This document provides complex coverage of global events from 07 – 13 May 2013 with hyperlinks 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.

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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

Sunni protests, which began in December 2012, are turning increasingly violent, demonstrated most recently when clashes between government troops and protesters broke out in Hawijad in April, according to Voice of America (VOA). The anti-terrorism laws imposed by the United States in the early days of US occupation are the primary focus of Sunni protests, reports The New York Times (NYT). Thousands of detainees captured during government-led terrorism sweeps remain in prison for years without being formally charged. In early 2013, Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki acknowledged the legitimacy of some Sunni grievances and formed a committee to address the issues. However, it appears that little has changed, as Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that a lack of transparency in the release of detainees makes it “unclear whether any of the [government] promises have been carried out”. Critics of the Shi’ite-led government assert that many of the detainees said to have been released remain imprisoned. As such, talks of potential reforms by the government are dismissed as empty promises. Regrettably, according to Sunni and Shi’ite Iraqis, the opportunity to address Sunni grievances and quell anger has been lost. Sunni protesters symbolically set fire to their list of demands while Shi’ite leaders claim reconciliation is politically impossible. Additionally, the continuing civil war in Syria is increasingly aggravating the region’s sectarian fault lines. Analysts report that Sunni Arab sheikhs, once urging restraint, are now calling for war.

The influx of thousands of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK¹) fighters from Turkey into Iraqi Kurdistan has many Iraqi Kurds living near the border concerned for their safety, reports Agence France-Presse (AFP). In the past, Turkey’s military has targeted PKK fighters in Kurdistan, conducting air and artillery strikes on Iraqi-situated PKK bases. The flow of fighters has many Kurds fearful of increased

¹ The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) is considered a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States, the European Union and NATO.
Turkish military action in the region. However, as PKK fighters exit Turkey, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan assures members that they “will not be touched” and urged the fighters to lay down their weapons as part of the on-going peace process. On 07 May, withdrawing PKK fighters accused the Turkish army of endangering the retreat of rebel fighters by using surveillance drones to monitor movements, reports VOA. According to Al Jazeera, Baghdad is opposed to the gradual retreat of PKK fighters across the border into Kurdistan. In an official statement, the central government states, “...it does not accept the entry of armed groups into its territory that can be used to harm Iraq’s security and stability”. The offer of refuge to PKK members, which originated from Iraq’s Kurdish region, coupled with the fighters joining the Kurdish forces in Iraq, could enflame tensions between Baghdad and Kurdistan.

Three attacks in Baghdad killed at least ten people on 06 May, according to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). Six were killed in a grenade attack on a Sunni mosque, two car bombs exploded at checkpoints into the capital city killing an officer, and another bombing near a restaurant killed three civilians. Iraqi Oil Ministry spokesperson Asim Jihad reported that saboteurs bombed the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline on 06 May, stopping the flow of oil, according to Reuters. A series of shootings and bombings across Iraq on 08 May killed six and wounded 24 others, according to CNN. In Fallujah, gunmen killed three police officers and in Kirkuk, car bombs targeting a security checkpoint and a Kurdish political party office killed one person. AFP reports in Tuz Khurmatu, Salaheddin province, a suicide bomber attacked a peshmerga2 checkpoint, killing one peshmerga. On 10 May, a bombing at a Sunni mosque, south of Baghdad, killed three and wounded seven others, reports AP. The same day, in western Iraq, police reported a bomb struck an army patrol killing one soldier and wounding two others. Targeting the home of Brigadier General Ismail al Jubiari, a senior Iraqi intelligence officer, in north of Baghdad, a suicide bomber detonated a small tanker truck killing three and wounding 21 others on 11 May, according to AFP.

Plans to revive Iraq’s rail system are gaining speed, in line with the country’s reconstruction efforts, reports Reuters. In 2012, Iraq finished building a 32 kilometre line between Mussayab, south of Baghdad and the holy city of Kerbala. The line transports hundreds of thousands of Shi’ite pilgrims during religious holidays. There are currently 2,000 kilometres of railway lines in Iraq. The goal is to increase coverage to 10,000 kilometres of dual-track railways with electrified trains.

A final agreement was not reached between Kurdish leaders and Baghdad over an oil dispute. The leaders met on 07 May in the capital city to discuss the most recent suspension of oil exports from Kurdistan to Baghdad, reports Reuters. In December 2012, Kurdish crude was halted after a dispute over oil-company payments re-emerged. In March, Kurdish lawmakers withdrew from Parliament after a controversial national budget was passed. The budget decreased the allocation of funds intended for the semi-autonomous region. On 07 May, the leaders met to “break the ice and start a new phase for serious talks” between Kurdistan and Baghdad. In other economic news, Scottish oil services company Wood Group, announced it was awarded a one year contract to work on the Majnoon oil field in southern Iraq, reports United Press International (UPI).

Food security has improved in Iraq over the past decade, reports Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). Historically, Iraq’s food shortages have been a result of internationally imposed sanctions complicated by two decades of war, thereby impacting the export of oil and import of food commodities. Joint government-United Nations analysis of 2007 survey data shows 7.1 per cent of the population suffering from food insecurity. In 2011, those suffering from a lack of food dropped to 5.7 per cent, according to the Iraq Knowledge Network (IKN) survey. The Iraqi government credits an improved food security to a more stable environment, economic growth and increased humanitarian aid.

### Mali

On 15 May, the European Union (EU) and France, in collaboration with the government of Mali, will hold a Donor Conference for Development in Mali (“Together for a New Mali”) at the European Commission headquarters in Brussels. The event aims to mobilise and coordinate support from the international body for development in Mali. According to a communiqué issued by the EU, attendees will include regional heads of state and ministerial representatives. The Malian government released a draft funding request on 10 May, which shows that Mali can provide just over half of the proposed USD 5.6 billion required for recovery in 2013/2014. On 14 May, an EU official claimed that the EU will provide a “substantial part” of the USD 2.6 billion Mali seeks from international donors, reports The Wall Street Journal. According to the EU official, the US and Gulf States as likely donors but noted that a credible presidential election in July 2013 is a key determining factor for many potential contributors. On 10 May, French President François Hollande and his Nigerien counterpart, Mahamadou Issoufou, announced the importance of July’s elections to Mali’s future, according to Al Jazeera.

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2 Peshmerga means “those who stand in front of death”. The peshmerga are armed Kurdish fighters whose role is to protect Kurdish territory from outside threats. In the 2003 invasion of Iraq, peshmerga fought with US troops fighting against Iraqi forces in the North. After the fall of Saddam, the Kurdish military sprang from the established peshmerga fighters.

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nekia.lane@cimicweb.org
The African Development Bank Group (AfDB) announced the approval of a **USD 59.3 million loan to Mali on 08 May**. The African Development Fund (ADF) will provide the allocated sum, and is set to finance an Emergency Economic Recovery Support Programme (EERSP) formulated to pull Mali out of its multi-layered crises (political, security, institutional, humanitarian) by supporting public services and economic recovery. The EERSP programme will also establish budgetary and macroeconomic frameworks necessary for sustainable growth. The document released by AfDB states, “The program’s specific economic outcomes are, among others, restoration of functioning and rebuilding of the capacities of the public administration, restoration of access to basic social services, especially health and education services and support to economic growth expected to increase from 1.2% in 2012 to an average of 5% between 2013 and 2014”. In its work to mitigate the negative effects of the nation’s successive crises, the scope of the programme aims to reach all **15.8 million people** of Mali, and brings the total approved AfDB funding in Mali to approximately USD 276.9 million.

**Three separate suicide attacks** on Malian and Nigerien soldiers took place on 10 May in the northern towns of Gossi and Menaka, resulting in two injured Malian soldiers and the deaths of five Islamist suicide bombers, reports *Reuters*. In Gossi, as pedestrian bombers approached a checkpoint, soldiers shouted orders to stop then fired at them, resulting in an explosion, according to Malian Lieutenant Colonel Souleymane Maiga. A second attack was attempted in Gossi, but the suicide bomber was killed when he attempted to enter the military camp. In Menaka, a car bomb driven into a military camp exploded when shot upon by Nigerien soldiers. *The Washington Post* reports that the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA) **claimed responsibility** for the latest attacks.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates there are 300,783 internally displaced persons (IDPs), with 517,500 targeted beneficiaries for food assistance programmes within Mali. OCHA highlights that as of 07 May, the Consolidated Appeal Programme (CAP) for Mali had only received 28 per cent of requested funding. The figures (see right) illustrate that seven out of nine targeted sectors (food security; nutrition; water, hygiene, and sanitation; health; protection; shelters; education; and common services and coordination) are less than 50 per cent funded, with three crucial sectors (water, hygiene, and sanitation; nutrition; and education) having received less than 20 per cent of the necessary funding.

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) projects **food security conditions** in Mali between April and September 2013. The report asserts that even limited humanitarian assistance could reduce current crisis conditions. Sustained aid could bring impacted regions to **Integrated Food Security Phase Classification**’s (IPC) Phase 2 Stress levels when combined with improved livestock conditions and milk production. According to FEWS NET, the poor livelihoods of households in the northern rice-growing and agro-pastoral areas are not likely to improve significantly by September without external humanitarian assistance.

**Syria**

On 07 May, Moscow and Washington agreed to convene an international conference to build on a transition plan for the Syrian crisis adopted in June 2012 in Geneva. The National Coalition opposition group indicated they planned to meet to determine their participation in the international conference outlined in the Kerry-Lavrov proposal, reports *AFP*. The US-Russian proposal calls for a conference to build on the June 2012 Geneva agreement which called for a cessation of violence and the establishment of a transitional government. The plan was sharply criticised by Syrian opposition groups for failing to call for Assad’s departure and was never implemented. Syrian rebels reacted coolly to the recent Russian-US proposal for a peace conference. Former head of the Syrian National Coalition Moaz al Hatib warned, “Syrians: be careful of squandering your revolution in international conference halls”, reports *The Guardian*. US President Obama pledged to work to bring the Assad government and rebels to the negotiating table in Geneva in the coming weeks, but cautioned that it will be difficult to get the Syrian conflict under control, reports the *Daily Star*. Obama stated. “[s]ometimes, once…the furies have been unleashed in a situation like we are seeing in Syria, it’s very hard to put things back together”, according to *the Los Angeles Times*.

UN-Arab League envoy Lakhdar Brahimi **pledged to stay on** as the Syrian mediator after receiving word of renewed diplomatic efforts by US Secretary of State John Kerry and Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to convene an international conference on Syria, reports *AFP*. In other UN events, Syria and the United Kingdom are separately urging the UN to impose sanctions on the

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3 On **30 June 2012**, the UN-Action Group for Syria announced a plan for political transition in Syria. The group identified steps and measures by the parties to secure full implementation of a six-point plan and Security Council resolutions 2042 and 2043, including immediate cessation of violence in all its forms.
jihadist group Jabhat al Nusra (al Nusra Front), reports AP. Additions to the sanctions blacklist must be approved by all fifteen UN Security Council members who have a deadline of 14 May to object to the request. In other UN news, on 12 May, Syria rebels group Yarmouk Martyrs’ Brigade released four Filipino UN peacekeepers kidnapped from the ceasefire line between Syria and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights earlier in May, reports Al Jazeera. The brigade said they held the UN peacekeepers for their own safety after clashes with Syrian government forces had endangered the peacekeepers. Philippine leaders indicated that they would withdraw 342 soldiers currently on peacekeeping duty in Golan after the abduction.

On 13 May, British Prime Minister David Cameron and President Obama met to discuss ways to strengthen the Syrian opposition both operationally and politically, reports AFP. Cameron said his government had not yet determined if it would provide military aid to opposition fighters in Syria, but pledged to double non-lethal aid to opposition groups, reports Foreign Policy. Earlier in the week, the British prime minister visited with Russian President Vladimir Putin attempting to bolster diplomatic efforts to bring the warring sides of the conflict together for talks, according to Arab News.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Putin plan to meet on 14 May to discuss the current situation in the Middle East, reports Christian Science Monitor (CSM). During the meeting, Netanyahu reportedly seeks to address concerns that Russia is preparing to ship Syria S-300 surface-to-air missiles which could compromise Israeli defences. Russia, a close ally of President Bashar al-Assad’s government, has provided weapons in the government’s fight against perceived terrorists.

In the days following Israeli airstrikes in Syria, on 09 May Hezbollah chief Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah indicated that Syria will supply “game-changing” weapons to the militant group, reports AP. Meanwhile, Israel says it will respond with airstrikes to any future weapons transfers to its Hezbollah enemy. Saudi Arabia requested UN action to end Israeli strikes in Syria. The strikes are considered a violation of Arab state sovereignty; Turkey agreed that Israeli airstrikes were unacceptable, reports AFP. According to AP, Assad allegedly granted permission to the Syrian-based Palestinian group Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) to set up missiles in order to attack Israel, after recent Israeli airstrikes near Damascus. Tensions between Turkey and Syria escalated after twin car bombings in the Turkish border town of Reyhanli killed 46 civilians on 11 May, reports RFE/RL. Turkish officials indicated that nine citizens with links to Syrian intelligence services were arrested in the bombings’ aftermath. In a speech to Turkish citizens, Prime Minister Erdogan warned of retaliation, but insisted the country would not be pulled into the Syrian civil war. Later, the Syrian regime denied masterminding the Reyhanli attacks and instead blamed Turkey stating, “[t]he Turkish government should be held responsible for what happened…it has turned the border areas into a center for international terrorism”. On 10 May, after stating “the [Assad] regime has used chemical weapons and missiles”, Erdogan expressed his administration’s support of a US-enforced no-fly zone in Syria, according to Al Jazeera. Finally, a Turkish F-16 fighter jet travelling over the Amanos Mountains near the Turkish-Syrian border crashed on 13 May, according to BBC. A search and rescue team has been deployed to discover the pilot and aircraft. According to The Guardian, military sources say the crash was most likely accidental.

US Charge d’Affaires to Lebanon Richard Mills reiterated the United States’ support of Lebanon’s disassociation policy while meeting with Lebanese caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mатаki on 10 May, according to The Daily Star. Also, Mills expressed US concern and condemned the continued shelling of Lebanese territory from Syria as well as Hezbollah’s involvement in the neighbouring civil war. Meanwhile on 10 May, Lebanese authorities charged nine people with smuggling explosives into Syria, intending to launch an attack, according to The Daily Star. The group is based in Lebanon, comprising Syrians, Palestinians and Lebanese, with alleged links to al Qaeda.

On 08 May, rebels fighting against the Syrian government shot down a fighter jet over the northern province of Aleppo, according to AFP. Syrian Sunni Muslims fled the region surrounding the Mediterranean port of Tartous in recent days as rumours of massacres carried out by militia loyal to Assad sparked fear among civilians, according to UPI. On 10 May, four rockets fired from Syria landed in the Lebanese village of Hermel, known to be a Hezbollah stronghold, reports The Daily Star. According to sources, rockets originated from the Syrian town of Qusayr where Syrian rebels and Hezbollah-supported Assad forces fought. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports that government forces have seized control of Khirbet Ghazaleh village near a strategic road that links Damascus with Jordan, reports The Guardian. Assad troops reopened the road and restored their supply line between Damascus and Dera’a city. Regime forces were also reportedly out on raids and searching homes in the village on 13 May. According to McClatchy, disagreements between countries that are arming moderate rebel groups have led to a slowing of much needed military supplies to Syrian rebels. The lack of supplies is cited as the cause for the rebels’ several recent setbacks against government forces.

A network of powerful tribes and smugglers in eastern Syria has created an illicit oil trade, thereby complicating Western efforts to help the Syrian opposition fund itself, reports Reuters. Tribal control could also make future reconstruction difficult. In addition to capturing oil production facilities, tribes are also seizing control of pipelines, often drilling into them to extract oil. Thousands of barrels of crude make their way to Turkey each day by small tankers using rural, farm roads. Additionally, al Qaeda affiliate al Nusra Front has a significant presence in the region and has reached agreements with various tribal leaders to split the oil revenues. Oil profits provide the jihadist group with ample funds to buy more weapons and pay fighters. Last month, the European Union (EU) authorised the purchase of oil from the Syrian opposition in hopes of funding rebel operations. Rebel leaders concede that there is little chance now they will benefit from the recent EU decision.

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The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that the number of Syrian displaced within the country stands at 4.25 million. Jens Laerke, spokesperson for OCHA said that movement by internally displaced persons (IDPs) continues to be large-scale and fluid. Also, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) released a statement on 13 May asserting the basic rules of war have largely been ignored in the Syrian conflict, thereby handicapping relief efforts in the country. HRW renewed calls to UN Security Council members to refer the Syrian conflict to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in order to ensure accountability for all war crimes and crimes against humanity. The renewed demands result from a graphic video depicting a Syrian opposition commander, Abu Sakkar from the Independent Omar al-Farouq brigade, cutting the heart and liver from a government fighter’s corpse. In the video, Sakkar holds a human organ stating “I swear we will eats from your hearts and liver you dogs of Bashar”.

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 07 to 13 May 2013.

GLOBAL NEWS

Libya: A car bomb explosion near a hospital in Benghazi killed several people on 13 May, reports BBC.

Mali: Mali’s military says five suicide bombers were killed 10 May during attacks in the North on pro-government troops, according to Voice of America (VOA).

Turkey: The death toll from car bombings on 12 May in Reyhanli stands at 13, according to Agence France-Presse (AFP).

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