



CrisisWatch 2018

November Alerts & October Trends

In October, a resurgent Taliban heavily disrupted **Afghanistan**'s parliamentary elections, and a constitutional crisis in **Sri Lanka** could trigger violence. A new initiative to start peace talks among **Yemen**'s warring parties offers hope for November. One of the protagonists, **Saudi Arabia**, drew fire after the tragic murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Political tension mounted in **Guinea**, **Zimbabwe** and **Cameroon**, where presidential elections deepened societal fractures. Deadly violence rose in neighbouring **Chad**, where the fight against Boko Haram intensified, eastern **DR Congo**, north east **Angola**, the **Comoros Islands**, in a territory disputed

between **Somaliland** and Somalia, and at the **Gaza-Israel** border. In East Asia, criticism grew over **China**'s detention of mostly Uighur Muslims in mass internment camps, and strategic competition between the **U.S. and China** stepped up – while relations between **Japan and China** improved. **Honduras** faced more political instability. Hostilities worsened in the conflict zone in eastern **Ukraine**, and tensions grew in the **Western Balkans** and Russia's **North Caucasus**. On a positive note, Armenia and Azerbaijan's new communication channel to manage incidents on their border and in the **Nagorno-Karabakh** conflict zone started operating.

In Asia, President Sirisena's unexpected decision on 26 October to form a new government with controversial former President Rajapaksa without following established legal procedures plunged **Sri Lanka** into a constitutional crisis, provoking unrest and concerns over the progress of reforms and ethnic reconciliation. As we have stressed, to avert further violence and political unrest, the U.S., European Union, India and other international actors should continue to urge Sirisena to reconvene parliament to select a prime minister through legal channels. In **Afghanistan**, the Taliban's killing of powerful Kandahar police chief General Abdul Raziq two days before parliamentary elections on 20 October showed rising Taliban strength, prompting concerns for security in the southern region and casting a shadow on the idea of peace talks.

With Sino-U.S. tensions at their worst in decades, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence's hawkish speech on 4 October containing a litany of complaints about Chinese activities across economic, political, security and human rights dimensions, and portraying China's strategy of militarisation in the **South China Sea**, was a clear signal of intensified U.S.-China strategic competition. **China and Japan** continued measures to improve their relations with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's "historic" visit to China in late October. Amid growing global censure of reports that China has forcibly detained hundreds of thousands of mostly Uighur Muslims in mass internment camps, new details emerged about the scale and conditions of these camps, along with news that the Xinjiang regional legislature has revised

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Trends in October



Deteriorated Situations

Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Ukraine, Comoros Islands, DR Congo, Guinea, Somaliland, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, China (internal), South China Sea, Sri Lanka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Caucasus, Honduras, Israel-Palestine, Saudi Arabia



Improved Situations

China/Japan, Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)

Alerts for November



Conflict Risk Alerts

Sri Lanka, Yemen



Resolution Opportunities

Yemen

its anti-extremism regulations, retroactively authorizing their existence.

In Africa, while **Cameroon's** hazardous presidential elections took place largely peacefully on 7 October, the legitimacy of the vote was called into question as most Anglophones boycotted it – the official turnout in the English-speaking Northwest and Southwest regions was 5.36% and 15.94% respectively – and the opposition rejected President Biya's win, claiming fraud. The shrinking political space nationwide and heavy security response to the Anglophone crisis deepened societal divisions.

In neighbouring **Chad**, the fight against Boko Haram intensified. Militia attacks increased in and around Beni in eastern **DR Congo**, triggering riots in the city, in turn throwing up more obstacles for those trying to contain the Ebola outbreak. In the name of cracking down on irregular diamond mining, security forces and locals in north east **Angola** assaulted and looted Congolese, killing at least six and forcing some 330,000 to flee into Congo. **Zimbabwe's** political and economic crisis deepened and on Anjouan, one of the **Comoros Islands**, the military clashed with armed protesters, who rejected the results of the July referendum that ended rotation of the presidency around the three main islands.

The opposition in **Guinea** organised a series of protest marches in the capital Conakry,

which degenerated into battles with security forces and left three protesters dead. In Sool region, a territory claimed by both **Somaliland** and Somalia's Puntland, fighting between rival clan militias left close to 100 dead.

In the Middle East, United Arab Emirates-backed forces in **Yemen** pursued a campaign to strangle the Huthi-held port city of Hodeida, risking awful humanitarian consequences. Fighting around the city and on other frontlines could escalate in coming weeks, but November also offers an opportunity to stem the country's ruin, as the UN envoy prepared a new initiative aimed at setting up a framework for talks, and the U.S. put pressure on warring parties to announce a ceasefire.

The alleged murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in **Saudi Arabia's** consulate in Istanbul sparked criticism of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who some suspect ordered the killing, weakening his hand at home and abroad. Turkish authorities said that audio and video recordings from inside the consulate prove the journalist was tortured, murdered and dismembered there. Deadly clashes escalated between Palestinian protesters and Israeli security forces at the **Gaza-Israel** border, leaving at least seventeen Palestinians dead, while rocket fire from Gaza and Israeli bombing raids there intensified.

In Central America, **Honduras** experienced its worst crisis since the disputed November 2017 general elections after thousands of Hondurans started a “migrant caravan” toward the U.S., which threatened to cut off all bilateral aid.

In Europe, hostilities worsened in the conflict zone in eastern **Ukraine**, while tensions between Kyiv and Moscow continued to rise over the Azov Sea and the proposed establishment of a self-governing Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In the Western Balkans, **Kosovo**’s moves to transform its security force into a national army raised tensions with Serbia, and

Bosnia’s flawed electoral process, and the victory of a hardline nationalist who has called for the break-up of the country, were cause for concern. In Russia’s **North Caucasus**, a controversial border demarcation deal with Chechnya triggered a political crisis in Ingushetia.

Finally, on a positive note, the communication channel between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which they agreed in late September to help prevent incidents on their state border and in the **Nagorno-Karabakh** conflict zone, started operating.