct defended its oil and gas development in East China Sea, ahead of high-level bilateral talks with Japan planned for Nov.

- [“Ahead of summit, China urges Japan make break from ‘inglorious’ past”](#), Reuters, 27 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Korean Peninsula** North Korean FM Ri Su-yong 1 Oct told UN that a peace treaty is urgently needed to prevent repeat of Aug 2015 escalation, denounced U.S. for conducting “aggressive and provocative large-scale joint military exercises” with ROK. Commander of U.S. Northern Command 7 Oct reportedly confirmed DPRK capability to launch nuclear weapon against U.S. homeland, said U.S. ready to defend itself. DPRK leader Kim Jong-un presided over large-scale military parade in commemoration of 70th anniversary of ruling Worker’s Party 10 Oct, attended by Chinese envoy; no rocket launch occurred despite Sept warnings. ROK National Intelligence Service 20 Oct reported DPRK is preparing for new nuclear test; also reported twenty senior members of DPRK regime had defected in 2015. ROK navy reportedly fired warning shots at DPRK patrol boat in Yellow Sea 25 Oct. DPRK media reported seventh Congress of the ruling Workers’ Party to be held May 2016, first since 1980.

- [“At military parade, a rare public speech by North Korea’s leader”](#), *New York Times*, 10 Oct. 2015.

South Asia

➔ **Afghanistan** Taliban 13 Oct withdrew from Kunduz city amid counteroffensive by Afghan forces, U.S. airstrikes and Special Forces on the ground; in two weeks following 28 Sept capture of city, Taliban reportedly destroyed govt offices and facilities, seized military hardware, attacked opponents, freed inmates from two prisons. During operations to help Afghan forces retake city, U.S. airstrike 3 Oct hit Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) hospital, killing at least 22; MSF condemned incident as “blatant breach of international humanitarian law”, called for independent investigation. Senior U.S.

commander Gen. John Campbell called attack “a mistake”, President Obama 7 Oct issued apology, promised investigation. Obama 15 Oct announced U.S. to halt withdrawal of troops, with current 9,800 remaining through most of 2016, reducing to around 5,500 by end of 2016; NATO countries including Germany, Turkey, UK and Italy announced they will also remain in Afghanistan. Gen. Campbell 30 Oct reported multi-day operation including airstrikes early month in Kandahar targeted “probably the largest” al-Qaeda training camp discovered since 2001. Head of lower house Mirdad Nejrabi 18 Oct attributed Taliban capture of Kunduz to intelligence failures, Taliban infiltration into security forces. President Ghani 3 Oct rejected call from former mujahidin leaders and political leaders for govt to provide framework for using non-state militias against Taliban. Renewed clashes between Afghan govt forces and Taliban, including in Northern provinces Baghlan, Takhar, Faryab; fighting also reported between Taliban and govt forces in Helmand’s provincial capital Lashkar Gah, and in Herat, Uruzgan and Ghazni provinces. Taliban 14 Oct claimed control of Faryab province’s Bala Baluk district, local officials denied. Border police 5 Oct reported 25 border police killed during clashes in eastern Nangarhar province, 268 Islamic State casualties. Interior Ministry 8 Oct reported over 5,600 Taliban and over 2,100 police killed in clashes during last six months. Former National Directorate of Security chief 7 Oct urged UN to investigate Taliban crimes against humanity. Earthquake hit north 26 Oct, killing around 400, mostly in Pakistan; Taliban 28 Oct reportedly took control of Darqand district in Takhar province, on border with Tajikistan.

- Mark Schneider, [“Dealing with disaster in Afghanistan”](#), *Boston Globe*, 3 Oct. 2015.
- [“‘Probably the largest’ al-Qaeda training camp ever destroyed in Afghanistan”](#). *Washington Post*, 30 Oct. 2015.

➡ **Bangladesh** Publisher of secular books hacked to death and three others injured in two separate attacks in Dhaka 31 Oct, claimed by al-Qaeda-linked Ansar al-Islam group. Gunmen on motorcycle shot dead Japanese national in Rangpur district north of Dhaka 3 Oct, days after deadly shooting of Italian national Cesare Tavella in Dhaka 28 Sept. Islamic State reportedly claimed responsibility for murders; PM Sheikh Hasina 4 Oct denied Islamic State (IS) responsibility, blamed local BNP-Jamaat alliance; both parties strongly refuted allegations. Several key diplomatic missions issued heightened security alerts. Several suspects arrested in Tavella killing, reportedly said they were hired to carry out killing to “create chaos”. Two other attacks 5 Oct, allegedly by banned Islamist extremist Jamaat-ul-Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) also reinforced concerns of rising extremism: former govt official-turned Sufi spiritual guide murdered in his Dhaka home, and attempted murder of pastor in Pabna city. At least one person killed in blasts attacking Shiite Ashura procession in Dhaka 24 Oct; IS claimed responsibility. Several media outlets 19 Oct said they received email threats signed by Ansarullah Bangla Team warning them of “severe action” if they publish reports on murders of atheist bloggers or their beliefs. International Crimes Tribunal 1 Oct issued death warrants against Jamaat-e-Islami leader Ali Ahsan Muhammad Majid and BNP minister Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, convicted of war crimes during 1971 liberation war. Police clashed with supporters of Awami League MP Manjurul Islam Liton 15 Oct; at least twenty injured. Member of Village Defence Police killed during encounter with unidentified “terrorists” during security operation in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) 18 Oct; security officials suspect link to Myanmar’s separatist “Arakan Liberation Army”.

- [“Publisher of secular books killed, 3 wounded in Bangladesh”](#), AP, 1 Nov. 2015.

➔ **India (non-Kashmir)** Deadly clashes between Maoists and security forces ongoing, including reported Maoist ambush of security forces near Katahalidh in Jharkhand’s Godda 10 Oct, one jawan killed; another jawan killed in gun battle with Maoists in Chhattisgarh’s Sukma district 25 Oct. Police 11 Oct arrested senior Maoist leader Eruvu Sivareddy alias Kiran in E Godavari’s Nandigama village.

- [“CRPF jawan killed, another injured in gun battle with Maoists”](#), Hindustan Times, 26 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Kashmir** Indian FM Sushma Swaraj 1 Oct rejected four-point peace plan presented by Pakistani PM Sharif to UNGA previous day, said Pakistan must give up terrorism, called for revival of dialogue. Pakistan ambassador to UN 2 Oct accused India of committing human rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir and sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan. Indian police reported high-ranking member of Lashkar-e-Taiba Abu Qasim killed in clash with security forces 29 Oct. Two Pakistani children reported killed in exchange of fire between Indian and Pakistani security forces near Sialkot 26 Oct. Indian security forces clashed with Pakistani militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad in Tral 4 Oct, two militants reported killed. Several killed in Indian elite counter-insurgency forces operation in Haphruda forest in Handwara 4 Oct. Several killed in clashes between military and insurgents in Pulwama district late Oct. China reportedly constructing road tunnels through Kashmir as part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

- [“India rejects Pakistan peace plan; calls for revival of terrorism talks”](#), Reuters, 1 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Nepal** K.P. Oli, head of the UML, elected PM 11 Oct following resignation of Sushil Koirala; UML leader Bidya Bhandari elected country’s first female president 28 Oct. Protests across southern Tarai plains by Madhesi and Tharu groups against new constitution entered third month; 16 Oct Human Rights Watch report called for investigations into killings during constitution-related protests. Obstructions at major Indian-border customs checkpoints continued, causing acute fuel shortage and increasing accusations of an unofficial Indian trade embargo. Following informal talks, formal dialogue between govt and Madhes-based parties began 25 Oct; govt agreed to some demands including compensating families of those killed in protests and withdrawing security forces from Tarai districts. Differences persist on federalism; Madhesi parties, seeking to preserve demographic advantage, demand two provinces across Tarai instead of six as currently agreed to among three main parties; govt favour letting future Federal Commission decide province demarcation. New Deputy PM Kamal Thapa met Indian Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj in New Delhi 18 Oct to discuss border situation; Swaraj urged govt to pursue dialogue with dissenting groups. Nepal Oil Corporation reached agreement on petroleum imports 28 Oct with PetroChina to ease fuel scarcity, ending four-decade Indian petroleum monopoly.

- [“In Nepal, where a battle for rights merges with geo-politics”](#), Hindustan Times, 1 Oct. 2015.
- [“Handle with care”](#), Kathmandu Post, 30 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Pakistan** Bomb blast killed two security personnel in FATA’s Mohmand agency 3 Oct; head of anti-Taliban militia killed in roadside bomb in Bannu district, adjacent to N Waziristan, next day. Several killed in ongoing attacks and clashes in Balochistan, including eleven people killed 19 Oct in bomb blast in bus in provincial capital Quetta, at least ten killed in suicide bombing at Shiite mosque in Bhaag 22 Oct. Sixteen killed

in suicide attack in Jacobabad district 23 Oct during Muharram procession, despite additional security across country ahead of Muharram (first month of Islamic calendar). Interior ministry 6 Oct reported 588 people killed and 10,007 injured in 821 terrorist attacks Jan-Aug 2015. Seven killed in bomb blast in Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz MP's office in Punjab's Dera Ghazi Khan district 14 Oct. U.S. and Pakistan 22 Oct released joint statement concluding PM Sharif's visit to Washington D.C., reaffirming "mutual commitment to democracy", amid continued U.S. concerns about Pakistani support to Afghanistan and India-oriented jihadi proxies. Govt appointed newly retired Lieutenant General Naseer Khan Janjua national security advisor 23 Oct. Amid ongoing Rangers crackdown against its workers in Karachi, Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) 9 Oct retracted resignations of its parliamentarians, ending two-month boycott, after senior party leaders and federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar agreed to formation of "Grievances Redressal Committee"; MQM leader in exile Altaf Hussain objected to party's return to parliament. Earthquake near border in northern Afghanistan killed at least 267 in Pakistan, mostly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

- Samina Ahmed and Sophie Desoulieres, "[Update on Pakistan's Polio War: Some Ground Gained but Victory Not Yet in Sight](#)", Lowy Interpreter, 23 Oct. 2015.
- "[Ex-general's new role strengthens Pakistani army's hand in talks](#)", Reuters, 23 Oct. 2015.

New Crisis Group Asia Report N°273, [Winning the War on Polio in Pakistan](#), 23 Oct. 2015. Pakistan remains the greatest impediment to a polio-free world. The link between the disease and Islamist anti-immunisation campaigns is clear but without an appropriate political response. The authorities must tackle extremist networks, step up health services, and make sure that health workers are safe.

➔ **Sri Lanka** UNHRC 1 Oct passed landmark resolution on accountability and reconciliation in Sri Lanka; resolution commits govt to ambitious agenda of transitional justice and political reforms, including establishment of truth and reconciliation commission, offices on missing persons and reparations, range of legal reforms addressing impunity for rights violations and, most controversially, establishment of special court to prosecute alleged international crimes. Tamil National Alliance (TNA) welcomed HRC resolution, though other Tamil activists and civil society groups more critical of lack of stronger international role in promised transitional justice mechanisms. Former President Rajapaksa and other Sinhala nationalist politicians strongly critical of HRC resolution. Parliament 22-23 Oct debated OHCHR war crimes report and reports from two govt commissions that found serious human rights violations but defended legality of military strategy during war. Investigations continued into numerous cases of alleged corruption and other crimes under Rajapaksa regime; former LTTE commander and former eastern province chief minister S. Chandrakanthan (aka "Pillayan") arrested 11 Oct for involvement in 2005 murder of TNA MP; attorney general 7 Oct indicted former secretary to president Lalith Weeratunga and several colleagues for misuse of public funds; new information about govt death squads emerged through investigations into 2009 abduction and presumed murder of journalist Prageeth Eknaligoda. Jaffna district judge 6 Oct convicted four soldiers of 2011 rape of two Tamil women. Tamil detainees held under anti-terrorism laws 17 Oct called off five-day hunger strike after govt promises to expedite cases and release those without charge.

- "[Mending broken hearts](#)", *Sunday Leader*, 18 Oct. 2015.

South East Asia

➔ **Indonesia** Some 500 Muslim extremists 13 Oct burned down Indonesian Christian Church and Roman Catholic church in Aceh's Singkil regency for allegedly operating without permit; clashed with Christians defending a third church, one killed. Hundreds of security forces deployed to Aceh 15 Oct, police arrested three people suspected of church burning. Singkil authorities began demolishing churches 19 Oct; some 5,000 Christians reportedly fled region.

- ["Islamist hard-liners attack Indonesian churches"](#), Foreign Policy, 20 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Myanmar** Govt and eight out of fifteen officially-recognised armed groups signed Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) 15 Oct; signatories on govt side included president, two VPs, parliamentary speakers, commander-in-chief and his deputy, attorney general and chief justice. Govt two days earlier removed groups from list of "unlawful associations". Fighting continued between army and ethnic groups that did not sign NCA, including Shan State Army-North and Ta'ang National Liberation Army. As preparations continued for 8 Nov general election, opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) leader Aung San Suu Kyi 7 Oct said even if she did not become president, she would be running the country if NLD won election; and that NLD's candidate for president would be from within party ranks. Election commission 12 and 27 Oct issued notifications that elections will not be held in conflict-affected Kachin, Shan and Kayin states, as well as a few parts of Bago Region and Mon state for security reasons; later confirmed polls will go ahead elsewhere despite disruption caused by widespread flooding. Concerns continued over disenfranchisement of Muslim Rohingya. MaBaTha 4 Oct held another large rally in Yangon celebrating enactment of "protection of race and religion" laws; thousands of monks and lay people attended.

- Richard Horsey, ["The Importance of the Myanmar Peace Deal"](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 16 Oct. 2015.
- ["Elections in Myanmar are a beginning – not a fairytale ending"](#), *Financial Times*, 21 Oct. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°146, ["Myanmar's Peace Process: A Nationwide Ceasefire Remains Elusive"](#), 16 Sept. 2015.

➔ **Philippines** Senate adjourned 7 Oct and House of Representatives 9 Oct without voting on Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL); session to resume 3 Nov, with new deadline to approve BBL deadline 16 Dec, when congress breaks for Christmas. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) 13 Oct signed "unified declaration" calling for approval of original BBL and rejecting "diluted BBL". MILF representative said combatants becoming "restive" over delays in passage of bill. Representatives from two dozen countries 15 Oct issued signed statement of support for peace process and call for safeguards to prevent resumption of Mindanao conflict. Deadly clashes between military and Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and New People's Army (NPA) continued. ASG 8 Oct seized Italian citizen in Dipolog, 13 Oct released video of one Filipino and three foreign hostages appealing for military to halt bombing ASG hideout in Jolo island. NPA claimed responsibility for abduction and killing of Mayor Dario Otaza of Loreto, Agusan del Sur, and his son, citing "revolutionary justice" for Otaza's alleged close ties with military.

- [“Fruits of peace”](#), *Economist*, 17 Oct. 2015.
 - [“MILF, MNLF sign ‘unified declaration’ for approval of BBL”](#), *Philippines Star*, 13 Oct. 2015.
- ↓ **South China Sea** Tensions increased as U.S. navy warship 27 Oct sailed within twelve nautical miles of Chinese-claimed reef in SCS as part of U.S. Freedom of Navigation (FON) program. Chinese defence ministry said missile destroyer and patrol vessel had warned U.S. ship to leave; foreign ministry said American warship entered its waters “illegally” and urged U.S. to avoid “dangerous or provocative acts”. The U.S. destroyer sailed around reef originally underwater or submerged at high tide and not entitled to the 12-nm territorial sea under international law. Unnamed U.S. defence official told press additional FON patrols will follow in coming weeks, but will be conducted also around reefs controlled and built up by Vietnam and the Philippines. Spokesperson for Chinese navy said further U.S. missions of this sort could “trigger eventualities” but did not elaborate. Chinese navy 31 Oct released photos of Chinese armed fighter jets training in SCS. Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague 29 Oct ruled that it can hear case brought by Philippines against China over SCS. U.S. aircraft carrier arrived at new home port in Japan 1 Oct. Philippines addressed UNGA 6 Oct, calling for China to settle SCS disputes peacefully through arbitration; China responded insisting on direct negotiations and consultations. U.S. 8 Oct committed \$100m to Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia as part of maritime law enforcement initiative. Chinese state media 9 Oct reported construction of two lighthouses on Cuateron Reef and Johnson South Reef complete; Vietnam 14 Oct protested that construction violated its sovereignty.
- [“Beijing summons US ambassador over warship in South China Sea”](#), *Guardian*, 27 Oct. 2015.
- ➔ **Thailand** Ruling National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) 5 Oct appointed new 21-member Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), headed by NCPO legal expert Meechai Ruchuphan; CDC has until 1 April 2016 to draft new charter. NCPO also appointed 200-member National Reform Steering Committee to replace defunct NRC. Members of European parliament 8 Oct condemned military govt for trying civilians in military courts, delaying elections, and curbing rights of free speech and assembly; adopted non-binding resolution urging Thai authorities lift repressive restrictions on political rights. Govt 12 Oct announced it would issue administrative order to seize \$16mn of former PM Yingluck Shinawatra’s assets as compensation for losses in her govt’s rice subsidy scheme. Activists opposed to govt plan for single internet gateway that would create firewall, similar to China and DPRK, launched successful distributed “denial of service” attacks on six government websites 30 Sept. Govt early Oct denied it was implementing single gateway. Hacking collective Anonymous 22 Oct launched attack on state-run telecommunications company. Several killed and injured in continued violence in deep south. In media interview, representatives of Barisan Revolusi Nasional representatives said group not involved in current dialogue process between govt and MARA Patani (umbrella group of separatists based outside country), but is willing to talk with govt through international mediation.
- [“Rebels reject peace talks in deep South”](#), *Bangkok Post*, 12 Oct. 2015.

Europe and Central Asia

Balkans

➡ **Bosnia** EU foreign Affairs Council 12 Oct expressed “serious concern” over Republika Srpska plans for referendum on authority of national courts in entity. State- and entity-level justice ministers agreed reforms of state-level court to be finished by year-end.

- [“Bosnian justice ministers agree crucial reform deadlines”](#), Balkan Insight, 16 Oct. 2015.

➡ **Kosovo** Opposition lawmakers disrupted parliament in protest against 25 Aug EU-backed agreement between Kosovo and Serbia on establishment of association of Serb-majority municipalities; MPs reportedly from Self-Determination (Vetevendosje) party set off tear gas canisters in parliament 8, 15 and 23 Oct. Vetevendosje activists clashed with police 13 Oct after party leader was arrested for setting off tear gas in parliament; protests outside parliament clashed with police again 23 Oct. EU and Kosovo 27 Oct signed Stabilisation and Association Agreement.

- [“Kosovo takes step towards joining European Union”](#), Reuters, 27 Oct. 2015.

⚠ **Macedonia** Increasing concern over fate of July EU-brokered agreement between opposition and govt, after talks on electoral reforms failed to produce agreement. Opposition suspended its participation in talks 14 Oct after National Prosecutors Council approved only half of fourteen-strong team of deputy special prosecutors proposed by newly-appointed special prosecutor in charge of probing claims that govt engaged in illegal surveillance of citizens. Despite continued talks and pressure from EU, sides remained unable to agree, endangering timetable for early elections in April 2016. Govt 7 Oct withdrew draft law it proposed previous day to ban publishing of materials related to wiretap claims, following protests outside parliament.

- [“Macedonia crisis deal in mortal danger, EU warns”](#), Balkan Insight, 21 Oct. 2015.

Caucasus

➡ **Armenia** Parliament 5 Oct voted to hold referendum to change constitution to parliamentary republic, with presidential powers transferred to parliament, president to be elected by parliament rather than by direct vote, presidential term to be extended from five to seven years. Hundreds protested in opposition to move, which they describe as intended to allow President Sargsyan to maintain power in PM role. Referendum scheduled 6 Dec.

- [“Pondering the limits of Russia’s security commitments”](#), Eurasianet, 21 Oct. 2015.

➡ **Azerbaijan** President Aliyev dismissed long-serving National Security Minister Eldar Mahudov; days later, authorities arrested seven National Security Ministry officials, accused them of abuse of power. OSCE refused to send observers to monitor 1 Nov elections, saying Baku sought to impose too many restrictions.

- [“‘Never been worse’: opposition, election monitors boycott vote in Azerbaijan”](#), RFE/RL, 31 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Russian foreign ministry 14 Oct urged parties to conflict to renounce use of force and find compromise, following recent escalation in violence along the line of contact; U.S. member of Congress also called for measure to de-escalate aggression.

- [“Frozen war thaws in Russian backyard as Karabakh flares”](#), Bloomberg, 23 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Georgia** International Criminal Court prosecutor Fatou Bensouda 13 Oct announced she will investigate alleged war crimes by both sides in 2008 Georgia-Russia war, including killing of peacekeepers, attacks on civilians. De facto leader of breakaway republic South Ossetia announced plan to initiate referendum on incorporating into Russian Federation.

- [“Georgia to push for broader ICC inquiry into 2008 war with Russia”](#), Eurasianet, 16 Oct. 2015.

➔ **North Caucasus (Russia)** Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov met with visiting Afghan First VP Abdul Rashid Dostum 5 Oct, reportedly discussed fight against terrorism. Kadyrov reported Libyan PM Khalifa al-Ghawi visited Grozny 13 Oct to negotiate release of Russian ship crew detained by Libyans. In Dagestan: head of Karamakhi village found shot dead 1 Oct following abduction by group of masked men, reportedly militants; three militants and one Federal Security Service (FSB) officer killed 10 Oct, and one militant killed 23 Oct in special operations in Gimry village; four militants killed in Khasavyurt district 17 Oct; security officials 22 Oct blew up house of one militant’s relative. Three militants killed 12 Oct in special operation in Gazi-Yurt, Ingushetia. Kadyrov reported three militants killed in special operation 8 Oct after arriving in Grozny from Syria, with intent to carry out terrorist attacks. Ten people reportedly returning from Syria, including three Chechens, arrested in Moscow 11 Oct for allegedly planning terrorist attack. Security forces 10 Oct reportedly abducted women’s rights activist Taita Yunusova near Grozny, released her same day. Salafi imam of Novokayakent village of Dagestan arrested 25 Oct for alleged possession of illegal weapons and drugs; relatives say case fabricated. Kadyrov 2 Oct asked Putin to allow Chechen infantry to fight in Syria.

- [“Dagestan fertile ISIS ground”](#), AP, 30 Oct. 2015.

Eastern Europe

➔ **Belarus** President Lukashenka won fifth presidential term in 11 Oct election, with 83.49% of vote; OSCE said poll fell short of democratic standards. EU and U.S. late Oct announced they will suspend most sanctions.

- [“Belarus tries to bring its economy in from the cold”](#), *Financial Times*, 15 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Ukraine** Building on Sept ceasefire, talks in Paris between Russia and Ukraine 2 Oct saw deal on elections in east, and withdrawal of small-calibre weapons; also greater access for OSCE monitors in separatist-held areas. President Hollande noted Minsk agreement cannot be fully implemented by year-end as planned. Ukrainian govt forces and separatists 5 Oct began withdrawing weaponry of 100mm or less from line of separation. Separatists 6 Oct announced highly contentious local elections would be delayed from Oct/Nov to Feb 2016; Moscow, Kyiv, U.S. and EU welcomed move. Kyiv reiterated demand for withdrawal of all troops and military hardware from east before polls there. Separatists 6 Oct demanded amnesty for participants in conflict, local powers and constitutional changes. Standoff

between separatist Ministry of State Security and other senior local leaders in Luhansk suggested power struggle in entity. Local elections across Ukraine 25 Oct saw Poroshenko's governing coalition retain support in west and centre, drop in support for PM Yatsenyuk's allies, and advances for Opposition Bloc, composed of Yanukovich-era politicians, in south and east; elections did not take place in Mariupol and Krasnoarmiisk; complete results expected 4 Nov. Dutch Air Safety board inquiry 13 Oct found Malaysian airlines flight MH17 destroyed 17 July 2014 by "9N314M-model warhead carried on the 9M38-series of missiles, as installed on the Buk surface-to-air missile system"; said missile fired from separatist-controlled territory. Russia and Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) rejected report as "deeply biased". DPR expelled Médecins Sans Frontières late month.

- Jean-Marie Guéhenno, ["What Next for Russia and Ukraine as Conflict Eases?"](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 16 Oct. 2015.
- ["West, Ukraine, hail rebel decision to postpone disputed elections"](#), Reuters, 6 Oct. 2015.

Western Europe/Mediterranean

➔ **Cyprus** Republic of Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades 12 Oct pledged to "significantly intensify" peace talks with Turkish Cypriot counterpart Mustafa Akinci as both acknowledged outstanding disagreements on issues of property and guarantees. Turkish President Erdogan 17 Oct inaugurated undersea pipeline to carry water from Turkey to northern Cyprus; move perceived by Greek Cypriot as attempt by Ankara to consolidate hold over north. Anastasiades 18 Oct said holding dual referendum on solution to conflict in March 2016 not possible in light of elections in Republic of Cyprus in May 2016.

- ["Turkey starts delivering water to Cyprus' breakaway north"](#), AP, 17 Oct. 2015.

⚠ **Turkey** Bomb attack at Ankara peace rally led by leftist groups and pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) 10 Oct left some 102 killed and 240 injured in deadliest attack in republic's history. PM Davutoğlu 14 Oct said Islamic State (IS) orchestrated attack. Interior ministry 14 Oct laid off several security officials amid growing anger and political division over bombing. Ankara prosecutor's office 28 Oct announced IS cell in Gaziantep responsible for attack. Pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) 10 Oct accused ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) of covertly aiding Ankara attackers and two other IS-linked bombers who struck pro-Kurdish targets in previous attacks. Over 320 IS suspects detained since 10 Oct. Two police and seven IS militants killed, twelve militants captured 26 Oct in police operation in Diyarbakır. Kurdish insurgency Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Murat Karayılan 10 Oct declared unilateral ceasefire until 1 Nov repeat elections; PM Davutoğlu same day pledged to continue military operations against PKK positions in SE and in Iraq. Deadly violence between security forces and PKK continued, with thirteen security officials reported killed since 10 Oct ceasefire. Governor of Diyarbakır province 9 Oct began four-day curfew in majority-Kurdish city's historic district following death of police officer in clashes with pro-PKK youth militia; 18 Oct declared curfew in Silvan district. Political and social tensions increased in lead-up to 1 Nov elections. U.S. 1 Oct pledged to deploy additional aircraft and personnel to Incirlik Air Base in SE, expanding scope of U.S.-led coalition anti-IS operations in Turkey. Russian-made drone shot down in Turkish airspace 16 Oct. Govt and EU 16 Oct discussed joint action plan to tackle Syrian refugee crisis. Govt 26 Oct announced

army hit Syrian PKK-affiliate, Kurdish Democratic Union Part (PYD) in N Syria twice: in July and again 16 Oct when PYD members attempted to cross Euphrates river.

- Berkay Mandiraci, [“Islamic State’s Threat to Turkey”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 19 Oct. 2015.
- [“Turkish capital Ankara hit by explosions, killing at least 95”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 10 Oct. 2015.

Central Asia

➔ **Kazakhstan** At Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit in Kazakhstan 15-16 Oct, Russian President Putin said some 5,000-7,000 individuals from Former Soviet Union are fighting with Islamic State (IS), described the situation in Afghanistan as critical and said goal of militant groups is to enter Central Asia. Regional countries in attendance signed military cooperation document focusing on border security 2016-2020, though questions remain about practical implementation given different status, capabilities and perception of risk within CIS. Following meetings in Astana 12 Oct between President Nazarbayev, and Kazakh and Chinese defence ministers, Kazakhstan and China announced they will increase defence cooperation including Special Forces training, anti-terrorist and joint-tactical exercises.

- [“CIS summit: Russia to bolster Central Asia military”](#), BBC, 16 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Kyrgyzstan** Parliamentary elections passed peacefully 4 Oct, returning six party parliament with no clear majority; Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) largest party, taking 38 of 120 seats, followed by Respublika-Ata-Jurt (28 seats), Kyrgyzstan (eighteen seats), Onuguu-Progress (thirteen), Bir-Bol (twelve), Ata-Meken (eleven). OSCE mission praised conduct of polls. New govt yet to be formed. OSCE and U.S. described elections as transparent and democratic, noted violations such as vote buying.

- [“Clean election produces messy result”](#), Eurasianet, 5 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Tajikistan** Amid increasing anxiety over impact of fighting in Afghanistan on Central Asian security, Russia and Tajikistan presidents met 6 Oct to discuss fighting along Tajikistan-Afghan border. Russia announced it would place transport and attack helicopters at Tajikistan’s Ayni airfield near capital Dushanbe. Govt 12 Oct announced civil servants prohibited from attending Friday prayers, amid ongoing crackdown on political opposition and on religious expression. UNHCHR 2 Oct expressed concern over govt’s Sept ban of opposition Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan.

- [“Russia-U.S. rivalry spreads to ex-Soviet central Asia”](#), Reuters, 30 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Turkmenistan** President Berdymukhamedov appointed Guichgeldy Hojaberdiyev Minister for National Security 5 Oct, replacing Yaylym Berdiyev, who was re-appointed defence minister, having previously held post 2009-2011. Re-shuffle comes amid concern for border security especially near Afghanistan’s Faryab and Jowzjan provinces, where fighting between Afghan govt and Taliban escalated. Independent media 4 Oct reported some 70% of Turkmenistan’s army has been moved south to protect border. Govt mid Oct rebuffed comments from Kazakh President Nazarbayev about recent incidents on its border with Afghanistan. Japanese PM Abe signed package of energy and infrastructure deals worth over \$18bn during late Oct visit, part of Central Asia tour.

- [“Taliban advances raise alarm in Turkmenistan”](#), Silk Road Reporters, 23 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Uzbekistan** Russian defence ministry delegation visited Tashkent 7-8 Oct, first such visit since 2007, denoting uptick in relations. President Karimov 7-8 Oct met Turkmen President Berdymukhamedov in Tashkent, with Afghanistan high on agenda. Germany announced it will close its air base in Termez this year – last remaining Western military base in Central Asia – after thirteen years. Tashkent police detained group of suspected members of banned Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir late month.

- [“Western militaries exit Central Asia as Germany shuts Uzbek base”](#), RFE/RL, 15 Oct. 2015.

Latin America and the Caribbean

➔ **Colombia** Govt-FARC peace talks progressed further, as parties 18 Oct struck deal to address plight of tens of thousands of victims of enforced disappearances: parties committed to immediately implementing humanitarian measures for search, location and dignified handover of disappeared; deal calls for establishment of high level search unit once final peace agreement has been signed. Deal followed “mini-crisis” in Havana triggered by differing interpretations over last month’s transitional justice agreement; parties 9 Oct agreed to recall group of lawyers who drafted initial agreement to iron out differences. Former President Andrés Pastrana 15 Oct resigned from high-level peace advisory commission established March 2015 by President Santos over disagreement with transitional justice agreement. FARC 6 Oct began publishing its “minimal proposals” for “end of the conflict” agenda point. Santos 29 Oct announced he will “immediately” ask UN for mandate to deploy mission-supported verification of bilateral ceasefire to enter into force possibly as soon as Dec. High level business representatives 19 October met Santos to express both support and concerns over peace process. Eastern Warfront of the National Liberation Army (ELN) 27 Oct acknowledged responsibility for 26 Oct attack in Güicán (Boyacá) that killed at least twelve members of security forces; announced intention to liberate two captured soldiers “in the next days”. Santos ordered intensified military offensive against ELN, casting doubt over hopes formal peace talks would be announced soon. Attorney general 6 Oct called on Supreme Court to initiate proceedings against former President Álvaro Uribe for alleged involvement in 1997 El Aro massacre. Special forces 1 Oct killed leader of dissident faction of Popular Liberation Army (EPL) “Megateo”. Attorney general 20 October confirmed identification of three women disappeared during the 1985 Palace of Justice siege. Local elections held 25 Oct; Santos noted elections day had been “most peaceful and less violent in decades”.

- Javier Ciurlizza and Christian Voelkel, [“Jurisdicción especial de paz: lo que se sabe, lo que no se sabe - y la lección de los países cercanos”](#), *Razón Pública*, 5 Oct. 2015.
- [“Colombians hope to discover fate of those missing in conflict”](#), AFP, 19 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Guatemala** Second round of presidential elections held 25 Oct: comedian Jimmy Morales of National Convergence Front (FCN) won with 67.44% of vote, defeating former First Lady Sandra Torres of National Unity of Hope (UNE). Second round held in eleven of 338 municipalities following violence or destruction during Sept first round. Worst case of election-related violence reported 11 Oct when mob lynched re-elected mayor of Concepción, Sololá, accused of ordering attack on defeated candidate that left two children dead. Former President Otto Pérez Molina, imprisoned on fraud charges following Sept resignation, 15 Oct said his rights had been violated and accused International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) of political persecution; asked Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) to send mission to investigate what he called violation of national sovereignty. 50 businessmen linked to “La Línea” corruption scandal barred from leaving country 15 Oct. Appeals court 8 Oct ruled former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt could not avoid charges of genocide and other international crimes under 1986 amnesty decree; retrial scheduled for Jan 2016.

- Arturo Matute, "[La CICIG como oportunidad en Guatemala](#)", *Semana*, 7 Oct. 2015.
- Arturo Matute, "[Guatemala's Electoral Dramas](#)", In Pursuit of Peace, 5 Oct. 2015.
- "[No joke: Guatemalan comedian wins presidency in landslide](#)", Reuters, 26 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Haiti** First round of presidential and second round of parliamentary elections held 25 Oct; some 15,000 police and MINUSTAH troops deployed for security. Opposition leaders René Civil and André Michel 22 Oct called for election boycott and annulment of 9 Aug parliamentary elections. Despite some reported incidents of violence and observers' mounting concerns over instability prior to vote, election officials noted polls relatively peaceful, appealed for patience as votes are counted; final results expected mid-Nov. Head of OAS observer mission Celso Amorim expressed optimism concerning relatively high voter turnout of 30% and peaceful conditions. Coalition of civil society organisations 27 Oct reported systematic fraud and irregularities at polling stations. UN forces reported some 224 people arrested on charges of violence and suspicion of voter fraud, including one candidate of lower Chamber of Deputies and two Haitian National Police officers; no election-related fatalities reported. Fewer reports of voter centres vandalised and security issues than in 9 Aug parliamentary polls.

- "[Patience, calm urged as votes counted in Haiti](#)", *Miami Herald*, 25 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Mexico** Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) 2 Oct called for appointment of special prosecutor to take over missing students case; said case reflected "pattern of human rights violations". UN rights chief Zeid 7 Oct highlighted widespread impunity in country, urged govt to take urgent action to investigate rights violations. Govt 20 Oct reached agreement with IACHR experts to extend their mandate and expand cooperation: case to be transferred to new team of prosecutors in human rights office who will cooperate with experts on planning investigation and opening new lines of inquiry. Govt also promised to coordinate with experts on new forensic study of dump where students' bodies were allegedly incinerated. Escaped prisoner Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán reportedly narrowly escaped marines during 6-9 Oct manhunt on border between Durango and Sinaloa states; hundreds of residents reportedly fled military operations; authorities deny human rights violations. Prosecutors charged nine people for aiding Guzmán's July escape from prison, including pilot who allegedly flew him to his home state Sinaloa, and defence lawyer accused of planning scheme.

- "[Mexico reopens investigation into 43 missing students](#)", BBC, 21 Oct. 2015.

New Crisis Group Latin America Report N°55, *Disappeared: Justice Denied in Mexico's Guerrero State*, 23 Oct. 2015. Violence is up but impunity remains the norm in Guerrero, where the lines between organised crime and legitimate authority are often blurred. President Peña Nieto's government must turn a new leaf and embrace new investigative bodies and international expertise capable of regaining the trust that Guerrero's corrupted institutions have lost.

➔ **Venezuela** Govt 5 Oct announced decision to bring forward appointment of thirteen Supreme Court justices whose terms do not expire until late 2016: observers cite attempt to avoid their appointment by opposition-dominated National Assembly, in apparent sign govt fears losing its parliamentary majority in 6 Dec legislative elections. President Maduro 6 Oct warned "revolution [would] change its nature" if govt loses elections. Opposition leaders refused to sign election pact proposed by ruling United

Socialist Party (PSUV) 15 Oct under which all parties agree to abide by legislative election results; pact endorsed by National Electoral Council (CNE) and signed by ruling parties and allies. Opposition Democratic Unity (MUD) alliance proposed its own text, emphasising need for international election observation and ban on use of state resources for campaigns. Secretary General of Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) 5 Oct announced 50-member delegation would “accompany” election process; Brazil’s electoral authority 20 Oct withdrew from observation mission, citing failure of negotiations with CNE over terms to allow “objective, impartial and broad” observation of elections. Tense pre-election climate compounded by 15 Oct return and immediate arrest for alleged corruption of former opposition presidential candidate Manuel Rosales after six years in exile; Rosales called on supporters to protest arrest by voting in 6 Dec elections. Editor of independent daily *El Nacional* 13 Oct said he would remain outside country after he was ordered to be taken to court by force in connection with libel case brought by National Assembly President Diosdado Cabello in April.

- Phil Gunson, [“Venezuela Elections 2015 – No Room for Credible Observation”](#), *In Pursuit of Peace*, 13 Oct. 2015.
- [“Brazil quits Venezuela election monitor mission”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 21 Oct. 2015.

Middle East & North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

↓ **Israel-Palestine** Escalating tensions at Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade saw surge in violence, triggered by revived Israeli limitations on Muslim entry to al-Aqsa Mosque early Sept and Palestinian stone-throwing at Israel security forces to prevent entry of religious Jews. Over 60 Palestinians killed during month in attacks and during anti-Israel protests in Jerusalem, West Bank, Gaza and elsewhere; over ten Israelis killed in series of random stabbing and shooting attacks against civilians and security forces. Govt 14 Oct introduced unprecedented security measures in attempt to curb violence, including checkpoints across city, police stationed on roof of al-Aqsa Mosque, limitations on entry to Old City for Palestinians. In West Bank, demonstrations against violence continued; Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces allowed protests near Israel checkpoints, seen by Israel as weakening of security coordination. Palestinians 16 Oct set fire to parts of Joseph's Tomb complex in Nablus. Hamas allowed popular protests in Gaza near fence. Military 24 Sept changed its open-fire regulations, security forces continued to shoot and injure Palestinians: at least six shot dead 9 Oct; at least 92 Palestinians injured 23 Oct during clashes in W Bank and Gaza. Leader of Hamas in Gaza Ismail Haniyeh 9 Oct described violence as beginning of new intifada. PM Netanyahu 15 Oct said Israel was using legitimate force. International diplomatic efforts focused on restoring calm: Israeli govt and Palestinian religious leaders rejected 18 Oct French UNSC draft resolution on stationing international observers at the Holy Esplanade. U.S. Sec State Kerry 19 Oct said Israeli and Palestinian leaders need to "upgrade and clarify" Nov 2014 understandings regarding governing arrangements for Temple Mount; Jordanian King Abdullah II 22 Oct cautioned Israel govt against "any attempt to change the status quo". Kerry separately met with Netanyahu 22 Oct and PA President Mahmoud Abbas 24 Oct in bid to quell violence.

- Ofer Zalberg, "[Jerusalem's crumbling status quo](#)", *Today's Zaman*, 26 Oct. 2015.
- Nathan Thrall, "[The End of the Abbas Era](#)", *London Review of Books*, 20 Oct. 2015.
- Nathan Thrall, "[Mismanaging the Conflict in Jerusalem](#)", *New York Times*, 18 Oct. 2015.
- Ofer Zalberg, "[The Crumbling Status Quo at Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade](#)", *In Pursuit of Peace*, 7 Oct. 2015.
- "[Palestine clashes: Netanyahu and Abbas are losing their grip](#)", *Guardian*, 10 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Lebanon** Anti-govt protests in Beirut over ongoing trash collection crisis continued; dozens injured as security forces fired tear gas and water cannons during protests in Beirut 8 Oct; at least 50 protestors detained for vandalism and assaulting policemen, several appeared before military court. Govt plan to address worsening waste crisis facing ongoing obstacles including objections of residents living close to proposed landfill sites. Further "National Dialogue" session aimed at finding solutions to political stalemate began 6 Oct. Thousands of supporters of General Michel Aoun, leader of Christian Free Patriotic Movement and candidate for presidency, rallied outside presidential palace 11 Oct. Parliament 21 Oct again failed to elect new president due to lack of quorum. As spillover from Syria conflict continued, five soldiers reportedly wound-

ed in militant strike in eastern border village Ras Baalbek 7 Oct; several militants reportedly killed, many wounded in military strike in NE town Aarsal 11 Oct. Security forces 12 Oct reportedly arrested senior al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) militant in Aarsal; 22 Oct announced arrest of top IS leader and several suspected militants in Ain al-Hilweh, Lebanon's largest Palestinian refugee camp.

- [“Meet the Lebanese fighting next door in Assad’s army”](#), Al Jazeera, 10 Oct. 2015.

➡ **Syria** Multinational pro-Assad regime camp continued major, multifront offensive initiated by Russian airstrikes 30 Sept; 7 Oct major escalation in ground operations backed by Russian strikes began including forces from Syrian army, Hizbullah, pro-regime Syrian militias, militias composed of Shiite foreign fighters, and Iran's Revolutionary Guard. Majority of Russian airstrikes and ground operations targeting rebel groups opposed to Islamic State (IS), despite Moscow's public messaging that intervention focuses on combatting IS. Opening days of offensive focused on areas held by anti-IS rebels in Hama, Idlib, Aleppo and Homs provinces, but also included Russian airstrikes outside Damascus and advances by regime forces in southern Quneitra province. Rebel commanders 12 Oct noted arrival of additional U.S.-made TOW anti-tank missiles provided to help C.I.A.-vetted insurgent groups battle regime forces. U.S. 9 Oct announced it has abandoned separate \$500mn program run by defence department to train and equip Syrian rebels; White House 30 Oct announced deployment of “fewer than 50” special forces personnel to Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG)-controlled areas to assist fight against IS. Amnesty International 13 Oct reported that U.S.-backed Kurdish forces had forcefully displaced thousands of civilians, mostly Arabs, and demolished villages in N Syria since Feb 2015. During first official foreign visit since 2011, Assad met with President Putin in Moscow 21 Oct. 30 Oct FMs from U.S., Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, China and other Western and regional states met in Vienna to discuss Syria; released joint statement avoiding central question of Assad presidency, agreed to meet again mid-Nov.

- [“Violence in Syria spurs a huge surge in civilian flight”](#), *New York Times*, 26 Oct. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°163, [New Approach in Southern Syria](#), 3 Sept. 2015.

Gulf

➡ **Bahrain** Appeals court 21 Oct upheld conviction of opposition activist Zainab al-Khawaja for insulting king. Public prosecutor's office 21 Oct announced 24 to face trial for attempting to establish Islamic State branch and promoting overthrow of monarchy. FM Sheikh Khalid mid-Oct said Iran on “path of conquest and power projection” against neighbouring states, sponsoring terrorism.

- [“Bahrain accuses Iran of ‘state-sponsored terrorism’”](#), *Telegraph*, 13 Oct. 2015.

⬆ **Iran** July nuclear deal formally adopted by all sides 18 Oct. Iranian authorities 13 Oct completed review of deal following passage of bill requiring Iranian govt to withdraw from deal if P5+1/EU3+3 fail to fulfil commitments under accord. Bill also included provisions requiring Iran to prioritise use of released assets to strengthen private sector and national development fund. U.S. President Obama 18 Oct issued two memoranda to administration instructing them to lay legal groundwork for lifting U.S.

nuclear-related sanctions; EU published Council Regulation for lifting sanctions that will come into force once IAEA verifies Iran has completed key nuclear commitments under accord. President Rouhani estimated Iran could complete these steps within two months; U.S. officials gave six-to-nine month estimate. Joint Commission created under deal held first session 19 Oct. IAEA 15 Oct announced investigation into past possible military dimension of nuclear program, will submit final report by 15 Dec. Iran 11 Oct tested new medium-range ballistic missile. Iran's military presence deepened in Syria, four high-ranking Revolutionary Guard commanders killed including General Harmedani 9 Oct.

- [“Iran deal ‘adoption day’: US approves conditional sanctions waivers”](#), *Guardian*, 18 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Iraq** Baghdad govt late Oct said it would authorise Russian airstrikes against Islamic state (IS) in Iraq weeks after first Russian strikes in Syria. Iraqi security forces backed by U.S.-led coalition continued fight against IS, early Oct retook several areas north and west of Ramadi, Anbar province. At least 26 killed late Oct in rocket attack on Camp Liberty housing exiled Iranian opposition. IS attacks continued including at least 50 killed, 100 injured 5 Oct by series of car bombs in Baghdad. UN reported over 700, including 559 civilians, killed in Oct. Parliamentary Shiite factions 29 Oct threatened to withdraw support from PM Abadi's govt if it fails to deliver genuine reform. Serious political turmoil in Iraqi Kurdistan over presidency, occupied for over a decade by Massoud Barzani, undermining U.S. anti-IS strategy of arming Kurds to fight jihadi group. Kurdish Regional Govt (KRG) PM Nechirvan Barzani 13 Oct sacked Gorran cabinet members, including peshmerga, finance and religious affairs ministers, and announced reshuffle. Demonstrators early Oct began protests in cities of Suleimaniya governorate against Kurdish govt's failure to pay employees including teachers, civil servants and peshmerga fighters; nine protesters injured 10 Oct in clashes with police; protests increasingly partisan.

- Maria Fantappie and Cale Salih, [“Kurds Need More Than Arms”](#), *New York Times*, 22 Oct. 2015.
- [“Iraq's ruling alliance, militias urge PM to seek Russian strikes”](#), Reuters, 21 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Yemen** Large-scale deadly violence continued throughout month: military stalemate between Huthi/Saleh bloc and govt/Saudi-led coalition ongoing, with both sustaining heavy losses. Saudi-led coalition early Oct made gains in coastal areas around Bab al-Mandeb. Huthis increased cross-border missile attacks: fighters 15 Oct launched Scud missile at Saudi air base in Kharnis Mushait provoking barrage of Saudi airstrikes on Sanaa. Some diplomatic progress: President Hadi 18 Oct accepted invitation from UNSG Ban to resume peace talks. Security continued to deteriorate in south: Islamic State (IS) branch 6 Oct claimed responsibility for series of deadly car bombs targeting govt facilities in Aden that killed at least eleven Yemenis and four UAE soldiers. Criminality and political tensions also on rise: southern resistance fighters appropriated private houses and stormed govt facilities in Aden. Thousands rallied 14 Oct, anniversary of start of 1960s war against British occupation, calling for independence. Médecins Sans Frontières 26 Oct claimed field hospital in Saada destroyed by coalition airstrikes.

- [“Saudi-led coalition drops weapons for allies in Yemeni city”](#), Reuters, 28 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Saudi Arabia** At least one killed 26 Oct in suicide bombing targeting worshipers leaving mosque in Najran, in SW. U.S. Sec State Kerry late Oct visited Riyadh, agreed to increase support for Syrian moderate opposition. Supreme Court 25 Oct rejected appeal to commute death sentence against Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. Saudi-led coalition continued military operations in Yemen (see Yemen).

- [“Ministry: one killed after Saudi mosque blast”](#), Al Arabiya, 26 Oct. 2015.

North Africa

➔ **Algeria** President Bouteflika’s supporters continued talk of transition to civilian state following Sept dismissal of intelligence chief General Mohamed “Toufik” Mediène. Presidency 8 Oct released communiqué saying these recent measures are part of security and political reforms that will be “crowned” by project to revise constitution. National Liberation Front (FNL) party chief Amar Saadani announced new “presidential alliance”, invited unions, political parties, media and NGOs to take part; constitutional reform, economic liberalisation and transition to civilian state on alliance’s agenda. Head of National Rally for Democracy party Ahmed Ouyahia rejected call. Police 12 Oct raided and shuttered private Islamist-leaning television Channel El Watan after it aired interview with former chief of armed wing of National Salvation Front (Front islamique du salut, FIS) Madani Mezrag in which Mezrag threatened Bouteflika; no charges brought against Mezrag. Security operations against Islamist militants continued: officials 20 Oct said at least three killed in counter-terrorism operation in north.

- [“Algeria closes private TV channel over Islamist’s comments”](#), Reuters, 12 Oct. 2015.

New Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Report N°164, [Algeria and Its Neighbours](#), 12 Oct. 2015. Algeria has emerged as an indispensable broker of stability in North Africa and the Sahel. But, especially as it enters a generational transition in domestic politics, it needs better strategies to deal with financial pressures, a neighbourhood in turmoil, cross-border jihadi threats, and ongoing tensions with France and Morocco. It should also resolve a presidential succession that is paralysing institutions.

➔ **Egypt** First round of long-delayed parliamentary elections held 18-19 Oct, second round scheduled for 22-23 Nov. Low voter turnout of 26.56% reported. President Sisi’s “For the Love of Egypt” electoral list took all 60 seats allocated to party list system; “Call of Egypt” list 24 Oct withdrew from elections, said will challenge first round results at Supreme Administrative Court. Run-offs for individual seats held 27-28 Oct, pro-Sisi parties did well while sole Islamist party al-Nour fared poorly. Security operations and militant attacks continued in Sinai province: security forces 25 Oct said at least 25 militants killed in joint “Martyr’s right” military-police operation in N Sinai; gunmen 25 Oct killed Al-Nour parliamentary candidate in Al-Arish, N Sinai; at least two killed, six conscripts injured 14 Oct in bombing in Al-Arish; three fighters from pro-govt militia reportedly kidnapped, two wounded 15 Oct in attack on checkpoint near Sheikh Zuweid town by Islamic State (IS) affiliate “Sinai Province”. Interior Ministry 23 Oct announced arrest of Hassan Malik, senior Muslim Brotherhood leader and businessman, for “exacerbating the instability of the dollar exchange rate”. Court 12

Oct ordered release of former President Mubarak's sons, arrested after 2011 uprising and sentenced to three years' prison for embezzlement.

- [“Egypt loyalists take the lead in parliament elections”](#), Reuters, 21 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Libya** UN SRSR León 8 Oct announced proposal for Government of National Accord (GNA). Western govts declared support for proposed line-up, urged lawmakers from Libya's two rival parliaments – internationally recognised House of Representatives (HoR) in Tobruk and rival General National Congress (GNC) in Tripoli – to endorse agreement. HoR, which early Oct voted to extend mandate beyond 20 Oct expiration, rejected agreement; GNC unlikely to endorse. León's last-minute amendments to draft agreement and decision to announce suggested line-up of GNA's cabinet and two other institutions triggered negative reactions within Libya, even among previously supportive factions. León 21 Oct said talks to continue. At least twelve killed, nine wounded after shells hit rally in Benghazi protesting proposed agreement; perpetrators still unclear as residents remain divided between those who accuse army and others who blame Islamist factions. Attacks by Islamic State (IS) affiliates and military operations against them continued including strikes on areas of Sirte controlled by IS militants, attack by IS on forces guarding Es Sider oil port 1 Oct. Helicopter transporting military commanders of Tripoli-aligned security forces gunned down 27 Oct in Maya, west of Tripoli, killing nineteen; east-based military coalition (Libyan National Army, LNA) took responsibility for attack (although others disputed claim), sparking renewed tensions between pro-Libya Dawn coalition and local forces allied to LNA.

- [“UN envoy says talks continue with warring factions”](#), Reuters, 21 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Tunisia** Pessimism prevailed despite award of Nobel Peace Prize to National Dialogue Quartet 9 Oct. Young street vendor died 9 Oct after self-immolating in front of Sfax governorate HQ; customs officer also died after self-immolating. Nida Tounes MP 8 Oct escaped assassination attempt; attack reportedly linked to party infighting over control of party apparatus and challenges to President Essebsi, amid rumours of growing “mafia” involvement in politics and imminent assassinations. An-Nahda leader Rached Ghannouchi also facing increasing dissent, criticisms over authoritarian governance of party and anti-Islamist policy of religious affairs ministry. State of emergency imposed after June Sousse attack lifted 2 Oct. Interior Ministry 27 Oct said seven members of jihadi cell arrested in NE. Small-scale Islamist militant attacks continued despite arrest of thousands in previous months: two soldiers killed 12 Oct in clashes near Algeria border after militants killed local shepherd, reportedly for spying. Dozens of Tunisians kidnapped 12 Oct by gunmen in NW Libya in response to arrest of Libyan official at Tunis airport, released 13 Oct.

- Issandr El Amrani, [“Tunisia's National Dialogue Quartet Set a Powerful Example”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 10 Oct. 2015.
- [“Tunisia's fragile security”](#), Al-Monitor, 20 Oct. 2015.