Additional election results released on 04 May show Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki’s coalition prevailed in 20 April provincial elections but failed to win a majority in any district, according to Reuters. Election results indicate that Maliki’s State of Law coalition will need to secure additional alliances in order to hold on to senior provincial posts. Ahmed Ali, an Iraqi analyst at the Institute for the Study of War commented, “Coalition building remains a main characteristic of forming governments in Iraq”. Election results also demonstrate a diminishing influence of the Sunni-dominated Iraqiya coalition, which received no more than three seats in any single province.

A preliminary report of the Iraqi parliamentary committee tasked to investigate the 23 April violence in Hawija determined that the crackdown by Iraqi security forces at the Hawija camps resulted in the deaths of at least 44 civilians, according to Al Jazeera. Human Rights Watch indicated that initial findings are largely based on interviews with government officials as well as photographs taken at the scene during the incident. In other security news, United Press International (UPI) reports that the resurgence of another militant Sunni group called The Men of the Army of the Naqshbandi Order (JRTN) led by Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, one of Saddam Hussein’s vice presidents, largely comprised of members from Hussein’s former Ba’athist regime.

April was the bloodiest month for Iraq in five years, according to the Council on Foreign Relations. The United Nations mission in Iraq recorded 712 people killed, reports Time. On 30 April, CNN...
reports that a bomb blast at a coffee shop in Muqdadiyah, north of Baghdad, killed one person and wounded nine others while roadside bombs killed three in Baghdad. Also, gunmen killed an anti-government protester in Haditha, and an employee of the Ministry of Industry was gunned down in Baghdad. Reuters reports that on 01 May, gunmen overtook a Baghdad police station after killing five Iraqi officers and in Anbar province, a suicide bomber killed six Sawha fighters. In Baiji, a roadside bomb killed four police officers, and another car bomb in Ramadi killed two Iraqi officers and wounded at least ten civilians. In northern Iraq on 03 May, clashes between police and armed men in west Mosul killed nine officers and four insurgents while in Rashidiyah, a car bomb exploded at a Sunni-Mosque killing five and wounding 30 others according to The Daily Star. On 06 May, bomb attacks in predominantly Shi’ite neighbourhoods of Baghdad killed at least ten people, according to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL).

BBC reports that non-profit group War Child, says the current situation for children in Iraq is “one of the world’s most neglected crises”, reporting that nearly 700 children and young people have been killed in the country since January 2013. Children as young as 14 are used as suicide bombers and over 25 per cent of children are suspected of suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The report warns that Iraq’s children are being abandoned as international donors assume that the Iraq mission has been accomplished.

Iraqi officials signed a second contract with Lockheed Martin worth USD 830 million for additional F-16IQ fighter jets on 03 May, reports UPI. Iraqi pilots are already receiving training to fly the aircraft from the US Air Force in Nevada. The first delivery of F-16’s from an earlier contract signed in December 2011 is set for 2013. The US continues to be Iraq’s main supplier of weapons. On 01 May, a USD 17 billion natural gas project supported by Royal Dutch Shell, Iraq’s state-owned South Gas Company and Mitsubishi Corporation became operational, according to Mining.com. Basra Gas Co. Managing Director Gasser Hanter states, “The birth of this joint venture is a clear testament to the determination of the Iraqi government to develop the country’s energy sector and a true reflection to the significant improvement of the security situation that is stimulating investments in Basra”, reports UPI.

Mali

Sporadic fighting continues in the North. BBC reports that two Malian soldiers were killed on 04 May by a suicide bomber while on patrol in Hamakouladi, a village forty kilometres north of Gao. Meanwhile, French Islamist, Gilles Le Guen, was captured on 01 May. Le Guen allegedly joined the ranks of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) before moving to Timbuktu shortly before it fell to militants. Jihadists accused Le Guen of spying for the French government, while others believed Le Guen and his Moroccan wife have long supported Islamic fundamentalism. French defence minister Jean-Yves Le Drian asserts Le Guen was fighting alongside rebels.

Greece, Germany and the United Kingdom began security assistance and training programmes for Malian soldiers. British and Irish troops will train 800 Malians, creating four new battalions, according to BBC. In total, Europeans will train 2,600 Malians. While Greek soldiers provide intelligence training, Germans have set up a field hospital and are teaching emergency paramedic skills, and the British are largely focusing on infantry exercises. Stars and Stripes noted the United States maintains just ten troops in the country, primarily to liaise with the African-led International Support Mission for Mali (AFISMA), which will continue its mandate until a UN stabilisation mission begins work in July. Currently, the US does not plan to deploy any combat troops, although it has increased its regional presence by contributing 100 troops to Niger as it constructs a new drone base.

A Tuareg group in northern Mali announced it would negotiate with the central government, reports the AP. The High Council for the Azawad said it does not seek an independent state, but would instead engage in dialogue with the government. However, many of its leaders are former National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) members, suggesting that it might have more autonomous goals.

The cost of staple food prices is expected to rise through August due to crop damage and limitations of trade flow in Nigeria, reports US Agency for International Development (USAID) FEWS NET service. Insecurity caused by the insurgent group Boko Haram in northern Nigeria has decreased production of maize and curbed the trade of surplus items throughout the West Africa region, heightening the humanitarian crisis. The report suggests that many countries will remain unaffected; however, in Mali the trade irregularities are expected to slow delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) released scathing information about the nature and extent of sexual violence that occurred after insurgents toppled northern Mali, reports IRIN. The UN registered 2,785 cases of sexual violence, but Eduardo Cue, the Malian spokesperson for UNHCR said the actual number is much higher. The MNLA purportedly carried out the

1 Sahwa or “awakening” fighters were pro-government Sunni forces that fought against al Qaeda in the region during the sectarian violence of 2005-2007. Today, Sahwa are often targeted by al Qaeda in revenge attacks.
most egregious crimes. The Movement for Oneness in Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) also perpetuates violence against women including forced marriages of young girls.

In other humanitarian news, the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) warns of a dangerous cholera season as more people collect water from the same contaminated sources; Mopti, Séoug and Bamako are at greatest risk. The UNICEF cluster in Bamako is working to provide non-food item (NFI) kits and other supplies to support public health measures and improve overall hygiene. UNICEF, in coordination with the World Food Programme (WFP) and several local NGOs, recently conducted the first food and nutrition survey in the country’s north since 2011. The survey will begin 30 April end of May. Meanwhile, France and the European Union, with close support from Mali, will co-chair a donor conference on 15 May in Brussels.

Syria

Syria’s leadership condemned “Israeli aggression” after Israeli launched airstrikes in Syria against three military sites on the outskirts of Damascus, reports Australian Associated Press (AAP). The Israeli raids reportedly targeted weapons bound for the militant Lebanese group Hezbollah. The 05 May attack comes after a reported Israeli raid on a weapons storage facility at the Damascus airport on 03 May. Christian Science Monitor (CSM) reports that the 03 May bombing of a warehouse allegedly held Iranian-made Fateh-110 short range missiles.

On 06 May, European Union Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton expressed great concern following the Israeli air strikes against Syrian targets and warned that the conflict could escalate further, reports Agence France-Presse (AFP). The Daily Star suggests that Russia also expressed concern over the growing possibility of foreign intervention in what it views as “a long-running internal conflict”. Damascus warned that it will respond to Israeli attacks but will “choose the moment” and may not do so immediately. Iran issued a statement hinting at the possibility of retaliation, according to AP. Additionally, as a result of the airstrikes, Iran called on the region to unite against Israel, according to Voice of America (VOA). The Syrian National Coalition opposition group condemned Israeli actions and asserted the “Jewish state had taken advantage of the on-going conflict”, reports AFP. US President Obama declined to comment on the airstrikes but reaffirmed his position that Israel, as a sovereign nation, has a right to defend itself against threats from Hezbollah. British Foreign Minister Secretary William Hague also voiced support for Israeli actions saying, “All countries have to look after their own national security”, reports Associated Press (AP).

In a televised speech on 30 April, Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah officially announced his organisation’s withdrawal from the Baabda Declaration2, reports The Daily Star. Instead, Nasrallah vowed to defend the Assad government and suggested that Syria’s allies Iran, Russia and “resistance groups” could intervene militarily to prevent the collapse of the Syrian government. On 04 May, Hezbollah official Ibrahim Amin Sayyed commented, “Hezbollah is ready to prevent Syria [from] falling under the control of Tel Aviv and Washington”, reports The Daily Star. Sayyed added, “This is a strategy not an intervention in the Syrian crisis. It is an intervention in the conflict against America and Israel”. Earlier, Hezbollah asserted its right to defend Lebanese living in Syrian border villages against rebel attacks.

On 02 May, clashes between Turkish border guards and Syrian refugees on the Turkish border with Syria left a Turkish officer dead and ten wounded, reports Al Jazeera. Violence broke out when refugees were prevented from crossing the border into Turkey. According to Al Jazeera, violence on the border is an increasing source of concern for Turkish leaders. Syrian troops advanced on the central city of Homs, pushing rebels out, in an effort to secure the country’s third largest city, reports AP. According to activists, on 03 May, Syrian troops and gunmen from nearby Alawite areas beat, stabbed and shot at least fifty residents from the Sunni-village of Bayda outside the coastal city of Banias, reports Time. In the Sunni neighbourhood of Banias, the bodies of at least 62 residents were discovered on 03 May after an assault by Syrian forces and Alawite members of the National Defence Force militia, reports AFP. It was the second reported massacre in Banias in a week and prompted Sunnis to flee the coastal city fearing additional attacks, reports VOA. On 05 May, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports that rebels captured parts of Mannagh air base, near the border with Turkey, capturing a tank unit deep within the compound, according to AP. On 06 May, Syrian rebels claimed responsibility for downtime a government helicopter in eastern Syria, according to The New York Times (NYT).

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says the pace of killing in the Syrian conflict accelerated in April, with a daily casualty rate of 196 people, reports McClatchy. Most significantly, the number of civilian deaths jumped in April, accounting for half of the 5,889 deaths.

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2 The declaration was developed in the aftermath of clashes in Tripoli, Akkar and Beirut, signed at Baabda Palace on 11 June 2012 that outlined Lebanese leadership’s commitment to remain neutral in the Syrian civil war.
According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Moscow is ready to talk with Salim Idriss of the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Idriss recently indicated the FSA was open to explore means to resolve the war in Syria, reports UPI. French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius commented “there is only one solution, it is to get back to a political solution and we French ask now to the secretary general of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to be involved himself”, according to NYT. Meanwhile, US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel confirmed on 02 May that the Obama administration was re-examining its opposition to arming the Syrian rebels while cautioning that discussing potential action did not mean the administration would change its position, reports CSM.

Carla Del Ponte, a leading UN investigator in the chemical weapons case, suggested that evidence showed “strong, concrete suspicions but not yet incontrovertible proof of the use of sarin gas in Syria, from the way the victims were treated”, reports NYT. Rebels dismissed the claims and defected Major General Adnan Sillo, former head of the government’s chemical warfare unit stated, “Ms. Del Ponte’s accusations came at a time when Syria had already crossed the red line laid down by President Obama”.

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 30 April to 06 May 2013.

GLOBAL NEWS

Dagestan: Russian police report at least two people were killed in an explosion near the shopping area of Makhachkala, reports The Guardian.

Somalia: A suicide attacker drove a vehicle laden with explosives into an armoured government vehicle transporting humanitarian aid workers on 05 May, reports BBC.

Tanzania: A new Catholic church was bombed on 05 May, reports Reuters.

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