

# CrisisWatch

## Tracking Conflict Worldwide

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*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.*

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## Global Overview

SEPTEMBER 2018

In September, Cameroon's Anglophone separatists and security forces stepped up attacks and violence could rise around the 7 October presidential vote, while Afghanistan's parliamentary polls are likely to be marred by violence and their results contested. Yemen missed an opportunity as Huthi rebels refused to take part in UN-led consultations and fighting resumed outside Hodeida, boding ill for October. Militia fighting worsened in Libya's capital, militant attacks rose in eastern Burkina Faso, and Ethiopia's capital saw a spate of ethnic violence. Al-Shabaab carried out ambitious attacks in Somalia's capital and regional states cut ties with the federal government, risking worse political divisions and violence in coming weeks. In Syria, a Turkey-Russia deal seems to have averted a major offensive on rebel-held Idlib, but it needs to take root in October. Djibouti and Eritrea agreed to work toward normalising relations, and a surprise electoral result in the Maldives gave hope for a peaceful political transition. In Guatemala, the

### Outlook for This Month

October 2018

#### ⚡ Conflict Risk Alerts

Cameroon, Somalia, Afghanistan, Yemen

#### 🔗 Resolution Opportunities

Djibouti, Eritrea, Syria, Yemen

### Trends for Last Month

September 2018

#### 📉 Deteriorated Situations

Cameroon, Ethiopia, Somalia, Burkina Faso, Georgia, Guatemala, Yemen, Libya

republics broke down. In East Asia, a summit between the leaders of North and South Korea opened up prospects for denuclearisation.

Korean Peninsula, Maldives, Syria

## Trends and Outlook

In the run-up to **Cameroon's** presidential elections, both the security forces and militants fighting for the independence of the English-speaking zone intensified attacks in the Anglophone west. Two flashpoints could trigger more flare-ups: the one-year anniversary of separatists' declaration of independence on 1 October and the presidential poll, which separatist militants have pledged to disrupt. To kick start conflict resolution, **international powers should support an Anglophone General Conference** that could enable Anglophones to adopt a common position and identify the issues they want to address in a future national dialogue.

Political tensions are also growing in **Afghanistan** as it moves closer to its 20 October parliamentary elections. The continued high level of violence across the country makes it harder to hold the elections, increasing the risk of disenfranchisement or fraud, and **raising the risk of a contested vote**. Observers fear that Islamic State-Khorasan Province and the Taliban may step up attacks.

The collapse of pre-talks between **Yemen's** conflict parties sparked renewed fighting near the Huthi-held port city of Hodeida. The UN can still work to mediate confidence-building measures, but **the battle for Hodeida is now imminent**, potentially the bloodiest of a war approaching its fourth anniversary. Such a contest would be catastrophic and a mediated solution remains the best option for all. In **Libya**, armed groups from towns surrounding the capital Tripoli intensified their offensives on the city in a bid to oust militias based there and pressure Prime Minister Faiez Serraj to step down. There was some respite in **Syria's** north west, as Turkey and Russia signed an agreement that seems to have averted an offensive by pro-government forces on rebel-held Idlib province. Presidents Erdoğan and Putin said they would work with their allies to create a demilitarised zone on the edge of Idlib to be policed by Turkish and Russian forces. **International actors should support the plan** as it offers some hope of preventing another humanitarian catastrophe.

**Burkina Faso** experienced a marked rise in attacks on both civilians and security forces in the east, embroiling the country further in the Sahel's interlocking conflicts. The military responded with airstrikes and ground operations against as-yet unidentified armed groups, and thousands protested in the capital against growing insecurity.

In the Horn of Africa, **Somalia's** regional states severed ties with the federal government, plunging the country into a new political crisis and triggering a clan-based standoff in Galmudug state. This political fragmentation could continue, creating yet more opportunities for Al-Shabaab, which escalated its attacks in the capital and

PRESIDENT'S TAKE

### As Acute Conflict Risks Rise, UN General Assembly Hears Calls for Multilateral Action



ROBERT MALLEY  
PRESIDENT & CEO

After a week at the UN General Assembly meetings in New York, our president Robert Malley highlights the world's most worrying conflicts detailed in this month's Crisis

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as **Eritrea and Djibouti**, following Ethiopian encouragement, began talks to resolve their decade-old border dispute.

Following months of growing crisis in the main negotiation forum for **Georgia's** conflicts with its breakaway republics, de facto South Ossetian officials walked out of a meeting of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, bringing the only communication channel to tackle practical problems in the conflict zones closer to collapse.

**Guatemala** became submerged in a political and constitutional crisis after President Morales renewed his battle to expel the UN-backed International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, and defied a Constitutional Court ruling that its head be allowed to re-enter the country.

South Korean President Moon visited Pyongyang on 18-20 September for his third summit meeting this year with **North Korea's** Kim Jong-un. The resulting Pyongyang Declaration stated that Kim agreed to allow international observers to oversee the closing of a missile test site and launch pad, while expressing a "willingness" to permanently dismantle the main Yeongbyeon nuclear complex provided the U.S. takes unspecified "corresponding measures".

In a surprise result in the **Maldives'** presidential elections, opposition candidate Ibrahim Mohamed Solih defeated incumbent President Yameen. Widely criticised for his government's crackdown on the political opposition, judiciary and media, Yameen said he accepted the result, and the security forces pledged to uphold it, paving the way for an orderly transfer of power.

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## Latest Updates

### Africa

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 [Burundi](#) SEPTEMBER 2018

Representatives of East African Community (EAC), regional bloc mediating inter-Burundian dialogue, after meeting govt, ruling party and opposition in Burundi in Aug, met exiled opposition coalition CNARED in Brussels 6-7 Sept; latter committed to take part in forthcoming fifth round of talks in Ugandan capital Kampala, reiterating that 2000 Arusha agreement must be basis of dialogue. Representatives of CNARED and Burundi-based opposition met in Entebbe, Uganda 21-23 Sept to forge common position ahead of talks and sent common memorandum to EAC facilitation. Since new

Amizero y'Abarundi). UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi presented main findings of new report in Geneva 5 Sept and full report in 17 Sept session boycotted by Burundian delegation; report states that serious human rights violations have continued in 2017 and 2018 and for first time implicates President Nkurunziza in incitement to violence. Ministers criticised report and govt denied its allegations. Govt organised demonstrations against report in capital Bujumbura and elsewhere 15 Sept and declared all three UN commissioners personae non gratae. UN Human Rights Council 27 Sept voted in favour of African bloc's proposal to send three experts to Burundi to report on human rights situation; Burundi supported plan in bid to render Commission of Inquiry unnecessary. But next day council also voted in favour of EU-proposed resolution to extend Commission of Inquiry's mandate for one year. Unidentified armed group attacked Gatumba on border with DR Congo 14 Sept, one policeman injured. Unidentified armed group reportedly beheaded local leader of ruling party's Imbonerakure youth wing and shot dead his wife at Buyumpu in north west near Rwandan border 18 Sept; govt spokesman said group came from and returned to Rwanda.

#### 🇨🇲 ⚡ Cameroon SEPTEMBER 2018

In run-up to 7 Oct presidential elections, Boko Haram (BH) continued to attack civilians and security forces in Far North and Anglophone separatists and security forces upped attacks in Northwest and Southwest regions; violence could escalate further on one-year anniversary of separatists' independence declaration 1 Oct and around presidential vote. In Far North, BH carried out at least eight attacks in Mayo-Sava and Logone and Chari departments, killing at least seventeen civilians and one soldier. In Anglophone regions, separatist militants intensified attacks and security forces launched at least ten attacks against separatist camps and checkpoints, killing over twenty separatists and numerous civilians, including three 27 Sept in regional capital Bamenda. In Northwest, militants 3 Sept reportedly kidnapped nine students and teacher in Bafut, freeing all but five students next day; reportedly kidnapped traditional ruler of Bafut 4 Sept; killed soldier in Mbiame 5 Sept; shot bus driver and destroyed buses on road between Akum and West region 9 Sept; attacked prison in Wum night of 25 Sept freeing 117 inmates; and killed two gendarmes in Batibo 27 Sept. Governor of Northwest 9 Sept imposed curfew restricting movement in region between 6pm and 6am. In Southwest region, separatists and security forces exchanged fire in Mile 16 neighbourhood of regional capital Buea 11 Sept; separatists abducted traditional ruler of Wotutu-Buea 12 Sept; attacked college in Sasse-Buea 19 Sept, injuring students; security forces killed at least nine civilians in Buea 24-27 Sept; separatists killed two security force members in Limbe 26 Sept. Navy 7 Sept said it had seized three boats carrying 43 mercenaries and large number of assault rifles near Bakassi, Southwest; officials implied mercenaries were on way to support separatists. Govt 30 Sept imposed 48-hour curfew restricting movement in Anglophone areas day before one-year anniversary of separatists' declaration of independence. Separatists nevertheless reportedly planned to hold protests 1 Oct and maintained calls for boycott of 7 Oct presidential election.

- [STATEMENT: Cameroun : la conférence générale anglophone mérite un soutien national et international](#)

#### ➡ Central African Republic SEPTEMBER 2018

Ex-Seleka faction Popular Front for the Central African Renaissance (FPRC) led by Nourredine Adam early Sept killed at least ten displaced people including women and children in Bria in east. Residents protested outside base of UN mission (MINUSCA) in Bria denouncing its failure to prevent killings.

Commission Moussa Faki met Touadéra in capital Bangui 18 Sept ahead of UN General Assembly meeting on CAR in New York 20 Sept. Sudan 28 Sept reportedly said AU had “adopted” Sudanese peace initiative.

→ Chad SEPTEMBER 2018

Following attack on security forces in north by Libya-based Chadian rebel group Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic (CCMSR), military continued operations in far north. Military aircraft 1 Sept bombed civilian vehicles en route to wedding between Miski and Yebibo in far north, mistaking them for rebels, reportedly killing at least ten. Army helicopters 13 Sept bombed two camps of artisanal gold miners near Kouri Bougoudi, 35km from Libyan border, killing two civilians and reportedly injuring several people including Colonel Dadi Chidi Kokei, former senior officer of Mahamat Nouri’s rebel group Union of Democratic Forces for Development (UFDD). Opposition party National Union for Democracy and Renewal (UNDR) led by Saleh Kebzabo 25 Sept condemned govt’s silence regarding resurgence of rebel movements in Tibesti region in north. Security forces repelled attacks by Boko Haram (BH) militants on Moussarom and Ngueleya on shore of Lake Chad in west night of 28-29 Sept, six members of security forces and seventeen militants reportedly killed. President Déby 20 Sept replaced finance minister Issa Mahamat Abdelmamout with secretary of state in finance ministry Mahamat Allali Abakar; third finance minister since Dec 2017. Public sector workers in general assembly 15 Sept decided to continue strike which they began in May, reiterating that they will return to work only when govt reinstates parts of salaries cut in Jan as part of austerity measures.

→ Democratic Republic of Congo SEPTEMBER 2018

Ahead of planned Dec general elections, former VP Jean-Pierre Bemba and former Katanga Governor Moïse Katumbi excluded from final candidate list, authorities repressed limited protest and armed group violence continued in east. After electoral commission (CENI) barred six would-be presidential candidates including Bemba in Aug, Constitutional Court 3 Sept confirmed Bemba’s exclusion, but reinstated two candidates, former PM Sammy Badi Banga and Marie-Josée Ifoku. CENI 19 Sept published definitive lists of candidates for presidential and legislative elections; 21 presidential candidates include ruling party’s Emmanuel Shadary and opposition’s most prominent challengers Felix Tshisekedi and Vital Kamerhe. Opposition delegation led by Moïse Katumbi and Adolphe Muzito 18 Sept met South African ruling party African National Congress (ANC) in Johannesburg; ANC called on South African govt to engage with DRC govt to ensure elections adhere to protocols of regional bloc Southern African Development Community. During Belgian FM’s trip to South Africa, Angola and Congo-Brazzaville, Belgian and Angolan FMs in joint statement 11 Sept called for inclusive electoral process for credible and free vote; Congolese FM 12 Sept warned against interference by neighbours and other partners. British experts 17 Sept delivered report of partial audit of voting machines and recommended how to mitigate risks. Authorities dispersed protests against voting machines organised by Struggle for Change (LUCHA) activists 3 Sept, arresting at least 65 people in major cities, and 12 Sept arrested seven opposition supporters campaigning against machines at Kinshasa University. International Criminal Court 17 Sept fined Bemba €300,000 and sentenced him to twelve additional months for witness tampering; prison term cancelled due to time he has already served. Bemba appealed. Opposition parties held joint rally in capital Kinshasa 29 Sept. In East. suspected members

Rwanda in North Kivu 4 Sept left at least two civilians dead. In South Kivu province, Mai Mai rebel coalition took control of Kilembwe and neighbouring areas 14 Sept, rebels pulled out and army retook control 24 Sept.

#### Djibouti SEPTEMBER 2018

Djibouti and Eritrea agreed to work toward normalising relations 6 Sept during visit of Eritrean FM Osman Saleh to Djibouti. President Guelleh met Eritrean President Afwerki in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia 17 Sept to discuss decade-old border dispute and Eritrea's alleged detention of Djiboutian war prisoners; Somalian President Farmajo also attended. In case pitting govt against Emirati port operator DP World, from which govt seized control of Doraleh port in Feb, High Court of England and Wales 5 Sept ruled in favour of DP World. Nevertheless, govt 10 Sept nationalised shares of state-owned company Port de Djibouti effectively taking ownership of Doraleh container terminal. High Court in London 14 Sept extended 31 Aug injunction against govt stating that actions regarding terminal must be taken with DP World's consent.

#### Eritrea SEPTEMBER 2018

Eritrea and Djibouti agreed to start dialogue to normalise relations 6 Sept during visit of Eritrean FM Osman Saleh in Djibouti. In further steps toward restoring relations, Ethiopia reopened its embassy in Eritrean capital Asmara 6 Sept and President Afwerki and Ethiopian PM Abiy celebrated opening of border crossing at Serha-Zalambesa 11 Sept, Ethiopian New Year. In tripartite summit in Saudi city of Jeddah 17 Sept between Eritrea, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia, Afwerki and Abiy signed final peace agreement ending twenty years of conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

#### Ethiopia SEPTEMBER 2018

Ethnic violence rose in and around capital Addis Ababa in days around return of exiled members of rebel group Oromo Liberation Front (OLF); group fought for self-determination of ethnic Oromo people but signed reconciliation agreement with govt in Aug. Supporters of former rebels held mass rally in Addis Ababa to mark their return 15 Sept, some attacked non-Oromo residents, in particular ethnic Guraghe and Gamo in Burayu district. Violence 12-16 Sept affected Addis neighbourhoods of Piassa, Merkato, Sheromeda, Ashawa Meda, Kataa, Fili Doro and Petros; at least 28 people killed. Security services 17 Sept forcibly dispersed crowds in Addis Ababa protesting against govt's failure to prevent or stem violence, killing five people. Police 24 Sept said it had arrested over 1,200 people on suspicion of holding "illegal rallies", burglaries and other crimes. Violence between ethnic Gumuz and Oromos in Kamash zone of Benishangul-Gumuz region in west late Sept reportedly left five people dead. In further steps toward restoring relations, Ethiopia reopened its embassy in Eritrean capital Asmara 6 Sept and PM Abiy and Eritrean President Afwerki celebrated opening of border crossing at Serha-Zalambesa 11 Sept. Ethiopian New Year. In tripartite summit in Saudi city of Jeddah 17 Sept

→ Kenya SEPTEMBER 2018

In Rift Valley, longstanding tensions between ethnic Maasai and Kipsigis (sub-group of Kalenjin) over land ownership erupted into clashes early Sept in at least four villages in Narok county and later in Njoro area of neighbouring Nakuru county, hundreds of police deployed to quell violence; almost three weeks of fighting left at least ten people dead. Govt 25 Sept imposed dusk-to-dawn curfew in Olposimoru, Narok North constituency. Military killed ten Al-Shabaab fighters in Pandanguo, Lamu county 25 Sept.

- [REPORT: Al-Shabaab Five Years after Westgate: Still a Menace in East Africa](#)

🚩 ⚡ Somalia SEPTEMBER 2018

Regional states severed ties with federal govt and Al-Shabaab stepped up attacks in capital Mogadishu, raising risk that political and security situation deteriorates further in Oct and in particular that clan tensions escalate in Galmudug regional state. Leaders of five regional states – Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Jubaland, Puntland and South West – met in Kismayo, Jubaland 8 Sept and suspended relations with federal govt citing its lack of cooperation with regions, corruption and growing insecurity. Federal govt called for talks with regional leaders. Following talks with federal govt 18 Sept, Hirshabelle's President Mohamed Abdi Ware said he would cooperate with federal govt. Galmudug regional state ran into political deadlock after MPs from Cadaado aligned with house speaker tried to unseat state president, Ahmed Geele "Xaaf", with no-confidence vote. 140 MPs loyal to President "Xaaf" 18 Sept passed no-confidence motion in VP, speaker's ally. State President "Xaaf" 23 Sept rejected President Farmajo's attempt to mediate standoff and told him to "stop interfering". In Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab carried out two suicide bombings on offices of district commissioners: first on office of Howl-wadag district commissioner 2 Sept killed five civilians, second in Hodan district 10 Sept killed six people. Militants bombed vehicle of MP Mohamed Mursal 15 Sept leaving him in critical condition. Attacks in capital 21 Sept left at least three people dead. Al-Shabaab bombed two cars in Mogadishu 22 Sept killing one person. In response to Al-Shabaab attack, U.S. airstrike on Mubaraak village, west of Mogadishu 11 Sept killed two militants. Ethiopian contingent of African Union mission (AMISOM) said its airstrike on undisclosed Al-Shabaab stronghold 15 Sept killed estimated 70 militants. Govt said its airstrike on Al-Shabaab-controlled Saakow town in Jubaland 19 Sept killed several commanders; Al-Shabaab said attacks killed three schoolchildren. Al-Shabaab attacked Somali and U.S. forces 21 Sept about 50km north west of Kismayo, Jubaland; in retaliation U.S. airstrike killed estimated eighteen militants and Somali forces killed two. Security forces protecting senior official 19 Sept, in apparent attempt to clear path for vehicle, opened fire on traffic in Mogadishu, killing one girl; authorities arrested four people.

- [REPORT: Al-Shabaab Five Years after Westgate: Still a Menace in East Africa](#)

→ South Sudan SEPTEMBER 2018

brokered by Sudanese President Bashir; Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) reinstates Machar as VP among other changes to executive. In line with agreement, Kiir 27 Sept ordered govt to release of all prisoners of war. Rebels of Sudan People's Liberation Movement-In Opposition (SPLM-IO) led by Machar 14 Sept accused govt forces of attacking their base in Lasu, near Yei in south west. SPLM-IO rebels 24 Sept reportedly attacked govt forces escorting displaced people in Wau state in west. UN undersecretary-general for peacekeeping operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, 18 Sept said fighting between govt forces and armed opposition had continued in former Central Equatoria state in south, former Unity state in north and in Koper area, Yei River state in south. Govt forces and SPLM-IO accused each other of launching attacks against them in Liech state, formerly part of Unity state in north 24 Sept. Govt soldier opened fire on UN convoy in Yei in south west 15 Sept, wounding one peacekeeper.

#### ➔ Sudan SEPTEMBER 2018

To alleviate economic crisis, President Bashir 9 Sept dissolved govt and appointed new PM, Motazz Moussa, formerly minister of irrigation and electricity; ruling National Congress Party (NCP) said number of ministries would be reduced from 31 to 21. Although constitution allows maximum of two presidential terms, NCP 21 Sept said it had chosen Bashir as its presidential candidate to run for third elected term in 2020 elections. Govt 27 Sept agreed to UN proposal to deliver aid to conflict affected Two Areas (Blue Nile and South Kordofan states). Bashir brokered new peace deal between South Sudanese President Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar in Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa 12 Sept (see South Sudan).

#### ➔ Uganda SEPTEMBER 2018

Popular musician-turned-opposition MP Robert Kyagulanyi, known as Bobi Wine, went to U.S. for medical treatment 1-20 Sept following his detention and alleged torture in Aug. On arrival in Uganda, police took Kyagulanyi to police station and from there to his home in capital Kampala. Security forces continued to crack down on Kyagulanyi's supporters.

#### ➔ Angola SEPTEMBER 2018

Former President dos Santos 8 Sept stepped down as leader of ruling party Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and same day party congress elected current President Lourenço as new leader. State prosecutor 24 Sept said José Filomeno dos Santos, son of former president and former manager of sovereign wealth fund, had been detained on suspicion of various economic crimes including embezzlement and fraud.

Govt crackdown on opposition continued following July referendum in which large majority reportedly voted to extend presidential terms and stop rotation of presidency between three main islands. Prosecutors 7 Sept issued international arrest warrant against former VP Jaffar Hassani for plotting against state; Hassani, who opposed referendum, had already left for Tanzania 3 Sept. Military police 10 Sept reportedly arrested army's deputy chief-of-staff, who also spoke out against reforms.

➔ Lesotho SEPTEMBER 2018

PM Tom Thabane 11 Sept suspended Chief Justice Nthomeng Majara, accusing her of inciting violence and threatening Lesotho's stability; move comes after Majara successfully petitioned courts to interdict Thabane from suspending her and setting up tribunal to investigate her. Under her leadership, courts found govt had acted unlawfully in removing constitutionally appointed head of appeal court and appointing Kananelo Mosito in his place. International panel of judges appointed to investigate. Opposition parties suspended their involvement in security and constitutional reform process backed by regional bloc Southern Africa Development Community, demanding Majara's suspension be set aside.

➔ Mozambique SEPTEMBER 2018

Alleged Islamist militants 20 Sept killed twelve people, injured fourteen and set fire to over 50 houses in Paqueue village, Cabo Delgado province near Tanzanian border in far north. Gunmen 20 Sept attacked military convoy near Tanzanian border, killing one officer. Defence minister 12 Sept said demilitarisation and reintegration of former rebel movement Renamo was going ahead "as planned". Policeman serving in border guard (who is also ruling party Frelimo's first secretary of Bairro Mpadue) 27 Sept shot and injured Renamo activist who went to police to file complaint in Tete in west.

➔ Zimbabwe SEPTEMBER 2018

Opposition continued to contest results of July presidential and parliamentary elections as cholera epidemic broke out in urban areas. Citing cholera outbreak govt 12 Sept declared state of emergency in capital Harare, including ban on public gatherings. In light of ban, opposition leader Nelson Chamisa 14 Sept postponed mock inauguration ceremony scheduled for 15 Sept; spokesperson for Chamisa's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) accused govt of "abusing the cholera epidemic for political purposes". Security forces' attempts to clear street vendors from streets in Harare led to running clashes between vendors and riot police 15-16 and 19 Sept. Opposition MPs 18 Sept walked out of parliament during President Mnangagwa's first address since election. At UN General Assembly in New York 26 Sept Mnangagwa called for end to "illegal" sanctions against him and those close to him, described environment before and after elections as "operationally peaceful" and reiterated

Attacks on security forces and civilians intensified in south east and continued in north and west. In Komojari province, East region, unidentified militants simultaneously attacked ranger station in Tankoalou, town hall and District Commissioner's office in Bartiebougou and District Commissioner's home in Foutouri 6 Sept; attacked three primary schools in Tankoalou, Foutouri commune 9 Sept; and reportedly took control of some rural areas of Komojari province 9 Sept. In Kompienga province, East region, military vehicle 5 Sept detonated explosive device in Kabonga forest, two soldiers killed; unidentified gunmen 14-15 Sept simultaneously attacked Diabiga and Kompienbiga villages, killing eight civilians, including Muslim religious leader. In Gourma province, East region, unidentified gunmen killed former municipal councillor in Nassougou village 9 Sept, and attacked ranger station 13 Sept. President Kaboré 8 Sept announced new military operations to tackle insecurity in East region and military carried out airstrikes and ground operations there 14-15 Sept. In North region, unidentified assailants abducted three people, including two foreigners, working at Inata mine, Soum province 23 Sept; three gendarmes searching for them killed in ambush near Inata same day. In Sahel region, eight soldiers killed when their vehicle hit mine between Baraboulé and Djibo, Soum province 26 Sept. In west, civilian community-defence groups – Koglweogo and local Dozo hunters of Dogon ethnic group – reportedly clashed 12 Sept in Kouéré, Hauts-Bassins region, reportedly after alleged Dozo tried to destroy Koglweogo base, four people killed. In South West region, security forces 1 Sept repelled attack on police station in Galgouli, no casualties reported. In trial of 84 people accused of planning 2015 attempted coup, four civilian defendants 3 Sept appealed to Disciplinary Judiciary Council claiming transcript used by prosecuting authorities had been falsified; case transferred to military court. Following call by opposition and civil society, thousands demonstrated in capital Ouagadougou 29 Sept against growing insecurity.

Political repositioning ahead of 2020 presidential election continued. Tensions deepened within former President Henri Konan Bédié's Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) following party's withdrawal from ruling coalition Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) early Aug: party split between those for and against proposed merger of PDCI and other coalition member President Ouattara's Rally of Republicans (RDR). Electoral commission 11 Sept released lists of candidates for municipal and regional elections scheduled for 13 Oct, with some PDCI candidates also on RHDP list. After promising in early Aug to reconsider contested composition of electoral commission, President Ouattara early Sept said reform would not happen before upcoming elections. Opposition party Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) of Pascal Affi N'Guessan denounced Ouattara's decision as violation of Nov 2016 ruling by African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights which obliged govt to reform commission's membership and said it would boycott Oct elections. Opposition platform Together for Democracy and Sovereignty (EDS) 15 Sept demonstrated in Abidjan against postponement of electoral commission reform.

Eight members of Constitutional Court 9 Sept announced dismissal of its president Keïta San reportedly over political disagreements, but legality of decision unclear; civil society and opposition supporters 19 Sept demonstrated in capital Conakry against what they saw as a “putsch”.

➔ Guinea-Bissau SEPTEMBER 2018

Electoral commission 8 Sept said legislative elections scheduled for 18 Nov should be postponed due to delays in organising vote, while regional bloc Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) called on country to organise vote as planned. Census of voters started 20 Sept one month late.

➔ Liberia SEPTEMBER 2018

Fifteen people, including former Central Bank Governor Milton Weeks and son of former President Sirleaf, banned from leaving country 19 Sept as part of investigation into disappearance of \$104mn intended for central bank. Thousands 24 Sept protested in capital Monrovia to demand thieves return money.

➔ Mali SEPTEMBER 2018

Attacks on civilians and security forces continued in north and east as intercommunal violence persisted in centre. Following his election victory in Aug, President Keïta was sworn in for second five-year term 4 Sept and next day he reappointed PM Maïga. New cabinet of 32 members formed 9 Sept. Supporters of main opposition candidate Soumaïla Cissé continued to organise protests to denounce alleged electoral fraud every Saturday in capital Bamako and other major cities. Govt 13 Sept postponed until Nov legislative elections initially planned for Oct, citing delays in registering candidates. Head of UN mission (MINUSMA) 19 Sept said UN Security Council recommended that signatories to 2015 Algiers peace agreement sign new “pact for peace” committing to speed up implementation. In north, unidentified gunmen 22 Sept killed two traditional chiefs in Kidal city. About forty unidentified gunmen 30 Sept attacked Amalaoulaou village near Ansongo, Gao region, killing at least 22 civilians. Army convoy 30 Sept fell into ambush near Gossi, Timbuktu region in north, at least one soldier killed. In Ménaka region in east, unidentified assailants 4 Sept shelled MINUSMA camp, one peacekeeper wounded. In centre, intercommunal violence continued, particularly in districts of Koro, Bandiagara, Bankass and Douentza. Notably, ethnic Dogon militias 8 Sept stormed ethnic Fulani village in Koro district killing nine residents, reportedly in retaliation for attack on Dogon village by Fulani militia 27 Aug. Unidentified gunmen 25 Sept raided remote Inekar village, 27 Tuareg civilians reportedly killed. Official 28 Sept said headquarters of G5 Sahel joint counter-terrorism force moved to capital Bamako from central town of Sévaré following deadly June bomb attack.

Opposition and civil society continued to criticise President Issoufou for his alleged growing authoritarianism. Independent judges' union Syndicat Autonome des Magistrats du Niger 6 Sept condemned what they saw as govt's efforts to erode power of judiciary. Thousands demonstrated in capital Niamey 9 Sept against 2018 and 2019 finance laws. Govt mid-Sept extended for three months state of emergency in Diffa region in south east and in Tillabery and Tahoua regions in west. Unidentified individuals kidnapped two women in Gueskerou, Diffa region 3 Sept; women reportedly released in exchange for ransom 13 Sept. Unidentified assailants kidnapped Italian priest 17 Sept near Torodi, Tillabery region, close to border with Burkina Faso. New York Times 9 Sept revealed existence of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) base at Dirkou, Agadez region in north reportedly run by U.S. Central Intelligence Agency; U.S. Department of Defense runs two UAV bases, in Niamey and Agadez.

Boko Haram (BH) continued attacks on civilians and military in Borno state in north east, while herder-farmer violence remained relatively low in centre and violence related to cattle rustling and banditry continued in north west. In Borno state, suspected insurgents from BH's Islamic State (ISIS)-affiliated faction, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), 7-8 Sept stormed Gudumbali town, sacked army base and held town briefly before military pushed them back, several civilians reportedly killed; army and air force 12 Sept repelled BH attack on military base in Damasak town; BH 14 Sept attacked Modu Ajiri and Bulama Kayiri villages, killing eight civilians; air force 16 Sept repelled BH attack on military bases at Gudumbali and Damasak; troops same day repelled BH ambush on military convoy along Konduga-Bama road, three insurgents killed; BH 19 Sept attacked villages of Kalari

Abdiye and Amarwa, killing at least nine villagers; troops 26 Sept repelled BH attack on army base in Garshigar town, killing four insurgents. International Committee of the Red Cross 17 Sept said BH had killed one of three female aid workers abducted 1 March. Soldier killed colleague and injured several before committing suicide in Borno state 19 Sept; soldier 23 Sept opened fire at military facility in Abuja, killing colleague and injuring another before killing himself. BH militants 27 Sept killed one of their own commanders over his alleged plan to surrender and hand over 300 hostages to military. In centre, herder-farmer violence remained relatively low: in Plateau state, gunmen 2 Sept attacked two villages in Jos South area, eleven villagers killed; army 8 Sept said three soldiers were killed in Barkin Ladi area; in Taraba state, gunmen 6 Sept ambushed and killed three policemen and two vigilantes responding to distress call from Bujum Kasuwan village; in Adamawa state suspected Fulani herders 13 Sept reportedly attacked five villages, over fifty killed. Violence related to cattle rustling and banditry continued in north west, particularly Zamfara state. Notably, armed men 13 Sept killed eleven people at cinema in Badarawa village; authorities said perpetrators were bandits. In Niger Delta, tensions rose 5 Sept after police raided Abuja home of leader of Pan-Niger Delta Forum, in search of illegal arms. Police found none, apologised and said raid was unauthorised; nevertheless a coalition of Niger Delta agitators said they had called off their ceasefire and would resume attacks on oil installations. Electoral commission 23 Sept declared governorship election previous day in Osun state inconclusive due to small margin between two major parties All Progressives Congress (APC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP); commission declared APC winner after 27 Sept rerun in seven polling units, but observers said exercise was marred by violence and other interference. Ruling party 28 Sept nominated President Buhari as its candidate for 2019 election.

Electoral commission 18 Sept announced referendum on constitutional reforms would take place 16 Dec, without specifying reforms, and legislative and local elections scheduled for 20 Dec. Former MP 24 Sept went on hunger strike, calling for release of opposition supporters arrested during 2017 protests against govt.

## Asia

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### → China (internal) SEPTEMBER 2018

Human Rights Watch 9 Sept and Amnesty International 24 Sept released reports accusing Xinjiang regional govt of conducting systematic mass campaign against Muslims involving arbitrary detention, torture, mistreatment, and pervasive controls on daily life; corroborates reporting since 2014 by NGOs, scholars and media describing widening scale of detentions without due process, political indoctrination, control over religious practice, restriction of movement and pervasive mass surveillance. Also called on China to provide information on all detainees, end measures, follow due process, and allow monitors access. New UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet in 10 Sept maiden speech called allegations deeply disturbing and urged China to provide access for her staff to monitor situation across country. Beijing rejected Bachelet's call, saying there was no need for UN monitors to visit Xinjiang. China's State Council denied govt was mistreating Muslims, describing camps as professional training and educational centres. U.S. State Department 11 Sept said it was "deeply troubled". Pakistan's Minister for Religious Affairs urged China to relax restrictions on Muslims that otherwise could "increase the chances of an extremist viewpoint growing" during 19 Sept meeting with China's ambassador in Islamabad, *Dawn* and *The Nation* reported.

### → China/Japan SEPTEMBER 2018

Japan's defence minister 3 Sept issued statement claiming China has been unilaterally escalating its military activities in sea and air around Japan, including conducting nuclear submarine movements near waters of the disputed Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands. Japan 29 Aug scrambled fighters to intercept PLA Air Force electronic warfare and surveillance aircraft crossing Sea of Japan and East China Sea. Sankei newspaper 11 Sept reported that Japan plans to develop micro radar satellite systems to support its monitoring activities around East China Sea, including disputed islands it controls, to "cope with China's recent ambitious maritime expansion". Despite ongoing military friction, Sankei 1 Sept reported that PM Abe told it in interview that relations with China are now on "normal track". At 12 Sept meeting with Abe at Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, China's President Xi echoed Abe's "normal track" language, while Abe said they had been "moving in the direction of great improvement." Japan and U.S. conducted combined exercises flying B-52 bombers and fighters over East China Sea and Sea of Japan 27 Sept, drawing objection from China.

South Korean President Moon visited Pyongyang 18-20 Sept for his third summit meeting this year with North Korea's Kim Jong-un, discussing denuclearisation, progress toward permanent peace, and prospects for North-South economic integration; issued Pyongyang Declaration stating Kim agreed to allow international observers to oversee dismantling of missile test site and launch pad, while expressing "willingness" to permanently dismantle Yeongbyeon nuclear complex provided U.S. takes unspecified "corresponding measures". Still no commitments to providing nuclear inventory or clear denuclearisation timeline. In potential clash with sanctions enforcement, declaration called for rail and road links to be reconnected by year-end and proposals to reopen tours to Mt. Kungang and Kaesong Industrial Complex. Summit came just after Pyongyang and Seoul opened joint liaison office in Kaesong region 14 Sept to facilitate communication and cooperation. U.S. 17 Sept convened urgent meeting of UN Security Council following confidential UN Panel of Experts report that reportedly cited Chinese and Russian help for North Korean sanctions evasion. Russia and China at 27 Sept Security Council meeting pushed for easing of sanctions to incentivise North Korea to open up; U.S. disagreed. U.S. Sec State Mike Pompeo met with North Korean FM Ri Yong Ho on sidelines of UN General Assembly 26 Sept; Pompeo expected to visit Pyongyang in Oct to prepare for second U.S.-North Korea summit; U.S. President Trump praised Kim, said he did not have a time frame for denuclearisation, and said sanctions must stay for now. Widely rumoured visit by Chinese President Xi to Pyongyang to attend country's 70th anniversary celebrations did not materialise; attending instead, Politburo Standing Committee member Li Zhanshu met with Kim Jong-un 10 Sept, described China's hopes that North Korea and U.S. will implement bilateral summit agreements and declared China's commitment to full denuclearisation of peninsula. Anniversary parade in Pyongyang 9 Sept conspicuously omitted displays of provocative military hardware; Trump described absence of ostensibly nuclear-capable inter-continental ballistic missiles as "big and very positive statement" by North.

- [COMMENTARY: Getting the U.S. in Step with the Koreas' Diplomatic Dance](#)

#### ➔ Taiwan Strait SEPTEMBER 2018

Taipei continued efforts to shore up diplomatic recognition with support from U.S.. Four U.S. senators 3 Sept introduced draft "Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative Act" that would authorise State Department to downgrade relations with govts that take adverse action against Taiwan. Signalling displeasure with countries that recently severed ties with Taipei, U.S. 7 Sept said it had recalled its ambassadors to Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Panama. Four of seventeen remaining countries recognising Taiwan — Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and eSwatini (formerly Swaziland) — reiterated their support. Following Vatican-China agreement on bishops, Taiwan 27 Sept said diplomatic relations with Vatican are stable. U.S. 24 Sept approved sale of spare parts for F-16 fighter planes and other military aircraft to Taiwan. European Parliament report 29 Aug called for EU and its member states to urge China "to refrain from further military provocation towards Taiwan and endangering peace and stability". China's Taiwan Affairs Office 16 Sept accused island's intelligence agencies of conducting espionage and infiltration activities on mainland, called on Taipei to

immediately stop "to prevent further damage to the increasingly complicated cross-Straits relations"; Taipei dismissed reports.

#### ➔ ⚡ Afghanistan SEPTEMBER 2018

amid concerns that Taliban and Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP) could step up attacks. Military operations intensified and attacks on civilians remained high during Sept; Taliban claimed to have overrun Jani Khel district in Paktia province (east) 3 Sept and Khomab district in Jowzjan province (north) 10 Sept, although authorities disputed claims. Taliban 8 Sept overran significant areas in Baghlan province's Baghlan Markazi district (north); govt forces 11 Sept claimed to have retaken part of area. Taliban also overran Daimirdad district, Maidan Wardak province in centre 10 Sept, several outposts near provincial capital of Sar-i Pul province (north), and outposts across western province Farah. Military also intensified operations, killing almost 300 Taliban 10-13 Sept according to defence ministry; UN mission 10 Sept said despite Taliban onslaught there were "no sustained changes in territorial control" in previous three months. IS-KP-claimed suicide bombing and car bomb attack 5 Sept at wrestling club in area home to predominantly Shiite and Hazara minorities west of Kabul killing 26; and suspected suicide bomb attack 11 Sept at Afghan-Pakistan border crossing Momand Dara district, Nangarhar province, targeting crowd demanding arrest of police commander and his family for alleged criminal activities, killing 72; some accused commander in question of facilitating attack. Ahead of 20 Oct vote, range of parties and groups continued to oppose electoral preparations, demanding biometric-based voter registry and mounting protests that briefly closed election commission offices in Kabul and several provincial capitals. U.S. Sec State 4 Sept appointed Zalmay Khalilzad, Afghan-born former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, as special envoy to Afghan peace effort, interpreted as sign of renewed U.S. focus. Planned Russian-hosted peace conference 4 Sept, involving representatives from twelve countries plus Taliban delegation, was postponed. Taliban 28 Sept denied reports they had met with Afghan govt delegation in Saudi Arabia to discuss security around elections.

- [COMMENTARY: As New U.S. Envoy Appointed, Turbulent Afghanistan's Hopes of Peace Persist](#)

#### ➔ Bangladesh SEPTEMBER 2018

Awami League (AL) govt continued arrests and detentions of critics; 6 Sept arrested prominent road safety campaigner Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, who leads student protests against unsafe transport, on extortion charges; human rights groups dismissed charges. Bangladeshi and international activists and artists called on govt to release photographer and activist Shahidul Alam, arrested under internet laws in Aug for criticising govt's crackdown on student demonstrators. AL majority in parliament 19 Sept passed Digital Security Act, rejecting criticism that law gives police power to arrest citizens for hurting religious sentiments or inciting violence online; Telecommunications Minister Mustafa Jabbar claimed act was only to protect state and citizens from cyber crimes. State Minister for Information Tarana Halim 12 Sept announced establishment of Rumor Identification and Removal Centre to monitor social media sites; critics see move as attempt to stifle free speech ahead of general elections in Dec. Opposition Bangladesh National Party 12 Sept said they would not allow elections to go ahead without release of imprisoned leader Khaleda Zia, currently jailed for corruption and with further criminal cases against her pending.

#### ➔ India (non-Kashmir) SEPTEMBER 2018

Approximately 40 suspected Maoist rebels 23 Sept reportedly surrounded cars of one former and one current Telugu Desam Party (TDP) politicians and shot them dead during official visit to Dumbriğuda

## → Kashmir SEPTEMBER 2018

In Indian-administered Kashmir, militants continued targeting policemen with four killed by suspected militants 17-20 Sept in Jammu and Kashmir. Indian security forces 27 Sept shot dead one civilian reportedly in crossfire during gunfight with alleged militants in Qamarwari area of Srinagar, leading to protests against Indian rule across region. New Jammu and Kashmir governor Satya Pal Malik 12 Sept requested Supreme Court defer controversial legal challenge to Article 35-A of constitution, which provides special rights and privileges to Jammu and Kashmir's permanent residents; court deferred hearing. Malik 2 Sept met visiting Defence Minister Sitharaman and army chief Bipin Rawat for talks on security and governance issues, at same time as search operations were ongoing against suspected militants including in Pulwana district. India and U.S. 6 Sept released joint statement calling on Pakistan to ensure its territory is "not used to launch attacks"; Pakistan's foreign ministry protested. Pakistani military claimed Pakistani civilians killed in firing across Line of Control (LoC, dividing Pakistan and Indian-administered Kashmir) 4 Sept and 10 Sept. Leader of Pakistan-administered Kashmir Farooq Haider Khan 30 Sept accused Indian troops of shooting at his helicopter while it flew close to LoC; Indian army said helicopter had violated Indian airspace, which Pakistan

denied. Pakistan's Foreign Ministry 20 Sept confirmed PM Khan wrote to Indian counterpart Modi 14 Sept calling for resumption of bilateral dialogue on outstanding issues, including disputes over Kashmir and terrorism, and proposed FMs meet during late Sept UN General Assembly; India 20 Sept agreed to talks but cancelled next day; Indian foreign ministry said meeting was called off after "brutal" killing of security personnel by Pakistan-based entities and for issuing postage stamps of Kashmir rebel commander killed in 2016. Indian ambassador to Pakistan 7 Sept expressed optimism about relations under new govt but cautioned "terrorism is a deal breaker". Tensions also remained over sharing of river waters; Pakistan late Aug reiterated objection to two Indian hydropower projects on Chenab River it claims violates 1960 Indus Water Treaty in bilateral meeting in Lahore. Indian army chief Rawat 24 Sept said India should carry out another "surgical strike" against "terror launch pads" in Pakistan; in 2016 India claimed, and Pakistan denied, that such strikes had taken place.

## → Maldives SEPTEMBER 2018

In surprise result in 23 Sept presidential elections, united opposition candidate Ibrahim Mohamed Solih defeated incumbent President Yameen; Solih, who won with 58.3% compared with Yameen's 41.7%, said vote showed country wanted "change, peace and justice". Yameen, accused of political repression in run-up to vote, defended his record as president but admitted defeat 24 Sept. Electoral commission 26 Sept said Yameen's Progressive Party of Maldives had requested delay in publication of final results, sparking opposition concerns it would attempt to annul results; however police and army same day said they would uphold result, and electoral commission officially declared Solih as victor 29 Sept.

## → Nepal SEPTEMBER 2018

against govt's increasing imitations of civil liberties. Three years since promulgation of Sept 2015 constitution, amendments demanded by southern plains-based Madhesi parties related to redrawing new federal provincial boundaries, equal rights for naturalised citizens, population-based provincial representation in upper house of parliament (all seven provinces currently get eight seats) remain

unaddressed; Madhesi parties' agitation for amendments waned considerably following 2017 elections. Nepal Army withdrew from participating in mid-Sept joint military exercise between Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) countries initiated by India following 30-31 Aug summit after criticism from both opposition and ruling party leaders about lack of discussion within parliament and lack of consultation with defence or foreign ministries. BIMSTEC controversy contributed to growing tensions within ruling Nepal Communist Party, with senior leaders reportedly discontent with Oli's monopolising of leadership. NCP co-chair and former Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal visited India and China in Sept and met Indian PM Modi among others; visits reportedly linked to Dahal's aspirations for prime ministership.

#### ➔ Pakistan SEPTEMBER 2018

PM Imran Khan's new Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) govt faced domestic and international challenges, including radical extremists threatening to besiege capital, military influence on policy, and U.S. pressure to end terrorist and militant sanctuaries. PTI came under pressure from late Aug as extremist Tehreek-i-Labaik Islam (Labaik, political party of Barelvi radical Tehreek-i-Labaik Ya Rasool Allah) launched protest march from Punjab to Islamabad demanding govt sever relations with Netherlands over planned "blasphemous" cartoon contest by Dutch far-right; Labaik called off march 31 Aug after contest was cancelled. Govt 7 Sept removed Atif Mian, from minority Ahmadi sect, from Economic Advisory Council, reportedly under pressure from Labaik. On foreign policy front, U.S. Sec State Pompeo 5 Sept visited Islamabad amid tensions over allegations of Pakistani assistance to Afghan Taliban; ahead of talks, U.S. defence department 1 Sept proposed to reprogram \$300mn of withheld coalition support funds citing lack of Pakistani support of U.S. South Asia strategy. Khan 6 Sept said Pakistan would not be "part of anyone else's war". Khan same day insisted there was no divide between civil and military leadership; amid reports of split between cabinet and military high command on direction of high-profile China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), govt reportedly reviewing scale of projects; army chief reiterated "CPEC was Pakistan's economic future"; govt 20 Sept announced Saudi Arabia agreed to invest "heavily" in CPEC. Insecurity persisted with militants killing three soldiers in attack in North Waziristan tribal district (west) 13 Sept. Militants 18 Sept killed two paramilitary troops in shooting in Killa Saifullah district, Balochistan (south west). Parliament 4 Sept elected PTI's nominee Arif Alvi President, with opposition fractured and unable to put up joint candidate. Islamabad High Court 19 Sept suspended sentences against Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief and former PM Sharif, PTI govt's most prominent opponent, and his daughter and son-in-law, while hearing evidence in appeals against their conviction for corruption.

#### ➔ Sri Lanka SEPTEMBER 2018

Mass "joint opposition" rally 5 Sept, organised by former President Mahinda Rajapaksa's son Namal as part of Rajapaksa family political comeback attempt, attracted some 40,000-50,000, falling far short of predicted crowds of 200,000. Divisions grew within Rajapaksa family over who should be candidate for 2019 presidential election; in 17 Sept interview with Indian newspaper during visit to Delhi, Mahinda

allegations levelled against them” for conduct at end of 26-year civil war, and told newspaper editors 14 Sept he would formally request UN Human Rights Council (UNOCHR) make changes to 2015 resolution to “give us some concession to resolve this issue [of war crimes allegations]”. Eventual 26 Sept UNGA speech praised “yeoman service rendered by our Security Forces in defeating a dreaded terrorist organization” and requested member states to “allow us space to resolve our problems and to progress as an independent country”. Following widely reported presidential intervention into criminal cases implicating military officials, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) spokesman 13 Sept announced TNA now supported an international judicial process for war-related crimes. Two former cabinet members acknowledged in 15 Sept media interview that govt forces had executed LTTE (“Tamil Tigers”) leaders at end of war. Cabinet 11 Sept approved new draft of proposed Counter Terrorism Act (CTA), with improved rights protections, designed to fulfil pledge to UNOCHR and EU to replace much-vilified Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Eight Tamils detained under PTA began hunger strike 14 Sept to protest long delays in their trials; in 26 Sept meeting with TNA leaders, govt officials repeated earlier promises to expedite cases.

➔ Cambodia SEPTEMBER 2018

Amid wave of pardons for govt opponents following July general election, in which Hun Sen’s Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) won all 125 parliamentary seats, court 10 Sept granted bail to former Cambodian National Rescue Party (CRNP) leader Khem Sokha, jailed Sept 2017 and awaiting trial for treason, and placed him under house arrest.

➔ Indonesia SEPTEMBER 2018

Authorities 4 Sept reported police shot dead two suspected militants and arrested five while seeking perpetrators of late Aug shooting of two traffic police in West Java, believed to be members of Islamic State (ISIS)-linked Jamaah Ansharut Daulah. Local media reported up to 79 people arrested after demonstrating peacefully in provincial capital Jayapura 4 Sept calling for self-determination; students protested 24 Sept supporting efforts to take West Papua issue to UN General Assembly, 67 reportedly arrested. Earthquake and tsunami that struck Sulawesi island 28 Sept killed at least 844 people, with fears death toll could reach thousands.

➔ Myanmar SEPTEMBER 2018

International criticism of govt’s response to Rohingya crisis and treatment of jailed journalists continued, as did sporadic clashes between ethnic armed groups and military in north. Yangon court 3 Sept sentenced two local Reuters journalists to seven years’ prison with hard labour for violating Official Secrets Act, despite credible evidence that police had set them up and prosecution failing to make convincing case; journalists had been investigating killings of ten Rohingya by security forces and local villagers at time of their arrest in Dec 2017; case widely seen internationally as miscarriage

responsibility for “political aspect” but declined to criticise what she termed “military aspect”. International Criminal Court 6 Sept ruled that it had jurisdiction over alleged forced deportation of Rohingya from Myanmar to Bangladesh, even though Myanmar is not a state party, since part of the alleged crime occurred on territory of a state party (Bangladesh). Myanmar govt “resolutely rejected” ruling, calling it “the result of faulty procedure”, “manifest bad faith”, and “of dubious legal merit”. UN continues to express frustration at its lack of access to northern Rakhine state, despite MoU agreed by govt in May; on 12 Sept began two-week assessment in 23 villages in area selected by govt. In Rakhine State, tensions continued between authorities and Rakhine Buddhist majority; Sittwe court 10 Sept decided to confirm high treason charges, which carry life imprisonment, against Rakhine political leader and former lawmaker Dr. Aye Maung. Armed clashes involving ethnic groups remain relatively limited, in part due to monsoon; sporadic fighting occurred in northern Shan State early Sept between troops of National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA)-signatory Restoration Council of Shan State and non-signatory Ta’ang National Liberation Army, also in northern hills of Kayin State between military and Fifth Brigade of Karen National Union, an NCA signatory.

#### ➔ Philippines SEPTEMBER 2018

Preparations underway for plebiscite on Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) to create new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR) amid attacks by suspected Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in south, and clashes continued between military and Abu Sayyaf and New People’s Army (NPA) communist insurgency in the centre and north. Election commission 5 Sept scheduled plebiscite for 21 Jan 2019 in areas being considered for inclusion in BAR. Islamic State (ISIS)-linked BIFF suspected of responsibility for improvised explosive device in Sultan Kudarat provincial capital Isulan in Mindanao 2 Sept, which killed two and wounded over a dozen in second attack in a week. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) peace panel chair Mohagher Iqbal said attacks were attempt to derail peace efforts. Another bomb in Mindanao’s General Santos City 16 Sept injured at least eight; bomb in North Cotabato’s Midsayap same day caused no injuries. Authorities reported BIFF militants executed two farmers and injured two soldiers in attacks in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, 2 Sept. Gunfight between military and BIFF in Maguindanao’s Datu Montawal town 7 Sept killed three suspected militants and one civilian. Military reported seven Abu Sayyaf killed and seventeen soldiers wounded in gunfights in Sulu’s Patikul town 15 Sept, although local human rights group said they were civilians; military reported Abu Sayyaf militant killed in clash in area 10 Sept. Military 13 Sept reported 179 Abu Sayyaf had surrendered so far in 2018. Clashes between military and NPA continued, including in Negros Oriental province (centre), where clash with alleged NPA 3 Sept forced hundreds of civilians to flee; and police 12 Sept reported ambush by NPA on truck carrying civilians, killing at least nine; army reported two NPA militants and one soldier killed in separate clashes 13 Sept. Military requested President Duterte issue executive order to create national inter-agency task force to end insurgency. Duterte, facing two charges of crimes against humanity at International Criminal Court over thousands of alleged extrajudicial killings as part of his “war on drugs”, in 27 Sept speech appeared to admit responsibility for killings.

#### ➔ South China Sea SEPTEMBER 2018

U.S., UK and Japan naval and overflight activities in South China Sea (SCS) drew criticism from Beijing, most notably U.S. flying B-52 bombers over SCS late Aug and Sept, which U.S. said were part

agency for buying Russian fighter jets and surface-to-air missile system; also cancelled high-level military visit to Washington and denied request for U.S. navy port call in Hong Kong. U.S. Navy

destroyer USS Decatur 30 Sept navigated within 12 nautical miles of features China controls in Spratly Islands. Japan 17 Sept announced its Kuroshio submarine had conducted anti-submarine warfare exercises with three Japanese warships before port call in Vietnam, in Japan's first public announcement of such drills which PM Abe said had been conducted in area for fifteen years; China called for halt to such actions. China's People's Liberation Army conducted live-fire flight training exercises near the SCS 19 September, People's Daily reported. UK's amphibious assault ship HMS Albion 31 Aug conducted freedom of navigation operation by sailing near disputed Paracel Islands en route to Vietnam; HMS Argyll headed to SCS after joint UK-Japan Indian Ocean drills 26 Sept. Australia's largest maritime military drills, Exercise Kakadu, began in Darwin 31 Aug, with 27 nations participating including China for first time. U.S. and India 6-7 Sept discussed security in Indo-Pacific and signed communications pact enabling equipment sales and closer military coordination, part of efforts to balance China's growing influence.

## → Thailand SEPTEMBER 2018

Violence continued in Deep South, while royal approval of two election laws cleared way for vote in 2019. In ongoing Southern insurgency, gunmen killed two civilians in daylight attack in Thepha district, Songkhla province 2 Sept; militants 8 Sept killed two village defence volunteers and wounded two others in Chanae district, Narathiwat. Roadside IED targeted officials in Songkhla's Chana district 9 Sept, no injuries; insurgents ambushed motorcycle-borne ranger patrol in Nong Chik district, Pattani 11 Sept, killing two and wounding four. Insurgents launched coordinated attacks on two Provincial Electricity Authority offices in Yala and Pattani 30 August, no injuries. Royal Gazette 12 Sept published king's approval of two final organic laws on election, removing the final legal obstacles for general election to proceed according to ruling National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO)'s roadmap. Law on election of members of parliament will take effect 10 Dec, after which constitution requires a general election be held within 150 days. NCPO 14 Sept partially lifted ban on political activity, allowing political parties inter alia to select executives and contact members. Most political activity, including campaigning, still prohibited; govt said ban on political gatherings of five or more people and other political activities will be lifted mid-Dec. UN Secretary-General's annual report 12 Sept listed Thailand among 38 countries engaging in reprisals and intimidation "against civilians who cooperate with the UN to uphold human rights"; junta spokesman said accusation was meant to discredit govt.

## Europe & Central Asia

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### → Bosnia And Herzegovina SEPTEMBER 2018

Campaigning began 7 Sept for 7 Oct presidential, parliamentary (state and entity level) and cantonal (for Federation entity) elections. Russian FM Sergey Lavrov visited Bosnia 21 Sept; meeting with tripartite state presidency in Sarajevo, said Russia supports Bosnia's territorial integrity and constitution and denied interfering in elections; also visited Republika Srpska (RS) capital Banja Luka, where he met with RS President Dodik (who is running for tripartite state presidency) and Serbian PM

➔ Kosovo SEPTEMBER 2018

Talk of possible border adjustment between Kosovo and Serbia as part of EU-facilitated normalisation dialogue continued to prompt strong opposition within Kosovo and internationally, while tensions rose between countries. Serbian President Vučić 7 Sept called off meeting with Kosovo President Thaci, reportedly citing “lies” from Pristina; same day ordered Serbian institutions to stop all communications with Kosovo police and international peacekeepers. Vučić went ahead with rare visit to Kosovo 8-9 Sept; addressing thousands of Kosovo Serbs at rally in Mitrovica 9 Sept, his remarks praising former Serbian President Milosevic, who died while on trial for crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes, as a “great Serbian leader”, drew criticism from neighbouring countries. Kosovo opposition continued efforts to block potential border change as part of normalisation deal, arguing it would require two-thirds parliamentary approval; local media 20 Sept reported Thaci had asked Constitutional Court to clarify whether his signature of an international agreement would be sufficient for ratification. Thousands joined opposition-organised protest against border correction proposal 29 Sept. Vučić in interview published 13 Sept said Serbia would need clear guarantees of EU membership in 2025 if it reaches agreement with Kosovo. Pristina deployed special police to Gazivode Lake area in northern Kosovo 29 Sept for visit by Thaci, prompting Serbia to put its troops on alert and accuse Pristina of breaking agreements. Govt 13 Sept approved bill expanding competences of Kosovo Security Force (KSF) without need for constitutional changes; Thaci expressed concern about need for support from Western allies including U.S. and NATO. Local NGO Kosovar Center for Security Studies published report 19 Sept claiming Belgrade put pressure on over 60 ethnic Serb members of Kosovo Security Force to resign. Local NGO Aktiv reported that integration of courts in Serb-run north into Kosovo judicial system, which came into force Oct 2017 following agreement as part of Serbia-Kosovo dialogue, has not helped backlog of tens of thousands of court cases.

➔ Macedonia SEPTEMBER 2018

In 30 Sept consultative referendum, 91.33% voted in favour of NATO and EU membership and accepting 17 June name agreement with Greece, however opponents of name deal, who had called for boycott, also claimed victory due to low turnout at 37%. PM Zaev said vote gave “crystal clear message” and he would proceed with bid to pass name change through vote in parliament, which as a constitutional change would require two-thirds support (80 out of 120 votes). Govt reported 71 deputies support name agreement; Zaev said if parliamentary vote failed he would call early general elections. Ahead of referendum, opposition called for boycott, while country’s Western partners lent support to yes campaign, with NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg during visit 6 Sept saying alliance was “ready to welcome” Macedonia once it finalises agreement with Greece; German and Austrian leaders also visited ahead of vote, along with senior U.S. defence secretary Jim Mattis, who warned of Russian attempts to influence vote, and EU foreign policy chief Mogherini. Thousands marched in Skopje in support of yes vote 16 Sept.

➔ Armenia SEPTEMBER 2018

for “overturning the constitutional order” but freed on appeal in Aug, continued to tell media about his intention to form new opposition to run in anticipated parliamentary elections; several key members of former ruling Republican party and Dashnaksutyun party said they would join him.

#### ➔ Azerbaijan SEPTEMBER 2018

Turkish President Erdoğan 15 Sept visited Azerbaijan, met with President Aliyev and in speech made remarks about Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and need to resolve it as a precondition to improving Turkish-Armenian relations. Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman also visited Baku 15-20 Sept for discussions on regional security, development, military-technical cooperation; observers speculated visit may herald big purchase of military equipment from Israel, already a major supplier to Azerbaijani military. Russian President Putin 27 Sept visited Baku for bilateral meeting with Aliyev and to participate in 9th Russia-Azerbaijan Interregional Forum in Baku; discussed trade, economy and humanitarian issues during visit.

#### ➔ Georgia SEPTEMBER 2018

Month saw further breakdown of main negotiation forum between Georgia, Russia and breakaway republics, which could increase tensions and aggravate difficulties faced by residents of conflict zones. Following months of growing crisis in Geneva International Discussions, launched in 2008 as main negotiation forum for Georgian conflicts and with representatives from Russia, Georgia, de facto Abkhazia and South Ossetia along with U.S., EU, OSCE and UN, de facto South Ossetian officials 14 Sept walked out of meeting of Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM, meant to meet every two-to-three weeks, aimed at defusing tensions along administrative boundary line), protesting Interpol’s decision to accept Georgian appeal to add two South Ossetian suspects in Feb 2018 death of ethnic Georgian Archil Tatumashvili. Similar IPRM in Abkhazia context has not taken place since de facto Abkhazia officials walked out in June protesting Georgian intention to prosecute several Abkhazia de facto officials and residents suspected of crimes against ethnic Georgians. Moscow 18 Sept accused Georgia of attempting to add “politically motivated” issues to agenda; Tbilisi accused Russia of attempting to “undermine” IPRM and the Geneva format. Uncertainty on date for next possible meeting, with no side showing readiness to find compromise to resume IPRM meetings. IPRM format is only communication channel between conflict parties to tackle practical problems in conflict zones; next round of Geneva discussions scheduled for mid-Oct, seen as chance to avert potential crisis of Geneva format. Amid growing opposition protests over lack of reforms, rising crime and deteriorating living conditions in de facto Abkhazia, opposition announced major protest in Sukhumi early Oct, demanding de facto leader Raul Khajimba should not run for second term in presidential election scheduled for Aug 2019; some also calling for him to step down early.

#### ➔ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) SEPTEMBER 2018

comprehensive settlement will require compromise on all sides” and sought clarifications on some recent statements and incidents. Earlier in month, Azerbaijani foreign ministry condemned remarks by Armenian PM Pashinyan at 8 Sept meeting of businessmen in Russia that he wanted to see NK eventually become part of Armenia. Continuing to favour more agency for NK de facto leadership – a red line for Baku – Pashinyan in 10 Sept interview with Russian newspaper said issue of return of lands should be discussed with de facto leadership, which effectively controls the territory. Amid tensions over Armenian statements, several reports of exchange of fire at Armenia-Azerbaijan border, with two soldiers killed: one Azerbaijani 5 Sept, and one Armenian 20 Sept; three more Armenian soldiers reported dead 22 and 26 Sept in isolated incidents at Line of Contact. Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders 28 Sept had brief informal exchange at Commonwealth of Independent States Summit in Dushanbe; both sides reached preliminary agreement on establishing an operational channel that should help sustain ceasefire regime through direct communication between Yerevan and Baku.

#### ➔ Russia/North Caucasus SEPTEMBER 2018

Amid ongoing anti-militant operations, concerns over human rights continued. Security forces 15 Sept reported counter-terrorism operation in area of Dagestan’s Talgi village had eliminated three militants. Residents of Shali early Sept told “Caucasian Knot” website that families of alleged perpetrators of 20 Aug attacks on police had been expelled from Chechnya. Chechen judge 20 Sept ordered that trial for drugs charges of Oyub Titiyev, director of Chechnya office of Memorial human rights organisation, be closed to public. Fifteen members of Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) 30 Aug enacted Vienna Human Dimension Mechanism, requesting concrete information on and investigations of human rights violations in Chechnya, and citing “climate of impunity”. Amnesty International 3 Sept called on authorities to disclose whereabouts of Chechen refugee deported from Poland 31 Aug, who disappeared 1 Sept reportedly after a dozen armed men wearing uniforms of Federal Security Service came to his residence in Chechen village Shalazhi. Violence broke out in Kabardino-Balkar Republic starting 18 Sept with fighting in Kendelen village between ethnic Balkars and Kabardinians staging march commemorating historic battle, followed by clashes between civilians and police next day in neighbouring villages, and in capital Nalchik 20 and 21 Sept; 45 people reportedly injured, over 100 detained. 26 Sept border agreement between Chechnya and Ingushetia prompted protests in Ingush capital Magas.

- [REPORT: Prospects for a Deal to Stabilise Syria’s North East](#)

#### ➔ Ukraine SEPTEMBER 2018

Tensions continued over Russia’s military presence in Azov Sea and obstruction of international shipping to Ukrainian ports Mariupol and Berdyansk. President Poroshenko 13 Sept called for further sanctions on Russia over its detention of ships bound for Ukrainian ports since May. Govt 16 Sept announced plans to build new Azov Sea naval base by end of 2018. Ukrainian Navy dispatched two armoured gunboats to littoral Donetsk region 8 Sept, 20 Sept moved two ships and boat from Black to Azov Sea. Russian state media claimed ships had passed into Russian exclusive economic zone and were being “escorted” by Russian coast guard; as boats passed through Kerch strait, Ukrainian navy claimed over ten Russian ships and one Russian aircraft were accompanying them. Russian media 25 Sept reported Ukraine had requested Russian permission for ships’ passage; Ukrainian navy denied

among forces on both sides; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe monitors confirmed one civilian death; de facto authorities reported three children killed by landmine 30 Sept. Army 22 Sept announced it had taken control of Vilne (population 150) in Luhansk region, which was previously in no-man's land. Following 31 Aug killing of separatist leader Aleksandr Zakharchenko, Ukraine's human rights ombudsman for region reported mass detentions, torture in areas outside govt control, forcing confessions of cooperation with Ukrainian authorities in assassination. Amid backdrop of historical tensions with Budapest over Ukraine's Hungarian minority, FM Pavlo Klimkin 26 Sept called for closure of Hungarian consulate in Berehove after media published video appearing to show diplomats granting Hungarian citizenship to Ukrainian citizens, in violation of Ukrainian law.

#### ➔ Cyprus SEPTEMBER 2018

Tensions over hydrocarbon explorations continued; Turkish FM Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu 3 Sept said Turkey, having purchased new drilling platform, could begin drilling in the east Mediterranean within months if Greek-Cypriot govt continued to take unilateral steps toward exploration. Turkish President Erdoğan 16 Sept said Turkey will increase Turkish troops in northern Cyprus. UN Special Envoy to Cyprus Jane Holl Lute travelled to Athens and London 11-12 Sept to complete meetings with all parties involved in Cyprus issue to assess possibility of renewed reunification talks. Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akıncı 27-29 Sept attended UN General Assembly.

#### ➔ Turkey SEPTEMBER 2018

Govt continued military operations against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in south-east Turkey and northern Iraq. Turkish Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu 18 Sept said PKK was "taking its last breaths" and "this winter will be difficult [for the PKK]", demonstrating Ankara's determination to continue pushing for military solution. Ankara welcomed appointment of new UN Special Envoy for Syria, former U.S. Ambassador to Turkey James Jeffery, who in 4 Sept meeting with Turkish defence minister reportedly emphasised importance of continued U.S.-Turkish cooperation on Syria. President Erdoğan and Russian President Putin 17 Sept signed agreement for demilitarised buffer zone to allow for "radical" rebels and heavy weaponry to be "removed" from rebel-held north-western governorate of Idlib, alleviating concerns over possible refugee influx from what appeared to be an imminent Syrian regime offensive. Disagreement between Ankara and Washington over U.S. support for People's Protection Units (YPG) in northern Syria continued. Erdoğan 24 Sept said Ankara could take military action against YPG in north-eastern Syria. Relations with EU and some EU capitals showed signs of improvement during month.

- [REPORT: Prospects for a Deal to Stabilise Syria's North East](#)

#### ➔ Kazakhstan SEPTEMBER 2018

province, adjacent to Kazakhstan, Kazakhs reported their relatives were being held in Chinese re-education camps”.

#### ➔ Kyrgyzstan SEPTEMBER 2018

Attending meeting of Turkic Council in Bishkek, Turkish President Erdoğan 1 Sept called for closer ties with Kyrgyzstan and urged counterpart President Jeenbekov to crack down on groups associated with banned Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen. Also attending, Hungarian President Orbán 4 Sept called for closer ties. In 18 Sept report, Human Rights Watch said govt has used “dangerously overbroad” interpretation of extremism to convict 258 suspects since 2010. UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women same day said govt had allowed “systemic” human rights violations due to pervasive practice of bride kidnapping and forced marriage. Kyrgyz and Russian troops conducted joint counterterrorism exercise late Sept.

#### ➔ Tajikistan SEPTEMBER 2018

Visiting Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO) bordering Afghanistan, President Rahmon 15 Sept criticised GBAO officials for failing to address criminal and drug-trafficking groups. Opposition 17 Sept said govt planning military operation in area; video footage surfaced online 19 Sept purportedly showing military equipment being transferred to region. Russian defence ministry reported it conducted counter-terrorism exercise in neighbouring Khatlon region 24-28 Sept. Scuffle broke out between govt officials attending 11 Sept meeting of Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in Warsaw and activists calling for release of jailed members of banned Islamic Renaissance Party.

#### ➔ Uzbekistan SEPTEMBER 2018

Attending meeting of Turkic Council in Kyrgyzstan, President Mirziyoyev 3 Sept said Uzbekistan eager to join organisation. Committee to Protect Journalists 6 Sept criticised govt’s 28 Aug-2 Sept roundup of bloggers, which it said signals that “the country is not serious about improving the environment for press freedom”.

## Latin America & Caribbean

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#### ➔ Colombia SEPTEMBER 2018

Liberation Army (ELN) prompted fears over future of that peace process. In Nariño (south west), army 6 Sept killed alias “David”, leader of most powerful dissident group United Pacific Guerrillas, and defence ministry 15 Sept reported army wounded alias “Guacho”, leader of dissident Oliver Sinisterra front, although he evaded capture, leading to further fighting in area as security forces pursued him. Oliver Sinisterra front 17 Sept began series of attacks on police and armed forces in Tumaco (south west). Six former FARC commanders went missing during month including main negotiator Iván Márquez and aliases “el Paisa” and “Romaña”, two senior military commanders, leading to speculation they may have joined dissident groups. Govt 7 Sept announced continued suspension of peace talks with ELN, leading to fears talks could fall apart completely in Oct; Spanish PM Sánchez offered to host future talks on Spanish territory. ELN freed nine hostages in “humanitarian gesture” to further peace talks with govt, including three in Arauca (east) 5 Sept and six in Chocó (west) 12 Sept, but two days later kidnapped teenage girl in Chocó, claiming she was army spy. UN Office on Drugs and Crime 19 Sept announced Colombia had 171,000 hectares of coca under cultivation and produced over 1,300 tonnes of cocaine in 2017, highest levels since records began; govt continued to proclaim crop destruction through fumigation as best policy against coca. Political killings of community activists remained high with nine killed during Sept in Nariño, Meta (centre), Antioquia (north west), Putumayo and Cauca (both south west) and Norte de Santander (north east) provinces; over 300 social leaders killed since FARC peace agreement in Dec 2016.

## ➔ Venezuela SEPTEMBER 2018

Amid acute regional concern over political impasse and humanitarian situation inside Venezuela, President Maduro 13-16 Sept visited China in search of fresh loans to relieve govt’s financial crisis, but reportedly failed to secure them. Among agreements signed, Maduro ceded further 9.9% share in joint Sinovensa oil project, and signed up for “active participation” in construction of China’s Belt and Road initiative; new Chinese assistance will come in form of investments in oil, gas and gold, rather than loans to govt. Venezuela already owes China \$20bn and has had to ask for repayment terms to be relaxed. Official Chinese statements expressed confidence in Maduro’s Aug economic reforms, but hyperinflation reported at around 220% per month. Economic crisis left shops struggling to stock basic goods; producers face spiralling costs, increased crime, power cuts and govt-backed land seizures, particularly in border regions. With Venezuelans continuing to flee country, eleven regional govts 3-4 Sept met in Ecuadoran capital Quito to discuss crisis, stressing need for regional solution and agreeing to accept expired Venezuelan passports as valid; Venezuelan govt declined to attend meeting and continued to deny existence of mass exodus, saying it is helping repatriate many “repentant” migrants. Political impasse and worsening humanitarian crisis fuelled talk of possible internationally-led or -backed military intervention. Speaking at Colombian-Venezuelan border, Organization of American States (OAS) Sec Gen Almagro 14 Sept said no option should be excluded, later clarifying he meant humanitarian intervention; ten members of Lima Group of govts issued statement rejecting use of force, but U.S. President Trump speaking at UN General Assembly 26 Sept reiterated that all options were open; also said would be willing to meet Maduro, but although Maduro flew to New York no meeting took place. In unprecedented move, six regional countries 26 Sept called on International Criminal Court to investigate Maduro govt for crimes against humanity. UN Human Rights Council next day passed resolution deploring situation in Venezuela, calling on govt to allow in humanitarian assistance and on UN human rights chief to investigate and report.

- [STATEMENT: How to Respond to Venezuela’s Humanitarian Emergency](#)

President Morales early Sept renewed his campaign to dismantle International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG, which has been preparing case and possible charges against him for illicit electoral financing), prompting political and constitutional crisis. Following Morales' 31 Aug announcement he would not renew CICIG mandate when it ends in Sept 2019, military vehicles same day surrounded CICIG's main building. Morales 4 Sept banned Colombian judge and CICIG chief Iván Velásquez from re-entering country, requesting UN appoint replacement. Constitutional Court (CC) 16 Sept ordered govt allow Velásquez's entry and called for dialogue with UN; Interior Minister Enrique Degenhart and Foreign Minister Sandra Jovel next day defied ruling and confirmed ban. As of 25 Sept, the presidency, three ministries, national police and two lawyers had filed eight appeals to CC to revoke its ruling. Move drew widespread domestic and international criticism. Civil society network Convergence for Human Rights 18 Sept filed criminal complaint against govt for disobeying CC ruling, while ombudsman for human rights Jordán Rojas 19 Sept filed appeal to CC demanding Degenhart and Jovel's dismissal. Activists 10 Sept began staging peaceful protests in support of CICIG. Govt deployed thousands of military and police to contain peaceful protests and impede access to centre of Guatemala City; civil society organisations 13 Sept denounced "remilitarisation" of country. International partners also condemned Morales' action, although U.S. took milder stance and advocated for "reformed CICIG" and for respecting Guatemala's sovereignty. Congressional committee of inquiry established late Aug to assess whether to lift Morales' immunity from prosecution (as requested by attorney general's office and CICIG) 18 Sept requested Morales to appear before congress in mid-Oct.

#### ➔ Honduras SEPTEMBER 2018

UN-backed political dialogue between govt and opposition which began 28 Aug continued but made little progress; main opposition group left-wing Libre party remained absent while President Hernández govt maintained scepticism toward talks, which cover four themes: events of 2017 election, human rights, constitutional reforms/rule of law, and electoral reforms. Political tension remained high; police and protesters clashed during anti-govt march in capital Tegucigalpa (centre) 15 Sept. Liberal Party left dialogue table 26 Sept citing govt's lack of commitment to democratic reforms. As part of "Pandora Case" investigation into diversion of \$11.7mn of public funds to finance election campaigns, attorney general (AG) late Aug ordered seizure of assets of members of ruling National Party and centre-left Liberal party and issued search warrants for parties' headquarters. In new security operations, recently-created Anti-Maras Unit arrested at least 50 alleged gang leaders 3 and 8 Sept. Autonomous University of Honduras 9 Sept reported 108 people killed in 33 massacres Jan-Aug 2018, predominately in Francisco Morazán, Cortés and Olancho departments in centre and north west, representing increase in number of mass killings although homicide rate has fallen.

#### ➔ El Salvador SEPTEMBER 2018

Govt launched unprecedented number of anti-gang operations in centre and south with police 2-4 Sept tackling both factions of 18th Street Gang for first time, leading to capture of nearly 200 gang members across country. Attorney General's Office 29 Aug launched Operation Pacific Harpoon against MS-13 finances, arresting 357 gang members. Month saw continued progress in fight against corruption with court sentencing former President Saca to ten years' imprisonment 13 Sept for

➔ Nicaragua SEPTEMBER 2018

Although violence declined overall, situation remained unstable as govt crackdown on peaceful protests continued. Opposition Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy (ACJD) in 1 Sept open letter called on govt to resume dialogue, echoed by Catholic Church; President Ortega claimed dialogue process could not restart under current conditions. ACJD 7 Sept held national strike. Peaceful protests demanding release of political prisoners continued under heavy police presence; govt continued repressive policies with reports of arbitrary detentions, “kidnapping” and unfair trials of opposition supporters. Human rights organisations estimate 309 people remain imprisoned for political activities as of 18 Sept, 136 facing terrorism charges and awaiting trial in Managua. Two protesters died from wounds after months in hospital 18 Sept. Groups of armed civilians shot participants in anti-govt marches in Managua on 2, 16, and 23 Sept, killing one and injuring four, bringing number killed since April to 325 according to Inter-American Commission on Human Rights figures. Media groups reported security forces harassing Nicaraguan and international press. International pressure on govt continued: EU suspended cooperation project with national police, U.S. 5 Sept raised Nicaraguan crisis at UN Security Council, where most members reiterated call for resumption of dialogue; echoed in letter signed by 36 countries 12 Sept. Ortega 10 Sept declared he would be willing to discuss issue directly with U.S. President Trump, who rejected offer 18 Sept. Organization of American States (OAS) Permanent Council 12 Sept issued resolution calling for resumption of dialogue and agreement on electoral timetable; govt 17 Sept demanded OAS Sec Gen Almagro’s resignation. Central American Integration System (SICA) 18 Sept declared it was working with govt to restore dialogue. Economic impact of crisis continued; financial system reported to have lost \$974.8mn since April, Nicaraguan Foundation for Economic and Social Development 18 Sept estimated 143,000 Nicaraguans had fallen into poverty since April and GDP would contract by 2-4%.

➔ Haiti SEPTEMBER 2018

Protests continued against President Moïse’s govt over alleged corruption including misuse of funds from PetroCaribe (alliance giving Caribbean states access to cheap Venezuelan oil) involving alleged \$2bn embezzlement. Two demonstrators shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Arcahaïe city (centre) 11 Sept; death toll over twenty since demonstrations over increase in fuel prices began in July. UN Assistant-Secretary General of Peacekeeping Operations Bintou Keita 6 Sept warned of “high risk” of “major unrest” in country. Haitians continue to leave country en masse while others face deportation from Dominican Republic and U.S. due to ending of migration schemes.

➔ Mexico SEPTEMBER 2018

New govt passed its first laws including measures cutting privileges for previous legislators such as subsidised fuel, and other measures reflecting campaign promises for “republican austerity”; however President-elect López Obrador, who will be sworn into power 1 Dec, apparently looking away from key

California state (north west) 11 Sept and Mexico City 14 Sept. Record levels of violence continued with 2018 on track to surpass 2017 as deadliest year; authorities reported 3,017 homicides in July, highest of any month on record and 40% increase in comparison with same month in 2017. Attacks on state forces continued in Tonalá, Jalisco state, just outside Guadalajara (west), operational centre of Cartel Jalisco New Generation (CJNG); govt data made public in Sept showed no member of CJNG was convicted between Sept 2017 and June 2018, despite it growing more than any other criminal group in previous five years. In other violence, three gunmen 14 Sept killed six at popular tourist site Garibaldi Plaza in Mexico City (centre) while three marines and two alleged criminal group members were killed in clash in Buenavista, Michoacán (west). In same region, heavy fighting between armed groups forced some people to leave their homes. Direct attacks on state forces, allegedly by criminal groups,

continued with four police killed in ambush in Tonalá, Jalisco state 3 Sept, and military convoy attacked in Reynosa, Tamaulipas state (north) 6 Sept, shortly before visit of President Peña Nieto. Authorities 26 Sept placed entire police force under investigation in resort of Acapulco, Guerrero state (south), claiming drug traffickers had infiltrated force.

## Middle East & North Africa

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### ➔ Israel/Palestine SEPTEMBER 2018

Palestinians resumed protests at and launching of incendiary kites across Gaza-Israel border as Egyptian-brokered talks aimed at ceasefire between Israel and Hamas stalled. Following meeting with Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas, Egypt 6 Sept returned to previous position that PA must reconcile with Hamas and retake control of Gaza before Egypt brokers ceasefire. Israeli PM Netanyahu 2 Sept said there would be no deal before Hamas has returned remains of two Israeli soldiers Israel says were killed in 2014 war. Hamas 9 Sept announced end of talks with Israel, blaming PA, which had voiced opposition to talks, and said it would escalate protests at border. Israeli army reportedly shot dead three Palestinian protesters at border, one each on 9, 21 and 23 Sept, and seven more 28 Sept. U.S. 8 Sept cut further its financial support to Palestinians, redirecting \$25mn it had pledged to hospitals in East Jerusalem. U.S. 10 Sept ordered closure of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) mission in Washington D.C. and 16 Sept ordered PLO Ambassador Husam Zomlot to leave. Tensions increased at Holy Esplanade in Jerusalem with Israeli police and officials of Waqf, Jordanian body that administers area, coming to blows over access issues. U.S. President Trump 26 Sept took favourable stance toward two-state solution saying, "I like a two-state solution. That's what I think works best". He later clarified that he would also back one-state solution if Israelis and Palestinians preferred it. Syrian anti-aircraft system 18 Sept shot down Russian military aeroplane while attempting to hit four Israeli jets that had attacked missile factory near Latakia in north west Syria on coast, killing fifteen Russian officers; Russian President Putin blamed "tragic chain of accidents" while Israel expressed "sorrow" but vowed to continue strikes against Iranian forces in Syria (see Syria). Israel 4 Sept said it had carried out over 200 airstrikes against alleged Iran-linked targets in Syria since early 2017.

### ➔ Lebanon SEPTEMBER 2018

Limited number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon continued to return to Syria through Masnaa and Abhoudieh border crossings in centre and north respectively, including 200 who returned 4 Sept and

Agreement between Turkey and Russia seems to have averted offensive by pro-govt forces on rebel-held Idlib province in north west, creating opportunity to consolidate deal in Oct. Summit of Turkey, Russia and Iran – guarantors of de-escalation agreement covering Idlib and adjacent rebel-held areas – in Tehran 7 Sept appeared to end in deadlock. Turkey publicly rejected prospect of pro-govt offensive and sent reinforcements to its observation points in Syria. Turkey’s European allies and U.S. also lobbied for negotiated alternative. After bilateral summit in Russian city of Sochi 17 Sept, Turkish President Erdoğan and Russian President Putin jointly announced agreement to create by 15 Oct demilitarised zone on edge of Idlib de-escalation area to be policed by Turkish and Russian forces; Turkey to take heavy weapons from rebels in demilitarised zone by 10 Oct and remove jihadist groups from zone; Idlib’s key highways to be secured and opened for transit by year’s end. Iran and Syrian govt welcomed deal. Individuals and media outlets of jihadist alliance in Idlib region Hei’at Tahrir al-Sham voiced hostility to it and rejected disarmament. Syrian anti-aircraft system 18 Sept shot down Russian military aircraft while attempting to hit four Israeli jets that had attacked missile factory near Latakia in north west on coast, killing fifteen Russian officers; Putin blamed “tragic chain of accidents” while Israel expressed “sorrow” but vowed to continue strikes against Iranian forces in Syria. Israel 4 Sept said it had carried out over 200 airstrikes against alleged Iran-linked targets in Syria since early 2017. Moscow 24 Sept announced delivery of S-300 air defence system to Syria; U.S. national security adviser called delivery “significant escalation”. In north-eastern city of Qamishli, fighting erupted 8 Sept between regime forces holding enclave and Kurdish Asayish forces, seventeen people killed. Turkey 23 Sept said it would take steps to create “safe zones” across northern Syria, including in areas held by Syrian Kurdish fighters allied with U.S. but which Ankara considers terrorists.

- [SPEECH: The Syrian Conflict and International Support for Rebel Groups](#)

Militants launched deadly attack on military parade in Ahvaz in south west as govt continued to negotiate future of nuclear deal in light of U.S. withdrawal. International Atomic Energy Agency 30 Aug confirmed Iran’s full compliance with 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Govt discussed regional issues with EU/E4 (UK, Germany, France and Italy) in meeting in Brussels 12 Sept. U.S. 14 Sept placed sanctions on Thai aviation company linked to Iran’s Mahan Air. Govt 29 Sept said it expected EU to establish legal framework to bypass U.S. sanctions by 4 Nov when U.S. oil-related sanctions to be re-introduced. Militants opened fire on army parade in Ahvaz in south west 22 Sept, killing 25 people, twelve Revolutionary Guards and thirteen civilians; both anti-govt Arab group Ahvaz National Resistance and Islamic State (ISIS) claimed attack. President Rouhani 23 Sept said U.S. and “puppet” Gulf allies enabled attack, which U.S. denied. Iraqi protesters allegedly angry at Iran’s role in Iraqi politics 7 Sept burnt down Iran’s consulate in Basra. Militants fired mortars at U.S. embassy in Iraqi capital Baghdad 6 Sept and U.S. consulate in Basra, southern Iraq 8 Sept; U.S. 11 Sept blamed Iran-backed militias. Army 8 Sept launched seven missiles against headquarters of Kurdish militants Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI) in Iraqi Kurdistan, killing twelve; in response, protesters demonstrated at Iranian embassies in Helsinki, Paris and Athens. Israel 4 Sept said it had carried out over 200 airstrikes against alleged Iran-related targets in Syria since early 2017. After

- [COMMENTARY: Iran's Ahvaz Attack Worsens Gulf Tensions](#)

## ➔ Iraq SEPTEMBER 2018

Political parties took steps toward creation of new govt as violent protests continued in south. Parliament 5 Sept convened for first time since May legislative elections, but disputes between two main alliances prevented election of parliamentary speaker, who, according to constitution, should be chosen in first session. Both alliances – Reform and Construction bloc led by Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and Construction bloc led by Hadi al-Ameri – claimed to have largest number of seats, earning right to appoint PM and ministers. Sadr and Ameri 12 Sept agreed on new parliamentary speaker, Mohammad Rikan al-Habousi, and two deputy speakers. Parliament must now elect new president, by convention a Kurd: Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) 19 Sept nominated Kurdish politician Barham Salih as its presidential candidate. Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) 23 Sept nominated Fuad Hussein as its candidate. Kurdish region 30 Sept held national assembly elections. Protests continued in south over poor services and unemployment; protesters 7 Sept burnt down Iran's consulate in Basra, reportedly expressing anger at Iran's overbearing role in Iraqi politics. Groups fired mortars at U.S. embassy in Baghdad 6 Sept and U.S. consulate in Basra 8 Sept; U.S. blamed Iran-backed militias. In emergency parliamentary session 8 Sept, governor of Basra criticised PM Abadi and cabinet for failures. Govt 9 Sept sent additional security forces to Basra province to restore calm. Islamic State (ISIS)-related insecurity continued, predominantly in Kirkuk, Diyala and Salah al-Din provinces: ISIS militants 3 Sept killed seven civilians in attack on village of Albu Shafer, Kirkuk province. Iranian army 8 Sept launched missiles at headquarters of militant Iranian-Kurdish group Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) in Iraqi Kurdistan, killing at least twelve. In far north, Turkey continued operations against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), claiming to have killed over fifteen militants in airstrikes.

- [Q&A: Iraqi Kurdistan's Regional Elections Test a Brittle Status Quo](#)

## ➔ Kuwait SEPTEMBER 2018

Military chiefs from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries including Qatar met in Kuwait 10-12 Sept for 15th GCC Supreme Military Committee; first meeting since Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain cut ties with Qatar in June 2017. Military chiefs from Egypt, Jordan and U.S. joined talks 12 Sept to discuss enhanced military cooperation.

## ➔ Qatar SEPTEMBER 2018

Military chief of staff 10-12 Sept attended 15th Gulf Cooperation Council Supreme Military Committee meeting in Kuwait; first meeting since Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain cut ties with Qatar in June 2017 (see Kuwait).

➔ Saudi Arabia SEPTEMBER 2018

Defence forces shot down several missiles fired from Yemen by Huthi forces aimed at cities in south west, Jizan and Najran; debris from missile shot down over Najran 5 Sept reportedly injured over twenty. Spain 4 Sept suspended sale of 400 precision bombs to govt over concerns about their use against civilians in Yemen, but reversed decision 13 Sept after alleged pressure from Riyadh. Military chief 10-12 Sept attended 15th Gulf Cooperation Council Supreme Military Committee meeting in Kuwait; first meeting since Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain cut ties with Qatar in June 2017.

King Salman 16 Sept brought together leaders of Eritrea and Ethiopia as well as UN Sec-Gen Guterres in western city of Jeddah for signing of “Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship” to bolster Eritrea and Ethiopia’s historic July peace accord that ended twenty years of war between two countries. Govt next day hosted talks between Eritrean President Afwerki and Djibouti President Guelleh to work toward resolving longstanding border dispute (see Eritrea and Djibouti). Govt 18-20 Sept hosted new Pakistani PM Imran Khan and agreed to significant investment in development projects in Pakistan (see Pakistan).

🇸🇦 🇯🇲 ⚡ Yemen SEPTEMBER 2018

UN-led consultations planned for early Sept failed to start and fighting escalated on outskirts of Huthi-held port city of Hodeida raising risk of further escalation in Oct; but opportunities to mediate confidence-building measures remain. Huthi representatives 8 Sept told team of UN envoy Martin Griffiths they would not leave capital Sanaa for talks in Geneva; they asked to travel in Omani instead of UN plane and to take wounded with them, but complications arose in negotiating details of procedure among Saudi-led coalition, Omanis and Huthis. Griffiths continued efforts to bring parties to talks; 18 Sept announced Saudi-led coalition would allow flights to leave Sanaa to evacuate those in need of urgent medical care. Forces backed by United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Red Sea coast early Sept launched assault to take control of road between Hodeida and Sanaa and 12 Sept claimed they had captured it; Huthis later said they had retaken it. Huthi rebels 30 Sept claimed they had launched attacks on Dubai international airport and boats off coast of Saudi port city Jizan. UAE 14 Sept delivered letter to UN Security Council arguing only way to bring Huthis to negotiating table was to continue offensive on Hodeida. Saudi-led coalition 1 Sept acknowledged that it had made mistakes in Aug airstrike on school bus in north that left 51 dead, including 40 children. Amid growing international criticism of coalition’s conduct in Yemen, U.S. Sec State Pompeo 11 Sept defended campaign, telling Congress that “Saudi Arabia and UAE are undertaking demonstrable actions to reduce the risk of harm ... resulting from military operations”. UN Human Rights Council 28 Sept voted to extend international probe into alleged war crimes committed in country; govt, Saudi Arabia and UAE denounced decision.

- [COMMENTARY: Yemen’s Hodeida Offensive: Once Avoidable, Now Imminent](#)

➔ Algeria SEPTEMBER 2018

gathering sixteen parties. Business Leaders Forum 6 Sept, General Union of Algerian Workers 10 Sept and National Union of Algerian Women same day called on Bouteflika to run for fifth term. Bouteflika 1 Sept returned to country after five days in Switzerland for medical checks. Authorities prevented meetings of new political movement Citizenship and Democracy, created in June to prepare “peaceful transition” to end Bouteflika’s rule, 8 Sept in Constantine in north east and 15 Sept in Bejaia, 220km east of capital Algiers; several movement leaders and members arrested 15 Sept in Bejaia. Overhaul of senior staff in security and intelligence institutions ongoing since June continued: army chief Ahcène Tafer and air force chief Abdelkader Lounes dismissed late Aug and early Sept respectively; Abdelhamid Ghriess appointed defence ministry secretary general 17 Sept following dismissal of Mohamed Zenakhri. Govt reportedly imposed travel ban on five generals mid-Sept for alleged involvement in drug trafficking. Thousands of residents of Ouargla in south 15 Sept protested against lack of development projects and infrastructure including university hospital in area after local hospital early Sept failed to save life of woman stung by scorpion.

## ➔ Egypt SEPTEMBER 2018

President Sisi continued to shuffle members of his inner circle as authorities continued to crack down on dissent. Sisi 1 Sept removed head of Administrative Control Authority (ACA) Major General Mohamed Irfan (one of his closest allies, Irfan is expected to be promoted) and reportedly dismissed head of General Intelligence Service (GIS) Major General Abbas Kamel. Sisi 20 Sept replaced Director of Military Intelligence (MI) Mohammed Shehat with former head of Second Field Army Major General Kahled Megawer. Govt 3 Sept took off air popular TV host with ties to GIS Lamees el-Hadidy after she reportedly upset Sisi with comments made during March election. Ahmed Bahgat 11 Sept said he was being forced to sell his Dream TV network to state-owned entities and move popular presenter to a GIS-owned network. Muslim Brotherhood affiliated, Istanbul-based, Mekemeen TV channel 15 Sept reported 27 army personnel had been arrested 13 Sept; many reportedly come from Second Field Army, previously led by two senior officers who have had disagreements with Sisi since 2013. Authorities 15 Sept arrested Alaa and Gamal Mubarak, sons of former President Mubarak, on revived 2011 charges of stock market fraud. Authorities 18 Sept froze funds of four prominent activists, including former diplomat Maasoum Marzouk, following their arrest in Aug on suspicion of belonging to terrorist organisation. Sisi 2 Sept ratified July law allowing govt to monitor social media accounts. Backpack exploded in alleged botched attack on U.S. embassy in Cairo 4 Sept, authorities same day arrested one suspect. In Sinai peninsula, security forces 10 Sept reportedly killed eleven suspected jihadists. Military chiefs from Egypt, Jordan and U.S. 12 Sept joined 15th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Supreme Military Committee meeting in Kuwait attended by all GCC members including Qatar; first meeting since Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain cut ties with Qatar in June 2017.

## ➔ Libya SEPTEMBER 2018

After eruption of violence in capital Tripoli late Aug, fighting escalated despite UN-mediated ceasefires; end-month security situation in capital was calm but precarious. Armed groups from towns surrounding Tripoli maintained offensives early Sept in bid to oust Tripoli-based militias and pressure Prime Minister Faiez Serraj to step down. UN 3 Sept mediated ceasefire and in follow-up meeting 9 Sept most parties agreed to lay down arms and support formation of ceasefire monitoring mechanism. Long-range artillery fire struck Tripoli’s Maitiga airport 11 Sept and fighting broke out in capital’s

from state institutions they govern. At least 100 people were killed during the attack, at least half were civilians in residential areas. Attack by gunmen on National Oil Corporation headquarters in Tripoli 10 Sept killed two; govt said Islamic State (ISIS) behind attack. U.S. govt 12 Sept placed sanctions on militia leader Ibrahim Jedran for overseeing June attempt to seize control of Gulf of Sirte oil facilities. Govt and Central Bank 12 Sept announced economic reform package aimed at reducing black market speculation on foreign currency transactions that benefitted some Tripoli armed groups.

➔ Mauritania SEPTEMBER 2018

In legislative elections 1 and 15 Sept, ruling party Union for the Republic (UPR) won majority in National Assembly with at least 89 seats out of 157. In simultaneous local elections, UPR won all thirteen regional councils. Court 3 Sept charged activist Abdallahi Salem Ould Yali, arrested in Jan for social media messages denouncing marginalisation of Haratin community, with incitement to violence and racial hatred.

➔ Tunisia SEPTEMBER 2018

Political competition between President Essebsi and PM Chahed continued. Executive bureau of Essebsi's Nida Tounes party, led by Essebsi's son, 14 Sept froze Chahed's party membership. Essebsi, in meeting with An-Nahda party president 3 Sept, reportedly failed to secure support for possible parliamentary no-confidence vote against Chahed. Informal alliance between An-Nahda bloc (68 MPs) and new pro-Chahed bloc Alliance Nationale (43 MPs, mostly dissident Nida Tounes members) now holds parliamentary majority. Essebsi 24 Sept announced in TV interview end of his alliance with An-Nahda. Unions 19 Sept agreed to 6.5% private sector salary increase; public sector workers union (UGTT) is demanding 10% increase to public sector wages, in spite of International Monetary Fund (IMF) recommendations to freeze public payroll. UGTT 20 Sept called for nationwide public sector strikes 24 Oct and 22 Nov against govt plans to privatise companies and stalled pay negotiations.