



CRISISWATCH

Tracking Conflict Worldwide

CrisisWatch is a monthly early warning bulletin designed to provide a regular update on the state of the most significant situations of conflict around the world.

Learn more about CrisisWatch →

January 2017

Global Overview

JANUARY 2017

Amid shifting global dynamics, the war in Yemen saw another serious escalation with the Saudi Arabia-led coalition launching a new campaign to regain territory, while fighting intensified in eastern Ukraine at the end of the month. The U.S. and China exchanged harsh rhetoric over the South China Sea, and the new U.S. administration's decision to build a wall on its border with Mexico sparked tensions with its southern neighbour. Domestically Mexico also saw a swell of popular anger triggered by fuel price increases. In the Balkans, political tensions spiked in Bosnia and between Kosovo and Serbia. Meanwhile in Africa, soldiers mutinied repeatedly across Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon's government hardened its repression of protests in the country's Anglophone regions. On a positive note, West Africa's regional bloc ECOWAS successfully pushed for a peaceful handover of power in Gambia.

Trends for Last Month

January 2017

Deteriorated Situations

Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, South China Sea,
Bosnia And Herzegovina, Kosovo, Ukraine,
Mexico, Yemen

Improved Situations

Gambia

Outlook for This Month

February 2017

Conflict Risk Alerts

None

Resolution Opportunities

None

Trends and Outlook

In **Yemen**, with the peace process at near standstill, the Saudi-led coalition and aligned Yemeni troops launched a new military push against Huthi rebels and forces supporting former President Saleh. On 7 January, they began an offensive to retake an area in the south west bordering the Bab al-Mandeb strait, a strategic sea passage running between Yemen and Djibouti in the Horn of Africa, and a stretch of Red Sea coastline. They simultaneously increased military pressure in the north including in Saada, Hajjah, Jawf and Marib governorates. Coalition-aligned forces claimed to have retaken Dhubab district on the Red Sea and on 23 January Mokha city further north, but at the end of the month fighting continued. The UN now puts the number of civilians killed since the conflict began in March 2015 at 10,000. As Crisis Group has warned, although the UN remains an essential umbrella under which to negotiate a settlement, after three rounds of failed peace talks and numerous ceasefire attempts, it has lost credibility with all sides and is unlikely to revive meaningful negotiations without a change in the main belligerents' calculation as to what constitutes an acceptable compromise.

In **Ukraine**, clashes between the military and separatists along the front line in the east intensified in late January, with some twenty people killed including civilians in fighting near Donetsk. The UN Security Council voiced its concern over the deteriorating security situation and the impact on civilians cut off from water, electricity and heating. As we explained in a report in December, three years after the conflict began, Russia's military intervention continues to define all aspects of Ukrainian political life. As well as pushing the Kyiv government to root out corruption, the U.S. and EU must maintain sanctions on Russia until it withdraws completely from eastern Ukraine. Elsewhere in the region, political tensions rose in **Bosnia** following the celebration by the Republika Srpska (RS) of RS Day on 9 January, in defiance of a state Constitutional Court ruling that it is discriminatory and unconstitutional. RS President Milorad Dodik repeated calls for greater autonomy for RS and again raised the prospect of secession. Tensions spiked between **Kosovo** and Serbia after Belgrade reopened a railway line to northern Mitrovica in the ethnic Serb part of Kosovo and sent a train painted with slogans saying "Kosovo is Serbia". The train was stopped at the border with Serbia claiming Kosovo was planning to attack it, while Kosovo President Thaci said Belgrade was plotting to annex northern Kosovo.

Tensions rose between China and the U.S. over the **South China Sea** amid shifting U.S. foreign policy priorities under President Trump. As new U.S. administration officials signalled a tougher approach to China's presence in the area, Beijing reiterated China's "indisputable sovereignty" over parts of the South China Sea and urged the U.S. to "speak and act cautiously to avoid harming the peace and stability" of the region. Tensions also rose between **Mexico** and the U.S. after President Trump signed an executive order to build a wall along the countries' shared border. The month saw widespread social unrest within Mexico over increased petrol prices, expressing public discontent at corruption in the political establishment, a lack of economic prospects and violent crime. Crisis Group has identified Mexico as one of 10 Conflicts to Watch in 2017, emphasising that the U.S. would better serve its own interests by strengthening its partnership with Mexico to address the systemic failings that give rise to violence and corruption.

In Africa, thousands of soldiers mutinied across **Côte d'Ivoire** to demand better conditions and bonuses. The mutineers, most rebels in the country's civil war (2002-2007), took control of Bouaké city in the centre and temporarily took hostage the minister of defence. The government managed to resolve the crisis by capitulating to all demands, paying up and reshuffling the military leadership, but discontent in the military remains a major threat to the country's stability. In **Cameroon**, the government hardened its repression of a protest movement in the English-speaking Southwest and Northwest regions. After talks between it and civil society representatives over perceived marginalisation of the English-speaking minority broke down mid-month, the government chose to quash the protest by banning a secessionist and a federalist organisation, arresting movement leaders, suspending internet service to Anglophone areas and threatening media outlets with closure.

In a positive turn of events, West Africa's regional bloc ECOWAS, in its role as promoter of regional peace and security, successfully pressed for a peaceful handover of power in **Gambia**. By applying both diplomatic pressure and the threat of force, the bloc persuaded President Jammeh, who rejected his defeat in a December 2016 election, to step down on 20 January, allowing election winner Adama Barrow to take up the presidency.

Latest Updates

Africa

➔ Burundi JANUARY 2017

East African Community (EAC) mediator former Tanzanian President Mkapa organised talks in Arusha, Tanzania 16 Jan between govt and some opposition politicians focusing on presidential term limit and formation of Govt of National Union; he did not invite main opposition coalition CNARED (National Council for the Respect of the Arusha Agreement, Restoration of the Rule of Law), but six members attended individually. Court of Appeal 16 Jan disbarred from Bujumbura Bar Association three lawyers and suspended another who had condemned human rights abuses. Following presidential pardon, govt released over 500 prisoners 23 Jan; said it would release some 2,500 in total. Unidentified gunman shot dead Water and Environment Minister Emmanuel Niyonkuru 1 Jan in Bujumbura. Govt 10 Jan said it would withdraw troops from AU mission in Somalia (AMISOM) following EU's decision to pay troops' salaries individually not via central bank, but reversed decision 21 Jan when EU agreed to pay via private banks.

- [OP-ED: Three Lessons About Burundi's Crisis from Speaking to Those Who Fled It](#)

🚩 Cameroon JANUARY 2017

Govt hardened repression in both Anglophone regions, Southwest and Northwest, in response to protests against perceived govt marginalisation, as Boko Haram (BH) continued attacks in Far North. Talks between govt and federalist Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) broke down 14 Jan, CACSC same day demanded referendum on federal governance system and called for "ghost town" general strike 16-17 Jan in western regions to protest violent

repression by security forces, call largely heeded. Govt 17 Jan banned secessionist Southern Cameroon's National Council and CACSC and same day arrested latter's president and Sec Gen in Buea in SW among others, sparking fresh protests. Govt mid-Jan shut down internet in both Anglophone regions; restrictions still effective, schools closed and strike ongoing end month. BH quadruple suicide bombings in Kolofata and Doublé, Kolofata district 11 Jan killed only bombers, triple suicide bombing in Doublé, Kolofata district 30 Jan killed at least four people including bombers. BH killed one soldier in Kolofata 10 Jan, looted Gakara village, Kolofata district 26 Jan and killed one civilian in Fotokol 30 Jan. Bodies of sixteen people killed by BH found in Gnam-Gnam, Waza district 15 Jan. Cameroonian troops continued to support Nigerian-led operations in Sambisa forest and Ngoshe in Nigeria to push out Abubakar Shekau's BH faction; three Cameroonian soldiers killed in operations in Nigeria since end Dec. Chiefs of armed forces (Gen Kodji) and gendarmerie (Col Kameni) in Far North and two officers killed in helicopter crash in Bogo district, Far North 22 Jan.

- [COMMENTARY: Forced out of Towns in the Sahel, Africa's Jihadists Go Rural](#)

➔ Central African Republic JANUARY 2017

Armed group violence continued in particular in centre and east as disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process remained stalled. Ex-Seleka factions clashed mid-Jan on Ippy-Bria axis (east) and in Morouba and Bakala (centre). Unidentified assailants 5 Jan killed UN peacekeeper at Bokayai, Ouham-Pendé prefecture. In SE, unidentified attackers 3 Jan killed two UN peacekeepers 60km west of Obo. After ex-Seleka and anti-balaka leaders met Angolan President dos Santos in Dec, President Touadéra met dos Santos in Luanda, Angolan capital 11 Jan. Touadéra 12 Jan said 70,000 people displaced since violence restarted in Sept. Govt and UN 13 Jan launched \$399.5mn humanitarian response plan for 2017-2019. UNSC 27 Jan extended arms embargo until 31 Jan 2018 and renewed Panel of Experts' mandate.

➔ Chad JANUARY 2017

Despite continued standoff between govt and unions over working conditions, major unions 13 Jan said they would suspend five-month strike for one month. Following airstrike on Chadian rebels in S Libya by Libyan General Khalifa Haftar's forces in Dec and rumours that combatants had crossed from Libya into N Chad, govt 6 Jan said it had closed border with Libya and deployed troops to prevent other militants entering Chad. President Déby discussed EU's aid to Chad during Brussels visit 9 Jan. Former President Hissène Habré's appeal against conviction for crimes against humanity opened in Dakar, Senegal 9 Jan; court said it would give final verdict 27 April. FM Moussa Faki Mahamat 30 Jan elected AU Commission chair for four-year term.

- [COMMENTARY: Forced out of Towns in the Sahel, Africa's Jihadists Go Rural](#)

➔ Democratic Republic Of Congo JANUARY 2017

Following 31 Dec agreement between presidential majority and opposition on transitional arrangements after end of President Kabila's second term (constitutionally his last), parties continued talks but failed to agree by 28 Jan deadline set by mediator Catholic Church (CENCO) on how to implement deal; talks extended for at least one week. Contentious issues included appointment of future PM, roles of political groups in future govt and CENCO's mediation role. In Haut-Katanga province in SE, violence and corruption reportedly affected voter registration during month. Armed group violence continued in parts of east, north, centre and south. In east, Hutu militia 15 Jan attacked Kyaghala, S Kivu province killing six people. UN mission (MONUSCO) 12 Jan warned new waves of fighters and refugees were crossing into NE DRC from S Sudan. Govt 15 Jan said army (FARDC) repelled incursion at Ishasha, N Kivu by ex-M23 militiamen encamped in Uganda since 2013 defeat; Ugandan govt 19 Jan reportedly arrested 100 ex-M23 fighters as they tried to cross into DRC. In north, FARDC 8 Jan pushed Lord's Resistance Army rebels, originally from Uganda, from Nakolongbo, Bas-Uélé province. In centre, dozens reportedly killed including five civilians in week of clashes early Jan between security forces and Kamwina Nsapu militia in Tshimbulu, Kananga, Kalumba-Gare and Bunkonde villages in Kasai-Central province. MONUSCO 12 Jan deployed some 100 soldiers to Kananga to protect civilians, UN staff and airport. Incidents in Kananga 26-27 Jan hampered arrival of PM Badibanga at head of govt delegation. In south, clashes between Pygmy and Bantu militias in Tanganyika province continued; Pygmy militias 4-5 Jan carried out attacks in Mpyana, Kakelwa and Manono killing nineteen; further clashes 13 Jan killed 24.

➔ Ethiopia JANUARY 2017

Unidentified assailants launched grenade attacks on hotels in Bahir Dar 4 Jan and Gondar 10 Jan, both in Amhara region; second blast killed one, injured dozens. Ethnic Murle militia from S Sudan early Jan entered Ethiopia's western Gambela region, killed eleven people and abducted twenty children.

- [COMMENTARY: Ethiopia Must Continue to Help Stabilise South Sudan](#)

➔ Kenya JANUARY 2017

President Kenyatta 9 Jan signed law allowing manual voting and ballot counting in Aug 2017 presidential and parliamentary polls if electronic system fails; opposition challenged law claiming it would open door to vote manipulation and that ruling Jubilee party used "underhand tactics" to pass it. Five main opposition parties including Raila Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement, runner-up in 2013 vote, formed National Super Alliance of Kenya (NASA) 11 Jan but have not agreed on joint candidate. Al-Shabaab 27 Jan temporarily captured base of Kenyan troops in AU mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in Kulbiyow, 18km from Kenyan border (see Somalia).

➔ Somalia JANUARY 2017

Al-Shabaab continued to carry out attacks in capital Mogadishu and rural areas and made modest territorial gains in south-central as delayed electoral process continued. In Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab 2 Jan carried out twin suicide bombings at Somali National Army (SNA) checkpoint near airport and hotel killing seven people; claimed car bombing near UN compound 3 Jan that injured four guards; car bombing and assault on Mogadishu hotel 25 Jan left at least 28 dead. Al-Shabaab temporarily captured base of Kenyan troops (KDF) in AU mission (AMISOM) in Kulbiyow 18km from Kenyan border 27 Jan, claimed it killed at least 57 troops; KDF said nine soldiers died and that it killed 70 militants. Al-Shabaab 31 Jan attacked army base near Hudur, Bakol region in south, killing two soldiers. In Puntland, Al-Shabaab intensified attacks including killing two police in Bosaso 15 Jan; clashed with Puntland forces 16 Jan 60km south of Bosaso, at least three soldiers and four militants killed. Pro-Islamic State militants 27 Jan abducted nine people including Puntland soldiers in Medlehe, Bari region. Internal SNA quarrels over checkpoint control allowed Al-Shabaab to seize new positions, including War Sheekh, Middle Shabelle region 7 Jan. Al-Shabaab 17 Jan released video of execution of Ugandan soldier captured during Sept 2015 assault on AMISOM base in Janaale, Lower Shabelle region. At least twenty SNA soldiers defected to Al-Shabaab from outposts in Bay, Bakol, Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, Lower Juba and Gedo regions. Al-Shabaab tax officer and administrator for Garbaharey, Gedo region surrendered 9 Jan. Burundi govt 10 Jan said it would withdraw troops from AMISOM following EU's decision to pay troops' salaries individually not via central bank, reversed decision 21 Jan when EU agreed to pay via private banks. Parliamentarians 11 Jan re-elected Mohamed Osman Jawari as lower house speaker and 22 Jan elected former Minister for Culture and Heritage Abdi Hashi Abdullahi as upper house speaker. Delayed parliamentary vote on new president, due 24 Jan, postponed to 8 Feb.

➔ Somaliland JANUARY 2017

Presidential and parliamentary elections set for 25 Jan postponed to Oct 2018 following severe drought; National Elections Commission said 60% of registered voters absent from designated voting centres due to drought-induced displacement.

➔ South Sudan JANUARY 2017

Ethnic Shilluk rebels under Johnson Olony, part of Riek Machar's Sudan People's Liberation Army-In Opposition (SPLA-IO), defeated rebels under Gen. Tanginye and Gen. Yohannes Okiech, part of forces loyal to Lam Akol, chairman of

opposition Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Democratic Change (SPLM-DC) party, early Jan in former Upper Nile state; Tanginye, Okiech and prisoners killed in fighting. Rebels and govt forces clashed several times around Malakal, Khor and Gabat, former Upper Nile state late Jan. After U.S. proposed UNSC resolution including sanctions and arms embargo late Dec, govt refused to meet U.S. Asst Sec State Thomas-Greenfield on visit to Juba 18 Jan. President Kiir 14 Jan created four new states bringing total to 32. Kiir's meeting with Egyptian President Sisi in Cairo 9 Jan strained relations with Ethiopia which has rejected Egypt troop contributions to proposed UN Regional Protection Force in S Sudan. Kenyan authorities detained two S Sudanese opposition figures 23 and 24 Jan on unknown charges pending deportation.

- [OP-ED: Sudan's Interest in South Sudanese Peace](#)

➔ Sudan JANUARY 2017

U.S. 13 Jan partially lifted economic sanctions imposed in 1996 due to govt's support for radical Islamist groups; U.S. companies can do business in Sudan with immediate effect, other sanctions relief will be effective 12 July if govt makes progress in resolving conflicts in Darfur and Two Areas (S Kordofan and Blue Nile states). Govt 15 Jan declared cessation of hostilities in Two Areas to allow humanitarian access. Opposition Umma party leader Sadig al-Mahdi 29 Jan returned to Khartoum to support peace process after over two years in exile after declaring support for armed opposition 2014.

- [COMMENTARY: Ethiopia Must Continue to Help Stabilise South Sudan](#)

➔ Uganda JANUARY 2017

President Museveni 10 Jan made changes in armed forces and intelligence agency leadership including appointing his son, Maj. Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, previously Special Forces Command chief, as senior presidential advisor, and replacing heads of Internal Security Organisation and Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence. Following clashes late Nov between security forces and royal guards of Rwenzori traditional leader Charles Wesley Mumbere in Kasese district in west, Jinja High Court 15 Jan granted bail to Mumbere but authorities rearrested him hours later on separate charges of terrorism, allegedly perpetrated before clashes.

- [OP-ED: It's in Uganda's Interest to Keep Supporting South Sudan Peace Efforts](#)

➔ Angola JANUARY 2017

Separatist rebel Front for the Liberation of Cabinda Enclave (FLEC) claimed to have attacked Angolan Armed Forces position 23 Jan in Chibango area, Massabi region, killing two soldiers.

➔ Mozambique JANUARY 2017

Peace talks between govt and armed opposition Renamo remained stalled with no date for restart. Renamo extended unilateral ceasefire begun 27 Dec for two months from 2 Jan; Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama said govt troops largely respected ceasefire. Unidentified gunmen 15 Jan shot dead district representative of opposition party Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM) in Tambara, Manica province in centre.

➔ Zimbabwe JANUARY 2017

Ruling ZANU-PF party won Bikita West by-election 21 Jan with 77.9% of vote; ex-Deputy President Joice Mujuru's Zimbabwe People First (ZPF) party gained 14.5%. ZANU-PF supporters 18 Jan assaulted candidate of opposition National Constitutional Assembly and his election agent.

➔ Burkina Faso JANUARY 2017

Insecurity in north persisted. Following attack on security forces at Nassoumbou mid-Dec reportedly by new jihadist group Ansarul Islam led by Burkinabè preacher Malam Ibrahim Dicko, gunmen allegedly linked to group 1 Jan killed imam in Sibé and seriously injured man in Djibo, both in Burkina Faso's Sahel region; both targets were former members of Dicko's group. Gunmen 10 Jan attacked mining site in Kerboulé, Sahel region stealing motorbikes. Military 13 Jan killed one civilian and wounded two others in Banh, North region. Armed men 25 Jan ordered teachers in Baraboulé, Sahel region to teach Islam exclusively. Govt, Mali and Niger 24 Jan agreed to create joint military force to counter insecurity in border areas in Liptako-Gourma zone. Constitutional commission 10 Jan presented draft constitution which would reduce presidential powers and limit presidential terms to two and MPs' terms to three.

 Côte D'Ivoire JANUARY 2017

Soldiers mutinied repeatedly across country forcing govt to accept all demands including for bonuses. Soldiers (most former rebels) in Bouaké (centre) 6 Jan left barracks, shot in air and demanded better conditions; soldiers in other cities including Abidjan followed suit 7 Jan. Mutineers took control of Bouaké and temporarily held defence minister hostage. President Ouattara same day said govt would meet all demands. Ouattara 9 Jan sacked military chief of staff and police and gendarmerie chiefs. Mutineers impatient for promised money 13 Jan again left barracks, including in Bouaké; govt agreed that all 8,500 mutineers would receive FCFA12mn (about €18,000). Other security forces (soldiers, not former rebels, and gendarmes) 17-18 govt mutinied in many cities, including Yamoussoukro and Abidjan, to demand inclusion in deal with govt, four killed. Govt 26 Jan made changes within armed forces, including promoting former rebel chiefs. Civil servants held general strike 9-27 Jan to protest pension reform and demand higher wages. Following Dec legislative elections, Guillaume Soro re-elected national assembly speaker 9 Jan; Ouattara 10 Jan appointed former PM Daniel Kablan Duncan as VP and Amadou Gon Coulibaly as PM; new govt with few changes announced 11 Jan.

- [COMMENTARY: Forced out of Towns in the Sahel, Africa's Jihadists Go Rural](#)

 Gambia JANUARY 2017

After rejecting defeat in Dec election, former President Jammeh agreed to step down under diplomatic and military pressure from regional bloc ECOWAS. Jammeh 17 Jan declared state of emergency banning “acts of disobedience” to hold onto power. Election winner Adama Barrow inaugurated president 19 Jan at Gambian embassy in Senegalese capital Dakar. ECOWAS troops crossed from Senegal into Gambia night of 19 Jan but halted advance to allow chance for mediated solution. Presidents of Guinea and Mauritania arrived in capital Banjul 20 Jan and secured Jammeh’s resignation. Jammeh went into exile in Equatorial Guinea via Guinea 21 Jan. Troops from Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana and Mali secured Banjul and other towns 22 Jan; ECOWAS said pro-Jammeh forces and mercenaries opened fire but were neutralised. President Barrow’s advisor 22 Jan said Jammeh embezzled over \$11mn from banks in previous two weeks. Parliament revoked state of emergency 24 Jan. Barrow returned to Gambia 26 Jan.

 Guinea JANUARY 2017

Opposition MPs 4 Jan boycotted national assembly vote on new electoral code objecting to changes by presidential majority. Opposition led by Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) 7 Jan said changes would delay local elections planned for Feb, accused presidency of “violating” 12 Oct agreement between govt and opposition on mayoral and community elections and suspended participation in committee responsible for its implementation. Leaders of UFDG and Democratic Union of Guinea announced alliance mid-Jan.

➔ Guinea-Bissau JANUARY 2017

President Vaz 6 Jan accused former PM Pereira of having embezzled €100mn of public funds while in office and asked judiciary to investigate.

➔ Mali JANUARY 2017

Jihadist bombing in Gao threatened fragile progress in security arrangements in north. While main separatist rebel alliance Coalition of Azawad Movements (CMA) and Platform coalition that favours national unity were negotiating conditions of participation in joint patrols, car bomb claimed by jihadist group al-Murabitun exploded 18 Jan at joint camp in Gao, killing 61 soldiers and armed group members. Germany 11 Jan said it would add 350 soldiers and eight combat and transport helicopters to its 650 troops in UN mission, MINUSMA. EU same day extended European External Action Service mission, EUCAP Sahel Mali, until Jan 2019 and allocated it €29.7mn for one year from mid-Jan 2017. National security forces, MINUSMA and French Barkhane forces continued to be targets of asymmetrical attacks. Unidentified assailants 1 Jan burned down police station in Gossi, Timbuktu region. Al-Murabitun claimed 6 Jan attack on govt forces (FAMA) outpost in Ansongo, Gao region that killed two FAMA. Two unidentified gunmen 4 Jan killed International Committee of the Red Cross employee in Gao region. FAMA vehicle 11 Jan triggered IED in Mopti region, five soldiers killed. In centre, unidentified gunmen shot two mayors in Boni 18 Jan and Mondoro 28 Jan. Pro-unity Self-Defence Group of Imrad Tuareg and Allies (GATIA) said CMA attacked checkpoint near Tin-Assako, Kidal region 21 Jan killing fourteen. During Africa-France summit in Bamako, Jeune Afrique 13 Jan reported Barkhane forces killed ten-year-old boy in Nov in Tigabatene, Kidal region; French President Hollande said investigation ongoing. Govt, Burkina Faso and Niger 24 Jan agreed to create joint military force to counter insecurity in border areas in Liptako-Gourma zone.

- [COMMENTARY: Forced out of Towns in the Sahel, Africa's Jihadists Go Rural](#)

➔ Niger JANUARY 2017

Boko Haram (BH) 1 Jan attacked army position in Baroua, Diffa region in SE killing three soldiers; fifteen BH killed. Govt said twenty BH members surrendered in Diffa region 4 Jan. Suspected BH members early Jan killed two civilians in charge of negotiating surrender of BH with authorities. BH 21 Jan raided army position in Gueskerou, Diffa region, killing two soldiers; dozens of combatants reportedly killed. In response to protest against President Issoufou's policies and regime corruption in capital Niamey in Dec, thousands joined presidential coalition march in Niamey 8 Jan. Govt, Mali and Burkina Faso 24 Jan agreed to create joint military force to counter insecurity in border areas in Liptako-Gourma zone.

Issoufou 13 Jan signed bilateral agreements with Saudi Arabia's King Salman including on security cooperation and education funding. IMF 23 Jan approved \$134mn three-year arrangement supporting national plan for economic development.

- [COMMENTARY: Forced out of Towns in the Sahel, Africa's Jihadists Go Rural](#)

➔ Nigeria JANUARY 2017

Boko Haram (BH) attacks and military counter operations continued. BH attacked three army positions in Yobe and Borno states 7-25 Jan, eleven soldiers and scores of insurgents reportedly killed; attempted to seize IDP camp at Rann 19 Jan, but army repelled them, killing eight. BH stepped up attacks on civilians: twelve suicide bombings in Borno and Adamawa states 4-31 Jan killed at least 34 people including bombers. BH raided Dagu, Askira Uba LGA 23 Jan abducting seven women; ambushed commercial vehicles on Maiduguri-Damboia road 28 Jan killing eight civilians and two soldiers. Army reported progress in "clearance operations" mostly in NE of Borno state: arrested four BH in Madaki 13 Jan; killed thirteen BH and rescued 48 women and children in Dikwa LGA 15 Jan; attacked BH hideout near Tumbum Rego 16 Jan. Air force 17 Jan mistakenly bombed IDP camp in Rann, Borno state: presidency admitted govt responsibility same day, aid workers 19 Jan said 76 killed but local govt chair 22 Jan said 234 corpses buried; govt promised investigation. Niger Delta situation remained fragile: long-dormant insurgent group Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta 2 Jan passed "vote of no confidence" on President Buhari's management of crisis; Niger Delta Avengers 6 Jan threatened to attack oil installations, claiming govt not ready for talks; Niger Delta Warriors 13 Jan threatened mass protests if Buhari did not meet their demands within fourteen days but failed to act after deadline. Federal govt 15 Jan met ethnic and political leaders in Delta state but not armed group leaders; no agreement reached. Unidentified assailants blew up govt-owned pipeline in Ughelli, Delta state. In Kaduna state in north centre, soldiers deployed to help police end communal violence. Shiite Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) 25 Jan protested in Abuja as federal govt did not comply with court order to release IMN leader by 16 Jan; govt appealed order. Several incidents of herder-farmer violence reported: at least thirteen killed in clashes in Bosso LGA, Niger state 10 and 14 Jan. Suspected bandits 15 Jan killed ten youths in Abaji, Benue state. Security operatives broke up rally by pro-Biafra agitators in Port Harcourt, Rivers state 20 Jan; agitators said eleven members killed, police denied deaths.

- [COMMENTARY: Forced out of Towns in the Sahel, Africa's Jihadists Go Rural](#)

Asia

➔ China (Internal) JANUARY 2017

Govt 9 Jan reported police had killed three "violent terror" suspects in Xinjiang. Xinjiang authorities 1 Jan conducted anti-terror exercise following late Dec attack on govt building; local govt head 10 Jan said authorities would tighten security along border with Pakistan to prevent terrorists entering or leaving. Several individuals from Xinjiang arrested by Turkish police 5 Jan suspected of involvement in deadly New Year's Eve attack on Istanbul nightclub.

➔ China/Japan JANUARY 2017

Japan 9 Jan scrambled fighter jets after Chinese air force bombers and reconnaissance planes flew through Tsushima Strait over ECS and Sea of Japan – but not entering Japanese air space – for first time since Aug 2016; Chinese media accused Japan of overreacting. Japan reported Chinese coastguard ships temporarily entered Japanese waters around disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands 4, 8 and 22 Jan. Japan 24 Jan launched first military communications satellite to boost Self-Defence Forces' capacity in region. During mid-month visit to Philippines, Australia, Indonesia and Vietnam, Japanese PM Abe discussed need for security and economic cooperation.

➔ Korean Peninsula JANUARY 2017

U.S. condemned Kim Jong-un's 1 Jan claim that DPRK will soon test-fire an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), warned against "provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric". Beijing said it hoped "all parties will refrain from words and deeds that lead to the escalation of tension". U.S. state department 3 Jan said it did not believe DPRK could mount a nuclear warhead on a ballistic missile. U.S. 5 Jan said DPRK had shown "qualitative" improvement in nuclear and missile capabilities following unprecedented level of tests – 24 missile and two nuclear – in 2016; said vital for U.S., Japan, South Korea and other countries to cooperate against threat, sustain pressure through sanctions. DPRK state media 8 Jan warned Pyongyang could launch ICBM test "any time" from any location, blamed hostile U.S. policy for arms development. Outgoing U.S. sec defense called DPRK weapons capabilities and missile defence programs "serious threat", said U.S. prepared to shoot down any missile launch or test coming toward U.S. or an ally that posed a threat, or monitor for intelligence. Outgoing U.S. Sec State John Kerry 10 Jan said situation could get dangerous, "getting close to it right now". ROK intelligence agencies 18 Jan reported they had seen possible ICBM parts being transported, suggesting preparations for new missile test-launch underway. New U.S. administration 20 Jan said it would develop "state of the art" missile defence system to protect against attacks from DPRK and Iran; no details provided. U.S. think-tank 39 North said satellite imagery from 22 Jan suggested nuclear reactor at DPRK's Yongbyon nuclear facility "very likely operating"; operations at facility previously suspended since late 2015. ROK Acting President Hwang 23 Jan said deployment of U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile defence system could not be delayed, despite Chinese opposition; U.S. President Trump in 30 Jan phone call to Hwang reiterated "ironclad" commitment to defend ROK. Senior DPRK defector Thae Yong-ho 25 Jan said country's elite increasingly expressing discontent toward regime, with low-level dissent.

➔ Taiwan Strait JANUARY 2017

In 5 Jan letter to Pope Francis, Taiwanese President Tsai said Taiwan aspires to create “new era” of peace with China, said “military action cannot resolve problems”. Tsai met with U.S. Senator Ted Cruz and Texas governor during stopover on way to Central America 8 Jan, defying request from China that U.S. not allow her to enter or have formal govt meetings. Beijing criticised attendance of Taiwanese delegation at U.S. President Trump’s inauguration 20 Jan; 23 Jan urged new U.S. administration to understand importance of One China policy. Taiwan scrambled jets and navy ships 11 Jan to “surveil and control” group of Chinese warships led by Liaoning aircraft carrier that sailed north through Taiwan Strait, entering Taiwan’s air defence identification zone (ADIZ) in SW. Japan late Dec changed name of its Taiwanese embassy from “The Interchange Association” to “Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association”; Beijing expressed “strong dissatisfaction”.

➔ Afghanistan JANUARY 2017

Three high profile attacks shook cities of Kabul, Lashkargah and Kandahar 10 Jan. Twin suicide bombing near parliament in Kabul left 51 people dead and 150 injured, mostly parliamentary staff and police; Taliban claimed responsibility, said target was bus carrying National Directorate of Security (NDS) personnel. Suicide in Lashkar Gah killed thirteen NDS personnel. Bomb blast at Kandahar governor’s guesthouse killed eleven including five UAE diplomats and deputy governor, over a dozen injured including governor and UAE ambassador; no group claimed responsibility, officials blamed Pakistan-based Haqqani network. Insurgents 20-21 Jan carried out major assault in Maiwand district, Kandahar, killing at least sixteen police and capturing two outposts. Gunmen 6 Jan ambushed ethnic Hazara miners in Baghlan province killing at least nine; Taliban denied responsibility. Taliban attack on army post in Helmand province 31 Jan resulted in at least ten soldiers reported killed; U.S. launched airstrikes on Taliban positions. Islamic State (IS) continued efforts to consolidate presence in Nangarhar province: reportedly destroyed 65 houses in Kot district; 15 Jan kidnapped fourteen staff from religious school in Haska Mina district. Govt reported anti-IS operations in southern Zabul province killed 57 suspected militants 23-25 Jan. At least ten killed in explosion in Pachir Wa Agam district, Nangarhar 15 Jan; at least three security officials killed by IED in Sehra Bagh, Khost province; both attacks unclaimed. Divisions widened within Jamiat-i-Islami party after chief executive and acting Balkh Governor Atta Mohammad Noor late Dec revealed he had engaged in talks with President Ghani to join national govt; Noor had previously complained about Chief Executive Abdullah’s failure to represent interests of the party in govt. Ethnic Panjshiri MPs and leaders in meetings 18-20 Jan agreed to elect leader from Panjshir to counter Noor’s growing influence in Jamiat. UN 21 Jan warned country is facing major humanitarian crisis with a third of population likely to need assistance in 2017; appealed for more than \$500mn in aid.

➔ Bangladesh JANUARY 2017

President Hamid 25 Jan formed six-member search committee for reconstitution of Election Commission (EC); followed consultations with political parties, including ruling Awami League (AL) and opposition Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and Jatiya Party, on proposals to amend way EC is formed, ahead of late 2018 general election. BNP said search committee members biased in favour of AL PM Sheikh Hasina reportedly considering forming all-party interim cabinet to supervise next parliamentary election, as she proposed for controversial 2014 polls, however BNP continues to demand caretaker govt for election period. AL-backed chairman candidates defeated by party rebels in about a third of 38 zila parishads (district councils) that held elections 28 Dec, boycotted by BNP and Jatiya Party. Dhaka court 25 Jan issued arrest warrants for seventeen BNP leaders and activists accused of involvement in arson attack on bus during Jan 2015

blockade. International Crimes Tribunal 23 Jan reported it would launch investigation into AL MP Muslem Uddin, accused of committing war crimes during 1971 independence war. Human rights organisation Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) released annual report 31 Dec claiming 195 extrajudicial killings, 97 enforced disappearances and “secret killings”, and 391 attacks on Hindu temples and homes in 2016. Court 23 Jan handed down death sentences to 26 including sixteen former members of elite Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) for involvement in 2014 murder of seven people. Counter-terrorism operations continued, including 6 Jan killing of Nurul Islam Marzan, chief of so-called neo-Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (neo-JMB) and alleged Gulshan attack mastermind. Some 22,000 Rohingya fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh in first two weeks of Jan (see Myanmar); visiting Myanmar special envoy early Jan expressed desire to address Rohingya issue and other concerns in “spirit of good neighbourliness”.

➔ India (Non-Kashmir) JANUARY 2017

Senior Maoist leader, Bengal-Jharkhand-Odisha commander Ranjit Pal and his wife surrendered to Kolkata police 25 Jan. Several suspected Maoists reported killed in clashes with security forces in Chhattisgarh early month including in Bijapur, Narayanpur and Gadchiroli districts; several security personnel also killed. Two women and a girl killed by suspected Maoist IED in Narayanpur district 18 Jan. Maoists also suspected in hacking to death of civilian in Sukma district 19 Jan and murder of village head in Dantewada district 17 Jan.

➔ Kashmir JANUARY 2017

India reported almost a dozen foreign and local militants killed by security forces in Jammu and Kashmir since 1 Jan. Three Hizb-ul-Mujahadeen militants killed in 16 Jan gunfight in Awoori, Anantnag district; confrontation sparked clashes between protesters and police while nearby villagers reportedly attempted to disrupt operation; incident reportedly prompted protests across southern Kashmir. Security forces 19 Jan killed operational commander of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) in Bandipore, N Jammu and Kashmir. Indian officials 24 Jan reported two LeT militants killed during security operations in Hadoora, N of Srinagar, and one unidentified militant killed near Line of Control (LoC). Clashes reported 20 Jan between police and protesters in Sopore in north during one-day general strike organised by separatists. Unidentified attackers 9 Jan killed three road construction workers in Jourian, Jammu district; motives unknown. Following World Bank's 12 Dec halting of two arbitration processes between India and Pakistan under Indus Water Treaty (IWT), Indian officials 5 Jan proposed dispute should be resolved bilaterally or through neutral technical expert, rather than full court of arbitration as sought by Islamabad. Pakistan minister for water and power 17 Jan told senate panel India engaging in “posturing”, no immediate threat of it repudiating IWT. India's new army chief in 3 Jan interview said strikes carried out Sept 2016 across LoC were “messaging” to terrorists, will repeat if militants continue operations on Indian territory; Pakistani counterpart 5 Jan claimed Pakistan armed forces ready to respond to any Indian aggression. Pakistan 6 Jan presented dossier to UNSG Guterres accusing India of involvement in terrorist activities in Karachi, Balochistan, and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Pakistan 9 Jan tested first submarine-launched cruise missile.

➔ Nepal JANUARY 2017

Lack of progress on proposed constitutional amendments continued to cast doubts over local elections, with CPN (Maoist Center)-led govt unable to bridge divide between opposition UML party demanding polls be held first and dissenting Madhesi parties demanding amendments as prerequisite. Constitutional amendment bill tabled in parliament 8 Jan; proposal previously approved by cabinet in Nov but contested by UML which obstructed discussions in legislature. Madhesi alliance – claiming bill only partially addresses their grievances – announced mass demonstrations in southern Tarai plains 5 Feb to pressure govt on amendments as some momentum gathered toward elections, with CPN (Maoist Center), Nepali Congress, and UML 21 Jan agreeing to hold local polls by mid-May and Election Commission 24 Jan announcing it could conduct them by May-June. Differences emerged between two transitional justice mechanisms over seeking one-year extensions to terms ending 10 Feb: Commission on Disappearances favours extension; Truth and Reconciliation Commission demands legal amendments and additional resources as precondition. Judicial Council criticised for failing to reflect principles of inclusivity and proportional representation following 12 Jan recommendation of 80 judges for High Courts. Head of national anti-corruption body Lokman Singh Karki disqualified by Supreme Court 8 Jan amid pending parliamentary impeachment motion.

➔ Pakistan JANUARY 2017

Unclaimed roadside bomb 2 Jan hit Frontier Corps (FC) patrol injuring four FC personnel and two civilians in Quetta, Balochistan. Anti-Shia extremist group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) claimed market bombing 21 Jan that killed at least 22 in predominantly Shia Parachinar, Kurram Agency. Punjab police 18 Jan reported alleged LeJ leader Asif Chotu killed along with three other militants during clash in Sheikhpura, west of Lahore. PM Nawaz and military officials 9 Jan agreed to renew controversial military court system for trying civilians charged with terrorism; interior ministry reportedly drafting legislation to make the courts permanent. Parliament 9 Jan expressed concern after five activists, known for their criticism of religious extremism and security forces, went missing early Jan. Alleged abductions sparked protests 10 Jan in Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore, where hundreds of people accused security forces of mandating abductions; in Karachi, around 100 members of hard-line Tehreek Labaik Ya Rasool Allah allegedly hurled stones at protesters while chanting slogans accusing activists of breaking blasphemy laws. Human rights activist 14 Jan filed Supreme Court petition seeking investigation into disappearances, charging that the missing activists were victims of “state enforced disappearances”. Four of the five missing activists returned late Jan. Police and security officials mid-Jan ordered around a dozen NGOs to halt operations, accusing them of activities “detrimental to national/strategic security”; groups mostly working on women’s and human rights in S Punjab. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif 6 Jan said ex-army chief Raheel Sharif had been appointed to head Saudi Arabian-led Islamic Military Alliance, prompting criticism from Shia political groups. Asif later conceded Sharif had accepted position without seeking govt’s permission.

➔ Sri Lanka JANUARY 2017

Parliament again postponed debate on Constitutional Assembly steering committee report that would outline proposed new constitution, now scheduled 23 Feb. Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) ministers continued to state positions including on devolution at odds with those of United National Party (UNP), President Sirisena and leadership of Tamil National Alliance (TNA). SLFP ministers also announced support for Sirisena to run for second term in 2020, despite his repeated claims he will serve only one term. Consultations Task Force (CTF), charged with national consultations on reconciliation and transitional justice, 3 Jan released 700-page report based on over 7,000 submissions from across island, with recommendations for all four promised transitional justice “mechanisms”: office of missing persons, office of reparations, truth commission and special court. Neither president nor PM attended launch. Cabinet spokesperson 4 Jan rejected CTF recommendation to include at least one foreign judge on each special court trial; justice minister 5 Jan stated he had “no confidence” in report, rejecting it as work of NGOs. In 11 Jan speech in London, FM Mangala Samaraweera announced govt’s intention to negotiate “technical rollover” resolution at March UN Human Rights Council (HRC), which would extend terms of current resolution for additional period; also announced law to establish “truth seeking commission” would be finalised in time to be presented to HRC. European Commission 11 Jan announced support for renewal of GSP+ trade benefits to Sri Lanka; stressed need for Sri Lanka to demonstrate further progress on implementing 27 human rights conventions, particularly need to make anti-terrorism legislation consistent with International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Cabinet 10 Jan reportedly approved revised draft of proposed Counter Terrorism Act, designed to replace Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA); reportedly removes several repressive clauses but leaves definition of terrorism broad. UN Special Rapporteur on Torture released report 23 Jan noting “total impunity” and a “culture of torture” in the police and recommending govt repeal PTA and review draft legislation to replace it.

- [OP-ED: Sri Lanka’s Transition to Nowhere](#)

➔ Indonesia JANUARY 2017

Police late Dec reported arrests of suspected terrorists in 2016 at 137, up from 75 in 2015; 33 suspected terrorists killed by security forces, up from seven in 2015; police said increase due to dynamics within Islamic State and in Syria and Iraq. Military commander 19 Jan announced military will build new naval base in Papua, part of move to border areas to “help create new economic centres and trigger development”. Indonesia early Jan suspended its language training for Australian military following controversy over training materials in Perth military base found offensive to Indonesia’s Pancasila ideology and thought to encourage West Papuan independence movement; Indonesian govt back-pedalled after commander of military forces, Gen Gatot Nurmantyo, had initially unilaterally announced suspension of all military cooperation with Australia.

➔ Myanmar JANUARY 2017

Military operations continued in north Maungdaw, N Rakhine state, where al-Yaqin armed group staged attacks Oct and Nov. Sweep in Buthidaung township 4 Jan resulted in seizure of home-made guns and arrest of four suspects who

authorities claim were planning attack on security targets. Ongoing operations, widespread fear and dire humanitarian situation caused continued displacement, with UN reporting 69,000 had fled to Bangladesh since Oct, at least 23,000 more displaced internally. Humanitarian access marginally improved but remains heavily restricted. Several Rohingya, most with links to authorities, found murdered in Maungdaw township over month; al-Yaqin suspected of responsibility. Investigation Commission established by govt to look into Oct/Nov attacks and security response issued preliminary report 3 Jan stating unable to confirm widespread reports that security forces were responsible for rape, burning of villages and illegal arrests and torture; also stated no cases of malnutrition were found, contradicting UN empirical data. Commission conducted second round of investigations from 6 Jan, but day before its 31 Jan deadline to send final report to president requested “indefinite extension” to look at further allegations. Video purporting to show beating and abuse of Rohingya villagers by security forces posted to social media 31 Dec; govt confirmed video’s authenticity, stated it was taking action to punish police responsible; several officers arrested. Visiting Bangladesh 11-12 Jan, deputy FM Kyaw Tin met with PM and FM, agreed to deepen bilateral relations, begin discussions on repatriation of those who had recently fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh. Prominent Muslim lawyer and legal adviser to Aung San Suu Kyi shot dead at Yangon airport 29 Jan; suspect arrested at scene. Ahead of next “Panglong-21” Peace Conference slated for late Feb, serious clashes continued between “Northern Alliance” of four armed group and govt forces in N Shan state. Govt forces also continued offensives against Kachin Independence Organisation positions in Kachin state, making gains late Dec and early Jan including group’s 3rd Battalion headquarters and nearby hill posts 12 Jan. Fighting close to IDP camps prompted some 4,000 IDPs to attempt to seek shelter in China on 11 Jan; reportedly turned back by Chinese authorities. Ta’ang National Liberation Army attacked govt troops in Namhsan town 10 Jan. Govt peace advisers met with National Ceasefire Agreement non-signatory armed groups in Chiang Mai 12-13 Jan, no substantive progress reported.

- **STATEMENT: Myanmar Assassination Shows Urgent Need for Unity Against Hate Crimes**

➔ Philippines JANUARY 2017

Security operations continued against militant groups pledging allegiance to Islamic State (IS). Defence minister 26 Jan reported intelligence showing that Isnilon Hapilon, leader of Abu Sayyaf group and reported IS emir for South East Asia, was moving on IS instructions to southern Lanao del Sur province to expand IS presence, unify extremist groups. Military 29 Jan reported fifteen militants killed, Hapilon seriously injured in airstrikes, Lanao del Sur. Security forces early Jan moved against IS-allied Ansar Al-Khilafah Philippines (AKP) in Sarangani province, reportedly killing leader Mohammad Jaafar Maguid 6 Jan. Police arrested Abu Sayyaf sub-leader Faizal Jaafar in Zamboanga City 27 Jan. President Duterte 27 Jan told MILF and MNLF to deny sanctuary to IS-linked militants, or face military incursions into their territory. Three children killed in bomb in Al-Barka, Basilan 29 Jan; officials blamed Abu Sayyaf. Malaysia 23 Jan reported four arrested linked to Mindanao IS cell. Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said speedy peace process in S Philippines needed to avoid IS militants leaving Syria and Iraq regrouping there. Presidential peace adviser Jesus Dureza 6 Jan said govt considering constitutional amendments to accommodate adjustments to new Bangsamoro autonomy enabling law. Govt, Communist Party of the Philippines/New People’s Army/National Democratic Front (CPP/NPA/NDF) peace talks continued in Rome. Following Russian weapons offer, Duterte 7 Jan visited Russian anti-submarine vessel docked in Manila, asked Russia to be ally and protector. (See also South China Sea).

🚩 South China Sea JANUARY 2017

Tensions increased between China and the U.S. after new U.S. administration officials signalled tougher approach to Chinese presence in SCS, as well as shifting to protectionist trade policy. Nominee for U.S. Sec State Rex Tillerson said at confirmation hearing 11 Jan U.S. should block China's access to its artificial islands in contested areas and stop it building new islands; compared China's policy to "Russia's taking of Crimea". Beijing said China had right to conduct "normal activities" in its own territory; state media warned such actions by U.S. would lead to "devastating confrontation" and "large-scale war". Asked whether President Trump agreed, White House spokesperson 23 Jan said "U.S. is going to make sure we protect our interests" and prevent Chinese attempts to "take over" SCS. Beijing next day reiterated China's "indisputable sovereignty" over parts of SCS, urged U.S. to "speak and act cautiously" "to avoid harming the peace and stability of the SCS". Chinese media 26 Jan reported govt testing new very long range air-to-air missile, apparent advantage over U.S. capabilities; next day said China moved long-range missiles to NE by Russian border, from where they can reach U.S. Chinese military official 29 Jan warned war with U.S. "becoming a practical reality", called for military deployments in SCS and ECS. Chinese aircraft carrier Liaoning early Jan continued operation in SCS, conducting exercises with other warships and fighter jets and testing weapons, before returning to Qingdao port 14 Jan. U.S. navy announced deployment of group of naval vessels to Western Pacific early Jan to focus on maritime security operations, conduct bilateral exercises in Indo-Asia-Pacific region. Philippines FM 17 Jan revealed govt had sent protest note to Chinese embassy in Dec over reports that China has installed anti-aircraft/anti-missile weapons on artificial islands in SCS. Meeting in Manila 19 Jan, Philippines President Duterte and China's vice FM agreed to set up bilateral consultation mechanism to deal with issues arising in SCS, announced planned visit to Beijing by Duterte in May. Chinese and Vietnamese leaders met in Beijing 14 Jan, pledged to manage their differences and safeguard peace and stability in SCS. Malaysian navy official reported it will establish three permanent submarine exercise areas in SCS to enhance submarine operating safety. Philippines defence minister 26 Jan said U.S. military to start work constructing facilities for troops and equipment inside Philippines army bases, in accordance with 2014 defence agreement.

➔ Thailand JANUARY 2017

Several members of National Legislative Assembly (NLA) early Jan said general election may have to be further postponed from late 2017 to mid-2018 because lawmakers needed more time to draft organic laws on parties and polling; PM Prayuth Chan-ocha later conceded election unlikely before 2018. Prayuth 10 Jan announced king had declined to endorse draft constitution, seeking changes in provisions relating to royal powers; NLA and cabinet quickly amended interim constitution to permit amendments to draft. Prayuth 17 Jan said amendments would be completed in one month before being sent to king again for endorsement within 90 days. NCPO mid-Jan announced launch of political reconciliation process, led by deputy PM Prawit Wongsuwan and to begin with MoU to be signed by all political actors committing to follow rules and abide by outcome of next general election. Prawit said govt would seek opinions from politicians, but will not yet lift ban on political party activity. Politicians responded warily; Democrat Party member and former FM Kasit Piromya and former Pheu Thai Party parliamentarian Worachai Hema both suggested military also sign MoU and pledge to refrain from staging coups. Sapaeing Basor, reputed leader of Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), died in exile in Malaysia 10 Jan. PM Prayuth offered condolences to Sapaeing's family, ordered authorities to facilitate return of his remains to Thailand; tens of thousands turned out for his funeral prayers in Yala and Pattani 16 Jan. Ongoing violence in Deep South included school director shot dead by gunmen in Yala's Muang district 4 Jan; suspected insurgent killed in military-police raid of his home in Yala's Raman district 16 Jan.

➔ Europe & Central Asia

🚩 Bosnia And Herzegovina JANUARY 2017

Republika Srpska (RS) 9 Jan celebrated RS Day, in defiance of Constitutional Court (CC) ruling that it is discriminatory and unconstitutional; RS President Dodik repeated calls for greater autonomy for RS and again raised prospect of secession. Celebrations in RS capital Banja Luka included presence of army's Third Infantry Regiment, despite lack of state govt authorisation and warning by NATO that their involvement would violate Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA); Serbia's president also attended celebrations. U.S. 17 Jan imposed sanctions on Dodik for obstruction of DPA over his defiance of CC; Dodik asked govt to declare U.S. ambassador "persona non grata". Following Dec CC ruling that electoral system for Federation entity House of Peoples is unconstitutional, largest Bosnian Croat party HNS 28 Jan repeated call for establishment of third, Croat entity; main Bosniak SDA party said call unacceptable, would further divide country.

🚩 Kosovo JANUARY 2017

Tensions spiked with Serbia following 14 Jan reopening of railway between Belgrade and northern Mitrovica town in ethnic Serb part of Kosovo, closed since 1999, with Serbian train painted with slogan "Kosovo is Serbia" in 21 languages. Serbia stopped train before border, claiming Kosovo was planning to attack it, after Kosovo ordered its authorities to block it, saying it was provocative. Serbian PM Vucic accused Kosovo of trying to provoke "large-scale conflict", while President Nikolic 15 Jan warned sides had been on "brink of war", said Serbia ready to send troops to defend Serbs in Kosovo if necessary. Kosovo President Thaci 16 Jan said Belgrade plotting to annex northern Kosovo. Tensions also fuelled by France's 4 Jan arrest, acting on Serbian warrant, of former PM Ramush Haradinaj on charges of war crimes; French court 12 Jan released him from custody, decision on extradition request from Belgrade pending. Kosovo and Serbian PMs and presidents met in Brussels 24 Jan for EU-mediated talks; EU foreign policy chief Mogherini called on them to put aside differences. President Thaci said meeting succeeded in lowering tension, however his remark that Serbian leaders had started to recognise Kosovo's independence drew sharp response from Serbian PM Vucic; next meeting scheduled for 1 Feb. Hand grenade damaged new govt building in northern Mitrovica 10 Jan, no casualties.

➡ Macedonia JANUARY 2017

Nikola Gruevski's VMRO DPMNE party, which narrowly won most seats in closely-contested 11 Dec elections, failed to meet 29 Jan deadline to form new govt as ethnic Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), VMRO DPMNE's partner in previous coalition govt, said it had not decided whether to join new coalition; VMRO DPMNE called for new elections. Representatives of three out of the four ethnic Albanian parties – DUI, Movement for Reform – Democratic Party of Albanians (LR-PDSH) and Besa Movement – 7 Jan signed joint declaration outlining preconditions for their participation in govt, including making Albanian an official language. Special Prosecutor (SJO) investigating wiretapping scandal 18 Jan announced it was dropping all charges including blackmail against opposition leader Zoran Zaev due to lack of evidence.

➔ Azerbaijan JANUARY 2017

Baku court 25 Jan sentenced over a dozen opposition figures, all arrested late 2015 during raids in Nardaran outside Baku, to prison terms of ten to twenty years' jail for calling for overthrow of govt and inciting hatred. Authorities continued efforts to achieve extradition of Russian-Israeli blogger Aleksandr Lapshin from Belarus to prosecute him for visiting Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict zone and making calls for its independence, prompting criticism from Moscow.

➔ Georgia JANUARY 2017

Breakaway Abkhazia republic's de facto parliament 29 Dec adopted amendment to law on foreign citizens softening rules for seekers of residency permit: will allow local ethnic Georgians to receive local documents solidifying their right to live and work in Abkhazia, does not allow them to run or vote in de facto elections. Group of ethnic Georgians 25 Jan staged rare public protest against decision of Abkhaz de facto govt to close two crossing points in southern section of administrative boundary line (ABL). Former de facto President Aleksandr Ankvab, exiled in Moscow since 2014, late Jan succeeded in registering to run in March legislative poll. Georgia 10 Jan called on UNESCO to send experts to Abkhazia following early Jan reports of destruction of church and cemetery in central Abkhazia during preparations for regular joint Russia-Abkhazia military training. In breakaway republic South Ossetia campaigning began ahead of 9 April de facto presidential election. In Tbilisi 21 members of former ruling party United National Movement (UNM) 12 Jan announced they were forming new political movement which will not cooperate with former Georgian President Saakashvili: move leaves UNM with only six MPs in parliament.

➔ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) JANUARY 2017

Month saw occasional exchange of fire on different sections of Line of Contact, both in main locations of incidents in recent months – N and NE sections – and intensified shooting in S and SE sections. Azerbaijani side reported one soldier killed mid Jan, Armenian side five soldiers killed. Russian FM Sergey Lavrov 17 Jan spoke about need to resume talks on post-April 2016 escalation proposals (increase of OSCE Special Representative's office and introduction of investigative mechanism), and about his vision of conflict settlement formula. Negotiation process remains in deadlock, with Azerbaijan demanding guarantees that Armenia will agree on some major concessions in peace process, and Yerevan denying prospects for any significant shift in its stance till incidents cease. Armenian and Azerbaijani FMs scheduled to meet on margins of Munich Security Conference 17-19 Feb. Ahead of referendum in de facto NK republic on new constitution scheduled for 20 Feb, observers expressed concern over changes which would solidify power of president and

abolish PM position; would also allow current de facto President Bako Sahakyan to stay in power after end of his second term in July 2017 for “transitional period” and allow him to run for same office in 2020.

➔ Russia/North Caucasus JANUARY 2017

Month saw another series of security operations in Chechnya, including large-scale operation against armed group allegedly affiliated with Islamic State (IS) in outskirts of Tsotsi-Yurt village, Kurchaloy district 10-12 Jan. Four suspected group members reported killed and one arrested during operation, two national guard members killed. Police arrested group's alleged commander in Grozny 14 Jan; two other members arrested same day in Nalchik. At same time as 10-12 Jan Tsotsi-Yurt operation, law-enforcement officials detained dozens of people displaying visual symbols of adherence to Salafism in seven other villages nearby. Addressing local law-enforcement forces 14 Jan, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov called them “ideological fighters”, urged them to expel families of fighters from their villages. Gathering of residents in Tsotsi-Yurt 14 Jan decided not to expel family members of insurgents killed in recent security operation, but ruled collective punishment would be enforced in future. Kadyrov claimed security services had followed armed group, which had been planning attacks since summer 2016, said over 50 members arrested. Three Counter Terrorist Operations (CTOs) conducted in Dagestan, killing at least four suspected militants. Month also saw rise in attacks on security and police forces throughout N Caucasus: some two dozen suspected militants reported killed, mostly in Dagestan and some in Chechnya; seven law enforcement officials killed in Dagestan and Chechnya; one civilian killed in Kabardino-Balkaria. “Memorial” human rights centre confirmed extrajudicial killing on 20 Dec of Madina Shakhbieva, suspected of being part of group that carried out attacks on police in Grozny 17-18 Dec. Kadyrov 24 Jan confirmed Chechen men are among Russian forces fighting alongside regime against rebels in Syria.

➔ Moldova JANUARY 2017

Newly-elected President Dodon met with Russian President Putin and during Moscow visit 17 Jan, reportedly suggested he wanted to abandon 2014 Association Agreement with EU. European Commission 13 Jan announced it will offer Moldova €100mn in aid. Dodon met with de facto head of breakaway Transnistria early Jan.

➔ Ukraine JANUARY 2017

Clashes between military and separatists along front line in east escalated late Jan, with some twenty killed 29-31 Jan in fighting over govt-held Avdiivka, near Donetsk, involving artillery shelling. Ukrainian officials 31 Jan reported eight

soldiers killed and 26 wounded since 29 Jan, ten Russian-backed separatists killed and 25 injured; at least two civilians reported killed. Sides blamed each other for escalation; President Poroshenko cut short trip to Germany. UN reported Avdiivka and Yasynuvata towns cut off from electricity supply, some 15,000 civilians left without water, many without heating. UNSC 31 Jan expressed “grave concern” over “dangerous deterioration”, noted severe impact on local civilians, called for immediate return to ceasefire regime. OSCE 19 Jan reported deteriorating security situation in east since New Year despite 23 Dec truce, with increase in ceasefire violations, including use of weapons banned under Minsk agreement; 27 Jan reported five civilians killed in increased fighting around Lugansk in previous two weeks. Ukrainian officials reported two soldiers killed in clashes 27 Jan. Kyiv, Germany, France and others expressed concern during month over whether new U.S. administration will maintain sanctions on Russia linked to its occupation of Crimea and role in separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine. Outgoing U.S. administration made final show of support to Kyiv with visit by VP Biden mid-month, and extension of sanctions on Russia by President Obama until March 2018. New U.S. President Trump and Russian President Putin reportedly discussed “partnership” on issues including Ukraine during 28 Jan call, did not discuss sanctions. Chinese President Xi speaking with Poroshenko on sidelines of World Economic Forum 17 Jan said he would like to deepen cooperation with Kyiv and offered assistance in seeking resolution of crisis. Kyiv 16 Jan filed lawsuit against Russia at International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing it of acts of “terrorism” and “discrimination” in connection with annexation of Crimea and backing separatist fighters in east. Poroshenko 22 Jan said he would resist efforts by “some politicians in Kyiv and Moscow” to push for early parliamentary elections, which he said were calculated to “destabilise our country”. Poroshenko 16 Jan warned continued delay on part of EU in waiving visa requirement for Ukrainians causing disillusionment with EU.

➔ Cyprus JANUARY 2017

UN-backed Conference on Cyprus took place in Geneva 9-12 Jan, with participation of Greek-Cypriot President Anastasiades and Turkish-Cypriot leader Akıncı, FMs of guarantor powers Greece, Turkey and UK, plus EU as observer. Participants discussed issues of security and guarantees, and exchanged territorial adjustment maps for first time. Territorial maps showed considerable points of agreement, with Greek Cypriots’ version showing Turkish entity comprising 28.2% compared with 29.2% on Turkish Cypriots’ version; disagreement also centred on specific sites including town of Morphou. On internal security in transitional period, Anastasiades suggested formation of international police force in which Turkish Cypriots could participate; Ankara said it could not accept EU as force provider. Turkish President Erdoğan 13 Jan said Turkey should maintain troops on island; Athens insisted on complete withdrawal. Deputies-level working group met 18-20 Jan to identify questions on security and security guarantees and instruments needed to address them; UN said talks a success but gave no details. Anastasiades and Akıncı met again in Cyprus 26 Jan and agreed to resume talks on all six chapters 1 Feb. UNSC 26 Jan extended UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus for six months. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development 24 Jan said ready to invest in N Cyprus if deal can be reached.

➔ Turkey JANUARY 2017

Clashes between state security forces and Kurdish PKK militants in SE continued at lower intensity. Two soldiers reportedly killed during operation against PKK in Şırnak (south east) 6 Jan; two soldiers killed 14 Jan and six alleged PKK militants reported killed in airstrikes 15 Jan during Bitlis operation (east). IED explosion attributed to PKK killed five

police in Diyarbakır's Sur district (south east) 16 Jan. Car bomb attack outside İzmir courthouse (west) 5 Jan killed four including police officer and two attackers; PKK affiliate Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK) claimed responsibility. As prosecution of Kurdish parliamentarians continued, prosecutor called for heavy sentences against jailed Democratic People's Party (HDP) co-chair Salahattin Demirtas and co-chair Figen Yüksekdağ; defending himself in court 6 Jan Demirtas denounced what he called politicised justice system biased against HDP. Police 31 Jan arrested two additional HDP lawmakers, including party spokesman Ayhan Bilgen, on charges of membership of "armed terror organisation". Parliament early Jan extended state of emergency introduced following July 2016 coup attempt for another three months. Govt continued post-coup purges, dismissing 6,000 additional police, civil servants, and academics 6 Jan and later in month, and issuing hundreds of arrest warrants for military and security personnel. Parliament 21 Jan approved controversial constitutional amendment set to increase President Erdoğan's powers, paving way for referendum planned for early April. Increased Russian support for Turkey's military operation in Syria marked new level of cooperation between Ankara and Moscow: Russia early Jan provided air support for Turkish offensive geared at taking Al Bab town from Islamic State (IS); Turkey and Russia 18 Jan launched joint airstrikes on town (see Syria). Police 17 Jan apprehended Uzbek national believed to be gunman who killed 39 people in New Year's attack on Istanbul nightclub. EU 12 Jan unlocked additional €200 mn from aid package for Syrian refugees in Turkey to build schools and provide humanitarian aid. Greece's Supreme Court 26 Jan ruled against extradition of eight Turkish military officers who fled to Greece on night of July coup attempt; court justified its decision saying that the soldiers, if sent back, would face "curtailment of their fundamental human rights". Turkish FM criticised decision saying Ankara would take necessary punitive steps including possible cancellation of bilateral readmission agreement with Greece, key component of EU-Turkey refugee deal.

➔ Kazakhstan JANUARY 2017

Govt formed working group 11 Jan to consider redistribution of power between president and parliament, widely viewed as step setting the scene for a post-President Nazarbayev era; Nazarbayev 25 Jan said he will serve as "supreme arbiter" between branches of govt. Other indicators include return of ambassador to Russia Marat Tazhin 12 Jan to become deputy head of executive office of president, and arrests of senior officials including former head of working group, detained 2 Jan on charges of disclosing state secrets; and former head of security services (KNB), detained late Dec on charges of disclosing state secrets and abuse of office. Kazakhstan hosted Syrian peace talks in Astana 23-24 Jan; also began two-year term as first ever Central Asian non-permanent member of UNSC 1 Jan.

➔ Kyrgyzstan JANUARY 2017

Ethnic Uzbek rights defender Azimjan Askarov sentenced to life imprisonment 24 Jan after retrial by Chui regional court, on charges of stirring ethnic hatred during clashes in Jalalabad in 2010 and alleged role in murder of police officer. Askarov maintains conviction politically motivated; UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) 24 Jan called decision "deeply troubling".

➔ Tajikistan JANUARY 2017

President Rahmon 12 Jan replaced longstanding mayor of capital Dushanbe, appointing his 29-year-old eldest son Rustam Rahmon; move raised further concerns among observers over consolidation of power in hands of president's family and possible alienation of former political allies.

➔ Turkmenistan JANUARY 2017

Govt early Jan suspended gas exports to Iran over payment dispute; now exporting to a single customer, China, which pays sub-market price.

➔ Uzbekistan JANUARY 2017

Swiss prosecutors 15 Jan confirmed they met with late President Karimov's daughter Gulnara, under house arrest in Tashkent on charges of money laundering, ending months of speculation about her fate. Govt continued border negotiations with Kyrgyzstan: Deputy PM Adkham Ikramov met with Kyrgyz President Atambayev 18 Jan in Bishkek, after meeting with Deputy PM Jenish Razakov in Osh in S Kyrgyzstan; sides agreed to speed up cooperation.

Latin America & Caribbean

➔ Colombia JANUARY 2017

Concentration of FARC forces in cantonments, which began 1 Dec and was meant to be complete by 31 Dec to guarantee timely start to disarmament process, continued in Jan amid logistical problems. FARC and gov't negotiated new protocol for FARC to be in cantonments at end of Jan and pushed back schedule for handing over of small and unstable weapons; as of 30 Jan, 2,500 guerrilla members resident in cantonments. Gov't established different commissions from peace agreement, including 17 Jan Special Electoral Mission to review and recommend improvements to elections and electoral structure. UN 29 Jan presented its second progress report stating it had deployed 280 out of 450 total international

monitors in country; carried out 288 activities including accompanying FARC movements, visits to pre-grouping sites and meetings with communities, among others; and investigated ten possible ceasefire violations. Govt and FARC 28 Jan announced plan to substitute 50,000 hectares of coca by compensating farmers for voluntary destruction of their crops, previously a source of financing for the guerrillas. Govt also announced plan to forcefully eradicate 50,000 hectares of coca. FARC saw further infighting between Teófilo Forero Mobile Column and part of another dissident unit comprising eight fighters from 14th Front 10 Jan. Peace process with ELN scheduled to begin 7 Feb, after expected release of ELN kidnap victim Odín Sánchez and pardons for two jailed ELN members. Govt additionally released two jailed ELN commanders to facilitate talks. ELN attacks continued in NE. ELN 31 Dec freed kidnapping victim Octavio Figueroa in northern department La Guajira. Violence against social leaders continued at high levels, including murder of local leader in northern department Córdoba 11 Jan, in Cauca 25 Dec and 10 Jan, and one in Urabá 29 Jan. Movements who have received threats and had members murdered include Patriotic March political party, seen as close to FARC.

- [REPORT: In the Shadow of “No”: Peace after Colombia’s Plebiscite](#)

➔ Venezuela JANUARY 2017

President Maduro’s appointment of Aragua state governor and former Interior Minister Tareck el Aissami as new VP 4 Jan seen as further step away from dialogue with opposition and toward confrontation. Aissami, replacing relative moderate Aristóbulo Istúriz, has been accused of ties with drug-traffickers and Middle Eastern extremists. Maduro charged Aissami with heading newly-created “Anti-Coup Command”; Aissami deployed intelligence service SEBIN to arrest several opposition politicians, including MP Gilber Caro, accused of plotting acts of terrorism. Aissami declared Voluntad Popular party “unconstitutional”, described its leaders as criminals and terrorists. Conflict of powers between executive and legislature worsened. Opposition-led National Assembly (AN) 9 Jan approved motion declaring Maduro had “abandoned his post” in constitutional terms by failing to address country’s multiple problems, no longer legitimate president. Govt-controlled supreme court (TSJ) 15 Jan reaffirmed AN was “in contempt” of its rulings and had violated its own internal rules, hence all actions null and void – including motion against president and 5 Jan election of its chairman and other officers. TSJ 9 Jan ordered that outgoing chairman Henry Ramos Allup (Acción Democrática) be reinstated while alleged contempt persists; legislature refused. TSJ also authorised Maduro to give his annual address not to parliament but to TSJ 15 Jan; during address Maduro said AN had “dissolved itself”. Talks between govt and opposition did not resume. MUD’s internal divisions appeared to worsen, with calls for alliance to be restructured and for Jesus “Chuo” Torrealba to step down as Sec Gen. Nuevo Tiempo party (UNT) led by Manuel Rosales and Avanzada Progresista continue to insist on dialogue. Rosales’ 31 Dec release from house arrest widely perceived in opposition as reward to UNT for promoting dialogue; following 12 July rally Rosales was congratulated in public by Maduro.

- [COMMENTARY: Venezuela Is Falling off the Map](#)

➔ Guatemala JANUARY 2017

President Morales’ son and brother arrested 18 Jan, accused of participation in 2013 fraud in National Registry of Property (NRP). Morales 18 Jan said he supports his family members but will respect due process; commentators praised uncompromising attitude of Public Ministry and International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) in

pursuing campaign against corruption. President Morales presented his first yearly report to Congress 14 Jan, trumpeting reduction in murder rates and increases in tax revenues. New governing board installed in Congress 14 Jan amid doubts over whether it is committed to fight against corruption. Interior minister 29 Dec announced phased reduction and elimination by end-2017 of military involvement in security patrols; curtailing role of military in civilian policing activities is part of conditions set by U.S. Congress to approve disbursement of funds from Northern Triangle aid package aimed at stemming flow of migrants to U.S.

➔ Haiti JANUARY 2017

Following 3 Jan confirmation of Jovenel Moïse as victor of 20 Nov presidential election, international community and “Core Group” welcomed Moïse’s election, stated willingness to work with new govt; called on all political forces to accept results on basis of monitoring and verification carried out by Provisional Electoral Council. Moïse questioned by judge 26 Jan as part of judicial investigation (launched in 2013) into reports from Central Unit of Financial Information that he misused funds and laundered money. Results of legislative elections confirmed 3 Jan. Moïse’s PHTK party (Parti Haïtien Tèt Kale) gained most votes, won 64 out of 99 seats in parliament. Demonstrations broke out following publication of results, especially in SE. Run-off poll held 29 Jan for eight senators. Newly elected senator of Department of Grand’ Anse Guy Philippe, wanted in U.S. for a decade on charges of drug trafficking, arrested 5 Jan by Haitian counter-narcotic police and extradited to U.S. Supporters of Philippe and PHTK demonstrated to demand his return, especially in Grand’Anse, where insecurity and violence forced schools to close since 9 Jan.

➔ Mexico JANUARY 2017

Tensions increased with U.S. after President Trump 25 Jan signed executive order for construction of wall along border and insisted Mexico would pay: President Peña Nieto cancelled planned meeting with Trump amid public outrage. Month also saw widespread social unrest over increased petrol prices, venting high levels of public discontent at corruption in political establishment, lack of economic opportunity and violent crime; at least six killed as protests turned violent, thousands arrested. Protests followed 27 Dec decision to liberalise fuel market and scrap state subsidies leading to 14-20% petrol price increases. Thousands protested 12 Jan in Baja California state against price increases and privatisation of water law. Protests ongoing in Mexico City and around twenty states. Further fuel price provisionally slated by Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit for 4 Feb. Congress continued to debate new Internal Security Law, designed to provide legal framework for military’s legitimate use of force in operations related to combating organised crime, corruption, terrorism and other crimes. Violence involving organised criminal groups continued, particularly in Michoacán state. Authorities early Jan arrested “El Duende”, presumed head of “Los Viagras” cartel, and senior leader “Jorge C. El Mecánico”. In Quintana Roo state, five killed in shootout during music festival in Playa del Carmen resort 17 Jan; “Old School Zetas” faction claimed responsibility. At least ten armed people attacked state’s prosecutor’s office in north of Cancún same day; three attackers and a police officer killed.

Middle East & North Africa

➔ Israel/Palestine JANUARY 2017

Representatives of some 70 countries gathered at Israeli-Palestinian peace conference in Paris 15 Jan amid uncertainty over implications of U.S. presidential transition for diplomatic process; concluding statement underlined continued feasibility of two-state solution, called for “swift steps” to improve humanitarian situation in Gaza and exhorted both sides to refrain from actions and policies that endanger two-state solution. President Abbas 9 Jan warned that if new U.S. President Trump acts on his campaign promise to move U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) may rescind recognition of Israel. In Israel, annexationist supporters of settlement expansion increased pressure for bills to legalise settlements built on private Palestinian lands; for formal endorsement of 2012 Levy report which holds that Israel has right to build in West Bank; for application of Israeli law to Ma’ale Adumim settlement east of Jerusalem; and for renewing access of Israeli Knesset members to Jerusalem’s Holy Esplanade. Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem 8 Jan drove truck into crowd of Israeli soldiers in E Jerusalem, killing four; Israeli forces launched crackdown on Palestinians throughout E Jerusalem. Israel carried out demolitions of illegally built homes in Arab town Qalanswah 10 Jan and of homes in unrecognised Bedouin village Umm al-Hiran 18 Jan, during which one resident and one police officer were killed; more demolitions scheduled. Large demonstrations held in Gaza over worsening electricity shortages, including 10,000 in Jabaliya refugee camp 12 Jan. Hamas blamed crisis on Ramallah’s decision to re-impose full taxes on fuel entering Gaza; Palestinian Authority (PA) demanded Hamas hand over control of Gaza if it wanted crisis resolved; Qatar and Turkey provided assistance for fuel. Following talks in Moscow, Hamas and Fatah 17 Jan announced they had reached new agreement to form unity govt to prepare for elections for PA and PLO parliaments; announcement greeted with scepticism among many Palestinians. Ahead of 1 Feb evacuation of small (40 houses) Amona settlement on basis of Supreme Court order, Israel announced construction of 5,500 residential units in settlements in move to reduce antagonism among pro-settlers forces; vast majority of units lie within Israeli-defined settlement blocs, definition Ramallah rejects but which U.S. President Trump is seen as highly likely to accept.

➔ Lebanon JANUARY 2017

President Aoun visited Saudi Arabia 9 Jan and Qatar 11 Jan; relations with Gulf states have been strained since Jan 2016 Cairo summit when Lebanese FM refused to sign Arab League statement condemning Iran and Hizbollah. Hizbollah rejected Syria ceasefire brokered by Russia and Turkey late Dec over demand for withdrawal of all foreign fighters from Syria; together with regime forces 26 Dec launched attack on main Damascus water source Wadi Barada (see Syria). Senior adviser to Iran’s supreme leader 3 Jan denied Hizbollah withdrawal from Syria. Security forces 21 Jan reported foiled suicide bombing at Beirut café.

➔ Syria JANUARY 2017

After ceasefire agreed late Dec, violence declined in NW but regime continued offensives against rebels outside Damascus as jihadist and non-jihadist rebel factions continued to clash. Russia and Turkey organised talks in Kazakhstan's capital Astana 23-24 Jan; regime and non-jihadist opposition groups, with notable exception of Ahrar al-Sham, attended; Russia, Turkey and Iran agreed to form trilateral commission to monitor and enforce ceasefire, details and prospects for accomplishing that remain unclear; neither regime nor any opposition group endorsed agreement. Regime forces 29 Jan said they had recaptured Wadi Barada valley near Damascus including source of most of city's water. U.S. bombed training camp of al-Qaeda-linked Fath al-Sham in Idlib province 19 Jan killing over 100 alleged militants. Fath al-Sham Salafi-jihadist group, previously called Nusra Front, and Ahrar al-Sham rebels clashed in Idlib province in NW 18-20 Jan. Fath al-Sham attacked non-jihadist rebel faction Jaish al-Mujahideen west of Aleppo 23-24 Jan; following attack six rebel factions joined Ahrar al-Sham. Fath al-Sham and four other jihadist factions 28 Jan formed new alliance Tahrir al-Sham. Islamic State (IS) 16 Jan broke through regime lines in eastern city Deir al-Zour after months of stalemate, surrounding military airport; Russian planes 30 Jan conducted airstrikes on IS positions in Deir al-Zour area. Rebels, backed by Turkish forces, continued efforts to push IS out of al-Bab, north of Aleppo. Turkey and Russia conducted joint airstrikes on IS positions near al-Bab mid-late Jan. Russian aircraft carrier deployed off Syrian coast in Oct began journey home mid-Jan; over 30 Russian fighter jets and helicopter gunships reportedly remained in Syria. U.S. 29 Jan said Saudi Arabia's King Salman at President Trump's request agreed to support safe zones for displaced people in Syria; regime 30 Jan said establishing safe zones without its consent would be "unsafe"; Trump's commitment to safe zone remains unclear.

- [COMMENTARY: What's at Stake in the Syrian Peace Talks in Astana?](#)

➔ Bahrain JANUARY 2017

Three Shiite men executed 15 Jan for killing three policemen in 2014; Shiite opposition activists and Iran condemned executions, first in twenty years. Authorities suspended Shiite-led opposition-linked online newspaper for threatening national unity. Gunmen 1 Jan attacked prison in Jau, south of capital Manama, freeing several inmates and killing one policeman.

➔ Iran JANUARY 2017

At sixth meeting in Vienna 10 Jan, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) Joint Commission resolved outstanding ambiguities in 2015 nuclear agreement and concluded that U.S. Senate's ten-year extension of Iran Sanctions Act in Dec does not violate agreement as long as U.S. suspends certain provisions. U.S. navy warship 9 Jan fired warning shots at Iranian boats that came within 800m of it in Strait of Hormuz, south of Iran. Revolutionary Guards 29 Jan reportedly carried out medium-range ballistic missile test about 140 miles east of Tehran; Israel said test violated UNSC Resolution 2231 which bans tests of ballistic missiles designed to deliver nuclear warheads, at U.S. request UNSC met 31 Jan to discuss test and recommended matter be studied at committee level. Former President Rafsanjani died 8 Jan; over 2mn

people attended funeral. Airbus 12 Jan delivered country's first new aircraft in 37 years. Govt 24 Jan agreed to form trilateral commission to monitor and enforce ceasefire in Syria (see Syria).

- [REPORT: Implementing the Iran Nuclear Deal: A Status Report](#)

➔ Iraq JANUARY 2017

U.S.-backed govt forces and allied militias made gains in campaign to retake Mosul in north from Islamic State (IS), taking control of city's eastern half. Head of Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) 19 Jan declared city-centre districts under govt control. Security forces 19 Jan pushed IS out of Tal Kyf, 10km NE of Mosul, and 22 Jan seized road linking Mosul to Dohuk, 90km north. PM Abadi 25 Jan said eastern Mosul "fully liberated". Knights of Mosul anti-IS insurgents in IS-controlled parts of Mosul reportedly passed intelligence to security forces and killed high-ranking IS members during month. IOM 19 Jan said almost 159,000 people had fled Mosul since offensive began 17 Oct. IS claimed multiple bombings in Baghdad's Shia districts early month: blasts 2-3 Jan killed 59, twin bombings 8 Jan killed twenty at marketplaces in Jamila and Baladiyat districts. IS 1 Jan killed seven policemen near Najaf, 146km south of Baghdad, 2 Jan killed seven policemen in Samara, 125km north of Baghdad, and four soldiers at barracks near Baji, 210km north of Baghdad. Following dispute over Turkey's participation in Mosul offensive, PM Abadi 8 Jan met Turkish PM in Baghdad to reestablish diplomatic relations and reduce Turkish military presence in north. National security minister 8 Jan discussed cooperation against "terrorism" with Syrian President Assad in Damascus. French President Hollande and Defence Minister Le Drian in Baghdad 2 Jan reaffirmed commitment to fight against IS. Parliament 30 Jan recommended govt should "respond in kind" to U.S. President Trump's ban on citizens of Iraq and six other Muslim-majority countries entering U.S., govt 30 Jan said it had asked U.S. to reconsider ban on its citizens, PM Abadi 31 Jan said govt would not ban U.S. nationals entry citing U.S. support for fight against IS.

➔ Saudi Arabia JANUARY 2017

Two Islamic State-linked men blew themselves up in Jeddah in west 21 Jan after security forces surrounded and shot at them. Govt 24 Jan said security forces captured two Saudi and twelve Pakistani suspected jihadists.

➔ Yemen JANUARY 2017

Fighting intensified as Saudi-led coalition and aligned Yemeni troops 7 Jan launched campaign to retake area around Bab al-Mandeb strait between Yemen and Djibouti in SW and southern part of Red Sea coastline from Huthi rebels and forces

supporting former President Saleh, and increased military pressure in north including in Saada, Hajjah, Jawf and Marib governorates. Govt-aligned forces claimed to have retaken Dhubab district on Red Sea coast 13 Jan and Mokha city further north 23 Jan, but fighting continued end month. Two U.S. drone strikes (first drone strikes under new U.S. President Trump) 21 Jan killed ten alleged al-Qaeda militants in al-Bayda province. U.S. Special Forces attacked al-Qaeda stronghold in al-Bayda 29 Jan killing fourteen militants according to U.S. military and causing civilian casualties, according to Yemeni official, including killing eight women and seven children. UNOCHA 16 Jan said at least 10,000 civilians killed since conflict began in March 2015.

➔ Algeria JANUARY 2017

Security forces clashed with people protesting against import restrictions, tax hikes and price increases in several towns in Béjaïa and Bouira provinces in north and Ain Benian near Algiers 2-4 Jan; protestors attacked symbols of state authority, blocked roads and looted. Authorities reportedly arrested suspected jihadist in Bordj Badji Mokhtar (south) 1 Jan and killed two suspected jihadists in Laghouat province (north) 2 Jan. Security forces 20 Jan arrested six people in Boumerdes (north) allegedly linked to jihadist groups and one suspected jihadist in Jijel province (north east).

➔ Egypt JANUARY 2017

Insurgency intensified in al-Arish area in N Sinai: Islamic State (IS) claimed attack on police station 9 Jan that killed at least seven police and one civilian; insurgents same day detonated lorry bomb at checkpoint killing at least seven police and one civilian, security forces killed five militants in ensuing gunfight; security forces 13 Jan reportedly killed at least ten IS-linked militants in raids; army 28 Jan said four soldiers and twenty insurgents allegedly linked to IS killed in five-day operation. Gunmen 22 Jan ambushed army convoy in Sinai, killing five soldiers. In al-Wadi al-Jadid governorate in south, gunmen 16 Jan killed eight police in attack on checkpoint, two attackers killed. In Abshway, 120km south of Cairo, gunmen 3 Jan killed policeman. Supreme Administrative Court 16 Jan denied President Sisi authority to hand over two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia.

➔ Libya JANUARY 2017

East-based strongman General Khalifa Haftar, opposed to Tripoli-based UN-backed Govt of National Accord (GNA), made military and diplomatic gains: his Libyan National Army (LNA) 31 Dec-1 Jan pushed Islamic State (IS) and allies out of Ganfouda, one of few districts in Benghazi still under their control. Following Dec visit to Moscow, Haftar boarded

Russian aircraft carrier off Libyan coast 11 Jan and spoke with Russian defence minister via video conference reportedly about fight against terrorism and possibility of re-activating Qadhafi-era contracts for Russian weapons. Internal divisions in UN-backed Presidency Council (PC) worsened after Musa al-Koni, one of PM designate Serraj's deputies from south, resigned 2 Jan saying PC had "failed". GNA continued to face budgetary constraints as Central Bank delayed disbursement of 4bn Libyan dinars (about \$2.7bn) requested for first quarter of 2017. Two U.S. B-2 bombers 18 Jan bombed two IS camps south of Sirte, reportedly killing some 80 suspected militants.

➔ Morocco JANUARY 2017

PM Benkirane 8 Jan broke off talks on creation of new coalition govt with two potential members, National Rally of Independence (RNI) and Popular Movement, explaining that RNI leader Aziz Akhannouch had replied to his proposal in collaboration with two other parties which Benkirane had not invited to join. Security forces 27 Jan dismantled seven-member cell allegedly linked to Islamic State. AU at summit 30 Jan admitted Morocco as member after it left predecessor Organisation of African Unity in 1984 over body's recognition of Western Sahara.

➔ Tunisia JANUARY 2017

On sixth anniversary of 2011 popular uprising 14 Jan, citizens protested high unemployment in several cities including Ben Guerdane (south) and Sidi Bouzid (centre) leading to clashes with police. In Gafsa (centre) some demonstrators reportedly blocked road and stoned convoy of President Essebsi; Essebsi same day announced development projects. Social unrest calmed after 20 Jan negotiations between protestors and political parties. Tensions with Germany emerged following 19 Dec Berlin attack by undocumented Tunisian migrant; after accusing govt 21 Dec of not cooperating in return of Tunisian illegal migrants, Germany 8 Jan threatened to cut development aid to countries that do not take back illegal migrants.

➔ Western Sahara JANUARY 2017

Moroccan security forces 1 and 4 Jan forcefully dispersed Sahrawi protestors in al-Ayun who claimed right of Sahrawi people to self-determination and condemned "plundering" of natural resources. Polisario Front independence movement 21 Jan filed complaint with European Commission and French customs to denounce shipment of fish oil from Western Sahara by Gibraltar-flagged tanker on grounds that it violated European Court of Justice 21 Dec ruling, arguing Morocco