CrisisWatch:  
• summarises briefly developments during the previous month in some 70 situations of current or potential conflict, listed alphabetically by region, providing references and links to more detailed information sources (all references mentioned are hyperlinked in the electronic version of this bulletin);  
• assesses whether the overall situation in each case has, during the previous month, significantly deteriorated, significantly improved, or on balance remained more or less unchanged;  
• alerts readers to situations where, in the coming month, there is a particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict, or a particular conflict resolution opportunity (noting that in some instances there may in fact be both); and  
• summarises Crisis Group’s reports and briefing papers that have been published in the last month.

CrisisWatch is compiled by Crisis Group’s Brussels Research Unit, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of our some 130 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 60 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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**Conflict Risk Alerts**
- Côte d’Ivoire
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- Yemen

Crisis Group is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 130 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict. Crisis Group’s approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, Crisis Group produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers, and backed up with high-level advocacy. Crisis Group is co-chaired by former European Commissioner for External Relations Lord (Christopher) Patten and former U.S. Ambassador and Vice Chairman of Hills & Company Thomas R. Pickering, and its President and Chief Executive is former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour.

1 April 2011, No92
For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°169, 15 March after re-election in Jan poll. Opposition continued to protest electoral boycott, calling for departure of President Bozizé inaugurated 7 Feb. 2011. Preparations for Nov legislative poll continued as newly appointed election commission members sworn in end Feb; new chairman Ngoy Mulunda 4 March announced commission preparing new electoral calendar to ensure fair process. Month also saw focus on mining sector: govt 10 March lifted mining ban in east, in place since Sept 2010, aimed at minimising role of mineral exploitation in conflict. Officials, mining stakeholders early March adopted new code of conduct; analysts, NGOs said code failed to address military, armed group involvement in mining sector. President Kabila 14 March led state security meeting in Kinshasa, reported peace deal with FDLR in pipeline. Insecurity continued in east as LRA 4 March attacked civilians near Dungu, 10 March clashed with FARDC near Bando, Ango Territory. Ugandan army 29 March said LRA leader Joseph Kony back in DRC. Following 27 Feb“attempted coup d’etat” in Kinshasa authorities 8 March listed 126 suspects, said 44 already before judiciary. “Burundi sends more troops for AU Somali force”, AFP, 14 March 2011.


Central African Republic

President Bozizé inaugurated 15 March after re-election in Jan poll. Opposition continued to protest electoral boycott, threats, voting took place 27 March in second round legislative poll; opposition claimed turnout low. Military sources said at least 6 killed, dozens injured, some 100 taken hostage during 13 March LRA attacks in mining town of Nzako. Rebel Convention de patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP) 21 March reportedly attacked 2 villages near Ndélé, north east; 7 killed, 150 houses burned.


Chad

Constitutional Council 22 March confirmed victory of President Déby’s Patriotic Movement of Salvation (MPS) in Feb parliamentary elections. State media 18 March announced 3-week postponement of presidential poll from 3 to 24 April by electoral commission to allow better organisation of vote. 3 opposition candidates 22 March announced plans to boycott poll claiming vote will not be credible; 3 opposition members 25 March withdrew from election commission, posing risk of delayed poll. Defence Minister General Bushara Issa and Sudanese counterpart Major-General Abdelrahim Hussein 17 March agreed to extend joint-border security operations for another 12 months. Déby 28 March claimed al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb suspected to be seizing surface-to-air missiles in Libya, smuggling arms to Chad-Niger border areas.

*“Al-Qaeda snatched surface-to-air missiles from Libyan arsenal”,* AFP, 25 March 2011.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Preparations for Nov elections continued as newly appointed election commission members sworn in end Feb; new chairman Ngoy Mulunda 4 March announced commission preparing new electoral calendar to ensure fair process. Month also saw focus on mining sector: govt 10 March lifted mining ban in east, in place since Sept 2010, aimed at minimising role of mineral exploitation in conflict. Officials, mining stakeholders early March adopted new code of conduct; analysts, NGOs said code failed to address military, armed group involvement in mining sector. President Kabila 14 March led state security meeting in Kinshasa, reported peace deal with FDLR in pipeline. Insecurity continued in east as LRA 4 March attacked civilians near Dungu, 10 March clashed with FARDC near Bando, Ango Territory. Ugandan army 29 March said LRA leader Joseph Kony back in DRC. Following 27 Feb“attempted coup d’etat” in Kinshasa authorities 8 March listed 126 suspects, said 44 already before judiciary. “Wanted rebel leader returns to eastern DRC”, Reuters, 29 March 2011.


Rwanda

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) 29 March sentenced former mayor Jean Baptist Gatete to life in prison for role in 1994 genocide, found Gatete responsible for deaths of perhaps thousands of Tutsi civilians. Belgian authorities 25 March arrested 2 suspected Interahamwe, “Camarade” and “Bomboke” accused of participating in genocide. Grenade detonated 1 March in Kigali injuring 12 people; police arrested 5 claiming FDLR and former security officers in exile in South Africa responsible. Security issues topped 8-9 March Great Lakes economic cooperation meeting in Kigali; participants adopted new declaration including formal joint DRC-Rwanda-Burundi military force.

*“Rwanda genocide: Ex-mayor Gatete sentenced to life”,* BBC, 29 March 2011.

HORN OF AFRICA

Djibouti

Authorities ordered opposition to postpone anti-govt protests set for 4 March after previous 18 Feb demonstration calling for departure of President Guelleh turned violent; opposition said govt intent on denying free and fair 8 April election. Authorities 2 March declared U.S. election observer group Democracy International “illegal”; other groups including AU, Arab League, EU invited to observe elections.


Ethiopia

At least 130 arrested following early month reports some 60 churches, at least 28 houses burned in western Oromiya; PM blamed Islamist extremists trying to fuel communal tensions. In series of mid-March interviews media reported govt actively advocating overthrow of govt in neighbouring Eritrea, accused Eritrea of supplying explosives to radical elements in attempt to destabilise Djibouti ahead of April election. Following Feb report of govt troops involved in fighting on Somali border against Islamic militant al-Shabaab, govt forces and Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama’a (ASWJ) militia early month, advanced towards other al-Shabaab strongholds in central and southern Somalia.

Kenya
International Criminal Court (ICC) 8 March issued summonses for 6 suspects accused of organising 2007-2008 post-election violence to appear 7 April; ICC 29 March confirmed they would not be arrested. President Kibaki 22 March addressed parliament, declared 2012 general elections would proceed as planned, pressed for electoral reform in line with new constitution; said ICC cases against deputy PM and finance minister Uhuru Kenyatta and Eldoret North MP William Ruto would not affect election process. Govt 18 March failed to win support from UNSC members for deferral of ICC prosecution. Unconfirmed reports emerged 24 March that Kenyan forces, with Somali proxy forces, crossed into Somali territory to fight al-Shabaab militants.

• "Kenya seeks AU help to defer ICC cases, again", Daily Nation, 28 March 2011.

Somalia
Heavy clashes between govt forces supported by AU peacekeepers (AMISOM) and militant Islamist al-Shabaab continued in Mogadishu. 4, 15 March al-Shabaab attacks against govt and AU bases triggered heavy shelling of militant-controlled areas; casualties on both sides including civilians. Reports 5 March indicated at least 50 AMISOM troops killed, some 150 injured during major offensive against militants in Mogadishu in Feb. Burundi deployed additional troops to AMISOM in line with pledges. Fighting intensified in towns bordering Ethiopia and Kenya, with unconfirmed reports 24 March that Kenyan troops crossed border, engaged in fighting. Political dispute between parliament speaker Sharif Hassan Aden and President Sharif Ahmed re-escalated; Parliament rebuffed calls from President Ahmed to reverse its Feb decision to extend Transitional Federal Government (TFG) mandate; meanwhile cabinet 27 March extended mandate of President Ahmed and cabinet ministers for further 12 months beyond Aug; said extension necessary to continue governing through current military offensive.

• "Somali government future clouded as mandate nears expiration", VoA, 30 March 2011.

Sudan (Northern)
Ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement met 1-6 March in Addis Ababa to discuss post-referendum arrangements; AU High Implementation Panel (AUHIP) said technical committee claiming decisions reached by majority votes rather than consensus, enabling SPLM to determine course of review. Early March clashes in Jonglei between Sudan People’s Liberation Army and forces loyal to renegade General Athor re-erupted 16 March forcing civilians to flee. At least 59 SPLA rebels reportedly killed 16 March during clashes army in Unity and Upper Nile. SPLA said North dropped bombs 21 March near SPLA base in Raja County, Western Bahr al-Ghazal, bordering Darfur.

• "South Sudan army-militia clashes kill 69: army", Reuters, 18 March 2011.

Uganda
Following 18 Feb presidential and parliamentary elections, opposition demonstrations broke out 9 March protesting poll outcome; security forces responded, no casualties reported. Human Rights Watch 23 March released report urging govt to investigate special police unit, alleging unit responsible for cases of torture, extortion, extrajudicial killings.

• "Uganda, Burundi pledge additional 4,000 troops in Somalia", VoA, 28 March 2011.

SOUTHERN AFRICA
Madagascar
Political uncertainty prevailed as only 8 out of 11 political movements 9 March initialled road map to end political crisis prepared by Southern African Development Community (SADC) mediator. 3 main political opposition groups, with exception of some individual members, refused to sign proposal. In line with road map PM Camille Vital and govt resigned 10 March; de facto leader Rajoelina 16 March reappointed Vital, 26 March named new govt; rejected by opposition. Meanwhile Rajoelina escaped 3 March road side bomb attack unhurt; opposition leader Mamy Rakotoarivelo accused of instigating attack, arrested 17 March.

• "Madagascar opposition groups reject new government", Reuters, 28 March 2011.

Zimbabwe
Month saw increasing rift within govt of national unity. MDC leader PM Tsvangirai denounced President Mugabe’s ZANU-PF attempts to remove MDC officials from office. Supreme Court 10 March rejected MDC Lovemore Moyo’s election as speaker of parliament; parliament 29 March decisively re-elected Moyo as speaker. Authorities 25 March re-arrested Energy Minister Elton Mangoma, initially arrested 10 March and charged with abuse of office over fuel purchase. Reacting, Tsvangirai 10 March declared ZANU-PF violence, arrests and total disregard for Global Political Agreement provisions had rendered govt impotent; stated road map prepared by President Zuma is only solution. Coalition of rights groups 23 March warned govt abuses were escalating and would intensify if elections held in 2011. Human Rights Watch 8 March accused security forces and ZANU-PF of beating, torturing, killing political opponents; criticised unity govt for failing to implement human rights reform. SADC troika 31 March called for end to political violence during meeting in Zambia.


Sudan (South)
As constitutional review process continued, 9 opposition parties 8 March announced they will pull out of technical committee claiming decisions reached by majority votes rather than consensus, enabling SPLM to determine course of review. Early March clashes in Jonglei between Sudan People’s Liberation Army and forces loyal to renegade General Athor re-erupted 16 March forcing civilians to flee. At least 59 SPLA rebels reportedly killed 16 March during clashes army in Unity and Upper Nile. SPLA said North dropped bombs 21 March near SPLA base in Raja County, Western Bahr al-Ghazal, bordering Darfur.

• "Darfur referendum aims to contain rebel demands", Sudan Times, 7 March 2011.
• For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°76, Negotiating Sudan’s North-South Future, 23 Nov. 2010.
WEST AFRICA

**Benin** ECOWAS expressed “deep concern” over escalating tensions following 13 March presidential election. Opposition candidate Adrien Houngbedji rejected preliminary results announced 18 March, claiming fraud; 21 March declared himself winner of poll. Police 24 March forcibly dispersed opposition protesters in economic capital Cotonou who were rejecting preliminary results. Constitutional Court 30 March declared incumbent Thomas Boni Yayi winner of election with 53% of vote, despite attempts by opposition groups to prevent announcement of results.


**Burkina Faso** Army unrest, dissatisfaction emerged 23 March as soldiers in capital Ouagadougou protested arrest of 5 colleagues; some 12 people injured during 3 hour gun-fire. In separate incident soldiers 28 March blockaded eastern town Fada N’Gourma with tanks, 29 March fired rocket at courthouse. Head of armed forces 30 March imposed nationwide curfew; President Compaore same day offered to meet army officers to discuss grievances.

- **“Burkina Faso soldiers blast court with rocket”, AFP, 29 March 2011.**

**Côte d’Ivoire** Month saw slide into civil war as fighting intensified in Abidjan between forces loyal to incumbent President Gbagbo and those allied to president-elect Alassane Ouattara; also reports of sexual violence, summary executions, individuals burnt alive and heavy fighting across country. Gbagbo spokesman 29 March called for immediate ceasefire after pro-Ouattara rebels made rapid gains same day in east and west; rebels 30 March seized official capital Yamoussoukro, major cocoa port San Pedro. Gbagbo army chief defected same day. Pro-Ouattara rebels 31 March reached Abidjan, attacked Gbagbo’s presidential residence, seized state-owned television station. Heavy fighting also spread to at least 5 Abidjan districts over month. Gbagbo forces 3 March gunned down 7 women protesters, 17 March shelled market area in Abobo district, killing 25 civilians. Unidentified armed men 17 March attacked ministry of defence, repelled by Gbagbo forces. Ouattara same day announced creation of Forces Republicaines de Côte d’Ivoire (FRCI) comprising former Forces Nouvelles rebels, army defectors and in televised address urged Gbagbo to agree to national unity govt, fusion of armed forces, and truth and reconciliation commission. UNHCR 25 March estimated up to 100,000 people displaced.

- **“A three-way contest”, Economist, 13 March 2011.**
- **For latest briefing, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°171, “Côte d’Ivoire: Is War the Only Option?”, 3 March 2011.**

**Guinea** Interior Minister Alhassane Condé 14 March proposed late-2011 date for legislative elections, despite constitutional requirement that vote must take place within 6 months of presidential poll, held Nov 2010; said delay necessary due to irregularities in electoral register. At least 3 army recruits killed 8 March in riot at Kissidougou military training camp, reportedly over poor living conditions.

- **“Guinea junta army recruits in Kissidougou riot”, BBC, 10 March 2011.**
- **For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°164, “Reforming the Army”, 23 Sept. 2010.**

**Niger** Election commission 14 March declared opposition leader Mahamadou Issoufou winner of peaceful 12 March run-off presidential election, with 58% of vote. Opponent Seini Oumarou 16 March accepted defeat, ruled out legal challenges, citing need to work towards national reconciliation. ECOWAS 24 March commended election, lifted economic sanctions in place since Oct 2009.

- **“Man of compromise takes power after military return Niger to civilian control”, Guardian, 22 March 2011.**

**Liberia** UNHCR 24 March warned mounting violence in Côte d’Ivoire threatened stability in Liberia as estimated 90,000 refugees have fled across border since end-Nov start of crisis. UN SRSG Ellen Løj 16 March warned security situation becoming “more complex”, 24 March announced increased UNMIL activity to prevent cross-border violence. Ahead of Oct 2011 presidential elections, electoral commission chairman James Fromoyan 23 March denied accusations of corruption; opposition earlier alleged Fromoyan favours incumbent President Sirleaf.

- **“Fears mount that Côte d’Ivoire conflict could spill into Liberia”, UN News, 24 March 2011.**

**Nigeria** Preparations for April general elections continued amid rise in politically-motivated communal and sectarian violence threatening peaceful and credible poll. At least 7 feared dead after 28 March clashes between rival supporters of ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Labour Party (LP) in Nembe, Bayelsa state. Authorities said more than 12 killed, 50 injured 22 March in fight between PDP and opposition Action Congress supporters during political rally in Uyo, Akwa Ibon state in South. Dozens injured, at least 5 reportedly killed during 21 March political rally of General Buhari’s Congress for Progressive Change in Jos, Plateau state. Boko Haram 13 March killed Maiduguri cleric famous in Borno state for anti-radicalisation sermons, also suspected of killing All Nigerian People’s Party’s youth leader in Maiduguri 26 March. 2 unidentified men killed 20 March in Jos when bomb they were transporting detonated prematurely. Prior to latest attacks Human Rights Watch 13 March urged authorities to establish special panel to investigate and prosecute election-related abuses and violence. Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) 14 March issued statement criticising president’s failure on Niger Delta issues, threatened to bomb Lagos, Abuja, oil installations in Delta. President Jonathan 31 March ordered country-wide troop deployment ahead of 2 April Senate elections.

- **“Three-way contest”, Economist, 10 March 2011.**
- **For latest briefing, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°79, “Nigeria’s Elections: Reversing the Degeneration?”, 24 Feb. 2011.**
CENTRAL ASIA

Kazakhstan Alga and Communist opposition parties 4 March called for boycott of upcoming presidential election, resignation of President Nazarbaev. Demonstration for boycott in NE city Pavlodar disrupted 11 March by 5 men, reportedly wielding knives and thought by some observers to support govt; 3 of 5 convicted of hooliganism 29 March. Rape, murder of Kazakh woman in Almaty region sparked protests against local Kurdish community 10 March. Nazarbaev mid-month declared opposition to hijab.
- "Kazakhstan’s election campaign that wasn’t", RFE/RL, 26 March 2011.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°201, Central Asia: Decay and Decline, 3 Feb. 2011.

Kyrgyzstan Dysfunctional three-party coalition govt came close to collapse early March after failed powerplay by radical nationalist faction, whose grievances included allegations of blatant corruption on part of first deputy premier. Situation deteriorated in south following 1 March contract killing of local tax official in Noorkat, allegedly on orders of local ethnic Uzbek businessman; incident sparked mob violence against suspected perpetrators, observers warned incident could reignite ethnic violence especially in predominantly Uzbek towns Uzgen, Kara-Suu. Jalalabad appellate court 10 March upheld verdicts against 18 ethnic Uzbeks convicted of murders at Sanpa cotton factory in June 2010 ethnic violence. Political pressure reportedly being exerted on mining sector, with several attacks including 10 March ransacking of company facilities in NW. PM Atambayev visited Moscow late-month, secured promise of $30 million credit, deal to suspend duties on Russian fuel. Riots, escape attempts in 3 prisons mid-March, hunger strikes in at least 6 facilities end-March; prisoners’ demands include govt ending crackdown on organised crime figures.

Tajikistan Tensions with Moscow increased after negotiations over deployment of Russian border patrol mission to Tajik-Afghan border ended in stalemate 5 March. Russia late month increased customs duties for oil exports to Tajikistan; analysts suggest Russia seeking military base in Tajikistan. Mirzokhju Akhmadov, UTO veteran and former police colonel in Rasht, 1 March said govt still conducting anti-terrorist operations in Tajikabad, Nurabad; was reportedly questioned by authorities 8 March over suspected involvement in Sept 2010 attack on military convoy in Kamarob Gorge. Tajikistan 14 March cancelled Dushanbe-Khujand train route that runs thorough Uzbek territory, deepening transport blockade between countries. Uzbekistan 13 March declared opposition to Pakistan’s plan to import hydropower from Tajikistan through Afghanistan, claiming violation of international laws as it ignores demands of downstream states in region. Amid fears of imminent energy crisis govt 20 March reintroduced widespread electricity rationing. In 28 March meeting with President Rahmon, Iranian President Ahmadinejad pledged to help complete Sangtuda-2 hydropower plant.

Turkmenistan President Berdymukhamedov 19 March said govt to recognise foreign educational qualifications, marking reversal of policy preventing students from studying abroad, banning graduates of foreign institutions from working for govt. Opposition website claims high school students still strongly discouraged by school officials, local authorities to take part in U.S. exchange program.

Uzbekistan Parliament 3 March passed constitutional amendments to reduce president’s powers in favour of PM, change order of succession; President Karimov described decision as step toward democracy, but analysts claim unlikely to produce meaningful change while Karimov in power. Govt reportedly ordered private telecoms companies to turn off networks if demanded by govt, inform govt of suspicious mass text messaging. Human Rights Watch announced closure of Tashkent office after govt refused to accredit its country representative. New figures disclosed German lease of Uzbek air base in Termez, on Afghan border; showed Berlin paid €67.9mn to Tashkent 2005-2009 while country under EU sanctions.
- "Uzbekistan: veil is lifted on German payments for Termez base", Eurasianet, 24 March 2011.

NORTH EAST ASIA

North Korea N Korea late March stated that Libya’s 2004 dismantling of nuclear weapons program made it vulnerable to military intervention by West; comment seen by analysts as reinforcement of North’s refusal to end its nuclear program. Statement comes despite N Korean official’s 15 March comment to Russian FM that North “ready to discuss nuclear enrichment”. S Korean FM visited China 29 March for talks on N Korea’s nuclear enrichment program; S Korea and U.S. have previously called on China to support UN condemnation of program but Beijing 25 March blocked UNSC adoption of expert panel report. South, North Korean specialists 29 March discussed joint research project into volcanic activity on N Korea’s Mt Paektu; first attempt at dialogue since Feb failed military talks. Pyongyang 27 March accepted repatriation of 27 out of 31 citizens whose boat drifted into S Korea last month; 4 will stay in South. N Korea’s food crisis continuing to worsen following shrinking international aid, harsh winter, foot-and-mouth disease. UN report late-month said 6 million (25%) of population at risk in coming weeks.
- “North Korea suggests Libya should have kept nuclear progran”, New York Times, 24 March 2011.

Kuril Islands/Northern Territories (Russia/Japan) In latest move to shore up presence on disputed islands, Russia 1 March announced instalment of modern anti-ship, anti-aircraft missiles, 25 March announced plan to build airport.

SOUTH ASIA

Afghanistan President Karzai 22 March announced Afghan security forces will take over from ISAF troops in 7 regions;
NATO, U.S. welcomed announcement, but analysts called it mainly symbolic as regions relatively violence-free. Karzai 8 March rejected petition from 38 MPs to close allegedly pro-govt special tribunal charged with recounting votes from Sept 2010 parliamentary elections; tribunal yet to announce results of recount. Taliban suicide blasts 14 March killed 36 at army recruitment centre in Kunduz; 28 March killed 23 in Paktika. UN 9 March reported 2,777 civilians killed during 2010, 75% by Taliban; highest yearly death toll since 2001 invasion, 15% increase on 2009. Marc Grossman, new U.S. envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, held first meeting with Karzai in Kabul 1 March. At least 7 foreign UN workers killed in Mazar-e Sharif 1 April after protesters demonstrating against Koran burning in U.S. church stormed UN compound.

- "Afghan forces to take lead in securing 7 areas", AP, 22 March 2011.

Bangladesh Abdul Alim, prominent member of opposition BNP party, arrested 28 March on war crimes charges, including genocide, in 1971 independence war; BNP criticised charges as politically motivated.

- "War crimes and misdemeanours", Economist, 24 March 2011.

India (non-Kashmir) Police 11 March killed Maoist commander Sasadhar Mahato in West Bengal, wanted for May 2010 train attack that killed some 150. 8 paramilitary troops killed in Assam 15 March, same day as bomb attack on local Congress party headquarters; police suspected Assamese separatist group NDFP, but no claim of responsibility.

- "Internal differences mar ‘action plan’ for Maoist areas", Reuters, 22 March 2011.

Kashmir Following 2-day bilateral meeting in New Delhi, Pakistan 28 March agreed to long-standing Indian demand that its investigators be allowed to visit Pakistan as part of probe of 2008 Mumbai terror attack. Amnesty International 21 March criticised Indian Public Safety Act allowing security forces to detain suspects without charges for up to 2 years in Kashmir. Govt-appointed negotiation panel 13 March called for independent investigation of violations by all parties; expected to submit final report April. State govt 15 March said will pay $1.15mn to relatives of some 100 civilians killed by security forces during 2010 protests. Indian police 10 March killed Sajjad Afgahni, head of Pakistani militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad, in Srinagar.

- "Indian investigators to visit Pakistan in Mumbai probe", Reuters, 29 March 2011.

Nepal Maoists 5 March agreed to join UML-led govt; power-sharing deal sees Maoists get 11 ministries, but only 4 sworn in by end of month. Supreme Court early month ruled Constituent Assembly’s (CA) May 2010 extension by 1 year constitutional, possibly opening for another CA extension if new constitution not completed by 28 May deadline. Following late-month visit by Chinese army chief General Chen Bingde, China 24 March committed $20mn in military aid to Nepal.


Pakistan Shahbaz Bhatti, Christian minister for minorities, killed by gunmen in Islamabad 2 March; “Punjabi Taliban” claimed responsibility, said murder due to Bhatti’s opposition to blasphemy law. Govt 16 March freed Raymond Davis, U.S. CIA contractor charged with killing 2 Pakistanis in Feb, after victims’ families were paid $2.3mn compensation. Army chief General Ashfaq Kayani 17 March condemned U.S. drone attack that allegedly killed 38 in N Waziristan, including civilian and members of militancy-aligned Hafiz Bahaadur militant group; govt 18 March said will withdraw from late-month talks with U.S. over Afghanistan in protest against attack. Taliban killed 36 in 9 March Peshawar suicide attack on funeral of wife of anti-Taliban militant; dozens more killed in Taliban attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) during month. 31 March suicide attack in KP targeting Fazlur Rehman, head of Islamist JUI-F party, killed 10, but Rehman unharmed. State prosecutor 26 March said will seek international arrest warrant for ex-President Musharraf over his alleged role in Benazir Bhutto’s assassination. At least 16 killed 19-20 March in clashes between supporters of MQM and ANP parties in Karachi.


Sri Lanka Ruling UPFA coalition won 203 of 234 councils in 14 March local govt elections; main Tamil party TNA won most seats in Tamil northern and eastern areas. Opposition UNP party claimed fraud, violence favouring govt, including 7 March grenade attack against Tamil MP in Nochiyagama town. Attorney General 3 March said govt would suspend registration of Tamil civilians in north, but group of TNA MPs 14 March claimed registration continues, requested hearing by Supreme Court. PM Jayaratne 11 March retracted claim, made earlier in March, that LTTE regrouping in training camps in Indian state Tamil Nadu, said he relied on false information. U.S. Senate 1 March passed unanimous resolution calling for independent international investigation into possible war crimes committed during final months of civil war. U.S. Asst Sec State Robert Blake said Sri Lankan govt could “force” independent investigation if its own panel probing civil war (LLRC) fails to meet international standards.

- “Sri Lanka PM retracts India rebel training camp claim”, BBC, 11 March 2011.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

Indonesia Series of mail bombs against individual targets from 15 March prompted calls for increased intelligence capacity; police suspect old jihadi networks. Several local govtss announced bans on Ahmadiyah sect during month, increasing pressure on central govt to do same. In Papua, journalist who revealed sexual abuse by police of prison inmate stabbed in Jayapura 3 March; protesters 3 March set fire to Yahukimo district govt office. Umar Patek, suspected member of Jemaah Islamiyah behind 2002 Bali bombing, arrested in Pakistan 30 March.

- "Power to the people! No, wait ...", Economist, 17 March 2011.

Myanmar/Burma Junta, or State Peace and Development Council, officially disbanded 30 March as it handed over power to new govt and President Thein Sein; new govt, parliament nominally civilian but overwhelmingly dominated by junta proxy USDP. Main parliamentary opposition parties 11 March called on EU to lift all sanctions, comes in context of annual EU review of Myanmar policy. NLD, banned party of...
opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, had supported continuation of sanctions, and on 27 March called for “urgent dialogue” with junta. Junta during month for first time made state budget publically available: 19.5% of budget spent on military, lower than previous estimates; NLD 4 March criticised new “Special Funds Law” allowing army chief to spend state money without parliamentary oversight.

- “Myanmar’s junta is ‘dissolved’ as gov’t sworn in”, AP, 30 March 2011.

Philippines Govt-MILF talks postponed from late March to 27-28 April; MILF leadership said it would resolve issue of breakaway commander Ameril Umbrat Kato before next round. House of representatives passed bill postponing Aug elections in Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao to 2013; senate yet to approve. With temporary ceasefire during Feb talks over, govt-NPA clashes resumed: 1 police, 3 rebels killed in Zamboanga 2 March; 3 rebels killed in Negros Oriental 16 March; several clashes in Mindanao during month. Philippine research vessel approached by 2 Chinese patrol boats close to disputed Spratly Islands 2 March; Beijing includes area in its territorial claims in South China Sea. In response to senate enquiry into corruption in army, President Aquino 6 March appointed Lt-General Eduardo Oban new army chief of staff.


- “The problem that won’t go away”, Economist, 28 March 2011.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°113, Stalemate in Southern Thailand, 3 Nov. 2010.

Kosovo Country thrown back into political crisis by Constitutional Court’s 28 March ruling that 22 Feb election in parliament of Behgjet Pacolli as president breached constitution due to lack of two thirds quorum of MPs and need for more than one candidate in vote. Pacolli 30 March left office, announced he would stand for election again. First round of EU-mediated Kosovo-Serbia talks took place in Brussels 8-9 March, resumed 28 March; sides reported some progress on land registers, energy supply. Next meeting expected mid-April. Parliament 10 March approved draft resolution proposed by govt coalition on acceptable content for talks, despite lack of opposition support. Thousands rallied across Kosovo protesting EULEX’s mid-month arrest of a number of former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) soldiers on war crime charges, including former transport minister and KLA leader Fadim Limaj; govt, opposition also condemned arrests. Local police and Kosovo riot police 16 March refused access to EULEX forces attempting to arrest senior Kosovo police officer Nexhmi Krasniqi, who later surrendered.

Macedonia PM Gruevski 30 March called for early elections to be held 5 June, after opposition SDSM dropped its preconditions for poll. Hearings on Macedonia’s case against Greece began at International Court of Justice 21 March. Macedonia charges Greece violated 1995 Interim Accord committing Greece not to oppose Macedonian membership in international organizations under provisional name “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. Democratic Party of Albanians returned to parliament 28 March, ending 20-month boycott.

- “Macedonian Prime Minister calls for June elections”, Balkan Insight, 30 March 2011.

CAUCASUS

Armenia President Sargsyan facing increased opposition political mobilization in form of street protests organized by former President Levon Ter-Petrossian, campaigning for immediate presidential, parliamentary elections. Over 10,000 people rallied in Yerevan 1, 17 March. Recent demonstrations largest since 2008, despite ban on anti-govt protests. Ter-Petrossian’s HAK party issued series of demands to govt including release of all political prisoners, ceasing of prosecution of opposition activists for alleged political purposes, and firing of PM and ministers accountable for weak economy. Ahead of protests authorities summoned several opposition activists to police stations, blocked public transport to Yerevan, released 2 Ter-Petrossian loyalists from jail 17 March. Next rally scheduled 8 April.

- For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°60, Armenia and Azerbaijan: Preventing War, 8 Feb. 2011.

Azerbaijan Azerbaijani youth groups and long-dormant opposition staged 2 well-publicized but sparsely attended rallies in downtown Baku 11, 12 March. First rally attended by non-partisan young Facebook activists, who named it “Great People’s Day”. Authorities took preventive measures including arrest of several activists. Second rally organized by activists from opposition Musavat party, drew several hundred protesters calling for greater freedoms, resignation of President Aliyev. Police detained several dozen protesters; 9 given 10-day jail sentences. Musavat and Popular Front announced plans to stage joint protest 2 April. OSCE told govt to respect right to free assembly. Authorities started taking action to limit activities of foreign/foreign-sponsored NGOs; govt 17 March adopted restrictive decision concerning the registration procedures of foreign NGOs.


North Caucasus (Russia) Moscow 28 March announced it had killed 17 militants with airstrike and helicopter gunship attack on Islamist base in Ingushetia, including 2 major field commanders Khamzat and Supyan; 2 more militants killed 30 March, 3 security forces also killed in operation. Warlord Dokku Umarov and another militant charged 29 March with organizing Jan Domodedovo airport attack, 2 also detained in Ingushetia. 10 members of Kabardino-Balkar-Karachai (KBK) wing of NC insurgency killed by security forces during month. Islamist website 5 March allegedly identified leader of Kabardino-Balkaria Republic (KBR) informal anti-wahhabi militia “Black Hawks” as FSB officer. Russian ombudsman issued report to State Duma condemning extrajudicial killings of members of illegal armed formations in NC. Skiing and tourist areas around Mt Elbrus in KBR remain closed following Feb attack on Moscow tourists. Protests over disappearances of young men in Nazran, Ingushetia broken up by police 23 March. Continued insurgent activity in Dagestan and Ingushetia saw several people killed, including members of security forces.

- Georgia Joint Abkhaz-Russian commission held border talks 28 March–1 April. Reports suggest Russia seeks to acquire 160km2 of Abkhazian territory; Tbilisi 18 March condemned talks as illegitimate. 15th round of Geneva talks on 2008 Georgia-Russia conflict 4 March ended in deadlock; issues include international peacekeeping in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, pledges on non-use of force. Follows Feb allegations by senior Russian official of Georgian involvement in Jan Domodedovo airport bombing. Senior opposition figure Nino Burjanadze 15 March called for peaceful revolution; opposition group People’s Assembly same day promised “concrete action” beginning early May. Russia 11 March detained 9 Georgian citizens for “illegally crossing the South Ossetian state border”. Tbilisi 22 March alleged Russian agents commissioned May 2010 assassination of interior ministry official Dimitri Kordzadze. Religious tensions rose in Abkhazia after suspected poisoning late March of local Mulfii and his wife; followed earlier reports of young Muslim killed by mercury poisoning.

- “Russia may have recognized Abkhazia, but not its borders”, EurasiaNet, 29 March 2011.

Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Armenian, Azerbaijanis, Russian presidents 5 March held talks in Sochi, Russia; agreed again to finalise exchange of prisoners, investigate recent skirmishes along ceasefire line under aegis of Minsk Group, “resolve all controversial questions in a peaceful manner”. As part of agreement Armenia and Azerbaijan 17 March exchanged prisoners. However situation on frontline remains deadly: Armenian soldiers killed 4, 17 March on frontline, reportedly from sniper fire. Azeri boy killed 7 March in frontline Agdam district, reportedly from Armenian sniper fire, Azerbaijani servicemen killed 21 and 23 Mar by Armenian fire. Azerbaijan 15 March threatened to shoot down civilian planes flying to N-K if Karabakh govt proceeds with planned May reopening of civilian airport in region, closed since 1991.

- “Azerbaijan reports casualties as Karabakh skirmishes continue”, RFE/RL, 24 March 2011

EASTERN EUROPE

Belarus EU FMs 22 March agreed to expanded list of Belarusian officials subject to visa bans, asset freezes. Several people sentenced to jail, hard labour for role in 19 Dec post-election protests; authorities late month softened charges against 2 former presidential candidates for their role in protests.

- “EU expands sanctions list against Belarus”, RFE/RL, 21 March 2011.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

Basque Country (Spain) Supreme Court 24 March voted 9-7 to deny legal status to new political party Sortu, formed to succeed banned political wing of ETA-Batasuna. ETA 27 March
said prepared to allow observers to verify its call for permanent ceasefire. Suspected head of ETA Alejandro Zobaran Anriola arrested in N France 11 March.


Cyprus Leaders of the two communities 18 March held hundreddth meeting since 2008. Greek Cypriot President Christofias 9 March admitted “huge gap” existed on citizenship issue. After briefing UNSC on latest developments in negotiations, UN Special Adviser Downer 15 March said UNSG Ban would contact leaders to see if they should have another trilateral meeting. Around 30 trade unions and NGOs took part in protests in north 2 March against economic austerity measures imposed by Turkey. Many also complained about increasing number of Turkish immigrants. Turkish Cypriot authorities 12 March briefly arrested 8, including 4 MEPs (including Cypriot MEP) and 2 Cypriot clergymen, for illegally entering Varosha, under Turkish military control since 1974.

“Turkish Cypriots unhappy with isolation, austerity measures”, SE Times, 10 March 2011.

For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°61, Six Steps toward a Settlement, 22 Feb. 2011.

Turkey Thousands protested 13 March in Istanbul against arrest of journalists including 7 for alleged involvement in “Ergenekon” coup-plot case. PM Erdoğan 14 March accused international press of “defamation campaign” against Turkey over coverage of media freedom. European Parliament 9 March adopted critical resolution on progress in Turkey’s EU accession, warned about deterioration in press freedom, urged constitutional reform; foreign ministry described report as one-sided and unacceptable. 3 PKK rebels killed 15 March in shootout with soldiers in southeastern Şırnak province. In first significant attack since Feb end of ceasefire, PKK militants 25 March fired rocket at police station in Diyarbakır province. Pro-Kurdish party BDP 23 March called on Kurds to stage collective acts of civil disobedience in southeast. Parliament 3 March approved parliamentary elections for 12 June. After expressing initial concern over military intervention in Libya govt 24 March announced backing for NATO command of operations (see Libya).


“Adangerous place to be a journalist”, Economist, 10 March 2011.

Latin America / Caribbean

Bolivia Following weeks of social unrest due to rising food and fuel prices, govt 2 March reached deal with main umbrella union COB, passed decree raising minimum wage by 20%. President Morales 11 March dismissed national police chief for allowing corruption in police force; followed late Feb high-profile arrest of police general in Panama for drug trafficking.

“Bolivia anuncia alza de 20 por ciento en salario mínimo”, Infolatam, 2 March 2011.

Colombia Army 15 March killed “Oliver Solarte”, FARC’s key contact with Mexican drug cartels, in Putumayo; 22 March killed “Jenénoro Galeano”, in charge of security for FARC commander Alfonso Cano, in Huila. FARC 7 March kidnapped 23 oil workers in Vichada, but 22 were released hours later due to army pressure. Regional body UNASUR 11 March appointed former Colombian FM María Emma Mejía as new secretary-general for 1 year. In Arauca, unidentified gunmen late month murdered 3 land restitution activists and judge investigating killing of 3 children.


Ecuador Esmeralda state prosecutors 14 March issued arrest warrant for Deputy Interior Minister Gregorio Tello for corruption; Tello is third high-ranking govt official to be charged with corruption recently. National electoral council 9 March scheduled referendum on constitutional and judicial reform, backed by President Correa, for 7 May.

“El ‘Sí’ oficialista y el ‘No’ opositor abren campaña de consulta”, Infolatam, 26 March 2011.

Guatemala First lady Sandra Torres de Colom 8 March announced candidacy for Sept presidential elections; 21 March announced she will divorce husband President Álvaro Colom to clear constitutional hurdle prohibiting family of incumbent to run. In 17 March visit to Guatemala, UNSG Ban pledged increased UN support for fight against organised crime in Central America, made public his Jan decision to extend UN-backed commission against impunity (CICIG) for 2 years. Colom 2 March said joint Central American security plan against crime and drug trafficking “similar to Plan Merida” will be created at June summit in Guatemala.


Haiti Delayed presidential runoff vote held 20 March; international observers said vote free and fair despite “isolated” violence that killed at least 2; preliminary results delayed until 4 April; final results due 16 April. Ex-President Aristide 18 March returned to Haiti after 7-year exile; U.S. criticised return as disruptive of election process. Aristide said ban of his Fanni Lavalas (FL) party FL; FL no longer to contest partial senate, local elections due in 2011.

“Observers: Haiti’s elections on Sunday was much improved”, Miami Herald, 21 March 2011.

Mexico President Calderón met U.S. President Obama in Washington 3 March amid growing bilateral tensions: U.S. continues to press for extradition of suspects in Feb murder of U.S. customs official outside Mexico City; U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Carlos Pascual resigned 19 March after criticising Mexican security forces in cable released by WikiLeaks. Julian Leyzaola 10 March named public safety secretary in Ciudad Juarez, where more than 3,000 people killed in 2010; Leyzaola earlier credited with bringing stability to Tijuana, but criticised for alleged use of torture. Suspected cartels 21 March killed Chihuahua state top anti-drugs investigator; same day in Michoacán killed mayor of Tzitzio, imprisoned on corruption charges, and prominent trade union leader. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 29 March said 230,000 displaced by drug violence in Mexico over recent years.


Nicaragua Preliminary ruling by International Court of Justice called for Nicaragua and Costa Rica to remove all security forces from disputed border region; both sides accepted ruling. Final verdict on disputed region expected to take 4 years.

“Nicaragua, Costa Rica both see victory in Hague’s ruling on border standoff”, Christian Science Monitor, 8 March 2011.

Venezuela OAS human rights body IACHR 1 March condemned law allowing govt to suspend public officials suspected of corruption from seeking office; opposition claims President Chávez uses law
Syria Fears of further unrest after anti-regime protests spread across country over month, including to Damascus, from southern city Daraa, where at least 55 reported killed by security forces since 18 March. Dozens reported killed in other cities in violent crackdown by security forces; army deployed 27 March after 12 reportedly killed in northwestern port Latakia. In first public address since beginning of unrest, President Assad 30 March blamed foreign conspiracy; remarks seen as inflammatory. Assad 26 March reportedly released political prisoners, including lawyer Diana Jawabra; 31 March ordered study on replacing emergency laws, probe into civilian deaths. Cabinet resigned 29 March in face of protests. UNSG Ban 26 March phoned Assad to urge “maximum restraint”, U.S. condemned gov’t “repression”. Syria 2 March agreed to allow IAEA inspectors to examine Homs acid purification plant on 1 April; U.S. 9 March said insufficient, warned Syria cannot be allowed to “stonewall” IAEA investigations.

- Comment by Peter Harling (Crisis Group), “Syria following the script”, Foreign Policy, 30 March 2011.
- “Syria’s Assad deploys army in port to keep order”, Reuters, 27 March 2011.

GULF

Bahrain Violence flared mid-month in new security crackdown on ongoing anti-govt protests, despite govt late-Feb, early-March commitments to dialogue, reform. 2 killed, hundreds injured 15 March during clashes with security forces; at least 3 killed 16 March as troops, tanks cleared protesters’ camp in Pearl Square in capital Manama. Hundreds of cyber activists dispersed anti-govt demonstration in central Tehran. UNHCR 2 March commitments to dialogue, reform. 2 killed, hundreds injured 15 March during clashes with security forces; at least 3 killed 16 March as troops, tanks cleared protesters’ camp in Pearl Square in capital Manama. Hundreds of cyber activists dispersed anti-govt demonstration in central Tehran. UNHCR 2 March called for immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces from Bahrain (see Bahrain). NATO officials 9 March said weapons cache including 48 rockets intercepted in Afghanistan en route from Iran to Taliban; foreign ministry 15 March denied reports. Turkey 19 March confiscated material illegal under UN sanctions in cargo plane en route from Tehran to Syria. 2 police officers killed 24 March by suspected militants in Kurdistan province.


Iran Head of IAEA 7 March criticised Iran for lack of cooperation; U.S. 9 March warned military aspects to Iran’s nuclear work “increasingly apparent”. Opposition 2 March said at least 79 arrested in 1 March rallies; security forces 8 March forcefully dispersed anti-govt demonstration in central Tehran. UNHCR 24 March established special rapporteur for Iran, Tehran criticised post as “politically motivated”. Govt 21 March called for immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces from Bahrain (see Bahrain). NATO officials 9 March said weapons cache including 48 rockets intercepted in Afghanistan en route from Iran to Taliban; foreign ministry 15 March denied reports. Turkey 19 March confiscated material illegal under UN sanctions in cargo plane en route from Tehran to Syria. 2 police officers killed 24 March by suspected militants in Kurdistan province.

- “A leadership neutered”, Economist, 10 March 2011.

Crisis Group Conflict Risk Alert: Syria, 25 March 2011. Syria is at what is rapidly becoming a defining moment for its leadership. There are only two options: an immediate and inevitably risky political initiative that might convince the Syrian people that the regime is willing to undertake dramatic change; or escalating repression, which has every chance of leading to a bloody and ignominious end.

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories Surge in cross-border violence between Israel and Gaza. Israel killed 16 Hamas fighters 16 March in response to earlier attack by unidentified group; Hamas and others responded 19 March with barrage from Gaza, heaviest since 2009. Israeli response killed at least 11 in following days. Militant groups 26 March signalled readiness to stop rocket fire if Israel halted strikes; Israeli PM Netanyahu 27 March said Israel has no desire to escalate situation; exchange of fire continued. Bomb blast 23 March killed 1, wounded dozens in Jerusalem; first in city since 2008. Jewish family of 5 murdered 11 March in Itamar settlement near Nablus; Israeli govt reacted by authorising construction of 550 residential units in settlement. Israeli 15 March intercepted ship reportedly carrying surface-to-sea missiles from Iran to be smuggled into Gaza from Egypt; Iran denied report. Hamas cracked down on pro-unity protests during month; in West Bank 15 March demonstrations attracted only a few thousand. Netanyahu 28 March criticised Palestinian efforts for national unity, said “can not have peace with both Israel and Hamas”.


- Gaza: The Next Israeli-Palestinian War?, Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°30, 24 March 2011. Will the next Middle East conflagration involve Israelis and Palestinians?

Lebanon Early month 4 members of caretaker cabinet refused requests by Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) prosecutor general to provide information and documents, breaching cooperation protocol signed with UN. Thousands protested 6 March in Beirut for end to sectarian political system. Tens of thousands of March 14 supporters demonstrated in Beirut 13 March demanding Hezbollah surrender its weapons. Tens of thousands 18 March attended rally organised by caretaker PM Saad Hariri’s Future Current in Tripoli; Hariri warned Hezbollah’s arms would lead to sectarian strife. 7 Estonian tourists kidnapped 23 March by masked gunmen in Bekaa Valley. Lebanon, backed by UK, France 15 March tabled UNSC resolution to impose no-fly zone over Libya; resolution endorsed 17 March by UNSC (see Libya).


- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°100, Trial by Fire: The Politics of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, 2 Dec. 2010.
Ireland Demonstrations continued in semi-autonomous northern Kurdistan against regional govt; 1 police officer killed, 10 wounded 22 March during protest in Halabja town. PM Maliki 3 March demanded immediate withdrawal of Kurdish troops from city of Kirkuk; President Talabani 7 March described Kirkuk as “Jerusalem” of Kurdistan, should be annexed into Kurdish region. Thousands of Shiites in Baghdad and Basra 13 March protested Saudi Arabia’s military intervention in Bahrain; Maliki 25 March called for end of intervention (see Bahrain). U.S. 7 March demanded accountability over crackdown on demonstrators, journalists following Feb surge in anti-govt protests. Sunni-backed Iraqiya leader Ayad Allawi 3 March rejected position intended specifically for him as head of yet-to-be-created National Council for Strategic Policy. At least 56 killed, 98 wounded 29 March after suspected al-Qaeda gunmen took hostages at provincial council HQ in Tikrit.

- “In Iraq protests, a younger generation finds its voice”, Wall Street Journal, 21 March 2011.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°103, Iraq and the Kurds: Confronting Withdrawal Fears, 28 March 2011. Iraq’s government was long in the making, but its inclusive nature and the way in which it was formed offer hope that it can make progress in the struggle between Arabs and Kurds.

Jordan Pro-democracy protests continued, but on smaller scale than elsewhere in region. 1 killed, around 120 injured 25 March in clashes between pro- and anti-govt groups and security forces in Amman.


Oman Sultan Qaboos bin Said 13 March announced reforms in response to ongoing protests, including delegation of some legislative powers to partially-elected Majlis al-Shoura council, cabinet reshuffle, welfare increases.


Saudi Arabia Sporadic pro-democracy rallies throughout month increased after military intervention in Bahrain, mainly by Shiite activists in east. King Abdullah 19 March announced $93bn in handouts including welfare benefits and increased housing, ordered creation of 60,000 security jobs within interior ministry. Administration 23 March announced long-delayed Sept municipal elections.

- “Saudi Arabia to hold municipal polls”, Al Jazeera, 23 March 2011.

Yemen Over 90 protesters killed as nationwide anti-regime protests continued for seventh week; fears of possible outbreak of civil war, but hopes remain for possible reconciliation and formation of national unity govt. Direct talks between president and opposition over govt transition stalled 27 March, but indirect talks continue. Opposition demanded immediate resignation of President Saleh and ban on govt positions for Saleh and family; Saleh vowed to make no more concessions. Security forces 17 March killed 52 protesters in capital Sanaa; series of defections to protesters by ambassadors, lawmakers, provincial governors, tribal leaders followed. Saleh 20 March fired cabinet, though retained as caretaker in interim. 11 military commanders including senior general Ali Moshen 21 March joined protest, promised to protect demonstrators; pro- and anti-govt tanks deployed in Sanaa. Parliament 23 March enacted emergency laws suspending constitution, banning protests. Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula and other Islamic militant groups attacks increased, including 26 March seizure of southern town of Jaar. 150 killed after explosion in ammunition factory in Jaar; cause of explosion unknown.

- “Yemen ruling party, Saleh to meet for crisis talks”, Reuters, 27 March 2011.

Crisis Group Conflict Risk Alert: Yemen, 23 March 2011. The political tide in Yemen has turned decisively against President Ali Abdullah Saleh. His choices are limited: he can fight his own military or negotiate a rapid and dignified transfer of power.

Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°102, Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (II): Yemen between Reform and Revolution, 10 March 2011. Even before the popular wave from Tunisia and Egypt reached Yemen, President Saleh’s regime faced daunting challenges.

NORTH AFRICA

Algeria Regular localised confrontations between police and protesters over social, economic conditions including violent clashes 23 March over demolition of illegal housing in Algiers; at least 20 officers injured. 10,000 auxiliary police 10 March demonstrated for higher wages. Heavy police presence in central Algiers 12, 26 March ended protests calling for immediate end of President Bouteflika’s regime. Ruling National Liberation Front 10 March stated support for “profound” revision of constitution. Bouteflika 20 March said Feb lifting of state of emergency only first step, promised further reform. 5 killed 9 March by suspected Islamist militants’ bomb in northern Djelfa province. FM Medelci 22 March called for “immediate cessation” of foreign intervention in neighbouring Libya.


Egypt 77% voted for constitutional amendments in 19 March referendum, precursor to Sept parliamentary elections and later presidential vote. Ruling Supreme Council 30 March issued interim constitution until new head of state elected. Govt 23 March passed laws easing formation of political parties and imposed prison sentences and fines for strikes, protests disrupting business. State security buildings stormed 4 March, secret police dissolved, renamed National Security, senior officers to face prosecution. Wildcat protests, labour strikes continued; hundreds of protesters reported detained, tortured. 13 Christians killed, 140 wounded 6 March in sectarian violence in outskirts of Cairo. Under pressure from protesters PM Shafiq and other Mubarak-linked cabinet members resigned 3 March. Former transport minister Essam Shafar PM, new cabinet sworn in 7 March. Public prosecutor 23 March charged former interior minister and security officials with aiding killing of protesters during uprising that ousted former President Mubarak.

- “Yes they can”, Economist, 24 March 2011.


Libya Clashes between rebel movement and security forces escalated into civil war, prompting international military action. Early month counter-offensive by pro-Qaddafi forces reversed previous rebel gains; govt forces 10-14 March
recaptured several key towns, including Ras Lanuf, Zawiya, Brega. Qaddafi’s son Saif al-Islam 10 March pledged to crush rebellion. Following 12 March call for intervention by Arab League, UNSC 17 March approved no-fly zone, authorised use of “all necessary measures” to protect civilians, whilst prohibiting foreign occupation. International coalition led by UK, U.S., France 19 March began missile, air strikes against military installations, aircraft; also targeted govt forces attacking Benghazi and other rebel-held towns. NATO 27 March assumed control of all international military operations. Situation unclear late month with continued heavy fighting following rebel counter-offensive, despite govt ceasefire declaration 18 March. FM Moussa Koussa 30 March arrived in UK, claimed to be defecting from regime; reports suggested other senior figures planned to defect. Reports late month suggested Libyan envoy in UK for discussions with govt. France 10 March recognised Benghazi-based National Libyan Council as legitimate Libyan govt; Council 23 March appointed Abdul Mahmoud Jibril interim PM. UNHCR late month estimated 350,000 refugees had fled. ICC prosecutor 2 March announced probe into events in Libya following Feb UNSC referral.

• Comment by Alain Déletroz (Crisis Group), “Que l’Europe se ressaisisse et vienne en aide aux Nord-Africains”, Le Temps, 8 March 2011.

Mauritania Police 8 March clashed with protesters demanding political, economic and social reforms in central Nouakchott; at least 18 injured. Opposition parties condemned violence; authorities claimed demonstration unauthorised. Hundreds of youths attended peaceful anti-govt rally 18 March in Nouakchott.

• “Violent clashes erupt in Nouakchott”, Magharebia, 10 March 2011.

Morocco In first speech since 20 Feb widespread pro-democracy demonstrations, King Mohammed VI 9 March announced “comprehensive constitutional reform” to be put to voters in referendum. Estimated 35,000 people protested 20 March in major cities demanding greater civil rights, end to corruption. At least 17 injured 26 March during clashes with police at teachers wage protest in Rabat.

• “Thousands in Morocco march for rights, end to graft”, Reuters, 20 March 2011.

Tunisia interim President Mebazaa 3 March announced constitutional assembly elections to be held by 24 July, confirmed interim govt would govern until then, despite constitutional 60-day term limit on caretaker leaders; claimed constitution no longer reflects “aspirations of the people”. Interim PM Essebsi 7 March named new cabinet, following string of resignations early month. Court 9 March dissolved ousted President Ben Ali’s Rally for Constitutional Democracy (RCD) party, major demand of continued protests; followed 7 March dissolution of State Security Department.

• “Tunisia president Fouad Mebazaa calls election”, BBC, 3 March 2011.

Western Sahara Sixth round of talks between Polisario Front and Moroccan govt 8-9 March in Malta under aegis of UN, no signs of progress; sides agreed to meet again late May. U.S. Sec State Clinton 23 March reiterated support for Moroccan autonomy plan in disputed territory.

• “Morocco, Polisario agree to meet again”, Magharebia, 10 March 2011.

“The analysis of the International Crisis Group on Colombia constitutes an important source of reference that helps us better understand our reality, as well as how to sensitively address key issues such as progress and obstacles on human rights, and the enormous challenges of comprehensive victims’ care in our country.”

Angelino Garzón, Vice President of Colombia, February 2011

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