This document provides complex coverage of global events from 09 – 15 April 2013 with hyper-links to source material highlighted in blue and underlined in the text. For more information on the topics below or other issues pertaining to events in the region, contact the members of the Complex Coverage Team or visit our website at www.cimicweb.org.

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IED/Demining</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**CONTACT THE CFC**

For further information contact:

Complex Coverage Team Leader
Linda Lavender
linda.lavender@cimicweb.org

Nekia Lane
Asst. Desk Officer
nekia.lane@cimicweb.org

**Iraq**

Linda Lavender linda.lavender@cimicweb.org

Two more Sunni Muslim provincial candidates were assassinated in the run up to the 20 April provincial elections, reports Reuters. While no group claimed responsibility, moderate Sunnis campaigning in Islamist insurgent strongholds have recently become targets of political rivals. This most recent incident brings the number of provincial candidates killed to fourteen, according to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). UN Special Envoy Martin Kobler condemned the killing of Najm al Harbi, leader of the Iraqiya political coalition in Diyala province, reports UPI. Kobler urged all eligible Iraqis to vote on 20 April and challenged Iraqi police and security personnel to ensure an orderly and safe environment free of violence, threats and intimidation. RFE/RL reports that Iraqi police and military are casting their ballots in advance of the 20 April provincial elections. An estimated 650,000 police and military are eligible to vote in the first elections since Iraqis elected their parliament in 2010. Iraqi leadership is concerned that provincial elections will aggravate sectarian tensions in Iraq. As the elections draw near, RFE/RL reports that more than 8,000 candidates are running for nearly 450 seats in 12 of Iraq’s provinces.

On 12 April, mosques in Diyala province became targets of several bombings, according to RFE/RL. In Kanaan, two bombs killed two Sunni worshippers departing from Friday prayers. Seven others were wounded when another mosque in Diyala was bombed. In west Baghdad, a Shi’ite mosque was bombed, wounding an additional eight civilians. A series of 32 bomb blasts on 15 April killed 31 people and wounded more than 200, according to CNN. The bombings mainly occurred in Baghdad, Baquba, Hilla, Kirkuk.
and Tzu Kharmato, targeting predominately Shi’ite areas. Iraq’s main Shi’ite militias, Asaib al Haq and Kata’ib Hezbollah, along with former fighters from anti-US cleric Moqtada al Sadr’s Mehdi Army, are now openly acknowledging their participation in the Syrian conflict, according to Reuters. Abu Mujahid, a Shi’ite militant leader states, “[n]ow Shi’ites have the feeling the battle in Syria is more legitimate and it does not matter if it is to protect Shi’ite shrines [in Syria] or fight alongside Assad’s soldiers”. According to Reuters, the shift is partly motivated by the increasingly sectarian nature of Syria’s conflict as Sunni rebels and Islamist fighters in Syria continue to target Shi’ite holy sites.

According to Iraqi government estimates, 480,000 Iraqi refugees residing in Syria must decide between staying in Syria or returning to an unstable Iraq, reports The Washington Post. Between the summer of 2012 and the first months of 2013, an estimated 70,000 refugees opted to return to Iraq, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). During the same period, 41,000 Iraqis fled instability in Iraq seeking refuge in Syria. The UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) reports 229 civilian deaths in March and 852 persons injured in “acts of violence”, reports UPI. Also, 227 Iraqi security forces were killed and 300 injured. UNAMI cited that terrorist organisations such as al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) are largely responsible for the continued attacks in Baghdad and the governorates of Anbar, Kirkuk, Nineveh and Salahaddin. Finally, a 2012 survey by Action on Armed Violence, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), reports that Syria surpassed Iraq as the country with the most “explosive violence”, according to The Guardian. Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria were rated the world’s top five for the most explosive violence in 2012.

Jordanian leadership considers a proposed USD 18 million Iraq pipeline a key component in addressing their country’s crippling energy shortage, according to UPI. The pipeline, slated for completion in 2017, would originate in southern Iraq, pumping an estimated one million barrels of oil and 258 million cubic feet of gas per day to Jordan. In other news, on 10 April, UPI reports that Anglo-Turkish company Genel Energy confirmed a major oil discovery in the Kurdish region of Iraq. Chief Executive Officer Tony Hayward indicates that the company is moving quickly to develop and implement a 2014 production schedule.

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Mali

International aid group Médecins Sans Frontièrs (MSF) released a report on 11 April highlighting the unacceptable living conditions within Mauritania’s Mbera refugee camp, home to an estimated 74,000 Malians. The report, titled “Stranded in the Desert” details the substandard conditions within the camp, including poor hygiene, water shortages, lack of shelter, and heightened malnutrition, and describes the humanitarian response as inadequate to address the urgent deteriorating health of refugees. MSF reports that more than 270,000 people are internally displaced within Mali while over 170,000 civilians have fled from Mali to neighbouring Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger. Camp inhabitants, fearful of a re-emergence of ethnic and political tensions, are reluctant return to Mali.

In election news, Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA), the nation’s largest political party, announced the selection of Dr. Dembele as its presidential candidate for the upcoming July 2013 elections, reports Reuters. Dembele was selected by top party officials on 10 April. The 46-year-old mining engineer faces twelve other candidates at the polls, including ex-finance minister Soumaïla Cissé and former Prime Minister Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. ADEMA currently holds 54 seats in the nation’s 160-seat national assembly and is popular throughout Mali. Prime Minister Diango Sissoko confirmed that presidential and legislative elections will indeed take place in July, according to Al Jazeera. There are reported concerns that sustained conflict combined with lack of government election preparation could spawn further volatility particularly if the election is viewed as illegitimate.

On 15 April, Chad’s parliament voted to commence the withdrawal of troops from Mali, according to Deutche Welle (DW). The move comes after the deaths of at least three Chadian soldiers and four injured in a suicide bombing at a market in the northern city of Kidal on 12 April, reports The Washington Post. Claiming that Chadian troops are not suited for the nature of the Mali conflict, Chad’s President Idriss Deby stated, “Chad’s army has no ability to face the kind of guerrilla fighting that is emerging in northern Mali. Our soldiers are going to return to Chad. They have accomplished their mission”, reports al Jazeera. Deby added that Chad will provide troops to support the UN peacekeeping force set to replace the French-led military coalition. Some 2,000 Chadians have engaged in the Malian conflict supporting French troops in efforts to push Islamists from remote northern regions. The drawback of Chadian troops from Mali follows the initiation of a progressive French troop withdrawal. In response to the Kidal suicide attack, the UN issued a press release reaffirming its support for the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), remarking that such terrorist acts will not weaken UN determination for peace.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union (EU) reached an agreement regarding funding of EUR 76 million in support of AFISMA and projects contributing to freedom of movement in the region. In a press release issued on the ECOWAS website, the organisation announced the allocation of EUR 50 million to fund AFISMA forces. The remaining EUR 26 million will be spent on projects promoting intra-regional dialogue on migration and freedom of movement within

16 April 2013
member states. The signing of the agreement took place on 9 April, fulfilling an EU pledge made on 29 January at the Addis Ababa donors’ conference. In addressing the importance of freedom of movement in the region, President of the ECOWAS Commission Kadre Desire Ouedraogo stated “For us to realize the dream of economic growth, regional development and integration, community citizens’ rights of entry, residence and establishment must be fully guaranteed and migration and labour mobility must be effectively coordinated and managed”. The head of the EU delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS Ambassador David MacRae expressed that the agreement is an indication of the EU’s commitment to fight insurgency and support development in West Africa. McRae added that the EUR 26 million will be applied to the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and the Common Approach on Migration.

Syria

In an emotional op-ed appeal published in *The New York Times*, UN agency heads Valerie Amos (UNOCHA), Ertharin Cousin (WFP), Antonio Guterres (UNHCR), Anthony Lake (UNICEF) and Margaret Chan (WHO) implored the international community to “use their collective influence to insist on a political solution to this horrendous crisis before hundreds of thousands more people lose their homes and lives and futures—in a region already at the tipping point”. Agency heads reveal that the UN is “precariously close”, perhaps within weeks, of suspending some humanitarian support. The Human Rights Watch (HRW) report, “Death from the Skies: Deliberate and Indiscriminate Airstrikes on Civilians”, released 10 April, documents that the deaths of at least 152 citizens were a result of government airstrikes, reports *UPI*. The airstrikes were carried out in rebel-held territories in Aleppo, Idlib and Latakia provinces. HRW also finds that Syrian forces dropped “unguided bombs” from high-flying helicopters and documented the use of incendiary weapons as well as more than 150 cluster bombs. In other humanitarian events, *AFP* reports that Jordan opened a second Syrian refugee camp on 10 April located some eighty kilometres northeast of Amman. The new Mrigeb al Fuhud camp, funded by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), will mainly host widows, orphans and families without single males. Plans are already underway to expand capacity to shelter 30,000 people.

Further claims of limited chemical weapons use on civilian populations came on 13 April when a woman and two children were killed in an alleged poison gas attack in Aleppo, reports *Asia Times*. The same day, the *Times of London* claimed that soil samples smuggled out of the country confirm claims of chemical weapon use on at least one occasion, according to *Voice of America* (VOA). Tests on soil samples revealed traces of chemicals from a weapon rather than riot-control gas sometimes deployed by Syrian security forces at protests. *Reuters* reports that the team of UN-led chemical weapons experts remain in Cyprus, awaiting permission to investigate allegations of chemical weapons attacks in Syria, but diplomatic wrangling over the UN team’s authority and security prevents deployment to the conflict-ridden country. While the Assad government asked the team to investigate alleged poison attacks by rebels in Aleppo on 19 March, Damascus rejected opposition requests for chemical weapons experts to investigate other locations where rebels claim government forces used chemical munitions.

Syrian government forces launched a counteroffensive in southern Syria on 11 April, successfully recapturing the village of Sanamein while killing 45 people, including women and children, reports *Time*. Activists in the region report the government’s operation resulted in “the ugliest massacre since the one in Houla”. The following day, accusations of another massacre, allegedly documented by video, occurred in the village of Khirbat Altin in Homs province, reports *The Guardian*. Activists in Syria report that a government airstrike in the town of Saraqeb in Idlib province killed twenty two people on 13 April, according to *RFERL*. The same day, Syrian government troops attempting to resupply a besieged military base, ambushed a rebel checkpoint, killing at least twelve opposition fighters, according to *Associated Press* (AP). In recent months, rebel forces held up government troops in the Wadi al Deif and Hamidiya military bases in Idlib province, but on 14 April, Assad forces successfully breached a six-month rebel blockade in northern Syria, reports *Reuters*. The renewed operation against the rebels’ blockade proved successful. The rebel front has been severely compromised in recent weeks by infighting and the redeployment of forces to other battles in Syria. According to *Australia Associated Press* (AAP), at least twelve children were killed in airstrikes by Assad warplanes in the Kurdish village of Haddad and a Kurdish section of Damascusa on 14 April.

On 10 April, the Syrian jihadist group Jabhat al Nusra (al Nusra) pledged allegiance to al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahri, “injecting a new urgency” for the international community to push to end the conflict in Syria, reports *Reuters*. Al Nusra’s decision was confirmed by al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, according to the *Christian Science Monitor* (CSM). The move, however, has been harshly criticised by some of Syria’s Islamist rebel brigades, reports *AFP*. The Syrian Islamic Liberation Front, an umbrella group of rebel brigades said, “[w]hen we in Syria launched our jihad [holy war] against the sectarian regime…we did not do so for the sake of any allegiance to a man here or another there”, adding, “[p]ledging allegiance to someone who does not understand our reality does not serve our people or nation”.

Western powers have expressed concern over the advance of groups like al Nusra in a conflict that has deepened sectarian divisions in the region, according to *Reuters*. In the scheduled Friends of Syria meeting to be held in Istanbul on 20 April, participants will explore
how to pressure Assad, who is backed by Iran and Russia, into accepting a negotiated settlement. According to one diplomat, “[t]he international powers are inclined to call Assad’s bluff and see if he is ready to accept a peaceful solution”. On 12 April, US officials suggested that Syria could face a protracted civil war even if rebels succeed in toppling the Assad government, reports NYT. US top intelligence official James R. Clapper said “even if Mr. Assad’s government fell, sectarian fighting would most likely engulf the country for a year or more”. US Ambassador to Syria Robert S. Ford states “there is a real competition under way now between extremists and moderates in Syria”, suggesting, “[w]e need to weigh in on behalf of those who promote freedom and tolerance”. Meanwhile The Telegraph reports, that during the London G8 meeting of foreign ministers, UK Foreign Minister William Hague declared the outside world “must mount a much stronger intervention to curtail the crisis” adding, “[the Syrian crisis] is turning into the greatest humanitarian catastrophe of the 21st Century so far and we cannot watch this happen”.

Syrian rockets hit the Lebanese border village of Hermel, on 14 April, killing two and injuring several others, reports The Daily Star. Rockets also hit in the nearby village of Hawsh al Sayyed, killing one citizen. The Lebanese army confirmed the attacks and indicated a heavy deployment in the region. According to reports, the Lebanese army is focusing on security of residents and positioning themselves to “adequately respond to the source of fire.” In recent weeks, various villages in the North and Bekaa Valley of Lebanon have been the target of shelling from the Syrian side of the border and by Syrian attack helicopters. President Michel Sleiman condemned the most recent shelling incident and called for the end to the bombardments. The Lebanese government intends to send a complaint letter to the Arab League over numerous cross border attacks. The Lebanese government is also urging the UN to convene a meeting to address the growing refugee crisis in the country, according to The Daily Star. In March, Damascus warned of attack against Beirut against rebel sites in Lebanon if “incursions from across the border did not cease”. UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Derek Plumbly, after talks with Hezbollah’s International Relations Department, said, “I would like to take this opportunity to stress our deep concern at the incidents over the weekend in which Lebanese citizens were killed as a result of fire from Syria”. In other cross-border incidents, on 12 April, the Israeli military returned fire from Syria, directed towards the Golan Heights, reports Reuters. The Israeli military reported the incident to the international UN peacekeepers tasked to monitor the 1967 ceasefire line.

Hezbollah-backed fighters from Lebanon patrol both sides of the Lebanese-Syrian border with the intent to protect Shi’ites on the Syrian side from alleged attacks by Sunni rebels, according to AP. The patrols are another indication that the powerful Lebanese militant group is playing a growing role in the Syrian civil war. Loay al Mikadad, spokesman for the rebel Free Syrian Army (FSA), indicated that over the past two months, Hezbollah has expanded operations in Syria, mostly in central Homs province and Damascus.

IED & Demining

The CFC publishes a weekly IED and Demining Events map. This global compilation identifies and links to articles pertaining to IED events and demining efforts. This report covers 09 to 15 April 2013.

GLOBAL NEWS

Lebanon: A bomb exploded at the Palestinian refugee camp Ain el-Hilweh located near the southern coastal city of Sidon, according to The Daily Star.

Somalia: On 14 April, nine al Shabaab militants bombed and stormed Somalia’s main court complex in Mogadishu, reports The Washington Post.

United States: Two bombs exploded near the finish line of the Boston Marathon killing three people and wounding over 28 others, reports CNN.

For more IED & Demining news click here or click on the map above.