



CRISISWATCH

Tracking Conflict Worldwide

CrisisWatch is our global conflict tracker, a tool designed to help decision-makers prevent deadly violence by keeping them up-to-date with developments in over 70 conflicts and crises, identifying trends and alerting them to risks of escalation and opportunities to advance peace.

Learn more about CrisisWatch →

July 2018

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JULY 2018

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August 2018

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Zimbabwe, Israel/Palestine, Yemen

🕊️ Resolution Opportunities

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Zimbabwe, Yemen

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July 2018

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Mali, Pakistan, Nicaragua, Haiti,
Israel/Palestine, Iraq, Yemen

🟢 Improved Situations

Eritrea, Ethiopia, Philippines

In July, fighting rose between Israel and Hamas and could quickly escalate into a new Gaza war, while in Yemen, as violence intensified on several fronts, a UN plan offered hope that a battle for Hodeida city could still be averted. Al-Shabaab stepped up attacks in Somalia, Cameroon's Anglophone conflict spread to new areas, and tensions rose within Côte d'Ivoire's ruling coalition. Violence marred elections in Pakistan and disrupted voting in Mali. Zimbabwe's first general election since former President Mugabe's ouster went largely peacefully; wide endorsement of the results could pave the way for the country's recovery, but their rejection could spark turmoil. Violent protests erupted in southern Iraq over poor services and unemployment, and in Haiti over a proposed hike in fuel prices. Deadly clashes between protesters and pro-government forces in Nicaragua continued with hundreds now reported killed. On a brighter note, Ethiopia and Eritrea took further steps to cement peace, South Sudan's warring leaders agreed to share power, and in the Philippines, the Bangsamoro Organic Law, a long-awaited step to implement peace in Mindanao, was finally signed into law.

Trends and Outlook

PRESIDENT'S TAKE

Some Good News Amid the Bad



ROBERT MALLEY
PRESIDENT & CEO

Over the summer several long-lasting conflicts have become more lethal. In his introduction to the July/August 2018 edition of CrisisWatch, our President Rob Malley welcomes the exception – the offi...

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Fighting between Israel and Hamas, the Palestinian faction that controls **Gaza**, rose to its highest level since the 2014 war, and could escalate into a new full-scale confrontation. To stop Palestinian protesters in Gaza sending incendiary kites across the border, Israel ramped up aerial strikes on Hamas targets and tightened its blockade. Retaliating with rocket fire, Hamas and Islamic Jihad sought to reestablish the precedent that Israeli bombings would not go unanswered. *To avert another war*, the international community should press Israel to lift the blockade and the Palestinian Authority to take over Gaza through intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

In **Yemen**, as fighting intensified on several fronts, Saudi-led coalition forces consolidated their positions just south of the port city of Hodeida. The UN envoy's proposal to avert a battle for the city and restart talks, and the Huthis' two-week ceasefire in the Red Sea still offer a glimmer of hope. But if the plan does not satisfy belligerents' conditions, they could continue to pursue victory through violence.

Protests swept across southern **Iraq**, with demonstrators bemoaning poor services and unemployment and attacking government and party offices. Security forces responded harshly, in some places shooting at protesters, and killing around 50. To douse widespread anger, *Crisis Group urged* the new government, once formed, to strengthen the judiciary and independent oversight agencies in their fight against corruption – Iraq's public enemy number one.

Zimbabwe's general elections on 30 July – the first since Robert Mugabe was ousted in November – could lay the foundation for the country's recovery, or lead to violence. Voting took place largely peacefully and three quarters of the electorate cast a ballot. A credible result accepted by all would give the government much-needed legitimacy. But, *as we warned*, if the losers reject the results, violence could break out, eroding prospects of economic and governance reform and international re-engagement.

In **Mali**, intercommunal violence and jihadist attacks, especially in the centre and north east, rose in the lead-up to hotly contested presidential elections on 29 July. The violence and a chaotic electoral process may have squandered whatever opportunity the vote presented to *revive the peace process*. In **Cameroon**, the *Anglophone conflict* spread to new areas, and trouble brewed within **Côte d'Ivoire's** ruling coalition. The parties of President Ouattara and former President Bédié squared off over the merger of all coalition members into a single party ahead of presidential elections in 2020.

The Horn of Africa took strides toward greater stability, and felt painful setbacks. In **Somalia**, Al-Shabaab stepped up its offensive against military forces and civilians, resuming attacks in Mogadishu after a lull. In contrast, the leaders of **Ethiopia** and **Eritrea** turned a page in history when they agreed to end the state of war that had existed between their nations since 1998. In **South Sudan**, the war's protagonists signed security and power-sharing agreements giving rise to cautious optimism. Now they must translate these commitments into new realities on the ground, and put a stop to more than four years of fighting.

Pakistan's general election on 25 July was marred by high levels of violence as well as allegations of irregularities and interference by federal and provincial caretaker governments, the judiciary and the military. Over 200 candidates and supporters were killed in attacks ahead of the election and on polling day, including the 13 July terror attack on a rally in Balochistan that killed at least 149 people.

In **Nicaragua**, 38 people were reported killed in clashes between protesters and troops on 8 July, the deadliest day since protests against President Ortega's government began in April. With paramilitary and police forces attempting to subdue protest strongholds and restore government control, the reported death toll since April now exceeds 350. Four people were killed during violent protests in **Haiti** after the government announced a hike in fuel prices.

In the **Philippines**, the long-awaited Bangsamoro Organic Law was finally signed into law at the end of July, the most important component of the 2014 peace agreement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front aimed at ending 40 years of conflict in Mindanao. *As we argue*, implementing this deal is essential to efforts to curtail the influence and spread of jihadist groups in the country.

Latest Updates

Africa

→ Burundi JULY 2018

Govt 5 July began collecting contributions from citizens to pay for elections in 2020; trade unions criticised multiple contributions demanded by govt. Tensions rose at University of Burundi: police and student members of Imbonerakure (ruling party's youth wing) 2 July arrested three student members of Agathon Rwasa-led branch of opposition National Forces of Liberation; tracts threatening students who were resisting joining ruling party found at university 9 July. European Parliament 5 July adopted resolution heavily critical of govt actions and calling for halt to Burundian participation in African Union's and UN peacekeeping operations. Tensions rose between Burundi and Rwanda following several cross-border attacks in southern Rwanda: unidentified armed group from Burundi 1 July raided Cyamuzi village in southern Rwanda near Burundi border, attack follows two similar raids in June; Rwandan President Kagame 13 July asserted army's readiness to fight off any attack.

↘ Cameroon JULY 2018

Anglophone conflict spread to new areas including Buea, capital of Southwest region, as Boko Haram (BH) continued attacks in Far North. Anglophone separatist militants carried out attacks almost daily in Southwest and Northwest regions, primarily on security forces and other state representatives, and for first time in Buea and Limbe, both Southwest, while military continued to attack militants and civilians. Religious authorities 25 July said they would convene Anglophone General Conference 29-30 Aug in Buea to agree on issues to address in national dialogue on Anglophone crisis. Major violent incidents include the following: separatist militants 8-9 July killed police commissioner in Kumba, Southwest and police officer in Buea; militants 12 July twice attacked convoy of minister-delegate for defence on Kumba-Mbongue road, military accompanying convoy killed six militants; militants 20 July burned teacher training college in Ndop, Northwest; militants 27 July killed traditional chief of Lysoka, Southwest; militants 28 July burned Ndop prison, Northwest, freeing dozens of prisoners; security forces and armed separatists clashed in Buea 30 July, four civilians killed. In Far North, BH militants continued attacks on civilians particularly near border with Nigeria, killing at least seventeen, and clashed with military. Govt 15 July reportedly arrested four soldiers suspected of appearing in video circulated in June that shows uniformed men killing two women and their children on grounds that women are BH militants. Govt had previously denied that video was recorded in Cameroon. President Biya 9 July set 7 Oct as date for presidential elections. Twenty opposition parties ("G20") 20 July declared their support for Biya.

- *OUR JOURNEYS: Dialogue is Essential to Unite Cameroon's Disparate Voices*

➔ *Central African Republic* JULY 2018

Armed groups in provinces continued to carry out attacks on each other, civilians, humanitarian workers and UN peacekeepers. Clashes erupted 11 July between ex-Seleka and anti-balaka militias close to displaced persons' camp in Bria in centre, UN mission (MINUSCA) managed to stop fighting. Armed men 5 July entered Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) base in Bria, stealing medical equipment and causing MSF to suspend activities; armed men robbed MSF staff residence in Kabo in north night of 15-16 July. MINUSCA 3 July confirmed violence targeting humanitarian workers has increased, with 143 cases reported in 2018. Anti-balaka militants 17 July attacked Pombolo village, Mbomou province in south east, injuring three MINUSCA peacekeepers who intervened, and 27 July attacked MINUSCA convoy 10km from Gambo on road to Pombolo, Mbomou province, injuring two peacekeepers. Unidentified assailants killed three Russian journalists near Sibut in centre night of 30-31 July. New movement known as Central African Republic's Church Defence League emerged early July, denounced Church and govt for failing to protect priests and declared intent to avenge deaths; Central African bishops 13 July said they did not recognise group. Russia 12 July attempted to hold meeting between govt and armed groups in Sudanese capital, Khartoum, but was unsuccessful. Govt and donors 4-5 July held roundtable in Bangui to examine structure and use of army, currently only present in five cities while armed groups are present in 80% of country; govt plans include creation of four defence zones, increasing number of soldiers and police and creating garrison army stationed outside capital Bangui. Ex-Seleka commander Ahamat Markani sentenced 19 July to life of forced labour for crimes committed in capital Bangui in Sept 2015.

➔ *Chad* JULY 2018

Boko Haram militants 19 July attacked village near Niger border, killing eighteen people and abducting ten women. Widespread social discontent continued as allowances withheld since Jan remained unpaid. President Déby met with head of Libya's Presidency Council 25 July and agreed to cooperate on border security to combat terrorism and smuggling operations.

➔ Democratic Republic Of Congo JULY 2018

President Kabila 19 July reaffirmed his commitment to respect the constitution, but remained vague on whether he intended to stand in Dec elections; according to electoral timetable, presidential candidates must register by 8 Aug. Major opposition parties 23 July jointly called for cleaning of voter list, cancellation of plans to use voting machines, confidence-building measures as outlined in Dec 2016 Saint Sylvester agreement and replacement of representative from opposition party Union for Democracy and Social Progress in electoral commission council. Opposition and ruling majority began talks on voter list. Opposition party Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) 13 July said it had chosen party leader Jean-Pierre Bemba, acquitted by International Criminal Court in June, as presidential candidate. MLC extended Bemba's presidency of party for five years. Bemba returned to DR Congo 1 Aug. Ruling majority expressed doubt that Bemba was legally allowed run for presidency. Platform of opposition leader Moïse Katumbi 30 July said Katumbi would return to DR Congo 3 Aug. Electoral commission 24 June-13 July registered candidates for provincial elections and 26 July published provisional list of over 18,000 candidates for 715 seats. Govt reshuffled command positions in army 14 and 24 July. In first reshuffle, Gen John Numbi was appointed inspector general of armed forces and Lt Gen Amisi Kumba Gabriel was appointed deputy chief of staff; both have been sanctioned by international partners for involvement in human rights violations. Govt cancelled visits by UN sec-gen and U.S. ambassador to UN scheduled for July. Kabila reportedly also cancelled his visit to Angola planned for late July. Navies of DR Congo and Uganda 7 July exchanged fire on Lake Edward, which straddles disputed border, one Ugandan soldier killed. DR Congo 11 July accused Ugandan military of shooting dead twelve Congolese fishermen and arresting about 100 others. Congolese delegation visited Uganda late month to discuss issues over lake. Uganda 28 July said it had sentenced 35 Congolese to up to three years for illegal fishing. Govt 24 July declared over Ebola outbreak that killed 33 people.

➔ Rwanda JULY 2018

Tensions rose between Rwanda and Burundi following several cross-border attacks in south: unidentified armed group from Burundi 1 July raided Cyamuzi village in southern Rwanda near Burundi border, attack follows two similar raids in June; Rwandan President Kagame 13 July asserted army's readiness to fight off any attack.

➔ Djibouti JULY 2018

Govt mid-July asked UN Sec-Gen Guterres to work with Security Council to mediate peaceful settlement of border dispute with Eritrea, said Eritrean troops still occupy Djiboutian territory.

 *Eritrea* JULY 2018

Govt took further steps to make peace with Ethiopia paving way for further consolidation in Aug. During visit of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy to Eritrean capital, Asmara 9 July, he and President Afwerki agreed to end “state of war” between countries. Afwerki visited Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa 14-16 July and reopened Eritrean embassy. Countries restored telephone connections and Ethiopian Airlines 18 July resumed flights to Eritrea. Afwerki 23 July met Saudi King Salman in Jeddah. Next day Afwerki and Abiy in United Arab Emirates thanked Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan for role in fostering peace between two countries; Prince Mohammed awarded both leaders highest civilian honour for ending war. Somali President Farmajo met Afwerki in Asmara 28 July; presidents said in joint statement that two countries would establish diplomatic relations and promote bilateral trade and investment. Djibouti mid-July asked UN Sec-Gen Guterres to work with Security Council to mediate peaceful settlement of its border dispute with Eritrea, said Eritrean troops still occupy Djiboutian territory.

 *Ethiopia* JULY 2018

PM Abiy took further steps to make peace with Eritrea paving way for further consolidation in Aug, and made progress in combatting repression and abuses by state forces domestically. During Abiy’s landmark visit to Eritrean capital, Asmara 9 July, he and Eritrean President Afwerki agreed to end “state of war” between countries. Afwerki visited Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa 14-16 July and reopened Eritrean embassy. Countries restored telephone connections and Ethiopian Airlines 18 July resumed flights to Eritrea. Abiy and Afwerki in United Arab Emirates 24 July thanked Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan for role in fostering peace between two countries; Prince Mohammed awarded both leaders highest civilian honour for ending war. Govt 5 July removed from list of terrorist organisations three rebel groups (Oromo Liberation Front, Ogaden National Liberation Front and Ginbot 7) and opened access to over 200 previously banned websites. Same day senior prison officials were fired for failing to protect prisoners’ rights. Authorities 11 July released political prisoners from Jijiga prison in Somali region in east after Somali regional state President Abdi Iley admitted his forces had committed abuses. Parliament 20 July passed law granting amnesty to former political prisoners. Project manager of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam being built on Nile, Simegnew Bekele, found shot dead in his car in centre of Addis Ababa 26 July, hundreds immediately protested in Addis and his hometown Gondar in north west demanding justice.

→ Kenya JULY 2018

As dry season sets in, rate of armed conflicts over natural resources, especially pasture and water, picked up in north. Armed ethnic Turkana herders clashed with security forces in Isiolo county; Turkana herders exchanged fire with police trying to recover stolen livestock near Isiolo-Marsabit road 14 July. Local residents in Turkana county in north blockaded camp of oil company Tullow Oil from 27 June demanding deployment of more security forces in area to combat cattle poaching and citing grievances over jobs, blockade interrupted Tullow's trucking of oil to coast. Al-Shabaab militants 10 July attacked police station at Hamey, Garissa county near border with Somalia, reportedly injuring four officers, and damaged nearby telecommunications mast. Security forces continued operations against Al-Shabaab in Boni forest, Lamu county. Al-Shabaab ambushed police vehicle on Lamu-Mombasa road in Milihoi, Lamu county 26 July, killing one police officer, another three went missing.

✦ Somalia JULY 2018

Al-Shabaab escalated attacks and resumed bombings in capital Mogadishu after more than month-long lull. In Mogadishu, roadside bombing injured seven people 2 July; car bombings and gunfire at interior ministry 7 July and at hotel 14 July killed nine and three civilians respectively; over fourteen security officials arrested 9 July in connection with first attack. In Galmudug region in centre, local clan militias fought Al-Shabaab militants trying to forcibly recruit their children in Caad town, near Haradheere 4 July, at least seventeen people killed; in retribution Al-Shabaab 19 July stole herders' livestock. In Puntland region in north, Al-Shabaab captured Af Urur town 20 July meeting little resistance from Puntland forces. In Lower Shabelle region in south, Al-Shabaab claimed roadside bombing that killed former district commissioner 7 July. Also in south, Al-Shabaab 23 July attacked army base at Baar Sanguni, about 50km from Kismayo, Jubaland region killing at least six soldiers. Fighting between semi-autonomous Puntland region in north and neighbouring Somaliland over disputed territories abated, but confrontation continued; elders from Somaliland 16 July visited Garowe in Puntland to discuss ceasefire options, but Puntland rejected elders' conditions. Joint peace mission from regional bloc Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and UN met with Puntland President Abdiweli Gaas in Garowe and Somaliland President Muse Bihi in Hargeisa 28-30 July, both sides agreed to work toward peaceful solution. Authorities of Jubaland federal state prevented newly appointed general from landing at Kismayo airport 12 July, accusing federal govt of breaching security pact by appointing general without consulting federal state leader. At second Somalia Partnership Forum, organised by EU, Sweden and Somalia govt in Brussels 16-17 July, donors pledged €1.2bn for country's recovery to be channelled through federal budget. President Farmajo met Eritrean President Afwerki in Eritrean capital Asmara 28 July; presidents said in joint statement that two countries would establish diplomatic relations and promote bilateral trade and investment.

- [EU WATCH LIST: Watch List 2018 – Second Update](#)

➔ *Somaliland* JULY 2018

Fighting between Somaliland forces and Somalia's semi-autonomous Puntland region over disputed territories abated, but confrontation continued; elders from Somaliland 16 July visited Garowe in Puntland to discuss ceasefire options, but Puntland rejected elders' conditions. Somaliland govt 17 July said elders did not represent govt and that it was committed to protecting its borders. Joint peace mission from regional bloc Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and UN met with Puntland President Abdiweli Gaas in Garowe and Somaliland President Muse Bihi in Hargeisa 28-30 July, both sides agreed to work toward peaceful solution.

➔  *South Sudan* JULY 2018

Following signing of framework agreement in June, govt and main rebel group signed further security and power-sharing agreements, creating opportunity for leaders to reduce fighting in Aug; other rebel groups raised objections to political deal and violence continued despite ceasefire. Govt and rebel representatives in Sudanese capital, Khartoum 6 July signed agreement on security arrangements that aimed at moving forces out of population centres, unifying and reorganising military, setting up joint security committee, and deciding where to base forces. Presidency said President Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar had agreed on peace plan 8 July in Entebbe, Uganda that would see Machar reinstated as first vice president (VP), alongside three other VPs, but faction of rebel group Sudan People's Liberation Movement-In Opposition (SPLM-IO) allied to Machar 9 July rejected plan, saying rebels should hold two VP positions. Govt and SPLM-IO signed power-sharing agreement in Khartoum 25 July that envisages Machar as VP alongside four others and 35-member govt; twenty ministers from current govt, nine from SPLM-IO and six from other opposition groups. Other opposition groups said deal had shortfalls and lacked clarity on future of legislature. Parliament 12 July passed govt-proposed bill to extend Kiir's term until 2021, SPLM-IO had called move illegal. UN Security Council 13 July passed U.S.-drafted resolution imposing arms embargo on S Sudan. Govt and rebel forces accused each other of violating ceasefire that came into effect 30 June: fighting 2 July at Maban in former Upper Nile state in far north east reportedly left eighteen civilians dead; fighting also erupted near Wau, former Western Bahr al-Ghazal state in west 20 July. Unidentified gunmen 4 July attacked humanitarian convoy near Mangalla, north of capital Juba, killing one man.

➔ *Sudan* JULY 2018

Govt 12 July said it had extended unilateral ceasefire with rebels in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile states until end of year. Egyptian President Sisi visited Khartoum 19-20 July in bid to strengthen bilateral relations. Opposition National Umma Party 1 July said Egyptian authorities had denied its leader Sadiq al-Mahdi re-entry into Egypt, where he had been living in self-imposed exile.

➔ *Uganda* JULY 2018

Navies of Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo exchanged fire on Lake Edward, which straddles disputed border, 7 July leaving one Ugandan soldier dead. DR Congo 11 July accused Ugandan military of that day shooting dead twelve Congolese fishermen and arresting about 100 others; Congolese delegation visited Uganda late month reportedly to discuss issues over lake. Uganda 28 July said it had sentenced 35 Congolese to up to three years for illegal fishing.

➔ *Comoros Islands* JULY 2018

In constitutional referendum 30 July, 90% voted in favour of changes that would extend presidential terms and stop rotation of presidency among three main islands. Opposition boycotted vote and observers questioned its legitimacy. In lead-up, govt cracked down on dissent, and general strike held in Moroni on Grande Comore island. State media reported voting largely peaceful; two ballot boxes destroyed and policeman injured in Hankounou district of Moroni. Assailants 22 July attempted to assassinate Vice President Abdou.

➔ *Mozambique* JULY 2018

In far north, suspected Islamist militants reduced rate of attacks as security forces increased presence. In Cabo Delgado province, militants 7 July beheaded four men and burned five houses in Macanga area; 10 July killed two and burned houses in Quisingule village. President Nyusi and leader of opposition Renamo party, Ossufo Momade, 11 July jointly announced that Renamo would disarm, condition set by ruling Frelimo party in June for holding of Oct local elections; Nyusi said parties would sign formal agreement to integrate Renamo fighters into police and defence force. Parliament 20 July passed electoral reforms in accordance with agreement between govt and Renamo to decentralise power.

➔  *Zimbabwe* JULY 2018

First presidential, parliamentary and local elections since ouster of former President Mugabe held largely peacefully 30 July, results expected early Aug; if main contenders – President Mnangagwa and opposition leader Nelson Chamisa – and citizens accept credible results, vote could lay foundation for country’s recovery from misrule, if losers reject results, violence is likely. On voting day, turnout was high at 75%. Chamisa 31 July accused Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) of delaying presidential results to favour ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). ZEC reported both Mnangagwa and Chamisa to police for violating electoral law by issuing press statements in 24 hours before polls. Mugabe 29 July rejected Mnangagwa and ZANU-PF and endorsed Chamisa of Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Alliance; in response Mnangagwa said vote for Chamisa was vote to bring back Mugabe. About 600 international observers monitored vote. Defence forces 4 July vowed to remain neutral. Afrobarometer survey released 20 July found that over 40% of population feared election-related intimidation, violence and military intervention, while over 30% distrusted ZEC due to history of bias toward ZANU-PF. Police 25 July refused to allow opposition protest against ZEC; Chamisa same day accused ZEC of bias, but said MDC would not boycott vote. Govt from 1 July raised civil servant wages by 17.5% and allowances to security force personnel. Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 24 July commended open political rallies and presence of human rights organisations, but expressed concern at increasing reports of “voter intimidation, threats of violence, harassment and coercion, including people being forced to attend political rallies”.

- [Q&A: Tensions Rise Ahead of Zimbabwe’s Elections](#)

➔ *Burkina Faso* JULY 2018

Attacks against security forces and civilians continued in Sahel region in north. Unidentified gunmen 4 July killed customs officer near Sebba city. Unidentified gunmen early July killed presumed member of local self-defence group near Djibo village, Soum province. Unidentified gunmen 17 July killed two people, including chief of Hocoulourou village, Soum province after abducting them two weeks earlier. In East region, unidentified gunmen 23 July attacked gendarmerie in Matiakoali, wounding gendarme; 24 July killed two civilians in nearby Kpendima village. Army 18 July said 60 people had been arrested since 8 July in counter-terrorism operation in north. Burkina Faso and Niger mid-July said they had created framework for concerted action against insecurity in border area. In trial of 84 people accused of planning 2015 attempted coup, army officer Moussa Nébié 6 July admitted he had arrested then President Kafando, but denied this constituted coup.

➔ *Côte D'Ivoire* JULY 2018

Tensions rose within ruling coalition between President Ouattara's Rally of Republicans (RDR) and former President Henri Konan Bédié's Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) over merger of all six coalition members into one party ahead of 2020 presidential election; PDCI continued to insist that it should be able to choose new party's presidential candidate. Ouattara 4 July dissolved govt, 10 July appointed new largely unchanged govt without consulting PDCI. Ouattara 16 July chaired new party's constitutive assembly without PDCI. PDCI 20 July said it had expelled party members who had been appointed to new cabinet. Machete attack during general assembly of Rally for Côte d'Ivoire (RACI) close to Assembly Speaker Guillaume Soro in Korhogo in north 7 July killed party supporter. Govt 18 July said local and regional elections would take place 13 Oct.

➔ *Gambia* JULY 2018

Govt 19 July condemned former President Jammeh's pledge in leaked phone call to return from exile in Equatorial Guinea, said comments were "shocking and subversive". President Barrow 9 July swore in new Vice President Darboe along with eight ministers. Barrow 5 July swore in members of commission to investigate killing of three anti-mining protesters in Faraba Banta village, about 50km south of capital Banjul in June.

➔ *Guinea* JULY 2018

Almost daily demonstrations and general strikes took place in several cities throughout month after govt increased fuel price from CFA8,000 (\$0.88) to CFA10,000 (\$1.10) per litre 1 July; protesters clashed with police on several occasions. Unidentified gunmen 8 July fired shots in Dara Labé area in north, seven people wounded. Parliament 5 July passed law reorganising electoral commission, reducing members from 25 to seventeen.

➔ *Guinea-Bissau* JULY 2018

Public radio and television employees 17 July started three-day strike, joining ongoing civil servants' protest movement to demand better salaries and working conditions.

✚ *Mali* JULY 2018

Amid rise in violence, especially in centre and north, presidential elections took place 29 July with armed groups preventing voting in some places. Govt said armed attackers forced closure of 644 out of about 23,000 polling stations, about 3%. Before publication of official results, President Keita 30 July claimed to be in lead, same day party of rival Soumaïla Cissé said he had won enough votes to face Keita in run-off. Party of Aliou Diallo 31 July said he had come second and would face Keita in second round. In Timbuktu in north, Arab community protested against insecurity and clashed with security forces 25 July; next day Arabs and Tuaregs clashed with black community. In Mopti region in centre, intercommunal clashes between ethnic Dogon and Fulani self-defence groups continued, seventeen reportedly killed in Somena village 25 July. Situation worsened by alleged abuses and arbitrary executions by govt forces (FAMA). FAMA 9 July burnt 300 motorcycles reportedly belonging to Dogon combatants. Dogon militia "Dan Nan Ambassagou" then breached unilateral ceasefire they had declared 2 July saying it would fight all state representatives ahead of 29 July vote. Suspected jihadist attacks on national, regional and international forces and on civilians continued in several regions. Notable incidents include: in Gao region in north, ambush 1 July targeting French Barkhane convoy near Bourem town, left four civilians dead. Al-Qaeda-linked Group to Support Muslims and Islam claimed mortar attack on Aguelhok, Kidal region 29 July causing

pause in voting. In centre, explosive device killed three soldiers and separately assailants ambushed govt soldiers killing two, both incidents 11 July in Mopti region; jihadist militants 22 July ambushed army patrol in Soumouni forest in Ségou region, soldier and eleven assailants killed; suspected jihadists 31 July ambushed security patrol in Ségou region, at least four soldiers and eight assailants killed. In Ménaka region in east, armed individuals 15 July killed at least ten civilians in Injagalane village. In Koulikoro region in west, armed individuals 4 July killed two gendarmes.

- *EU WATCH LIST: Watch List 2018 – Second Update*

➔ Niger JULY 2018

Suspected Boko Haram (BH) militants continued attacks in Diffa region in south east. Suspected BH 1 July attacked military position in Bla Brin village in Lake Chad area, killing six soldiers. BH militants 19-20 July attacked military post in Baroua village near border with Nigeria, killing soldier, ten BH also killed. High Court in capital Niamey 24 July handed three-month suspended prison sentences to several prominent civil rights activists detained since March on charges of unauthorised public gathering; activists released same day.

➔ Nigeria JULY 2018

Boko Haram (BH) maintained attacks on military and civilians in north east, herder-farmer violence continued in centre and banditry persisted in north west, as major faction pulled out of ruling party and allied with opposition ahead of 2019 general elections. In north east, BH continued attacks in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states despite military's claimed gains against it. Notably, in Borno state, BH ambushed army convoy near Bama 13 July, with at least 23 soldiers missing or killed. BH killed six traders at Mussini village 17 July; killed at least 27 people near Gajibo village 18 July; at least seven in suicide attack at mosque in Konduga 23 July; 26 July attacked military in Jakana, at least thirteen killed including seven insurgents, four soldiers and two policemen. In Yobe state, BH attacked military base in Jilli 14 July, with scores of soldiers killed or missing after attack; army 22 July said troops had repelled BH attack on patrol at Sasawa village, several insurgents and troops killed. In Adamawa state, BH 10 July killed five civilians in Luru town. Special court in Kainji, Niger state 9-10 July sentenced 113 suspected BH to jail for involvement in terrorism, and dismissed cases against 111 other suspects for lack of evidence. Herder-farmer violence continued with at least four people killed in Plateau state, 24 in Taraba state and six in Adamawa state. Violence related to cattle rustling and banditry continued in north west, with at least 90 killed in Zamfara and Sokoto states. Armed bandits 9-10 July attacked several villages in Rabah area of Sokoto state, killing 39. Suspected armed bandits 17-19 July killed at least 30 people in attacks on five villages of Gidan Goga district, Zamfara state. Suspected armed bandits 24 July killed at least twenty people in attack on Kwaddi village, Zamfara state, and displaced over 12,000. Armed attacks on police spiked nationwide with at least 25 policemen killed,

including nine in two attacks in or near capital Abuja 1-2 July. Political factions stepped up positioning ahead of 2019 elections. Major faction withdrew from ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party 4 July condemning govt's alleged incompetence and, calling itself Reformed APC, 9 July formed coalition with opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP) and 38 other parties, resolving to field common presidential candidate. Benue state governor and over 40 federal legislators defected from ruling APC to opposition PDP.

- **REPORT: Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence**

Asia

➔ China (Internal) JULY 2018

People's Daily reported that authorities in Xinjiang had relocated 461,000 residents to work in other parts of region during first quarter of 2018, with plans to relocate 100,000 in southern Xinjiang by 2019. Scholar at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences told Global Times that relocation will help maintain regional security and alleviate poverty; some observers cite move as part of campaign to weaken Uighur culture.

➔ China/Japan JULY 2018

Following May visit of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang to Japan, Chinese foreign ministry 5 July announced invitation to Japanese PM Abe to visit Beijing later in 2018, ahead of planned visit by Chinese President Xi to Tokyo in 2019 for G20 summit. Li 24 July called for healthy, stable ties between China and Japan in meeting with speaker of Japanese parliament in Beijing. Japan reported it scrambled fighter jets 27 July to intercept Chinese Y-9 electronic surveillance aircraft over Sea of Japan.

➔ Korean Peninsula JULY 2018

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Pyongyang 5-7 July for follow-up discussions after 12 June U.S.-DPRK Singapore summit; described talks as “productive” and “good-faith negotiations”, however North Korea released statement denouncing “unilateral and gangster-like [U.S.] demand for denuclearisation”, saying U.S. stance runs “against spirit” of Singapore summit, while saying that leader Kim Jong-un nevertheless wants to build on “friendly relationship and trust” forged with President Trump in Singapore. U.S. intelligence official 31 July told Reuters about further evidence of increased North Korean ballistic missile production activity, citing images showing trucks activity at Sanumdong factory. U.S. and North Korean officials 16 July met to coordinate repatriation of 50-55 sets of remains of U.S. servicemen killed in Korean War; repatriations took place 27 July. North Korea and South Korea resumed ship-to-ship radio communication links 1 July, ten years after their unilateral suspension by Seoul, which said move represents bid to defuse military tensions and prevent violent confrontation, especially around contested islands in Yellow (West) Sea. Koreas 17 July fully restored military communications line in western part of peninsula, suspended since early 2016 closure of Kaesong Industrial Complex. South Korea 10 July announced suspension of large-scale annual civil defence drills and independent military exercises, saying it plans to develop new drills to prepare for armed attacks “from outside as well as terrorism”; also affirmed intention that U.S. troops should remain in South Korea. South Korean defence ministry 24 July announced plan to gradually reduce troop numbers along demilitarised zone. Month saw further inter-Korean good-will gestures of sports engagements. South Korean workers travelled to Kaesong, North Korea, mid-July to repair facilities to be used for inter-Korean joint liaison office, as agreed during April inter-Korean summit in Panmunjom. China and North Korea 11 July celebrated 57th anniversary of DPRK-China Treaty of Friendship, which compels the two countries to defend one another in event of attack. China and Russia 20 July reportedly blocked U.S. request made at UN Security Council to stop oil transfers to North Korea.

➔ *Taiwan Strait* JULY 2018

Two U.S. warships sailed through Taiwan Strait 7 July; China next day accused U.S. of playing the “Taiwan card” to harm Chinese national interest; U.S. Navy said warships’ route “perfectly permissible”. Chinese navy 18-23 July conducted live-fire drill in East China Sea; China’s Global Times reported operation was over area “roughly the size of Taiwan” and designed to simulate real combat against Taiwan and show preparedness for conflict. Taiwan foreign ministry 26 July denounced Beijing’s efforts to stop private companies referring to Taiwan as separate country as “attempts to destroy Taiwan’s sovereignty”. Beijing 31 July said it had called on U.S. not to allow President Tsai to transit through U.S. en route to Latin America in Aug. Taiwan 17 July brought into service a second squadron of U.S.-supplied Apache AH-64E attack helicopters. Chinese President Xi 13 July met Lien Chan, former chair of Kuomintang party, in Beijing and urged more work on peaceful development of relations across Taiwan Strait and efforts toward peaceful reunification.

➔ *Afghanistan* JULY 2018

Post-ceasefire resumption of violence continued; NATO 20 July reported Afghan national army (ANDSF) conducted more than 90 post-ceasefire operations, with 1,700 insurgents killed or injured; period also saw sharp uptick in civilian casualties caused by ANDSF and U.S. forces, with worst-hit provinces including Badghis (west), Farah (west), Faryab (north) and Ghazni (south). Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP) suffered significant setbacks late June-early July from Taliban offensives in Laghman and Kunar provinces (east), and Jawzjan province (north), where local officials reported more than 250 killed on both sides during two weeks of fighting. Taliban reportedly captured territory from IS-KP in Darzab and Qush Tepa districts throughout July. U.S. military 7 July reported joint U.S.-ANDSF operations had retaken Deh Bala district, Nangarhar province, from IS-KP. IS-KP continued attacks, with dozens killed, mostly civilians, in several suicide bombings in Jalalabad, Nangarhar province (east), and at least ten killed in suicide attack on govt ministry in Kabul 16 July. During two-day international conference in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia 10 July, nearly 200 religious scholars called for Taliban to end insurgency and accept govt's peace offer, issuing statement labelling ongoing bloodshed "religiously illegitimate" and conferring religious legitimacy to govt; Taliban condemned declaration. U.S. Sec of State Pompeo 9 July paid unannounced visit to President Ghani in Kabul, reiterated support for peace process; New York Times 16 July cited "senior American and Afghan officials" as saying U.S. President Trump was now seeking direct talks with Taliban. International media late July reported that direct informal talks took place between Taliban negotiators and senior U.S. diplomats in Doha, Qatar; both sides described meetings as positive. Special forces 2 July arrested militia commander and close ally of VP Abdul Rashid Dostum, Nizamuddin Qaysari, in Faryab province (north), resulting in clash with his supporters and death of four of his guards; arrests prompted protests in several northern provinces, subsiding after Dostum returned from exile in Turkey 22 July. UN mission 15 July said more civilians killed – 1,692 – in first six months of 2018 than any comparable period over past decade.

- *REPORT: Building on Afghanistan's Fleeting Ceasefire*

➔ Bangladesh JULY 2018

Ruling Awami League (AL) continued anti-narcotics drive with over 202 killed since May, some allegedly in staged police encounters by end of July. Opposition Bangladesh National Party (BNP) 20 July held rally in Dhaka demanding immediate release of its jailed leader Khaleda Zia, which it says is a condition for its participation in Dec parliamentary elections, also threatening to hold protests elsewhere in country. Supreme Court 2 July upheld its decision to reject High Court's granting of bail for Zia (in March) in murder case from Feb 2015. Visiting Bangladesh at start of July, UN Secretary-General António Guterres and World Bank President Jim Kim 1 July praised country for accepting Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in meeting with PM Hasina; 2 July visited refugees and humanitarian workers in Cox's Bazar. Bangladesh and UN late June began formal registration of refugees aimed at facilitating repatriation, stressing any returns would be safe and voluntary. Home Minister Asaduzzaman 11 July said registration process was completed and registration of children born in camps was ongoing; data to be ready by Nov and shared with Myanmar. UN investigators ending fact-finding mission in Cox's Bazar camps 19 July noted that Rohingya refugees continue to arrive in Bangladesh from Myanmar, many reporting violence and persecution.

➔ *India (Non-Kashmir) JULY 2018*

In Jharkhand state, encounter between security forces and Maoist rebels 11 July left one officer dead. In Chhattisgarh state, suspected Maoist rebels 15 July killed two security forces in Kanker district; eight suspected Maoist rebels, including four women, killed 19 July in large-scale police operation in nearby Bijapur district.

➔ *Kashmir JULY 2018*

Fall of Kashmir's three-year-old coalition govt and New Delhi's imposition of "governor's rule" direct control in June continued to fuel unrest. In Hawoora Mishipora village, Kulgam district (west), paramilitary forces 7 July killed three protesters when clashes erupted after demonstrators, protesting alleged army beatings of villagers earlier that day, threw rocks at army patrol; govt temporarily suspended mobile services to prevent organisation of further protests. Separatists 7-8 July held strikes in south Kashmir, closing shops, schools and businesses. Army 11 July fired on youths throwing stones at patrol in Trehgam, Kupwara district (north west), killing one. Militants abducted and killed two policemen during month, in Shopian (west) district 6 July and in Kulgam 20 July; security forces 22 July claimed to have killed three men responsible for second attack, one allegedly from Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) and others from Hizbul Mujahideen, in operation in Kulgam. Suspected LeT militant killed in clashes with security forces in Handwara, Kupwara district 20 July. Security forces 25 July claimed to have killed two LeT militants in gunfight in Anantnag (south).

➔ *Maldives JULY 2018*

EU 16 July warned it could adopt sanctions, including travel ban and assets freeze, on those responsible for human rights violations since Feb imposition of state of emergency and arrest of political opponents.

➔ Nepal JULY 2018

Civil disobedience and concerns about the narrowing of political space dominated discussions between ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) and opposition groups. Two simultaneous hunger strikes – by Dr Govinda KC, prominent doctor demanding medical sector reforms, and Ganga Maya Adhikari, demanding accountability for her son's conflict-era killing in 2004 – created public pressure on govt. Opposition Nepali Congress (NC) and prominent civil society leaders subsequently criticised govt's policy of restricting public protests to designated areas around country – first announced in April – as curtailing right to protest and contravening constitution. Supreme Court 6 July issued interim order to govt not to implement protest ban. NC 17 July announced nationwide protests to increase pressure against govt's "totalitarian" decisions. UN Human Right Council experts 11 July claimed govt's National Integrity Policy – aimed at monitoring and restricting NGO activity – could severely impinge on rights to free speech and association. Domestic activists and international organisations including Amnesty International and International Commission of Jurists criticised draft legislation to amend 2014 transitional justice act for critical flaws; urged govt to reconstitute transitional justice mechanisms, ensure punishment proportionate to gravity of crimes, and undertake transparent consultative process with victims' groups.

✚ Pakistan JULY 2018

Deeply contested 25 July general election marred by high level of violence across country and allegations of fraud and vote-rigging; marking second time in country's history that a civilian govt has transferred power to another civilian govt, Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) won with 116 seats, emerging as largest party in National Assembly (lower house of parliament) but short of 137 required for an absolute majority. Former ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) won 64 seats, and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) 43. Losing parties claimed PTI was unfairly assisted by federal and provincial caretaker govts, military and electoral commission ahead of poll, including alleged clampdown on media and arrest of PML-N activists and restrictions on rallies. Parties also claim they were disadvantaged by court rulings against their leaders ahead of vote, including 6 July sentencing of PML-N leader and former PM Sharif to ten years' imprisonment for corruption; and Supreme Court's 9 July reopening of cases of suspicious financial transactions implicating PPP leader and former President Asif Ali Zardari. PTI dismissed claims as anti-Pakistan agenda. Judge 18 July criticised what he alleged was interference of intelligence agencies in affairs of judiciary in order to undermine election. Amid concerns over insecurity, electoral commission granted military unprecedented arresting powers and deployment of 371,000 troops – by far the largest ever for an election; concerns remain over risk of militant and extremist violence during post-election uncertainty. Death toll in attacks on candidates and supporters ahead of election and on polling day over 200, exceeding total for 2008 election; included second deadliest terror attack in Pakistan's history in Mastung, Balochistan (south west) 13 July, killing at least 149; Islamic State (ISIS) claimed attack but security officials blamed sectarian extremist Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. ISIS also claimed election day bomb killing 31 in Balochistan capital Quetta. Electoral commission allowed banned militant and new extreme groups to take part in election through political fronts and alliances; PPP's Bhutto Zardari cautioned that extremists were being given

space, however other front-line parties reportedly sought alliances with them. Other incidents of insecurity persisted, particularly in Balochistan.

- *OP-ED: National Ambitions Meet Local Opposition Along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor*

➔ Sri Lanka JULY 2018

Amid ongoing govt divisions, political discourse continued to be dominated by extreme and violent statements from Sinhala and Tamil nationalists. United National Party parliamentarian Vijayakala Maheswaran 5 July resigned as state minister for child affairs following widespread criticism of 2 July speech in which she said return of LTTE (“Tamil Tigers”) was necessary “if we want to walk freely, if we need our children to attend schools and return back”, in wake of high-profile murder of northern Tamil child. PM 20 July condemned late June statement by Sinhala nationalist retired admiral calling for death penalty for alleged treasonous actions of chairperson of National Human Rights Commission. Controversy generated by late June New York Times article about Chinese govt companies’ control of strategically located but economically unproductive Hambantota port, particularly allegations of payment to Mahinda Rajapaksa’s presidential election campaign in 2015, continued. PM Ranil Wickremesinghe promised to reopen criminal investigation into alleged campaign contribution, which company denied, while Rajapaksa-aligned legislators denounced story. Govt 17 July tabled in parliament bill to create office of reparations, which would be second of four key transitional justice institutions promised in Oct 2015 UN Human Rights Council resolution; bill being challenged in Supreme Court. EU delegation and member states representatives, with Norwegian and Canadian ambassadors to Sri Lanka, issued 16 July statement requesting President Sirisena not to follow through on his 10 July decision to end 40-year moratorium on implementation of the death penalty.

➔ Cambodia JULY 2018

PM Hun Sen’s Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) won all 125 seats in 29 July general election marked by voter intimidation and manipulation. Final vote count expected 15 Aug. Twenty parties registered to compete, but govt dissolved main opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party Nov 2017. UN Special Rapporteur Rhona Smith 20 July expressed concern over reports of voter intimidation, particularly statements by officials that abstaining from vote is illegal, and threats to withhold services from communities that do not support CPP. White House released statement declaring election “neither free nor fair”, and Australia expressed “disappointment that Cambodian people have been unable to freely choose their representatives”.

➔ *Indonesia* JULY 2018

United Liberation Movement for West Papua reported that security operation in West Papua's Nduga agency had conducted aerial campaign in pursuit of pro-independence fighters who claimed responsibility for late June attack on police at local airport; said operation resulted in several casualties and thousands displaced; military said reports of airstrikes and bombings were a hoax, and that it was working with police in "law enforcement activities" in Alguru in Nduga. Amnesty International 2 July said that security forces have committed almost 100 extrajudicial killings in Papua and West Papua since 2010, mainly in context of "unnecessary or excessive use of force during mass protests, during law enforcement operations or due to misconduct by individual officials", and almost no accountability. Police chief mid-July said police had arrested almost 200 terror suspects and killed twenty who were resisting arrest since mid-May Surabaya attacks; early July told media police had foiled over 500 terror plots since 2012. Jakarta court 31 July banned Islamic State (ISIS)-linked Jamaah Ansharut Daulah group, blamed for Surabaya attacks.

➔ *Myanmar* JULY 2018

Amid continued occasional clashes between military and ethnic armed groups in Kachin and North Shan states, third "Panglong-21" Union Peace Conference was held in Naypyitaw 11-16 July. For first time, all ethnic armed groups attended, including those without ceasefires. State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and commander in chief both struck slightly more conciliatory tone, but did not offer any major new concessions; conference outcome seen as not particularly substantive, no discussion of security sector and constitutional change. Govt reaffirmed intention to complete peace process by 2020 elections. Outgoing UN High Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein gave strongly worded update on Rohingya human rights situation at UN Human Rights Council in Geneva 4 July, stating that, "people are still fleeing persecution in Rakhine"; member states expressed increased focus on accountability measures. UN Secretary-General António Guterres and World Bank President Jim Kim visited Bangladesh early July, including Rohingya camps; Guterres called for greater funding to support Rohingya and host communities, and for Myanmar to create conditions suitable for return. Bangladesh home minister 11 July said that Bangladesh and UN had completed process of formally registering Rohingya refugees, aimed at facilitating repatriation, registration of children born in camps ongoing. Following fact-finding mission to camps, UN investigators 19 July reported continued refugee influx, with violence and persecution ongoing. Leaked confidential memorandum of understanding between govt and UN on humanitarian and development assistance to northern Rakhine 29 June prompted criticism over lack of consultation with Rohingya refugees; failure to recognise the Rohingya identity; and denial of basic rights for Rohingya residents or returnees, including citizenship. Govt 30 July named two local and two international members of commission of inquiry into allegations of rights abuses in Rakhine state, which was announced in late May. Court 9 July decided to formally charge two Reuters journalists under Official Secrets Act over their reporting on massacre of Rohingya villagers perpetrated by security forces and local people; decision criticised by U.S., EU, and others.

➤ Philippines JULY 2018

President Duterte 26 July signed Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) which creates Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), implementing 2014 peace agreement between govt and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which ended 40-year conflict in Mindanao region. Senate and House earlier ratified BOL after bicameral conference committee approved final version 18 July. Bill provides for self-rule of entity, home to estimated five million Muslims, by 2022. BARMM to have more powers and cover bigger area than entity that it replaces: will have 80-member regional parliament which will select chief minister to head govt; will keep 75% of locally collected taxes and receive govt funds; manage natural resources; and incorporate Islamic law into regional justice system for cases exclusively involving Muslims. Central govt to retain control over police and military, MILF to lay down arms in phased approach and decommission its fighters, which leaders say number 30,000-40,000. First local elections to be held 2022; before then, Duterte will appoint 80-member Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA). Martial law to remain in place in Mindanao until end of 2018 so that security forces can tackle Islamic State (ISIS)-linked groups. MILF leadership satisfied with BOL, which they said would help win back splinter rebel groups and make them less susceptible to ISIS-linked foreign groups. Regional referendum needed to ratify BOL anticipated for Oct; MILF began efforts to build support for BOL, including consultation at main MILF camp in Maguindanao province 29 July reportedly attended by tens of thousands of MILF members. MILF leaders visited national military HQ in Manila 12 July. Military retook town taken by ISIS-linked Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Maguindanao 4 July; military reported twelve BIFF killed in clashes in Maguindanao province 8 July. Army reported one soldier, five paramilitary troopers and four civilians killed by vehicle suicide bomb at checkpoint on southern island Basilan 31 July; ISIS claimed responsibility. Duterte 27 July offered to open talks with Abu Sayyaf rebel group; presidential spokesman said his remarks were calling for surrender. Amid stepped-up military offensive against communist New People's Army in north late month, Duterte 26 July said he hoped govt and communist rebels would return to negotiating table.

- **COMMENTARY: Philippines: Addressing Islamist Militancy after the Battle for Marawi**

➔ South China Sea JULY 2018

Biennial U.S.-led Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercises continued, scheduled to end 2 Aug, including some 25,000 personnel and 52 ships from 26 countries; China sent surveillance ship to monitor exercises. Vietnam's participation for first time seen as significant sign of closer military relations with U.S. Department of Ocean and Fishery. China's Hainan province 4 July released notice encouraging Chinese development of uninhabited islands in SCS; policy would particularly affect islands in Paracel archipelago, also claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam. Reports emerged that Philippines govt is proposing new constitution that would make more explicit assertions of sovereignty over areas in SCS, which Manila calls West Philippine Sea. ASEAN and Chinese officials late June discussed proposed code of conduct (CoC) in meeting on implementation of 2002 Declaration of Conduct of Parties

in the SCS, agreeing on a single draft CoC negotiating text and to move ahead with consultations to produce a unified draft document. Australia and UK 20 July discussed plans to send British aircraft carrier to Pacific and undertake joint naval operations to reassert international “norms and conventions”.

➔ Thailand JULY 2018

Amid ongoing violence in southern insurgency, series of five bombings targeting Buddhist-owned rubber plantations in Yala province 28 June-4 July wounded five, including in Krong Pinang district 2 July and Muang district 4 July. Villager shot dead at rubber plantation in Chanae district, Songkhla province 14 July. Motorcycle-borne gunmen shot dead policeman in Cho Airong district, Narathiwat, 10 July. Dialogue process between Bangkok and MARA Patani (Patani Consultative Council) remains on hold pending decision by new Malaysian govt on its role as facilitator. PM Prayuth Chan-ocha 27 June said another meeting with political parties would be held in Sept to discuss long-delayed national poll; commented that “national reconciliation” and stability must be achieved before general election; and dismissed as groundless speculation that he would compete for elected office. National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO)’s hand-picked National Assembly 9 July unanimously approved twenty-year national strategy, including sanctions designed to prevent future civilian govts from revoking it, ruling that they must comply with strategy and stating that political parties are prohibited from advocating policies at odds with strategy; regime’s appointed Senate will ensure compliance, together with National Strategy Commission, which will include all military service chiefs.

Europe & Central Asia

➔ Kosovo JULY 2018

EU-facilitated talks between Kosovo and Serbia 18 July ended without apparent progress on normalisation of relations. EU Commissioner for Migration Dimitris Avramopoulos 18 July confirmed that Kosovo met criteria for visa liberalisation, having ratified border demarcation agreement with Montenegro and “demonstrated full commitment in fighting corruption and organised crime”; commissioner voiced hope that Kosovo citizens would be able to travel to EU countries without visas by year-end. At London summit on Western Balkans 10 July, EU countries pledged to increase funding for region; participants discussed ways to improve security and regional cooperation.

➔ Macedonia JULY 2018

Following June historic deal with Greece ending decades-long dispute over country name, govt started preparations for referendum on name deal. Parliament 25 July voted to appoint new electoral commission required to organise referendum; came after delay after opposition VMRO-DPMNE withheld its support, demanding provision guaranteeing formation of a technical govt 100 days ahead of any future elections. Parliament 30 July approved date for referendum as 30 Sept, in vote boycotted by VMRO-DPMNE. NATO 11 July invited Macedonia to start accession talks, to take place once name deal fully implemented. Macedonia 17 July started technical screening process to assess readiness for EU accession talks.

➔ Armenia JULY 2018

New govt of PM Pashinyan, who continues to enjoy high popularity levels, arrested more former govt officials and their relatives, including launch of investigations into former President Sargsyan's brother, nephew and niece, reportedly charged with conducting illegal business activities. Armenia's second President Robert Kocharyan sentenced 27 July to two-month pre-trial detention in court investigation into his involvement in crackdown on protesters in March 2008 that left ten dead; former ruling Republican Party and Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaksutyun party spoke about possible political motivation of investigation. Amid ongoing uncertainty over date for new parliamentary elections, speculation increased that they will be postponed until 2019, as parliamentarians continue to amend electoral code. Armenia took part in Russia-led military exercises "International Army Games" late July.

- [*EU WATCH LIST: Watch List 2018 – Second Update*](#)

➔ Azerbaijan JULY 2018

Turbulence in second-largest city Ganja after attacker 3 July shot city's unpopular mayor, seriously wounding him; police detained suspect identified as Russian national Yunis Safarov, later described by authorities as belonging to a radical Islamist group. Estimated 150-200 people 10 July joined protest in Ganja city centre, interpreted by some opposition politicians and observers as show of anger against corruption; two policemen stabbed and killed as they were confronting demonstrators. Next day govt launched security operation detaining more than 100 people and arresting more than 60; one suspect in death of police officer was shot dead 13 July. Interior ministry 9 July

reported fourteen people jailed for online comments about shooting and about nationwide power blackout 3 July. President Aliyev 13 July made statement blaming events in Ganja on “religious radicals”; Iran dismissed and criticised speculation by Azerbaijani politicians of Islamic extremists with links to Iran. Azerbaijan took part in Russia-led military exercises “International Army Games” late July.

➔ *Georgia JULY 2018*

President Margvelashvili announced at 11-12 July NATO summit that Georgia was ready to join NATO. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg 18 July said Georgia had right to choose for itself whether to join NATO, said Russian pressure was “totally unacceptable”. De facto leader of Georgian breakaway republic South Ossetia visited Syria and met with President Assad 23 July, two months after Syria recognised South Ossetia’s independence.

➔ *Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) JULY 2018*

Armenian and Azerbaijani FMs with Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chairs 11 July held first official meeting on Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) issue since recent change in Armenian leadership; no detailed information or date for further meetings released. Amid uncertainty over position of new Armenian govt on peace process, Armenian PM Pashinyan at 20 July press conference did not provide direct response to question on whether he believed territories around NK were to “go back” to Azerbaijan, saying that no decision would go against will of Armenian people; some observers interpreted this as indication that Pashinyan will not favour territorial concessions. Incidents along border between Armenia and Azerbaijan included 1 July exchange of fire near Nakhchivan; Azerbaijan reported detention on 15 July of Armenian national, accusing him of “sabotage” attempt against army; Armenia denied, said he was civilian with health problems. Azerbaijan 21 July reported one soldier killed as result of ceasefire violation in unspecified location. Azerbaijani armed forces started large-scale exercises 2 July; Ministry of Defence said exercises aimed at “the liberation of the occupied territories [Nagorno-Karabakh]”.

- *EU WATCH LIST: Watch List 2018 – Second Update*

➔ *Russia/North Caucasus* JULY 2018

Shali city court 9 July extended detention of Oyub Titiyev, director of Chechnya office of Memorial human rights organisation, until Dec; Titiyev's lawyers 9 July filled complaint to European Court of Human Rights for "politically motivated prosecution"; Council of Europe Commissioner Dunja Mijatović 17 July called for Titiyev's release in letter to prosecutor general of Russia. In Chechnya, police reportedly detained one villager from Novye Atagi 10 July and six villagers from Borozdinovskaya 12 July without official charges, and with police reportedly giving no news to relatives. Gunmen 20 July attacked police car in Dagestan's Kizilyurtovsky district, killing two policemen and wounding one; Islamic State (ISIS) claimed responsibility. Vladimir Vasilyev, acting head of Dagestan, 10 July reported over 200 officials had been prosecuted for corruption charges; detained officials included former deputy PM and former minister for public health. In Chechen capital Grozny, city council 26 July appointed nephew of republic leader Ramzan Kadyrov as mayor.

- *OP-ED: No Matter What Happens in Helsinki, Putin Has Already Won*

➔ *Moldova* JULY 2018

Hundreds joined protest in front of parliament 19 July against annulment of Andrei Năstase's victory in 3 June Chişinău mayoral election and demanding new elections. Responding to election annulment, EU 4 July froze first tranche of €100mn financial assistance program, citing annulment which it said showed lack of respect for preconditions of democratic mechanisms and rule of law; European Parliament 5 July said annulment of mayoral election was evidence of "state capture and a very deep crisis of institutions".

➔ *Ukraine* JULY 2018

Security situation in east improved from 1 July "Harvest Ceasefire" between Ukrainian military and Russia-backed armed formations; Kyiv reported ceasefire violations dropped 80% 1-11 July; however Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) noted "sharp increase" in ceasefire violations in Donetsk region 29-30 July. Following 11 July Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) meeting, Kyiv reiterated calls for OSCE monitors' full access up to Russian border; and for return to military positions established by Sept 2014 memorandum. Following 25 July

TCG meeting, Kyiv envoy Iryna Herashchenko said Russia refused to consider new prisoner exchange and urged TCG resolution guaranteeing International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access to Ukrainians in Russian and separatist detention. Ukrainian military casualties included four killed 1-30 July; OSCE reported eight civilians injured, two dead. Tensions rose around Azov Sea, amid reports of Russian searches of Ukrainian vessels and May opening of Kerch bridge linking Crimea to Russia's Krasnodar region. President Poroshenko 17 July pledged military measures to stop "Russian provocations"; accused Moscow of hindering mining and metallurgical industries, cementing annexation of Crimea, and violating 2003 agreement guaranteeing free movement of vessels in area. Russia accused Ukraine and Western backers of provocations via military exercises in Black Sea, which were followed by Ukrainian aviation exercises on Azov Sea reported by military 30 July. Talks on potential UN mission in Donbas remained deadlocked. Interior Minister Arsen Avakov 16 July elaborated plan for reintegration of areas outside Kyiv's control through security operations facilitated by a small peacekeeping force; said open questions include nature and duration of "special status" for reintegrated territories; status of Russian language. Following closed-door session at 16 July Helsinki summit between U.S. and Russian leaders, President Putin allegedly claimed he suggested to President Trump for his private consideration that Ukraine's separatist-held territories conduct internationally recognised referendum on status; U.S. govt 20 July denied it would consider this. U.S. 20 July announced additional \$200mn in security assistance for "training, equipment, and advisory efforts". Parliament 12 July passed amendments to June anti-corruption court law as per calls from Western counterparts.

➔ *Cyprus* JULY 2018

Turkey 4 July approved appointment of Jane Holl Lute as new UN special envoy on Cyprus; Holl Lute met 23 July with Greek Cypriot President Nikos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akıncı to discuss ways forward on possible new round of reunification talks. No substantial progress was reported. Turkish FM Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu met same day with Akıncı, later stated that Turkish Cypriots would accept no less than political equality. Greek FM Nikos Kotzias 3 July expressed Greece's desire for treaty with Turkey on issues of security and guarantees before holding an international conference on Cyprus; Greek PM Tsipras 12 July broached topic with Turkish President Erdoğan on sidelines of NATO summit in Brussels, emphasising importance of restarting talks and establishing close contact between Greek and Turkish FMs in process. UN Security Council 26 July unanimously voted to renew UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)'s mandate for six months until 31 Jan 2019.

➔ *Northern Ireland (UK)* JULY 2018

Month saw incidents of republican and unionist violence. Republican dissidents 7-12 July reportedly orchestrated violence over six successive nights in republican neighbourhood of Londonderry, firing shots at police 10 July and throwing 75 petrol bombs and two IEDs at police on 12 July. Police 16 July blamed "new IRA" republican

dissidents, saying they had arrested thirteen in connection with attacks. Unidentified assailants 13 July threw explosive device at house of former leader of republican party Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams, in west Belfast and attacked house of another republican activist and former IRA member; current Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald 16 July blamed dissent republicans for attacks. Loyalist paramilitary group Ulster Volunteer Force 11 July reportedly hijacked and burnt thirteen vehicles in protest at govt limiting size of bonfires for annual 12 July Orange Order parades. Five largest political parties, including Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin, released joint statement 11 July appealing for end to all violence. British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 25 July met for first time since 2007 in London to discuss issues including paramilitary and dissident violence, support for Good Friday Agreement and British and Irish relations post-Brexit.

➔ Turkey JULY 2018

Number of fatalities and attacks in conflict between Turkey and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in south east went down compared to previous month; fatalities were concentrated in rural areas of Hakkari and Diyarbakır. By three-year anniversary of breakdown of ceasefire with PKK 20 July, Crisis Group had recorded almost 4,000 fatalities. Military conducted at least five major air operations hitting PKK targets in northern Iraq around Qandil during month. Govt crackdown on Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) continued: court 10 July sentenced two previous HDP deputies to fifteen months in prison based on claims they disobeyed law on meetings and demonstrations; authorities launched investigations into four newly elected HDP MPs over "terrorist propaganda" charges after they attended funerals of PKK militants. Govt 18 July lifted state of emergency introduced following July 2016 coup attempt, in move expected to ease economic and political tensions, however ruling Justice and Development Party (AK) 25 July passed bill amending Turkey's anti-terror law retaining some contentious provisions. Anti-Islamic State (ISIS) operations continued with further arrests. In northern Syria, Turkey and U.S. continued coordinated patrols around Manbij as part of their negotiated roadmap (see Syria). Relations with U.S. remain strained; FM Çavuşoğlu confirmed during 11-12 July NATO summit that Turkey would complete contentious purchase of Russian S-400 missiles by end-2019. Tensions increased after Turkish court 25 July ruled to put jailed U.S. Pastor Andrew Brunson under house arrest (U.S. had expected his release). President Erdoğan met Russian President Putin on sidelines of BRICS summit in Johannesburg 26 July, reportedly discussing bilateral ties, Syria and upcoming Tehran summit (as part of Astana process dialogue on Syria conflict). Cooperation with EU on Syrian refugees continued with EU's late June allocation of second tranche of €3bn to assist with Syrian refugees' basic needs and integration. Tensions between Syrian refugees and host communities flared 2 July with fight in Bursa city, south of Istanbul, prompting some 500 residents to protest Syrian presence and vandalise Syrian-owned shops.

➔ Kazakhstan JULY 2018

President Nazarbayev 5 July signed decree, which came into force 12 July, making him head of Security Council for life, and changing body's status from consultative to constitutional. U.S. officials visiting Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan 20-23 July met with representatives from all five Central Asian states for meetings under C5+1 format which includes economic and security cooperation.

➔ *Kyrgyzstan* JULY 2018

Amid ongoing feud between President Jeenbekov and former President Atambayev, Bishkek mayor and Atambayev ally Albek Ibraimov was detained 19 July on corruption charges. FM Sirodjidin Aslov 21 July hosted meeting of FMs representing all five Central Asian states, who agreed to increase cooperation on regional issues including combatting terrorism and drug trafficking. Kazakh Defence Minister Saken Zhasuzaqov 25 July travelled to Bishkek in first such visit since independence in 1991.

➔ *Tajikistan* JULY 2018

Court 11 July sentenced journalist Hairullo Mirsaidov to twelve years' imprisonment for financial crimes and false reporting to police; several NGOs including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International condemned conviction, saying charges were politically motivated. Islamic State (ISIS) claimed responsibility for 29 July attack on group of foreign cyclists on road in Khatlon region in south, in which four were killed.

➔ *Uzbekistan* JULY 2018

U.S. officials visiting Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan 20-23 July met with representatives from all five Central Asian states for meetings under C5+1 format which includes economic and security cooperation.

Latin America & Caribbean

→ Colombia JULY 2018

Negotiations between govt and National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla group resumed 2 July, with agenda including possible ceasefire and participation of civil society; no agreement reported, amid concerns talks will end in Aug; ELN reasserted its commitment to peace talks in 28 July letter to Episcopal Conference of Colombia. ELN 4 July marked its 54th anniversary with spate of attacks including IED attack in Buenaventura (south west), wounding eight soldiers, while clashes with army in Chocó (west) left one soldier dead. Govt late June found bodies of Ecuadorian couple kidnapped by alias “Guacho”, leader of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) dissident group Oliver Sinisterra front (operating along Colombia-Ecuador border), which 11 July killed three judicial officials in Tumaco (south west); police 12 July arrested fourteen alleged members of group. Clashes between ELN and Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL) in Catatumbo (north east) continued with six days of fighting beginning 11 July, displacing hundreds of people. Violence against social leaders increased, with five leaders killed in one week in early July. New Congress sworn in 20 July, including senators from FARC who were given ten seats as part of peace accords; former FARC commander Iván Márquez 16 July announced he would not take his seat to protest recent changes to peace accords and April arrest of fellow FARC leader Jesús Santrich, who sent a letter stating his detention prevented him from assuming his seat. President-elect Duque takes office 7 Aug. Duque ally and former President Uribe 24 July announced his resignation from Senate due to Supreme Court summons requesting testimony in criminal inquiry involving witness tampering allegations. Gaitán Self-Defence Forces (AGC), country’s largest drug-trafficking group, announced in 27 July communiqué that it is studying the recently passed law to enable its legal surrender, but have not decided yet to hand themselves in.

- [REPORT: The Missing Peace: Colombia’s New Government and Last Guerrillas](#)

→ Venezuela JULY 2018

Govt benefited from splintering of domestic opposition and signs of easing international pressure, however, congress of ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) late July also revealed dissent in govt ranks, including over policy of currency exchange controls. Opposition Democratic Unity (MUD) alliance 5 July suffered major split with departure of one of its biggest members, Acción Democrática (AD); AD leader Henry Ramos Allup blamed MUD’s inability to appoint new leadership or fulfil existing agreements. Former opposition presidential candidates Henrique Capriles, Henri Falcón and Manuel Rosales met with Ramos Allup 19 July to discuss how to reunify opposition, but other opposition leaders rejected idea of “revival of the MUD”. So-called “Supreme Court in exile” (in Panama) 5 July ruled Maduro must be replaced by interim president elected by opposition-led National Assembly. Pro-govt National Constituent Assembly 16 July confirmed plans to hold recall referendums against 30 opposition legislators. Electoral authority 12 July announced delayed local council elections to take place 9 Dec; opposition divided over whether to take part. Switzerland 10 July announced fresh sanctions against eleven officials

including VP Rodríguez, and Lima Group 17 July reiterated call for restoration of democracy and expressed “deep concern” over reports govt has moved combat aircraft and other weapons to Colombian border. Colombian President-elect Duque said he would not appoint ambassador to Caracas. New govts of Spain and Mexico signalled softer stances on Maduro govt; Spanish FM Borell 16 July met Venezuelan counterpart and signalled Spain no longer so keen on sanctions; Mexican President-elect López Obrador 5 July said his govt would restore policy of “non-interference” in other countries’ affairs. International Monetary Fund 23 July warned inflation could reach a million % by end 2018; Maduro 25 July postponed introduction of new banknotes for second time to 20 Aug, announced five zeroes (instead of three) would be eliminated; also indicated gasoline rationing could be imminent. Miami newspaper El Nuevo Herald 27 July claimed Maduro under investigation in U.S. over massive money-laundering scheme involving Venezuelan state oil company.

➔ Guatemala JULY 2018

President Morales reportedly continued efforts to undermine International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), proposing changes including narrowing definition of corruption, increasing donor reporting requirements, limiting Commissioner Iván Velásquez’s authority and appointing govt-approved deputy commissioner. Police 4 July reassigned twenty of 45 police officers providing security to CICIG officials. U.S. embassy 6 July issued statement supporting anti-corruption efforts and conditioning tranche of aid on continuing fight against graft. Govt 16 July appointed Conrado Reyes – former short-lived attorney general (AG), who CICIG investigated and removed from office in 2010 over alleged links to criminal networks – as substitute judge in Constitutional Court. New AG Consuelo Porrás reportedly ordered review of public prosecutor’s special unit against impunity (FECI) investigation into Morales’s alleged illicit election financing. Morales implicated in further scandals as former FM Edgar Gutiérrez 9 July accused him of sexually harassing at least two women working in public institutions. Responding to migration crisis and U.S. deportations of Central American migrants, Guatemala 10-11 July hosted Northern Triangle of Central America and Mexico (Tricamex) meeting attended by El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico FMs, as well as U.S. homeland security chief Kirstjen Nielsen, who agreed to establish special homeland security office dedicated to family reunification, set up campaign to promote legal migration, tackle human trafficking and share information. Some observers accused govt of failing to adequately address issue amid reports of 5,995 Guatemalan children remaining in U.S. migration centres, with 475 separated from families in recent months.

➔ Honduras JULY 2018

With UN-backed dialogue between govt and opposition groups stalled, President Hernández 11 July questioned lack of results. UN office in capital Tegucigalpa 16 July approved four Latin American mediators to lead thematic working groups on human rights, electoral process, constitutional reform and institutional strengthening; main

opposition group Libre remained absent from dialogue. Judge 21 July ordered arrest of 38 lawmakers, officials and individuals for allegedly diverting over \$11.7mn of public funds to finance 2013 election campaign. Govt 3 July announced U.S. and Mexico had deported 36,500 Hondurans in first six months of 2018, 55.6% increase on previous year. FM 10-11 July attended Northern Triangle of Central America and Mexico (Tricamex) meeting to address migration crisis and regional security (see Guatemala).

➔ El Salvador JULY 2018

Trend of rising homicide rates continued with reported average 10.1 killings per day in June, up from 7.8 in May. With U.S. continuing to deport gang members, Salvadoran officials 12 July said 527 gang members so far deported in 2018, of whom 67 jailed. Newspaper El Faro late June released story concerning former mayor of San Salvador Nayib Bukele, who aims to run for president in March 2019 elections, alleging he negotiated with gangs. FM 10-11 July attended Northern Triangle of Central America and Mexico (Tricamex) meeting to address regional migration crisis and security (see Guatemala).

✎ Nicaragua JULY 2018

Protests against President Ortega's govt continued into fourth month, with paramilitary and police forces attempting to subdue protest strongholds and restore govt control; reported death toll since April now exceeds 350 with pro-govt forces also targeting mediating clergy. Clashes between protesters and troops in towns of Diriamba (west), Jinotepe (west) and Matagalpa (north) left 38 reported dead 8 July, deadliest day since protests began in April. Protesters held nationwide strikes 13 July; police siege of church near main National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN) in capital Managua where protesters took refuge ended 14 July after assault by police and paramilitary which left two dead; paramilitary groups subsequently occupied UNAN. Pro-Ortega groups 15 July killed ten protesters in anti-govt stronghold Masaya (west); retook Monimbó neighbourhood 17 July in clashes that left four dead. Police and paramilitaries 23 July attacked protesters' barricades in Jinotega (north), killing three. NGO Nicaraguan Pro-Human Rights Association claimed 750 protesters abducted by paramilitary forces 22-23 July. In Diriamba, pro-govt armed militia 9 July entered church and attacked bishops who had been mediating dialogue between govt and protesters; Bishop's Conference suspended working groups set up to mediate. Clerics reported paramilitary groups attacked or looted at least ten churches during month. Ortega 19 July used anniversary of Sandinista revolution to attack Catholic Church as allies of coup plotters. Rival pro- and anti-govt demonstrations in Managua 28 July took place with no reported violence. Govt faced increasing international isolation and criticism: U.S. 5 July announced sanctions against three Ortega allies; UN Sec-Gen Guterres 16 July said govt allies used "unacceptable" force; UN human rights office 17 July stated violence "overwhelmingly perpetrated" by govt and govt-allied groups, demanded access to prisons. Ortega 23 July refused calls for early elections and blamed U.S. and private sector "interventionism" for violence.

🚩 Haiti JULY 2018

Govt 6 July announced hike in fuel prices as part of agreement with International Monetary Fund, prompting three days of violent protests in Port-au-Prince and other cities despite govt immediately withdrawing proposal; cars set alight, streets blocked and shops and hotels looted. At least four people died in violence, police detained 64 people for rioting and looting. Transport and public sector unions participated in major strike 9-10 July. PM Lafontant 14 July resigned, however activists vowed to continue to pressure govt. President Moïse 17 July opened consultations with several parties on selection of new PM, closed on 28 July.

➡ Mexico JULY 2018

In 1 July elections, left-leaning Andrés Manuel López Obrador (known as AMLO) from coalition Juntos Haremos Historia, who ran on promise to end corruption and replace militarised anti-organised crime strategy with peacebuilding measures, won 53.19% of votes for presidency, winning in all but one state and securing over 50% of votes in twenty states, most by any candidate in three decades. Incumbent President Peña Nieto's Institutional Revolutionary Party obtained 16.4% of vote, its worst result in decades. Political violence continued on election day with seven public officials reportedly murdered; 153 politically active persons, including 48 candidates, killed since Sept 2017 start of election campaign. NGO Impunidad Cero 17 July reported only 1.14% of criminal cases solved in 2018. Incoming govt, which takes power in Dec, 17 July invited pope to participate in peace and reconciliation process toward drug-related violence in country and initiated debate about establishing a new drug policy that includes decriminalisation of marijuana, as well as creating truth commissions and reparation for victims of criminal violence. Drug trafficking-related violence continued, with deaths from fighting between criminal groups and clashes between security forces and groups taking place in Mexico City (centre), Sinaloa state (north west), Guerrero (south), Michoacán (south west), Guanajuato (centre), and Zacatecas (centre). Amid ongoing violence against journalists, police 8 July attacked two reporters covering shootout in Doctores, Mexico City. Police continued operations to tackle gasoline theft throughout country, especially in Puebla (centre). Newly elected President AMLO held phone call with U.S. President Trump 2 July and in 13 July letter proposed four priorities for relationship: trade, security, migration and development in Central America; also signalled willingness to cooperate on NAFTA revision, however govt 5 July launched second set of retaliatory tariffs against U.S.. Citizen Council of Mexico City 16 July reported 85% increase of incidents relating to human trafficking in first six months of 2018 compared to 2017. FM 10-11 July attended Northern Triangle of Central America and Mexico (Tricamex) meeting to address migration crisis and regional security (see Guatemala).

Middle East & North Africa

🚩 ⚡ Israel/Palestine JULY 2018

Fighting between Israel and Hamas in Gaza rose to highest level since 2014 Gaza war and risks escalating into new war. Palestinian protesters in Gaza continued to launch incendiary kites across Gaza-Israel border, setting fire to crops in Israel. In response, Israel upped bombing of Hamas targets, and Hamas and Islamic Jihad increased rocket attacks on Israel. Israel 14-15 July struck dozens of Hamas targets, killing two militants, and Hamas and Islamic Jihad launched around 200 rockets at Israel. Israeli air raid 19 July reportedly killed Hamas militant. Gazan sniper 20 July killed Israeli soldier at border, first death of Israeli soldier on Gazan front since 2014. Same day Israel bombed 60 Hamas targets, killing four militants. Hamas sniper wounded Israeli soldier 25 July, in response Israel attacked multiple Hamas positions, killing three militants. Gazan health ministry said Israeli airstrikes 29 July killed two in north Gaza. Israel tightened blockade on Gaza 9 July, stating it was closing Gaza's border to all exports, restricting imports to "humanitarian equipment (including food and medicine)" and reducing Palestinian fishing area in Mediterranean from nine to six nautical miles from shore. Egypt closed Rafah border crossing 16-17 July. Israel 17-23 July halted supply of fuel and cooking gas into Gaza. Hamas 19 July accepted Egyptian plan for reconciliation with Fatah, other main Palestinian faction, which controls West Bank; Fatah yet to respond to proposal. Israeli parliament 19 July passed law that defines state of Israel as nation state of Jewish people, discriminating against Arab minority. Israeli Arabs, EU, Arab League and various nations condemned law. Netanyahu 3 July ended two-year ban on visits by parliamentarians to Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade. As pro-Syrian govt forces in Syria advanced toward border with Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, Israel retaliated to spillover of fighting between Syrian army and rebels: 23 July fired missiles at Syrian rockets – Israel's first use of mid-range missile shield – and 24 July shot down Syrian warplane which it said entered its airspace. PM Netanyahu welcomed U.S. President Trump and Russian President Putin's commitment to Israel's security at 16 July Helsinki summit. Netanyahu 23 July rejected Russian offer to keep Iranian-backed forces in Syria at least 100km from Golan Heights, stating Iranian forces should leave Syria altogether.

- **BRIEFING: Averting War in Gaza**

➡ Lebanon JULY 2018

Hundreds of Syrian refugees returned to Syria throughout month, many from border town Aarsal. PM Hariri 24 July said he was considering Russian plans to assist in repatriation of Syrian refugees, which include monitoring safety of returnees. Human Rights Watch 4 July condemned FM Gebran Bassil's June criticisms of UN refugee agency as sign of "escalation of pressure on refugees" in Lebanon.

➔ *Syria* JULY 2018

Pro-govt forces backed by Russian air power pursued offensive launched late June in Daraa and Quneitra provinces in south west, forcing series of rebel surrenders and reasserting govt control up to Israeli-held Golan Heights. Pro-govt forces late July advanced on last pocket of territory held by local Islamic State (ISIS) affiliate in south-west Daraa. Amid understandings with Moscow, Israel did not intervene to obstruct govt advance, but did strike in response to incidents adjacent to or in airspace above Israeli-controlled territory: Israeli airstrike 6 July hit Syrian army post in Syria that Israel said had shelled buffer zone; Israel 12 July attacked Syrian army posts near Golan Heights after Syrian drone crossed border; Israel 23 July said it had fired missiles at two rockets fired by Syrian govt in fight against ISIS, which landed inside Syrian territory – Israel’s first use of its mid-range missile shield. Israel 24 July said it had shot down Syrian warplane that crossed into airspace over Golan Heights; Syrian govt said plane had been shot while inside Syria. Israel 23 July reportedly rejected offer by Russia to keep Iran-allied forces at least 100km from Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, stating Iranian forces should leave Syria altogether. ISIS militants 25 July carried out multiple suicide bombings in govt-held Sweida city and attacked pro-govt forces and civilians in several nearby villages, killing at least 200. In east, Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) backed by U.S.-led coalition continued efforts to retake pockets controlled by ISIS. Delegation representing SDF and allied political bodies visited Damascus late July, opening high-profile negotiating track with govt; talks currently focused on service provision, major rifts between parties remained on core issues of security control and structure of Syrian state. Turkish President Erdoğan 14 July reportedly warned Russian President Putin that attack on Idlib province in north by pro-govt forces could abrogate Astana accord between Turkey, Russia and Iran which has limited conflict in north.

- *EU WATCH LIST: Watch List 2018 – Second Update*

➔ *Bahrain* JULY 2018

U.S. 10 July designated al-Ashtar Brigades, Shiite militant group which it characterised as Iranian proxy, as terrorist organisation; Bahrain 16 July praised U.S. decision (see Iran).

➔ *Iran* JULY 2018

UK, France, Russia, China and Germany (P4+1) reiterated commitment to Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at ministerial-level JCPOA Joint Commission meeting in Vienna 6 July. U.S. 2 July said it had issued sanctions against 53 Iranian and Iran-related persons and entities since May; U.S. 9 July imposed sanctions on Malaysian sales agent for Iran's Mahan Air, and 10 July designated al-Ashtar Brigades, Shiite militant group in Bahrain, which U.S. characterised as Iranian proxy, as terrorist organisation. Iran 16 July lodged complaint against U.S. sanctions with International Court of Justice. President Rouhani and Revolutionary Guards 5 July threatened to close Strait of Hormuz if Iran was prevented from exporting oil. Insecurity in border areas continued. Iran 18 July said it had finished building factory for production of centrifuge rotors. Rhetoric escalated between Iran and U.S. when Rouhani's 22 July warning to President Trump that "war with Iran is the mother of all wars" prompted Trump to tweet that if Iran threatened U.S. again it could "suffer consequences the likes of which few throughout history have ever suffered before". Trump 30 July said he was willing to meet Rouhani; Iranian govt 31 July rejected offer seeing "no value" in it. In north west on border with Iraq, Revolutionary Guards 14 July claimed to have killed three unidentified militants; Kurdish militants 21 July killed ten Revolutionary Guards in attack on border post in Marivan area, several militants also killed. In south east near Pakistani border, security forces clashed with Pakistan-based Iranian Sunni extremist group Jaish al-Adl in Lar 19 July, Iranian border guard killed. Belgian authorities 2 July said they had detained Iranian diplomat and couple with Iranian heritage for involvement in terrorist plot against 30 June Iranian opposition rally in Paris; govt said incident was ploy by opposition to damage Iran's reputation.

Iraq JULY 2018

Protests erupted in oil-rich south over poor services and unemployment, with some protesters attacking govt and political party offices; security forces responded harshly, killing some 50 protesters. Protests began in Basra 8 July and spread to nine provinces in south, smaller protests held in capital Baghdad. Protesters targeted govt and party offices, oil fields and other economic infrastructure. Security forces, including police and Counter-Terrorism Service, forcibly repressed protests, in some places shooting at protesters. Govt shut down internet and social media platforms to disrupt organisation of protests. PM Abadi promised to change ministers and implement reforms, 17 July pledged \$2.5bn to improve services in Basra and to generate 10,000 jobs. Popular Shiite clerics Ali al-Sistani and Moqtada al-Sadr both offered support to demonstrators. Abadi 29 July suspended electricity minister until investigation carried out into poor electricity provision. Protests continued end month: demonstrators 31 July threatened to block all roads to West Qurna 1 oil field. Following 12 May general election, recount of votes in areas where fraud suspected began 3 July, reportedly revealing serious discrepancies between original results and new count in Kirkuk. Islamic State (ISIS)-related insecurity continued in Kirkuk, Diyala and Saladin provinces, with militants increasingly abducting and killing soldiers and officials. Army, police and Kurdish peshmerga forces 4 July launched joint operations in Kirkuk, Diyala and Saladin provinces targeting ISIS forces. Peshmerga fighters 16 July claimed to have killed fourteen ISIS militants in northern Qarachukh mountain region, Erbil province, six peshmerga fighters also killed. In Erbil, capital of Kurdistan, three gunmen took over governorate building until forced out 23-24 July, two gunmen and one civilian killed; no group claimed responsibility but mayor blamed ISIS. In far north, Turkey continued operations against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), claiming to have killed at least 55 in airstrikes and ground operations throughout month.

- **BRIEFING: How to Cope with Iraq's Summer Brushfire**

➔ *Kuwait* JULY 2018

Court 8 July sentenced four former MPs to three and a half years in prison and reduced sentences of two MPs and one former MP to three and a half years for forcing their way into parliament in Nov 2011 to protest corruption, alongside dozens of activists. Court acquitted seventeen defendants and declined to sentence 34.

➔ *Qatar* JULY 2018

Govt and U.S. 24 July launched expansion of al-Udeid military base, 35km from Doha, which hosts largest U.S. military presence in Gulf.

➔ *Saudi Arabia* JULY 2018

Govt suspended oil exports via Bab al-Mandeb strait between Yemen and Horn of Africa after two oil tankers were attacked 25 July, allegedly by Huthi militants in Yemen. Military 10 July shot down missile fired from Yemen by Huthi forces at Jizan Economic City in south west.

✂️ ⚡️ *Yemen* JULY 2018

Yemeni forces backed by United Arab Emirates (UAE) preparing to take Hodeida city on Red Sea coast from Huthis consolidated positions south of city and fighting intensified elsewhere; UN proposal presents opportunity to avoid battle for Hodeida and restart talks, but fight for Hodeida could also intensify in Aug. UAE-backed forces held positions south of Hodeida, claiming it had paused offensive to facilitate UN mediation, but continued to fight Huthis in Hays, Tuhayta and Durayhimi along Red Sea coast south of Hodeida. UAE-led fighters and Hadi govt forces also gathered in Mokha, port town south of Hodeida, apparently preparing for attacks on Huthi positions on inland road between Mokha and Hodeida, including Zabid town; fighting for Zabid intensified end month with dozens reportedly killed on both sides. Saudi-led coalition resumed air strikes late July in and around Hodeida and in Zabid damaging water facility there that supplies most of Hodeida's water. UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths mid-July submitted to Huthis, Hadi govt and Saudi-led coalition for comment his proposal to avert battle for Hodeida: plan proposes UN oversee Hodeida port and two ports north of city; Huthis undertake phased withdrawal from Hodeida; UAE-led forces pull back from city; reopening of Sanaa airport; national de-escalation and resumption of talks. Govt and Huthis proposed changes. Griffiths shuttled between parties to organise "consultations" between Hadi govt and Huthis in Geneva late Aug or early Sept. Fighting intensified elsewhere. Huthi fighters redoubled efforts to take back territory in Taiz city lost earlier in 2018 and pushed into Lahj province, while govt forces 17-19 July made progress south east of Taiz. In north, Saudi-backed forces made gains in Huthis' home Saada province and in neighbouring Hajja, while Huthis launched missiles into Saudi city of Najran. Huthis 18 July claimed drone attack on oil refinery in Saudi capital, Riyadh; refinery same day said minor fire on site was due to "operational incident". Huthis 25 July allegedly attacked two tankers in Bab al-Mandeb strait, prompting Saudi Arabia to suspend oil shipments through strait; 31 July said they would halt attacks in Red Sea for two weeks from 1 Aug and could extend and expand ceasefire if Saudi-led coalition reciprocates. Huthis 26 July claimed to have launched drone attack on Abu Dhabi airport, UAE denied attack. Tensions between UAE-backed forces and Hadi govt rekindled as Abu al-Yamamah, commander of UAE proxy Security Belt forces, 15 July threatened to attack Hadi govt in Aden.

➔ *United Arab Emirates* JULY 2018

Huthi forces in Yemen 26 July claimed to have launched drone attack on Abu Dhabi airport, which UAE denied. Leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea met Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan 24 July in Abu Dhabi and thanked UAE for role in fostering peace between two countries after twenty-year frozen conflict; Prince Mohammed awarded both leaders highest civilian honour for ending war (see also Ethiopia and Eritrea).

➔ *Algeria* JULY 2018

Senate President Abdelkader Bensalah 3 July urged President Bouteflika to run for fifth term in 2019 election, following similar calls by other officials. Blogger Merzoug Touati 8 July went on hunger strike to protest his seven-year prison sentence on charges of sharing “intelligence with a foreign country” following interview with Israeli official. After medical students in public hospitals suspended seven-month strike late June, they called on govt to keep its promise to begin talks on improving working conditions and abolishing compulsory civil service. Army 30 July clashed with suspected Islamist militants in Bessi locality, Skikda province in north east, four militants and seven troops killed.

➔ *Egypt JULY 2018*

President Sisi continued reshuffle of military leadership: 2 July appointed former director of Armed Forces Morale Affairs Department, Major-General Mohsen Mahmoud Abdel Nabi, head of presidential office, replacing Major-General Abbas Kamel, who became head of General Intelligence Service late June. Parliament 3 July approved draft law giving Sisi power to grant military officers lifelong immunity for any alleged crimes committed since 2013 when then army chief Sisi led military in coup deposing former President Morsi. Former military chief of staff Sami Anan, imprisoned since Jan after he tried to run for presidency, taken into intensive care 14 July. Court 28 July sentenced 75 people to death for taking part in 2013 demonstration in support of deposed President Mohamed Morsi, referred cases to country’s Grand Mufti for final decision. Islamic State (ISIS)-related violence continued in Sinai. Two ISIS Sinai Province (SP) commanders early July reportedly surrendered to security forces in Rafah city, North Sinai. Military 3 July said three suspected SP militants and two civilians had been killed in North Sinai in preceding days. Security forces 11 July killed eleven suspected SP militants during raid on hideout in Arish city, North Sinai. SP 22 July said one of its commanders, Abu Jaafar al-Maqdesi, had been killed earlier in July. Security forces 24 July killed thirteen SP militants in shootout in Arish city. As fighting between Israel and Hamas in Gaza escalated, Egypt tried in vain to broker truce and closed Rafah border crossing citing “technical fault” 18-19 July. Parliament 16 July passed law that will allow authorities to block social media accounts and penalise journalists for publishing so-called fake news.

➔ *Libya JULY 2018*

Under international pressure, Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar’s east-based Libyan National Army (LNA) 11 July reversed decision made late June and returned oversight of oil sales from area under its control to internationally recognised Tripoli-based National Oil Corporation (NOC). Reversal came after Tripoli-based Govt of National Accord (GNA) said audit would be conducted of Central Bank of Libya branches in both east and west. GNA also

sacked anti-Haftar Minister of Defence al-Mahdi al-Barghati 29 July, addressing one of LNA's grievances. Eastern Tobruk-based House of Representatives held session 30-31 July to vote on draft new constitution that would go to referendum, amid protests in city and divisions on new constitution's current draft and referendum procedure; vote postponed by two weeks. Islamic State (ISIS) and other armed groups continued attacks on civilians, especially in south. Notably, in south east, suspected Islamist militants 7 July killed two workers and kidnapped two others at Tazirbu water plant. ISIS's weekly newspaper al-Naba 6 July said ISIS had captured two air force officers from forces loyal to Haftar in Fezzan region in centre. ISIS-linked militants 24 July killed two policemen in eastern town of Agheila.

➔ *Morocco* JULY 2018

Govt and EU officials 24 July in capital Rabat signed new fisheries agreement: EU to give Morocco €52mn per year for allowing boats from EU to fish in Morocco's waters, including waters off Western Sahara. Spanish police in Ceuta, Spain's enclave in Morocco, 26 July clashed with migrants from sub-Saharan Africa as some 800 stormed border fence between Morocco and Ceuta, about 150 people injured including 132 migrants and at least sixteen police officers.

➔ *Tunisia* JULY 2018

President Essebsi 15 July asked PM Chahed, if he does not manage to win significant support for his govt, to resign or seek confidence vote in parliament. Following meeting between two major parties in ruling coalition, Islamist party An-Nahda and Chahed's Nida Tounes, An-Nahda 16 July called on Chahed not to run in 2019 presidential election. Minister in charge of constitutional affairs Mehdi Ben Gharbia 14 July resigned, said opposition was non-constructive and hampering legislative reform. Chahed 24 July appointed Hichem Fourati as new interior minister following dismissal of Lotfi Brahem early June. Suspected jihadist militants 8 July ambushed National Guard patrol in Ain Sultan area near Algerian border in north west, killing at least six members of security forces.

➔ *Western Sahara* JULY 2018

EU's General Court 19 July ruled that territory of Western Sahara and its adjacent waters do not fall under Moroccan sovereignty, confirming rulings of European Court of Justice. Morocco and EU 24 July signed new fisheries agreement: EU to give Morocco €52mn per year for allowing boats from EU to fish in Morocco's waters, including waters off Western Sahara; Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) said deal "encourages the Moroccan occupation" of Western Sahara and "European Commission is accomplice to this robbery". Polisario Front independence movement's dissident wing Khatt al-Shahid early July sent letter to African Union contesting SADR's claim to be sole representative of Sahrawi people, denouncing human rights violations by security forces during crackdown on protesters taking part in sit-in 16 June in Tindouf refugee camps after political activist died in prison early June.