



CRISISWATCH

Tracking Conflict Worldwide

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

Learn more about CrisisWatch →

August 2018

Global Overview

AUGUST 2018

Outlook for This Month

September 2018

⚡ Conflict Risk Alerts

Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria,
Yemen, Libya

🔗 Resolution Opportunities

Macedonia, Yemen

Trends for Last Month

August 2018

📉 Deteriorated Situations

Chad, Ethiopia, Uganda,
Zimbabwe, Russia/North Caucasus,
Venezuela, Syria, Libya

📈 Improved Situations

None

In August, the Syrian regime and its allies upped attacks in the north west, pointing to an imminent offensive on rebel-held Idlib province, home to nearly three million people. Fierce militia fighting erupted

in Libya's capital and could escalate in the coming weeks. The UN's consultations with Yemen's belligerents in September could re-energise peace talks; but failure could trigger more violence. In DR Congo, the government's determination to bar the main opposition contenders from December's presidential poll could provoke more protests, while Zimbabwe's elections left the country even more divided. Uganda's detention of a popular challenger sparked protests, which the authorities put down with force. Mob violence rose in eastern Ethiopia, and Chad responded with force to a rebel attack. In Chechnya, boys reportedly carried out attacks on police after pledging allegiance to Islamic State. The exodus of Venezuelans to neighbouring countries presented a growing regional threat, with the government's new economic reform package making things worse. A forthcoming referendum in Macedonia could bring the country another step closer to resolution of its longstanding name dispute with Greece.

Trends and Outlook

PRESIDENT'S TAKE

15 Years of Tracking Conflict Worldwide



ROBERT MALLEY
PRESIDENT & CEO

This month we mark the fifteenth anniversary of our monthly global conflict tracker, Crisis Watch. In his introductory commentary, our President Rob Malley notes some examples of conflicts where Crisis Wat...

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In **Syria**, the regime and its allies seemed to be preparing for an all-out offensive in the north-western province of Idlib, the armed rebellion's last stronghold. A day after dropping fliers urging civilians to surrender, a wave of airstrikes in Idlib and neighbouring Hama and Aleppo provinces killed at least 29 people. The regime says it must root out jihadists, but the region is also home to almost three million people, mostly civilians. To avoid a massive death toll, **Crisis Group urged** Turkey and European countries to tell Russia that an assault on Idlib could work against its main goal: the Assad regime's full rehabilitation. Turkey, Russia and Iran should resume talks to find a less dangerous way to neutralise the most hardline jihadists.

Intense fighting erupted in **Libya's** capital Tripoli between militias linked to the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA), and the violence could escalate further in September. Clashes broke out late August between fighters of the Seventh Brigade, a militia formed by the GNA's defence ministry in 2017, and a coalition of armed groups operating under the GNA's interior ministry. UN consultations with **Yemen's** warring parties in early September could increase their commitment to restart peace talks, but if discussions collapse in acrimony, fighting could escalate. Meanwhile, infighting between Yemeni forces in the Saudi-led coalition intensified and coalition strikes killed more civilians, including at least 50 children.

DR Congo's president, Joseph Kabila, revealed that he would not stand in December's presidential poll, thus abiding by the constitution. But, **as we argued**, the regime continues to keep electoral preparations skewed in its favour, notably by barring the main opposition contenders. Publication of a final candidates list – due on 19 September – that lacks opposition champions could trigger another bout of violence. In the coming months, international actors should keep up rigorous scrutiny of the electoral process and

push the regime to relax its repression. **Zimbabwe**'s contested elections and the military's crackdown on opposition supporters, killing six, have **undermined the government's legitimacy and deepened political divisions**.

In sharp contrast to the recent positive stories coming out of **Ethiopia** – a drive toward more liberal domestic policies and more friendly regional relations – mob violence rose, especially in the eastern Somali region, where youth and the region's police targeted ethnic minorities. After one of the strongest Chadian rebel groups based in southern Libya attacked a military post in northern **Chad**, the government answered the rebels' proposed prisoner swap with airstrikes. Meanwhile, the **Ugandan** government may have shot itself in the foot by arresting a singer-turned-opposition politician known as Bobi Wine. Hugely popular among young people, his arrest and alleged beating in detention brought supporters out on the streets, whom security forces scattered with force, killing at least one.

In the **North Caucasus**, Chechen authorities reported that the perpetrators of a series of attacks targeting police on 20 August ranged in age from eleven to sixteen. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attacks and released a video purportedly showing the young attackers pledging allegiance.

Preparations are underway in **Macedonia** for a referendum on 30 September on whether to accept the new country name that the government agreed with Greece in June, ending a long-standing dispute. A "yes" vote would pave the way for implementing the deal, which unblocks Greece's veto on Macedonia, starting the accession process for the EU and NATO.

In **Venezuela**, President Maduro – the target of an apparent assassination attempt early in the month – introduced an economic reform package, including a new currency and a 35-fold increase in the minimum wage. Observers predicted it will worsen the country's spiralling economic and humanitarian crisis, and intensify the exodus of Venezuelans to neighbouring countries – already prompting a growing backlash. Peru and Ecuador announced entry restrictions in August and Venezuelans came under attack in Brazil; the UN warned the region may be heading for a "crisis moment".

Latest Updates

Africa

➔ Burundi AUGUST 2018

Opposition boycotted govt's initiative setting out path toward 2020 elections and govt agreed with conditions to take part in fifth round of inter-Burundian dialogue in Sept. At govt's invitation, registered political parties gathered at Kayanza in north 3 Aug to compose roadmap to 2020 elections; twenty signed document committing to promote democratic culture, reinforce security for free and fair vote, revise legal framework and appoint new electoral commission leadership. Two opposition parties attended but did not sign. Opposition coalition Amizero y'Abarundi and two other opposition parties did not attend. Amizero y'Abarundi and exiled opposition coalition CNARED criticised initiative as way to render void inter-Burundian dialogue mediated by regional bloc East African Community (EAC). UN Special Envoy Michel Kafando 9 Aug asked UN Security Council to call on all sides to take part in fifth round of inter-Burundian dialogue to reach political settlement. Representatives of EAC mediation team met authorities and opposition in capital Bujumbura 16-17 Aug and agreed to hold new round of talks in Ugandan capital,

Kampala in Sept. UN Security Council 22 Aug criticised slow progress in talks and urged parties to reach agreement well before 2020 elections. In session boycotted by Amizero y'Abarundi, national assembly 29 Aug approved new electoral commission members. Burundians protested outside Tanzanian embassy in Brussels 10 Aug against perceived pressure by Tanzanian authorities on Burundian refugees to return home.

- **REPORT: Soutenir la population burundaise face à la crise économique**

➔ Cameroon AUGUST 2018

Ahead of Oct presidential elections, Boko Haram (BH) and Anglophone separatists kept up insurgencies. In Far North, three BH attacks in Mayo-Sava department 3 and 17 Aug left at least four people dead and army 3 Aug killed three BH militants in Mayo-Tsanaga department. Govt 11 Aug said it had arrested seven soldiers suspected of appearing in video circulated in June that shows uniformed men killing two women and their children on grounds that women are BH members; govt said investigations ongoing into second video showing soldiers killing a dozen unarmed civilians. In Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions, separatist militants continued to attack security forces (killing at least six), state representatives and traditional rulers and burn down property; security forces repelled attacks, killing militants. Notably militants killed paramount ruler of Balondo Bananga in Ekondo Titi, Southwest 12 Aug; attacked convoys of Northwest region governor on way to and from Kumbo (Northwest) and of parliamentarian in Northwest killing four soldiers, both incidents 14 Aug; and kidnapped first deputy mayor of Ndop (Northwest) 16 Aug. Militants abducted ethnic Bamileke (Francophone) chief in Bamumka Ndop (Northwest) 21 Aug. Separatists kidnapped traditional leader and another civilian in Bambalang (Northwest) 23 Aug. Tensions rose in Southwest between residents of Southwest and Northwest regions. Mayor of Buea, Southwest region capital 31 July organised demonstration urging separatists to release Southwestern chiefs and calling on separatists from Northwest to leave Southwest. Separatists released chiefs hours later. Killing of Balondo Bananga chief 12 Aug fuelled calls by Southwesterners for separatists, whom they perceive as mainly Northwesterners, to leave their region. Unidentified gunmen attacked home of secretary general of the presidency in capital Yaoundé night of 10-11 Aug, presidential guard killed two assailants.

- **OP-ED: Grossesses et mariages précoces : la face cachée de la guerre contre Boko Haram au Cameroun**

➔ Central African Republic AUGUST 2018

Armed groups continued to cause insecurity in provinces and African Union (AU) and Russia brokered parallel talks among armed groups. Anti-balaka militants 2 Aug temporarily took control of Lioto village in Ouaka province in centre-south before ex-Seleka fighters pushed them back, 25 people reportedly killed. Unidentified assailants looted convoy of International Committee of the Red Cross 6km from Kaga-Bandoro in north 11 Aug. As part of AU mediation initiative, facilitators met representatives of fourteen

armed groups for third time in Bouar in west 27-30 Aug to finalise joint demands. Russia organised parallel talks in Sudanese capital Khartoum 28 Aug at which main leaders of strongest armed groups signed preliminary agreement; they included anti-balaka leader Maxime Mokom and ex-Seleka leaders Nourredine Adam and Abdoulaye Hissene of Popular Front for the Central African Renaissance (FPRC), Mahamat al-Khatim of Central African Patriotic Movement (MPC) and Ali Darass of Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC). After unidentified gunmen killed three Russian journalists investigating alleged presence of Wagner private military contractor 30 July, Russian govt said killers were “thieves” and denied any responsibility. EU 13 Aug said it had expanded its military training mission in CAR and extended it for two years until 19 Sept 2020; EU has also changed mission’s mandate so that, in addition to providing strategic advice to defence ministry, military personnel and armed forces, it can also advise presidency and interior ministry. U.S. handed over 48 of planned 57 military vehicles to army 6 Aug. China’s Poly Technologies handed over 70 vehicles to defence ministry 8 Aug. Russia and CAR signed military cooperation agreement near Moscow 21 Aug, which reportedly frames avenues of future cooperation, including opportunities to study in Russia.

Chad AUGUST 2018

One of strongest Chadian rebel groups present in south Libya, Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic (CCMSR), 11 Aug crossed into Chad and attacked military post near gold mines in Tibesti region in north, later claiming to have killed several soldiers and abducted several more, including three officers. Group proposed to hand over prisoners in exchange for govt releasing three of its members arrested in Niger in late 2017 and deported to N’Djamena, including leader Mahamat Hassan Boulmaye. Govt rejected deal, asked population to leave Kouri Bougri area and 17 Aug air force bombed it, reportedly wounding civilians. Civil servants continued strike. Opposition party Democratic Union for Development and Progress 27 Aug launched petition calling for removal of new constitution enacted in May.

Democratic Republic Of Congo AUGUST 2018

Following announcement that President Kabila will not run in Dec presidential election, violence could flare if definitive list of candidates – to be published 19 Sept – excludes main opposition contenders. Ruling coalition 8 Aug announced that Kabila would not run, abiding by constitutional two-term limit, but that it would be represented by Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, secretary general of coalition’s main party People’s Party for Reconstruction and Development. Jean-Pierre Bemba, leader of opposition party Movement for the Liberation of Congo acquitted by International Criminal Court (ICC) in June, returned to Congo 1-5 Aug, submitting presidential candidacy. Govt prevented Moïse Katumbi, leader of opposition platform Together for Change, returning to Congo to submit candidacy before 8 Aug deadline, denying him authorisation to land at Lubumbashi airport and refusing him entry through land border with Zambia 3 and 4 Aug. Authorities arrested dozens of his supporters in Lubumbashi. Katumbi’s spokesperson 12

Aug said his platform had asked Council of State to lift irregular measure blocking his return. In total 25 people lodged presidential candidacies. Main opposition parties 13 Aug reaffirmed intention to unite behind single candidate. Electoral commission 24 Aug published provisional list of candidates, barring six would-be candidates, including Bemba on account of his ICC conviction for witness tampering. All six began procedures at constitutional court to overturn decision. Catholic Church, affiliated lay organisation, international community and opposition welcomed Kabila's decision to step down, but underscored that electoral commission needed to resolve multiple issues to ensure free, fair and credible vote. In North Kivu province in east, fourteen bodies found in Beni area 7 Aug, suspected victims of Allied Democratic Forces armed group; fighting between two armed groups in Kalungu area, Masisi territory reportedly left at least twelve civilians dead 5-10 Aug; army fought Nduma Defence of Congo armed group to take control of Kasugho and Kagheri areas, Lubero territory 14-17 Aug. Govt 1 Aug declared new Ebola outbreak around Beni, North Kivu, and cases since reported in Ituri province; 75 deaths reported by 30 Aug.

- **COMMENTARY:** [Kabila Shows His Hand in DR Congo's Electoral Poker](#)

➔ Republic Of Congo AUGUST 2018

Following Dec 2017 ceasefire, leader of Ninjas rebel group Frederic Bintsamou, known as Pastor Ntumi, 22 Aug called on his followers to disarm. Disarmament officially launched 7 Aug, but yet to start.

➔ Djibouti AUGUST 2018

Somalian President Farmajo met President Guelleh in Djibouti 16 Aug; Somalia's support for lifting UN sanctions on Eritrea imposed in 2009 has soured Somalia's relations with Djibouti; UN placed sanctions on Eritrea partly because latter had not withdrawn its forces from disputed border area following clashes with Djibouti in June 2008.

➔ Eritrea AUGUST 2018

Following Somalian President Farmajo's visit to Eritrea in July, Eritrean foreign minister 13 Aug visited Mogadishu to strengthen ties; Somalia's support for lifting UN sanctions on Eritrea imposed in 2009 has

soured Somalia's relations with Djibouti; UN placed sanctions on Eritrea partly because latter had not withdrawn its forces from disputed border area following clashes with Djibouti in June 2008.

🚩 Ethiopia AUGUST 2018

Ethno-religious tensions and mob violence rose in several areas, especially in Somali region in east. In east, after federal govt forces tried to dismantle Somali region's Liyu police and remove regional President Abdi Mohamoud Omer (known as Abdi Illey), both accused of human rights violations, youth and Liyu police attacked non-ethnic Somalis, looted and burned their property and burned Ethiopian Orthodox churches in regional capital Jijiga 4-5 Aug. Govt soldiers reportedly exchanged fire with local Liyu police. Liyu police cracked down on residents protesting attacks 6 Aug, killing four. Violence spread to at least four other towns. Attacks in Dire Dawa, about 150km west of Jijiga, 2 Aug left at least nine people dead, including six Djiboutian citizens; some 2,700 Djiboutians evacuated to Djibouti. Abdi Illey resigned 6 Aug without giving reason, replaced by region's Finance Minister Ahmed Abdi Mohamed. Oromia region official said Liyu police carried out cross-border attacks in East Hararghe district of Oromia region 11-12 Aug, killing at least 40 ethnic Oromos. Unidentified assailants reportedly killed at least thirteen ethnic Somalis in same district 28 Aug. Following parliament's removal of three rebel groups from list of terrorist organisations in July, govt 7 Aug signed reconciliation agreement with one, Oromo Liberation Front, fighting for self-determination of Oromia region; another, Ogaden National Liberation Front, fighting for secession of Somali region, 12 Aug declared unilateral ceasefire. Exiled leadership of third, Patriotic Ginbot 7, early Aug said it would return home and launch political activities. Amhara region authorities 16 Aug signed reconciliation agreement with rebel group Amhara Democratic Forces Movement exiled in Eritrea. Govt 10 Aug said United Arab Emirates was exploring investment opportunities there, including building oil pipeline between Addis Ababa and Eritrea's Assab port.

➡ Kenya AUGUST 2018

Al-Shabaab continued attacks on security forces and civilians in south east near coast and in north east. In coastal Lamu county, five soldiers killed 8 Aug when their vehicle triggered explosive device claimed by Al-Shabaab between Majengo and Bodhei areas; five more soldiers killed when their vehicle hit explosive device suspected to have been laid by Al-Shabaab on Sankuri-Kiunga road 29 Aug. In north east, three people killed when their vehicle detonated explosive device suspected to have been laid by Al-Shabaab in Wantey area, near Elwak in Mandera county 13 Aug; large number of militants 20 Aug attacked police station and communications mast in Ijara, south of Garissa county, repelled by security forces.

→ Somalia AUGUST 2018

Al-Shabaab maintained attacks, but at lower rate. In Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab militants 2 Aug killed prominent businessman and activist Mohamed Sheikh Ali, sparking protests across country and in diaspora; and 3 Aug attacked restaurant killing three civilians. In Lower Shabelle region, Al-Shabaab car bombing on military base at Afgoye, 30km north west of Mogadishu 5 Aug killed two soldiers. Govt forces foiled car bombing outside Mogadishu 14 Aug having received information from civilians, arrested five Al-Shabaab militants. Govt forces recaptured from Al-Shabaab Marka city in Lower Shabelle, on coast about 100km south west of Mogadishu 20 Aug. Puntland forces 17 Aug said they had retaken from Al-Shabaab Af Urur town without a fight. U.S. airstrikes continued: first 120km north west of Mogadishu 2 Aug killed four militants, second 46km north east of Kismayo in south 21 Aug killed two militants; third about 40km south west of Mogadishu 27 Aug killed three militants. Puntland region maintained military standoff with Somaliland over disputed territory. Following President Farmajo's visit to Eritrea in July, Eritrean foreign minister 13 Aug visited Mogadishu to strengthen ties. Farmajo met Djiboutian President Guelleh in Djibouti 16 Aug; Somalia's support for lifting UN sanctions on Eritrea imposed in 2009 has soured Somalia's relations with Djibouti; UN placed sanctions on Eritrea partly because latter had not withdrawn its forces from disputed border area following clashes with Djibouti in June 2008.

→ Somaliland AUGUST 2018

Govt maintained military standoff with Somalia's Puntland region over disputed territory. Puntland interior minister 20 Aug threatened war with Somaliland.

→ South Sudan AUGUST 2018

President Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar, having signed security and power-sharing agreements in July, signed further power-sharing agreement in Khartoum 5 Aug. Talks continued on outstanding issues including number of states and their boundaries. Machar initially rejected draft agreement including six-month roadmap for conclusion of final deal put forward 28 Aug, but signed it 30 Aug. Kiir granted general amnesty to rebels including Machar 8 Aug. U.S., UK and Norway 10 Aug expressed concern that arrangements agreed so far were "not realistic or sustainable" and called on parties to "bring in a wider range of stakeholders, and develop clear plans for the transition period". Kiir 15 Aug told state governors that under deal opposition would take over fourteen of 32 governorships. Mediators from regional bloc Intergovernmental Authority on Development chaired by Sudan 26 Aug proposed compromise on number and boundaries of states but parties remained divided on matter. Army accused Machar's rebels, Sudan People's Liberation Movement-In Opposition, of violating ceasefire signed in June by attacking them 21

Aug in two areas of Northern Liech state in north, saying four soldiers and nine rebels killed. Former Botswanan president, Festus Mogae, resigned from position as Chairperson of Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission 20 Aug.

➔ Sudan AUGUST 2018

Three rebel groups in Darfur (Sudan Liberation Movement faction led by Minni Minnawi, Justice and Equality Movement and Sudan Liberation Movement-Transitional Council) extended for three months unilateral cessation of hostilities in Darfur region 8 Aug. Sudan and Ethiopia 16 Aug agreed to withdraw their troops from each other's territory and deploy joint forces to combat terrorism and human trafficking. Govt early Aug handed over to U.S. embassy in Khartoum second batch of proposals on normalisation of relations with U.S. and its removal from list of states sponsoring terrorism.

🚩 Uganda AUGUST 2018

Popular musician-turned-opposition MP Robert Kyagulanyi, known as Bobi Wine, arrested and reportedly beaten in detention, sparking protests which security forces dispersed forcibly. During campaign for parliamentary by-election in Arua in north where Kyagulanyi had been campaigning for independent candidate, opposition supporters threw stones at President Museveni's motorcade 13 Aug; Kyagulanyi and four other opposition MPs arrested same day for suspected involvement. Kyagulanyi's driver shot dead, allegedly by security forces, in Arua 13 Aug. Kyagulanyi charged 16 Aug with unlawful possession of weapons, three other MPs and dozens of other people charged with treason. Security forces 19-20 Aug forcibly dispersed opposition protests in capital Kampala and elsewhere, at least one person killed and 68 reportedly arrested. Kyagulanyi appeared at military court hearing in Gulu in north 23 Aug, court dropped charges of unlawful weapons possession, but local magistrate charged him with treason over alleged role in stoning of motorcade. Court 27 Aug released on bail 33 people accused of treason, including Kyagulanyi. Authorities at Entebbe airport 30 Aug prevented Kyagulanyi and another MP, Francis Zaake, from travelling abroad to seek medical treatment, triggering more protests in Kampala 31 Aug. Police 23 Aug arrested opposition politicians Kizza Besigye and Kato Lubwama for defying house arrest. Military court 24 Aug charged General Kale Kayihura, inspector general of police from 2005 till March and arrested in June, on three counts including aiding and abetting kidnapping, and remanded him in custody until 28 Aug.

➔ Angola AUGUST 2018

Thirteen members of secessionist group Cabinda Independence Movement arrested 10 Aug during meeting to organise public debate on Cabinda enclave's autonomy; acquitted of crimes against state security 17 Aug.

➔ Comoros Islands AUGUST 2018

Following July referendum, in which over 92% reportedly voted in favour of extended presidential terms and stopping rotation of presidency among three main islands, monitoring mission 1 Aug said it had observed voting irregularities. Opposition leaders 2 Aug called referendum "a farce". President Assoumani 3 Aug announced elections would be held early 2019 and opposition said they would form united electoral front against him. Eight opposition members arrested early Aug and later accused of trying to organise coup. Former President Sambu, under house arrest since May, charged 20 Aug with embezzlement while in office (2006-2011). Assoumani 28 Aug appointed new govt.

➔ Mozambique AUGUST 2018

Islamist militants continued attacks in far north as govt and armed opposition Renamo took further steps to cement peace. Govt forces 16 Aug attacked alleged camp of Islamist militants – known locally as both Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a and Al-Shabaab – near Pundanhar village, Palma district, Cabo Delgado province near Tanzanian border in far north, killing at least four and capturing suspected leader, Abdul Raim. Raim was one of six men police identified as group's ringleaders mid-Aug. In response, militants attacked Pundanhar 21 Aug wounding civilian and destroying local administration's office. Four insurgents 23 Aug reportedly attacked Cobre village near Quitarajo, Macomia district on coast, killing two. Govt and Renamo 6 Aug signed MoU on military matters setting out steps to disarm, demobilise and integrate group's fighters into security forces and society. President Nyusi 16 Aug said govt and Renamo would set up four working groups – Commission on Military Affairs and three Joint Technical Groups – to implement MoU.

🇿🇼 Zimbabwe AUGUST 2018

Political divides deepened after Constitutional Court dismissed opposition's challenge to results of 30 July presidential vote, confirming President Mnangagwa's victory, and military crackdown on opposition protesters left six dead. Electoral commission 1 Aug announced results of parliamentary vote, with ruling ZANU-PF winning 144 seats (over two thirds) and opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Alliance winning 64, but postponed releasing presidential results. EU observers said delay undermined credibility of results. After MDC Alliance leader Nelson Chamisa said he had won "the popular vote", opposition supporters protested in capital Harare 1 Aug accusing ZANU-PF of rigging elections. Riot police gave way to soldiers who forcibly dispersed protesters with water cannon and live ammunition, six protesters killed. Police 2 Aug sealed off MDC Alliance headquarters before storming building and arresting sixteen people. Human rights organisations reported over 150 incidents of alleged abuses by security forces against opposition supporters, including illegal detention, assault, looting and rape. Electoral commission 3 Aug announced Mnangagwa winner of presidential poll with 2.46mn votes (50.8%) against Chamisa's 2.15mn (44.3%), after MDC Alliance said it would reject result. Electoral commission later revised Mnangagwa's score to 50.6%, about 31,000 votes over 50% threshold to avoid second round. Chamisa 3 Aug said he would challenge through legal process presidential result and parliamentary results in twenty constituencies. Police 8 Aug arrested opposition politician Tendai Biti at border with Zambia as he tried to seek asylum there; Zambian police deported him, ignoring Zambian high court interdiction. Biti charged next day with public violence and illegally announcing election results. EU, U.S., Canada and Switzerland in joint statement 7 Aug expressed concern with post-election violence and intimidation of opposition supporters. Chamisa 10 Aug filed legal challenge against Mnangagwa's victory, accusing electoral commission of bias and fraud. Court 22 Aug dismissed challenge, ruled Chamisa would have to pay ZNU-PF legal costs and validated Mnangagwa's victory. Mnangagwa 29 Aug said former South African President Kgalema Motlante would chair inquiry into events of 1 Aug.

- **COMMENTARY: After Elections, Zimbabwe Government's Legitimacy in Limbo**

➡ Burkina Faso AUGUST 2018

Insecurity continued in several areas, especially east and north. In East region, unidentified gunmen 1 Aug attacked checkpoint in Natiaboani village, injuring several police officers; five police officers and a civilian killed when their vehicle detonated explosive device between towns of Boungou and Ougarou 11 Aug; insurgents 27 Aug attacked military barracks in Pama, killing at least seven members of security forces. In North region, assailants 22 Aug ambushed police convoy on Sollé-Titao axis, killing a police officer. In west, unidentified individuals 17 Aug ambushed vehicle of Canadian mining company Semafo in Bekuy, Hauts-Bassins region, two civilians killed. Six unidentified gunmen 21 Aug attacked customs post in Batié, South West region, killing one customs officer. Opposition and civil society early Aug criticised new electoral law passed by National Assembly 30 July, saying rule that Burkinabe living abroad must use passport or identity card to prove their nationality would severely impede diaspora's participation in 2020 presidential election as many lack these documents. Electoral commission 26 Aug said constitutional referendum will take place 24 March 2019.

➔ Côte D'Ivoire AUGUST 2018

Major political repositioning took place ahead of 2020 presidential election. Former President Henri Konan Bédié's Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) left ruling coalition 8 Aug following increased tensions within coalition over creation of unified party. Bédié 10 Aug discussed with opposition leader Pascal Affi N'Guessan of Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) creating alliance between their parties. Opposition continued to question legitimacy of electoral commission and mobilised protest in Abidjan 28 July demanding immediate revision of its composition; President Ouattara 6 Aug said govt would examine and reconsider commission's composition to ensure credible and inclusive electoral processes. Ouattara 6 Aug granted amnesty to former first lady Simone Gbagbo, sentenced in March 2015 to twenty years in prison for crimes against state security, as well as 800 other people accused or convicted of crimes linked to 2010-2011 post-election crisis.

➔ Gambia AUGUST 2018

At least twenty prisoners 3 Aug escaped from Jeshwang Prison, outside capital Banjul. Police 7 Aug said six prison guards had been arrested on charges of negligence.

➔ Guinea AUGUST 2018

Govt and opposition 8 Aug signed agreement on contested results of 4 Feb local polls that secured number of posts in local administration for main opposition party Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea.

➔ Guinea-Bissau AUGUST 2018

Govt and National Union of Workers 1 Aug agreed on new salary scale for civil servants, to be applied from Sept, with minimum wage rising from FCFA29,000 (\$51) to FCFA50,000 (\$88) a month. Civil servants 2 Aug said they had suspended their strike. Public radio and television employees 7 Aug started five-day strike to demand better salaries and working conditions. PM Gomes 9 Aug said legislative elections scheduled for 18 Nov may be postponed due to delayed arrival of equipment for registering voters.

➔ Mali AUGUST 2018

President Keita won re-election with 67.17% of votes in second round 12 Aug, vote disrupted by violence especially in centre and north. Main challenger Soumaïla Cissé rejected results and denounced massive govt fraud, but major observation missions, including from European Union and African Union, deemed electoral process “acceptable”. Turnout in second round was low at 34.54%, in part due to jihadist violence. Results of 29 July first round, released 2 Aug, placed Keita first with 41.4%, Cissé second with 17.8%. Three major opposition candidates, including Cissé, appealed to Supreme Court, but court validated results 8 Aug. Suspected jihadist militants disrupted election process before and on voting day 12 Aug. Militants ambushed army convoy transporting voting material on Nampala-Dogofri axis, Ségou region in centre 31 July, at least four soldiers and eight assailants reportedly killed. Security forces 11 Aug arrested in Bamako three members of “commando” group allegedly planning attacks during second round. Suspected jihadists 12 Aug killed polling station president in Arkodia, south west of Timbuktu city in north. In Mopti region in centre, a quarter and two-thirds of voting offices did not open in Mopti and Tenenkou districts respectively. Intercommunal violence continued in centre. Dogon hunters self-defence group clashed with Fulani gunmen, allegedly affiliated to Alliance for the Salvation of the Sahel (ASS), and Fulani civilians. Dogon militiamen reportedly kidnapped and killed at least eleven Fulani civilians near Sofara town in Mopti region 7 Aug. French govt said its forces 26 Aug killed two members of jihadist group Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), including top official Mohamed Ag Almouner, and two civilians.

➔ Niger AUGUST 2018

Alleged Boko Haram militants 8-9 Aug attacked Toumour village, Diffa region in south east, at least one civilian killed. Army 1 Aug clashed with unidentified assailants near Inates in west along border with Mali, at least one soldier killed. Amid govt crackdown on civil liberties and dissent, authorities closed several radio, television, and press outlets since start of July for alleged “non-payment of taxes”. Issoufou 5 Aug launched Niger Compact, \$437mn grant from U.S. to support economic growth and investment; five U.S. senators warned authorities not to take anti-terrorist cooperation as green light to avoid governance responsibilities.

➔ Nigeria AUGUST 2018

Despite military operations, Boko Haram (BH) continued attacks on civilians and military in north east and banditry-related insecurity persisted in north west, as politicians jostled for position ahead of 2019 elections. In Borno state in north east, five BH suicide bombers killed themselves 5 Aug trying to enter suburb of state capital Maiduguri; militants killed 30 civilians and reportedly seventeen soldiers 6-19 Aug; attacked army base at Zari 30 Aug, reportedly killing 30 soldiers; army dismissed report as BH propaganda. In Adamawa state, suicide bombers killed at least ten in Madagali 11 Aug. After more than three years fighting BH, soldiers 12 Aug blocked entrances to Maiduguri airport and shot in air to protest length of deployment without relief. Herder-farmer attacks decreased amid sustained military deployment, but violence continued: army said troops fought armed herders in Benue and Nasarawa states 4 and 18 Aug, killing 21; troops also raided camp of gang leader Terwase Akwaza in Benue state, killing unspecified number. In Plateau state, gunmen 28-29 Aug killed eight people, burnt 95 houses and stole 310 cows in Barkin Ladi local govt area. Insecurity related to cattle rustling and rural banditry continued in north west as military stepped up counter operations. In Zamfara state, army 17 Aug said soldiers clashed with bandits in Kwuyambana forest, five bandits and one soldier killed; air force 18 Aug said it had recovered weapons and ammunition after bombing bandits' hideouts in Shamashale village and Rugu forest. Army 16 Aug said soldiers killed five bandits in Birnin Gawri area, Kaduna state. Air force 23 Aug reported airstrikes in Daji Bawar and Sunke villages, Zamfara state killed 30 bandits. Ahead of 2019 general elections, political manoeuvring intensified. After Senate President Bukola Saraki – along with three state governors and over 40 federal legislators – defected from ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) to opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP), masked operatives of domestic intelligence agency (DSS) 7 Aug temporarily prevented lawmakers from entering National Assembly complex, motives unclear. With President Buhari on ten-day "medical vacation" in UK, Acting President Osinbajo same day dismissed intelligence agency chief.

➔ Togo AUGUST 2018

After repeated opposition protests since Sept 2017 calling for President Gnassingbé to step down, summit of regional bloc Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in capital Lomé late July proposed way forward, including electoral reforms and postponing legislative elections planned for Aug until 20 Dec. Opposition coalition 2 Aug expressed dissatisfaction with ECOWAS plan, especially that it does not prevent Gnassingbé standing for fourth term in 2020 presidential poll. Electoral commission 19 Aug published electoral calendar up to Dec vote, scheduling censuses for Oct, but opposition continued to demand recomposition of electoral commission. Govt late Aug adopted decree to create special force to secure electoral process.

Asia

➔ China (Internal) AUGUST 2018

Rapporteur to UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) 13 Aug cited reports China's expanding network of political "re-education" centres in Xinjiang region may now hold up to a million people in "counter extremism centres". Describing "massive internment camp that is shrouded in secrecy", rapporteur said "another two million have been forced into so-called re-education camps for political and cultural indoctrination"; also cited cases of seemingly arbitrary detention, mass surveillance and confiscation of travel documents, among other security measures. Rapporteur said national security laws have become "imprecise and over-broad" and now "enable abusive, arbitrary, and discriminatory prosecutions and convictions". Statements by U.S. officials and 17 Aug reporting by Wall Street Journal and other media corroborated assessment and noted that Uighurs outside China said that some relatives have died in detention or soon after release. Responding to allegations, Chinese official acknowledged camps' existence for first time but described them as "vocational training centres"; official denied they held a million people but did not provide alternative figure. CERD's concluding observations 30 Aug expressed alarm and called for China to end detentions and release detainees. Commentary in state media Global Times 12 Aug argued that measures are necessary transitional phase to eliminate terrorism and stabilise region.

➔ China/Japan AUGUST 2018

Chinese Premier Li and Japanese PM Abe 12 Aug exchanged congratulatory messages commemorating 40th anniversary of China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship; comes ahead of planned visit by Abe to Beijing in Oct. Japan's Ministry of Defence 28 Aug published "Defence of Japan 2018 White Paper" saying "China's rapid modernization of the PLA [People's Liberation Army], enhancement of operational capabilities, and unilateral escalation of activities, without sufficient transparency, are generating strong security concerns"; China 29 Aug said it firmly opposed paper which was "full of slanders". Japan's Defence Ministry 31 Aug proposed largest budget in country's history, with 2.1% rise and doubling of spending on missile defence.

➔ Korean Peninsula AUGUST 2018

North and South Korea 13 Aug held senior-level talks at Panmunjom to prepare for third summit between their leaders, which they agreed would take place in Sept. Other advances during month included full restoration of cross-border military communication line in east of Korean peninsula 15 Aug (following restoration in west in July), and organisation of family reunions at Mount Kumgang 20-26 Aug. In his annual Liberation Day speech 15 Aug, President Moon argued that advancing inter-Korean relations should be main driver of denuclearisation, not merely an outcome of improved U.S.-North Korean ties. U.S. 13 Aug said it is too early to consider ending Korean War, and that improvements in inter-Korean relations must occur “in lockstep” with progress toward denuclearisation. In report published 20 Aug, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said it found no evidence North Korea had reduced nuclear activity, same day that South Korean media report citing anonymous U.S. official warned that inter-Korean liaison office set to open in Kaesong pursuant to April Panmunjom Declaration could represent violation of sanctions. U.S. President Trump 24 Aug cancelled trip to North Korea by Sec State Mike Pompeo without consulting State Department, citing lack of progress on denuclearisation talks and prompting angry response from Pyongyang; U.S. Sec Defence James Mattis 29 Aug said U.S. and South Korea may opt to resume large-scale military exercises. North Korea stepped up preparations for its celebrations of 70th anniversary of country’s founding 9 Sept; rumours suggest Chinese President Xi could attend celebrations or visit in preceding days. China and Russia 9 Aug blocked U.S. UN Security Council request to blacklist Russian, Chinese and North Korean individuals and entities alleged by U.S. to have helped North Korea evade restrictions on financial transactions, in bid to halt oil exports to North Korea; U.S. unilaterally imposed sanctions. Koreas marched together in opening ceremony of Asian Games in Indonesia and co-competed in six events late Aug.

➔ Taiwan Strait AUGUST 2018

Taiwan lost another diplomatic ally as El Salvador 20 Aug announced it was shifting its diplomatic relationship from Taiwan to China, fifth country to change alignment since Democratic People’s Party took power in Taiwan in 2016; brings number of countries that formally recognise Taiwan as Republic of China down to seventeen. U.S. and Taiwan criticised move; President Tsai said China’s behaviour “increasingly out of control”. Tsai made transit stops in U.S. 13-14 and 19 Aug during official visit to diplomatic supporters Belize and Paraguay; high profile trip part of apparent effort to push back at Beijing’s pressure, included public speeches and meetings with members of U.S. Congress; China lodged formal protests against both transit stops. Associated Press 18 Aug reported Taiwan has stepped up development and production of missiles and anti-missile systems. China’s State Council 18 Aug approved measures making it easier for citizens of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau to apply for residency permits and remain on mainland, latest measure intended to encourage ties.

➔ Afghanistan AUGUST 2018

Month saw major Taliban attacks in several provinces and political manoeuvring ahead of Oct parliamentary elections. President Ghani 19 Aug offered Taliban three-month ceasefire, conditional on Taliban reciprocating; fighting between two sides subsided during Eid al-Adha festive period and Taliban 20 Aug issued statement announcing release of hundreds of “enemy prisoners”, however no ceasefire occurred. In reaction to July efforts by govt to undermine its religious legitimacy, Taliban claimed that gathering of 4,000 Islamic scholars at unspecified location 5 Aug declared armed struggle as legitimate jihad against occupation; Taliban leader 18 Aug issued message re-emphasising righteousness of insurgency; Taliban officials in Qatar sent delegations to Uzbekistan 6-10 Aug and Indonesia 12-15 Aug, reportedly discussing peace process and withdrawal of foreign military forces. Taliban launched major attacks in several provinces. Some 1,000 Taliban fighters attacked Ghazni city 10 Aug, taking most of it during five-day siege and claiming to have captured thousands of weapons and dozens of military vehicles; military expelled last Taliban from city centre 15 Aug; casualties reportedly included hundreds of govt forces, insurgents and civilians killed. Taliban also overran govt bases in Ghormach and Baghlani Markazi districts of Faryab and Baghlan provinces mid-Aug; captured Uruzgan province’s Chinarto district 3-4 Aug, until govt recapture 8 Aug, and Faryab province’s Bilchiragh district 18 Aug. Leaders of self-declared Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP)-affiliated group in Jowzjan and about 250 followers surrendered to govt 1 Aug to evade Taliban, weeks after Taliban offensive against it; public controversy ensued over allegations of govt collusion with ISIS-KP-affiliated group. IS-KP continued launching attacks, including targeting Shiite sites in Paktia province 3 Aug killing at least 33, and in Kabul 15 Aug, killing 48. Grand National Coalition opposition group of more than 30 parties and civil society groups 10 Aug called for immediate reform of election system, threatening to oppose Oct parliamentary elections. Electoral Complaints Commission 12 Aug announced disqualification of 35 prospective parliamentary candidates, including twelve MPs, based on connections to illegal armed groups among other concerns.

➔ Bangladesh AUGUST 2018

Massive student protests across country that began 29 July over dangerous road conditions continued, triggered by death of two students hit by bus allegedly owned by relative of govt minister in Dhaka; police 5 Aug used tear gas and bullets against protesters in Dhaka, injuring around 100; at least 97 students detained, most subsequently released. Same day, police arrested and allegedly tortured photographer and activist Shahidul Alam for coverage of govt’s response, and charged him with making “false” and “provocative” statements. Bangladesh Chhatra League, student wing of Ruling Awami League (AL) party, reportedly attacked protesters and journalists covering protests; govt claimed student wing of opposition Bangladesh National Party (BNP) was responsible for violence, denied by BNP. UN called on all parties to prevent violence. Students 9 Aug ended protests but police subsequently detained at least twelve social media activists and announced investigations into around 1,000 Facebook accounts allegedly used to incite violence during protests. Armed men 4 Aug attacked U.S. ambassador’s car; govt 8 Aug demanded U.S. embassy withdraw its criticism posted on Facebook condemning “brutal attacks and violence” against protesters. Court 13 Aug granted imprisoned BNP leader Khaleda Zia bail in defamation case, one of many ongoing criminal cases against her. FM Ali 9-12 Aug visited Myanmar to assess progress in receiving and resettling returning Rohingya refugees, including visit to villages around Maungdaw township in Rakhine state (see Myanmar); both govts agreed to speed up process but without specifying time frame; diplomatic sources in Dhaka reported that progress in resettling returnees is slow, particularly in provision of accommodation in conflict-hit areas.

➔ India (Non-Kashmir) AUGUST 2018

Security forces 6 Aug killed at least fourteen suspected Maoists during raid in Sukma district, Chhattisgarh state.

➔ Kashmir AUGUST 2018

Clashes across Line of Control (LoC) and militant attacks continued, as did separatist demonstrations, prompted by perceived attempt to change demography of region. Indian troops 18 Aug reportedly killed Pakistani villager in firing across Line of Control (LoC); Pakistan's Foreign Ministry summoned Indian diplomat to lodge protest in what it called "unprovoked firing". Indian army 7 Aug claimed four Indian soldiers and two militants killed in gunfight during infiltration attempt by militants across LoC. Militants 22 Aug reportedly killed three policemen and one politician in three separate attacks in Pulwama (west) and Kulgam (south) districts. Separatists 5-6 Aug held strikes and demonstrations throughout Kashmir to protest legal challenge in Supreme Court to Article 35-A of constitution, which provides special rights and privileges to Jammu and Kashmir's permanent residents and bars non-residents from acquiring immovable property in state; separatists claim challenge is attempt to change disputed region's demography and convert its majority Muslim population into a minority; held further strikes 27 Aug in which they clashed with security forces in capital Srinagar and Anantang district (south), and again 30-31 Aug ahead of court hearing on Article 35-A. Militants 30-31 Aug reportedly kidnapped at least twelve relatives of police in south Kashmir, allegedly in response to arrest of son of Hizbul Mujahideen chief. Protesters and security forces clashed in Srinagar 21 Aug during demonstrations against Indian rule. New Pakistani PM Khan 21 Aug tweeted Pakistan and India must have dialogue and "resolve their conflicts including Kashmir".

➔ Maldives AUGUST 2018

Ahead of Sept presidential election Human Rights Watch 16 Aug released report detailing extensive govt crackdown on media, judiciary and political opposition.

➔ Nepal AUGUST 2018

Six months into PM KP Oli's term, concerns about gov't attacks on civil liberties heightened further with 17 Aug enforcement of new civil and criminal code criticised widely for provisions limiting press freedoms including outlawing photography without consent, recording conversations, disclosing private information on public figures, and criminalising satire, carrying prison sentences of up to three years for journalists found in violation. Following enactment of code, statutory governmental body Press Council Nepal summoned several print media editors to reprimand them for minor publication errors; one individual arrested 22 Aug for sharing image mocking Oli on Facebook group. Federation of Nepali Journalists issued declaration 25 Aug arguing for code to be immediately amended; Committee to Protect Journalists issued alert 20 Aug calling gov't to repeal or amend code. Oli claimed criticisms were exaggerated. Allegations that police blamed an innocent local man for rape and murder of thirteen-year-old girl in far-western Kanchanpur district led to protests and clashes; police firing 24 Aug killed fourteen-year-old boy and injured 24 others. Incidents sparked wider protests against sexual violence against women; national survey revealed reported rapes increased 256% in past decade.

➔ Pakistan AUGUST 2018

New gov't took power following July general election, militant violence continued, as did tensions with U.S. and Afghanistan over allegations of Pakistani assistance to Taliban. Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) leader Imran Khan sworn in as country's 22nd PM 18 Aug, promising an "Islamic welfare state", after assembling coalition gov't with support of several smaller parties to secure 176 (out of 342) votes in lawmakers' 17 Aug vote for PM, ahead of 96 for Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) nominee Shahbaz Sharif. Opposition alliance against PTI in protest at alleged election rigging appeared to unravel as former President Zardari's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), with 43 seats, refused to support Sharif's nomination and abstained from voting. PTI also heads Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's provincial gov't, has coalition gov't in Balochistan, and formed gov't in Punjab. Amid concerns over banned militant groups taking part in election through political fronts, extremist Tehreek-i-Labbaik Islam (political party of Barelvi radical Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah) emerged as major political player with two provincial assembly seats in Karachi; its 2.2mn votes make it fifth largest party in terms of vote share. Militant violence continued, including: gunmen 11 Aug killed three police officers in Gilgit-Balistan (north); bomb killed one person and injured ten in Chaman district, Balochistan (south west) 12 Aug. Following late-July speech in which he said relations with U.S. were currently "one-sided" and called for change to make them "mutually beneficial", U.S. mid-Aug reportedly suspended funding for training of Pakistani military officers, and 20 Aug reiterated concerns that Afghan Taliban enjoy safe haven in Pakistan; U.S. Sec State Pompeo to visit Pakistan in Sept. Pakistani army chief strongly refuted allegation by Afghan President Ghani 16 Aug that Pakistani hospitals were treating Pakistani citizens who had participated in recent Taliban attack on Ghazni city. Financial Action Task Force (FATF) 16 Aug completed review of Pakistan's anti-money laundering and counter-terror financing laws, telling gov't that framework for non-profit and charitable organisations is weak and liable to misuse by militant and jihadist groups.

- **BRIEFING: Shaping a New Peace in Pakistan's Tribal Areas**

➔ Sri Lanka AUGUST 2018

Ahead of presidential elections due by end 2019, former President Mahinda Rajapaksa 18 Aug told media his Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna party would formally request Supreme Court's opinion on whether 19th amendment to constitution prohibits him running for third term, as widely believed when amendment adopted in April 2015. Mahinda questioned at his residence 17 Aug by police investigating 2008 abduction of journalist Keith Noyahr. New High Court for major corruption cases began work 24 Aug with indictments of Rajapaksa's former chief of staff and three others on charges of embezzling \$3mn from state insurance firm, and of former defence secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa and six others for alleged misappropriation of public funds. Court of Appeal 8 Aug convicted Ven Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara, leader of radical Buddhist organisation Bodu Bala Sena, on four counts of contempt of court relating to incident that took place in Jan 2016, sentenced him to six years' rigorous imprisonment; Gnanasara filed appeal. Sri Lanka country mission report of UN special rapporteur on promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism 23 July found that Sri Lanka's "counter-terrorism apparatus is still tainted by the serious pattern of human rights violations that were systematically perpetuated under its authority" and "none of the measures so far adopted to fulfil Sri Lanka's transitional justice commitments are adequate to ensure real progress". In first ever visit by a Japanese defence minister, Itsunori Onodera 21-22 Aug met govt leaders and visited ports in Colombo, Hambantota, recently leased to Chinese state-owned company for 99 years, and Trincomalee, site of planned Indian and Japanese investment.

➔ Cambodia AUGUST 2018

Election commission 15 Aug announced official results confirming ruling Cambodian People's Party's sweep of all 125 seats in July election. U.S. same day announced expansion of restrictions on visas for Cambodian officials it deems responsible for what it called "anti-democratic actions taken in the run-up to the flawed July 29 election". Govt pardoned almost two dozen prisoners in second half of month in perceived attempt to appease external critics, including former lawmaker, two former Radio Free Asia journalists, jailed Oct 2017 on espionage charges, and fourteen govt critics, most former members of dissolved opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) convicted in 2014. Supreme Court 22 Aug denied bail to jailed CNRP leader Kem Sokha, arrested Sept 2017 on charges of treason and yet to be tried. Fourteen former CRNP members pardoned 27 Aug after three years in jail.

➔ Indonesia AUGUST 2018

Court in Sumatra 21 Aug sentenced Buddhist woman to eighteen months' jail for complaining about level of noise from her neighbourhood mosque, in controversial verdict that added to concerns that country's strict blasphemy laws are being used to violate religious freedoms and bully minorities; moderate Islamic organisation Nahdlatul Ulama among those criticising verdict. Indonesia and Philippines 10 Aug signed agreement to enhance defence cooperation including on fighting terrorism. Police chief 7 Aug said police had arrested almost 300 terror suspects since mid-May Surabaya terror attacks. Group proclaiming itself pro-Islamic State (ISIS) hackers threatened to attack govt to avenge jailing of "brothers" and crackdown on their social media activity. Military ordered soldiers to pursue Papua National Liberation Army, suspected of killing two soldiers in ambush in Puncak Jaya regency 20 Aug.

➔ Myanmar AUGUST 2018

UN fact-finding mission 27 Aug issued report calling for investigation and prosecution of Myanmar military leaders for genocide against Rohingya and war crimes and crimes against humanity against minorities in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states; said military were "killing indiscriminately, gang-raping women, assaulting children and burning entire villages"; called for referral of case to International Criminal Court (ICC). Report also criticised State Councillor Aung San Suu Kyi for not acting to stem or prevent events, found civilian govt "contributed to the commission of atrocity crimes". Govt rejected report and questioned body's impartiality and sincerity. Facebook, long criticised for providing platform to incite hatred and facilitate violence against Rohingya, immediately removed eighteen accounts and 52 pages associated with Myanmar military and its commander-in-chief, depriving him of his main channel of communications with Myanmar people. UN Security Council held open session on situation in Myanmar 28 Aug, addressed by Secretary-General Guterres; while there were many strong statements, Council remains deadlocked on stronger action due to opposition from China and Russia. Office of the State Counsellor 9 Aug stated it has declined to engage in any way with ICC on question of whether it has jurisdiction over possible crime of deportation of Rohingya from Myanmar (a non-State Party) to Bangladesh. Chair of Commission of Enquiry 16 Aug stated that Commission would not "point fingers" and that seeking accountability was "quarrelling ... not looking for peace", dealing major blow to body's international credibility. Govt's Advisory Board on Rakhine crisis prematurely dissolved 16 Aug after submitting hasty final report. U.S. Treasury 17 Aug announced sanctions on four members of Myanmar military and two units, for serious human rights abuses in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states. Bangladesh FM visited Myanmar for talks with senior officials 10 Aug, during which they reaffirmed commitment to early repatriation of Rohingya refugees and agreed to establish hotline to facilitate cooperation. UNICEF 23 Aug warned of potential "lost generation" of Rohingya children lacking access to education in camps in Bangladesh.

- **BRIEFING: Myanmar's Stalled Transition**

➔ Philippines AUGUST 2018

Preparations began for plebiscite on Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), while attacks and clashes continued between military and Islamic State (ISIS)-linked militant groups and communist New People's Army. At ceremonial signing of BOL 6 Aug, President Duterte said he hoped it will "finally end decades of conflict that is rooted in the Bangsamoro's right to self-determination and recognition of their unique identity". Referendum to ratify BOL expected to take place between Nov and Jan 2019. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) chief negotiator Mohagher Iqbal 10 Aug reported group had begun decommissioning MILF firearms, with second phase to take place after plebiscite and appointment of Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), interim govt until first Bangsamoro elections. MILF 21 Aug selected its Chairman Murad Ebrahim as interim chief minister of BTA. Electoral commission 22 Aug said preparations on track for referendum, as efforts began to encourage residents to register to vote and inform them on BOL content. Govt and MILF 9 Aug agreed to cooperate on rehabilitation of Marawi City, heavily damaged during five-month siege in 2017. Clashes between military and ISIS-linked Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Front (BIFF) rebel group continued in Mindanao; included two suspected militants killed carrying bomb in M'lang, North Cotabato province 8 Aug; and seven suspected militants killed in clash in Maguindanao province 20 Aug; clashes between rival BIFF factions reportedly displaced scores in Shariff Saydona Mustapha town late month. Homemade bomb exploded during festival in Isulan town, Sultan Kudarat province 28 Aug, killing three and injuring dozens; military blamed BIFF, ISIS claimed responsibility. Clashes also continued with ISIS-linked Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG): security forces killed ASG commander in Patikul town, Sulu, 15 Aug; 22 soldiers wounded and one ASG fighter killed in Patikul 23 Aug. ASG suspected of kidnapping ten-year-old son of official in Jolo mid-month. Unidentified gunmen killed six people and abducted pro-govt militia leader and his wife in Siriwai, Zamboanga del Norte province, 31 Aug. With peace talks suspended, military also continued to clash with communist New People's Army, including seven rebels reported killed in clash in Antique (centre) 15 Aug; several soldiers also killed in clashes, including three in Masbate (centre) 3 Aug.

➔ South China Sea AUGUST 2018

In continuation of its "free and open Indo-Pacific" strategy, U.S. 30 July pledged \$113mn to increase technology exports to region, support energy industries and establish network to promote infrastructure development; at ASEAN meeting in Singapore 4 Aug pledged \$300mn in security assistance. China FM Wang Yi publicly mocked scale of assistance and traded barbs with his U.S. counterpart over militarisation of South China Sea (SCS). U.S. Congress 1 Aug passed defence spending bill which calls on Department of Defence (DoD) to increase public reporting on Chinese activities in SCS, and conditions future Chinese participation in Rim of Pacific naval exercises on Beijing halting its island-building activities and removing weapons from features it controls. DoD report 16 Aug said China seeks to establish regional pre-eminence and is developing land, sea and air nuclear capabilities. China's People's Liberation Army 10 Aug issued six alerts to overflying U.S. reconnaissance plane to stay away from Chinese-controlled features in disputed Spratly archipelago. Chinese media 14 Aug reported three satellites scheduled to launch 2019, part of constellation that will enable China to track ships across entire SCS. Vietnam's state-owned PetroVietnam and two Japanese companies 31 July signed agreement to extract and sell gas in Sao Vang-Dai Nguyet project, likely within China's nine-dash line claim. China 29 July donated four patrol boats to Philippine Navy as gesture to improve relations. In unusually stern statement, Philippine President Duterte 14 Aug said China had no right to repel aircraft and vessels passing artificial islands, calling waters international sea; China 16 Aug replied it had right to respond to aircraft and ships encroaching into its waters. ASEAN and Chinese officials 2 Aug formally announced agreement on single

draft text that will serve as basis for code of conduct negotiations, which Chinese FM Wang 4 Aug said would be long and complex. Japanese helicopter carrier conducted rare SCS bilateral exercises with U.S. aircraft carrier strike group (CSG) 31 Aug.

➔ Thailand AUGUST 2018

Violence in Southern insurgency continued: in Narathiwat province, two Muslim defence volunteers killed in ambush in Sungai Padi district 7 Aug, and police blamed militants for murder of Buddhist woman and her daughter in Bacho district 11 Aug. In Pattani province, gunmen 8 Aug killed villager in Mayo district and wounded defence volunteer in Kapho district; suspected militants shot and wounded police officer and his wife in Saiburi 18 Aug. Authorities 22 Aug announced they had killed three militant suspects and arrested ten in operations over preceding week, including two killed in raid in Yala province's Krong Pinang district. Gunman killed defence volunteer and bystander in Pattani town 30 Aug. Malaysian PM Mahathir appointed former police inspector general Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor as new facilitator for dialogue process between Thai govt and MARA Patani (Patani Consultative Council, umbrella group of five Malay-Muslim separatist groups in exile); still no indication of when dialogue will resume. In most concrete indication yet of prospective date for long-delayed general election, Election Commission 18 Aug said election would take place 24 Feb 2019 but reversed announcement following day; Deputy PM Wissanu Krea-ngam 20 Aug said election would take place between 24 Feb and 5 May; and PM Prayuth Chan-ocha said, during mobile cabinet meeting in Chumphon province 22 Aug, that election could be held 24 Feb "if we can do it".

Europe & Central Asia

➔ Bosnia And Herzegovina AUGUST 2018

Republika Srpska (RS) parliament 14 Aug voted to annul 2004 report produced by special govt commission on 1995 Srebrenica massacre, which acknowledged that Bosnian Serb forces killed thousands of Bosniaks in serious violation of international law; RS President Dodik said document contained "false data" and was produced under international pressure; parliament also ordered RS govt to form new commission and report, to include suffering of Serbs. U.S., UN and Bosniak politicians decried move. Journalist returning from reporting on anti-govt protest in RS capital Banja Luka was beaten by two unknown assailants 26 Aug; Bosnian journalists' association said Dodik's campaign against independent media had made journalists "open targets", while Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe called for end to negative rhetoric against media.

➔ Kosovo AUGUST 2018

Ahead of 7 Sept resumption of EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia on normalising relations, signals from Kosovo and Serbian leaderships that they may consider territorial swap as part of deal prompted strong reactions in Kosovo, Serbia and internationally. President Thaci 30 Aug said he would table proposal for border correction to allow for predominantly ethnic Albanian communities in southern Serbia to become part of Kosovo as part of deal, while also rejecting idea of partition of Kosovo; earlier in month, told press conference 6 Aug that deal with Serbia could include a “correction” of border. Serbian President Vučić 9 Aug referred to policy for delimitation with Albanians, and need for clarity on who administers territories. Participating in international forum in Austria 26 Aug, Thaci and Vučić both expressed commitment to reach a deal, and called for EU to support agreement that they reach. U.S. national security adviser John Bolton 24 Aug said U.S. would not oppose a territorial exchange if both sides agreed, while several European FMs voiced concerns about land swap, also expressed by local and international NGOs, and by three former high representatives for Bosnia, warning of potentially destabilising impact on Kosovo and region. Opposition in Kosovo called for resolution in parliament ahead of 7 Sept dialogue to prevent negotiations on Kosovo territory. Vučić mid-Aug announced he will visit Kosovo 9 Sept to present “guidelines and directions of state policy towards Kosovo”; also called for Serbs to show “much more tolerance” to potential deal with Kosovo. Tensions rose early Aug over allegations that Kosovo authorities were planning to seize control of Gazivode hydropower plant in Serb-run part of northern Kosovo; Vučić in open letter to Kosovo Serbs said Serbia would protect them and called on them to remain peaceful, also said Pristina would “not lift a finger” to fulfil its commitment to establish Association of Serb municipalities.

➔ 🇲🇰 Macedonia AUGUST 2018

Govt 22 Aug launched public campaign ahead of 30 Sept referendum on implementing 17 June name deal with Greece, which unblocks Greek veto on Macedonia starting accession process to join NATO and EU in return for country changing name to Republic of North Macedonia. Polls published late Aug, carried out by International Republican Institute, showed 57% of respondents favour entering EU and NATO under new name, and general increase in support for EU and NATO membership since Aug 2017. Albanian President Meta called on Macedonian Albanians to vote for the agreement in the referendum.

➔ Armenia AUGUST 2018

Robert Kocharyan, country's second president who in July became first former leader in post-Soviet space to be imprisoned when he was detained for two month's pre-trial detention on charges of "overturning the constitutional order" during final weeks of his rule in 2008, was released 13 Aug following successful appeal, but still faces criminal charges. Several former and current officials and their relatives were charged and their property searched in relation to Kocharyan's case. 46 parliamentarians from Armenia's National Assembly and fifteen from de facto Nagorno-Karabakh called on appeal court to release Kocharyan, fuelling speculation he could consolidate opposition to PM Pashinyan.

➔ Azerbaijan AUGUST 2018

Country's most prominent political prisoner Ilgar Mammadov, leader of ReAl (Republican Alternative) party who was jailed for seven years in 2013 on charges of organising riots, was released 13 Aug, and his jail time commuted to two-year probationary period during which he cannot run for election (possibly including in 2020 parliamentary elections). European parliament had made his release and that of other political prisoners a condition of signing of EU-Azerbaijan agreement. Ahead of anticipated visit by President Aliyev to Russia early Sept, govt analysts and pro-govt MPs called for Azerbaijan to consider joining Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO, the Moscow-led military bloc) as means to secure Russian support in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution and take advantage of deterioration in Armenian-Russian relations. Azerbaijan signed convention on Caspian Sea at Summit of Caspian States in Kazakhstan 12 Aug (see Kazakhstan); implications for Azerbaijan include limits for its cooperation with Turkey and other NATO member states in connection with joint military exercises in Caspian Sea.

➔ Georgia AUGUST 2018

Tenth anniversary of August War with Russia provoked emotional public campaign against Russia, coinciding with launch of campaigning for Oct presidential election. Day before anniversary, PM Mamuka Bakhtadze called for peaceful resolution and reintegration of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, underlining that Tbilisi's response to the continued conflicts would be a "bold peace initiative". FMs of Latvia, Lithuania and Poland and Ukraine's vice premier visited Georgia 7 Aug to support its call for withdrawal of Russian army from breakaway republics, backed by similar calls in statements by EU, U.S., and other allies. No major events or commemorations of war in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; events took place late month to celebrate tenth anniversary of Russia's recognition. During 22-23 Aug visit to Georgia, German Chancellor Merkel travelled to conflict zone near South Ossetia; meeting with students, spoke about "injustice" in relation to continued Russian military presence in Georgia's breakaway regions, which she called occupation; also downplayed prospects for Georgia's membership of NATO and EU any time soon.

➔ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) AUGUST 2018

Political leadership in Armenia and Azerbaijan made some positive public statements about peaceful resolution of conflict and continued building contacts, including launch by Armenian PM Pashinyan's wife of new campaign "Women for Peace", which was well received in Baku; Armenian PM's office said her speech was not a policy statement, but reflected general mood in new administration. Azerbaijani leadership also toned down its rhetoric, and took down website of major local news-agency APA after it reportedly misquoted words of President Aliyev by attributing to him statement "we will bring Armenia to its knees". However military leaderships on both sides continued to make inflammatory public statements, amid continued instability and uncertainty at Nakhchivan section of state border. FMs widely expected to meet in coming weeks, but many in both capitals believe that genuine dialogue can take place only after anticipated snap elections in Armenia.

➔ Russia/North Caucasus AUGUST 2018

Several police injured in three attacks allegedly carried out by minors in Chechnya 20 Aug; knife attack on district police station in Shali town injuring two officers, carried out by two alleged perpetrators who were shot dead; alleged perpetrator blowing himself up at police post in Merker-Yurt village without injuring others; and vehicle used to hit police officers in capital Grozny, driver shot dead. At least five alleged attackers died during incidents; Chechen information minister told media that attackers' ages ranged from eleven to sixteen years old, authorities said driver in latter incident was younger brother of convicted terrorist Khizir Akhmatkhanov. Islamic State (ISIS) claimed responsibility, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov denied ISIS claim, saying group has no support in Chechnya. Police reportedly detained up to 200 teenagers in Shali for interrogation 23-25 Aug; Kadyrov pledged to collectively punish alleged attackers' relatives. Thousands gathered in Geldagen village to attend burial of Yusup Temerkhanov, convicted of 2011 murder of Russian colonel who was convicted of murdering Chechen teenager in 2000; Temerkhanov died in prison in Siberia 3 Aug. Kadyrov 23 Aug said he would ban from region human rights activists, who have been travelling to Chechnya to attend trial of Oyub Titiyev, director of Chechnya office of Memorial human rights organisation, once trial is over, saying they were provocateurs like terrorists and extremists; international rights groups called on Kremlin to safeguard rights defenders' access to Chechnya and ensure Titiyev's release.

➔ Moldova AUGUST 2018

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) 15 Aug expressed concern over river-crossing exercise conducted by Russian military in Transnistria Security Zone mid-month, as the OSCE was obstructed from fully monitoring the exercises and they were not authorised by Joint Control Commission, in violation of 1992 agreement on principles of a peaceful settlement. Thousands joined anti-govt protests in capital 26 Aug; hundreds protested next day.

➔ Ukraine AUGUST 2018

At 21-22 Aug Trilateral Contact Group meeting, parties agreed “back-to-school ceasefire”, but immediately accused each other of violating ceasefire after it came into effect 29 Aug. Adherence to 1 July “harvest ceasefire” waned during Aug, with increased use of large-calibre weapons (though still well below June levels) and casualties again rising among civilians and combatants. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) monitors reported six civilian fatalities and at least six injured. At least nineteen Armed Forces of Ukraine (UAF) servicemen were killed and 72 injured, and at least seven dead and two injured among Russian-backed forces 22 Jul-28 Aug; conflict hotspots remained Krymske and Novotoshkivske villages in Luhansk, Svitlodarsk bulge, areas surrounding Horlivka, Avdiivka, Donetsk (Marinka), Dokuchaevsk and Mariupol (Lebedynske). OSCE mission reported two convoys of cargo trucks entering and exiting Ukraine at night through Russian-controlled section of eastern border with Russia in Donetsk region 7 Aug; also observed for first time 7 Aug suspected military camp near unguarded road crossing Russian border; published drone footage of previously observed convoys crossing border 10 Aug; 11 Aug reported July sighting of “four distinct electronic warfare systems” near Chornukhyne village, previously unseen by monitors. Lawmakers in Kyiv debated whether to extend validity of Sept 2014 law, due to expire in Oct, guaranteeing temporary “special status” to areas controlled by Moscow-backed separatists upon return to Kyiv’s control; OSCE envoy reportedly wrote letter to parliament arguing that extension of law would give Ukraine leverage to press Russia to agree to peacekeeping mission; while some in Kyiv argue law strengthens Kyiv’s position toward West and Russia, others contend it lost relevance following Jan 2018 “reintegration law”. U.S. President Trump 13 Aug signed act authorising \$250mn in security assistance to Ukraine, including \$50mn for lethal weapons. Aleksandr Zakharchenko, local head of Russian-backed separatist group, died following Donetsk city bombing 31 Aug; Russian FM Sergei Lavrov called bombing “Ukrainian provocation aimed at ruining the Minsk agreements”; ruled out Normandy Format meetings in near future.

➔ Cyprus AUGUST 2018

Tensions over hydrocarbon explorations continued; Turkish President Erdoğan 3 Aug revealed plan to buy Turkey’s second drillship for east Mediterranean exploration. UN efforts to explore options for restarting reunification talks continued; Greek Cypriot President Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Akıncı expected to meet with UN Secretary General in Sept.

➔ Turkey AUGUST 2018

Month saw continued clashes between military and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), pressure on Kurdish movement and operations against Kurds in northern Iraq, concern over impact of developments in northwest Syria, and tensions with U.S.. Military operations against PKK in south east continued, with almost 40 casualties reported during month, mostly PKK militants. Crackdown on pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and sister Democratic Regions' Party (DBP) continued. Two former HDP MPs were arrested 13 Aug on charges of "terrorism propaganda" over content of recent speeches; DBP co-mayor and HDP local official were among twelve arrested for suspected involvement in alleged PKK bomb attack 16 Aug. Ground operation in northern Iraq continued along with major air operations against PKK targets; President Erdoğan and Iraqi PM Abadi 14 Aug agreed on full cooperation against PKK. Amid spectre of all-out Russian-backed assault by Syrian regime on Syrian opposition stronghold Idlib, northwest Syria (see Syria) and fears of accompanying influx of refugees into Turkey, Ankara 15 Aug called on Syrian regime to terminate its military operation in Idlib and made diplomatic efforts with Russia to broker deal. Despite ongoing cooperation in Syria's Manbij, U.S.-Turkey frictions increased: U.S. 1 Aug imposed sanctions on Turkish justice and interior ministers over Turkey's refusal to free jailed U.S. pastor Andrew Brunson, subject of 3 Aug discussion between FMs, while diplomatic delegations met in Washington 7 Aug in attempt to resolve crisis. U.S. 10 Aug doubled tariffs on Turkish aluminium and steel products, contributing to sharp devaluation of Turkish Lira during first half of Aug; Trump 13 Aug signed bill blocking Turkey's access to F-35 fighter jets; Erdoğan 14 Aug called for boycott of U.S. electronic products and 15 Aug hiked tariffs on U.S. products. Ankara 22 Aug accused U.S. of waging "economic war", 27 Aug said U.S. sanctions could destabilise region, and exacerbate terrorism and refugee crisis. Lira slightly recovered toward end of month after Central Bank measures and Qatari Emir's 15 Aug pledge for \$15bn in direct investment. Turkish court 14 Aug ordered release of two Greek soldiers held since March for illegal border crossing and military espionage.

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➔ Kazakhstan AUGUST 2018

Leaders of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Russia and Turkmenistan met in Kazakh city Aktau 12 Aug to sign new convention on legal status of Caspian Sea (in dispute for two decades) and outlining rights of littoral states; new agreement not disclosed, reportedly allows for construction of underwater pipelines and fishing quotas; follow-up talks expected. Nazarbayev 24 Aug attended meeting of Central Asian leaders in Turkmenistan to discuss environmental degradation of Aral Sea (see Turkmenistan).

➔ Kyrgyzstan AUGUST 2018

Kyrgyz-Uzbek intergovernmental committee mid-month reportedly reached agreement to swap Kyrgyzstan's Barak exclave (inside Uzbekistan) for land around village of Birlashken in Uzbekistan's Andijon region, contiguous with border. President Jeenbekov 24 Aug attended meeting of Central Asian leaders in Turkmenistan to discuss environmental degradation of Aral Sea (see Turkmenistan).

➔ Tajikistan AUGUST 2018

Police 3 Aug reported detention of suspected ringleader of group behind 29 July attack which killed four foreign cyclists, and killing of four other suspects, during police operation night following attack; claimed all five suspects were members of banned Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, despite release by Islamic State (ISIS) of video showing the five swearing allegiance to ISIS. Two Tajik foresters reported killed in shooting along border with Afghanistan 26 Aug; Afghan authorities next day reported eight suspected Taliban killed in airstrike along border in Darqad district. Journalist Hairullo Mirsaidov, jailed for twelve years in July for charges he said were baseless, was freed 22 Aug. President Rahmon 17 Aug travelled to Uzbekistan, first such visit in seventeen years; signed strategic partnership agreement among others. Rahmon 24 Aug attended meeting of Central Asian leaders in Turkmenistan to discuss environmental degradation of Aral Sea (see Turkmenistan).

➔ Turkmenistan AUGUST 2018

President Berdymukhamedov 12 Aug signed new convention on legal status of Caspian Sea with heads of all Caspian littoral states (see Kazakhstan), offered to host follow-up talks. Berdymukhamedov 15 Aug travelled to Sochi, Russia to discuss bilateral relations with President Putin. Berdymukhamedov 24 Aug hosted counterparts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in western city Turkmenbashi for meeting of International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea; Turkmenistan reportedly to draft joint action plan on basis of agreements.

➔ Uzbekistan AUGUST 2018

Taliban political chief 6 Aug travelled to Uzbekistan for talks with senior Uzbek foreign ministry officials on Afghan peace process, withdrawal of international forces and Uzbek development projects in Afghanistan; followed President Mirziyoyev's March offer to broker Afghan peace talks. Kyrgyz-Uzbek intergovernmental committee mid-month reportedly made agreement to swap Kyrgyz Barak exclave (inside Uzbekistan) for land around village of Birleshken in Uzbekistan's Andijon region, contiguous with border. Mirziyoyev 17 Aug hosted Tajik counterpart in first such visit in seventeen years; signed strategic partnership agreement among others. Mirziyoyev 24 Aug attended meeting of Central Asian leaders in Turkmenistan to discuss environmental degradation of Aral Sea (see Turkmenistan). Justice ministry 30 Aug registered local branch of first foreign NGO (American Councils for International Education) in more than ten years.

Latin America & Caribbean

➔ Colombia AUGUST 2018

Iván Duque from Democratic Centre party sworn in as new president 7 Aug; in his speech advocated corrections to peace agreement with Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and stated that govt would take 30 days to study negotiations with National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla group before making decision on whether to continue them, prompting fears that ELN violence could increase upon end of negotiations. ELN 3 Aug kidnapped two civilians and four soldiers in Chocó (north west), stating they would be willing to free them as "humanitarian gesture" to new govt, and are willing to continue peace talks; Duque 10 Aug said govt would not be intimidated by kidnappings. ELN suspected of killing nine people in El Tarra, Catatumbo region (north east) 30 July, including former FARC members who had joined dissident groups. FARC dissident violence continued in Tumaco (south west) with clashes displacing 650 residents in city 1 Aug. Police 5 Aug captured second-in-command of Gaitán Self-Defence Forces (AGC, country's largest drug trafficking group), alias Nicolás, in Antioquia province (north west). Duque 16 Aug announced 100-day police plan focusing on ten crimes that most affect citizen security including kidnapping and homicide. Clashes between ELN and AGC in Chocó during first weeks of Aug trapped some 3,700 indigenous people in their communities; police 26 Aug reported child killed and two indigenous women injured in ELN-AGC clash in Juradó. Senators formerly belonging to FARC 22 Aug proposed their first ever bill which would give lenient treatment to small-scale drug growing farmers who are willing to substitute their crops. Referendum on introducing tougher anti-corruption laws failed to pass 25 Aug due to turnout falling just short of required threshold, despite nearly 99% of voters supporting proposals.

🚩 Venezuela AUGUST 2018

Apparent attempt to assassinate President Maduro shook country, while govt's new economic reform package widely expected to worsen economic and humanitarian crisis and intensify exodus of Venezuelans to neighbouring countries. Two drones carrying explosives blew up – one within 50 metres of Maduro – 4 Aug during military parade in Caracas; govt said seven soldiers injured; group calling themselves “Soldados de Franelas” claimed responsibility on social media without giving evidence. Maduro claimed outgoing Colombian President Santos was responsible; Santos dismissed as “ridiculous”. Security forces 7 Aug arrested opposition MP Juan Requesens, with govt claiming he helped leader of attack under orders from exiled opposition leader Julio Borges; Requesens' family and colleagues alleged he was drugged to force televised confession. Govt charged Requesens with crimes including attempted assassination and treason, which he denied in court, and 8 Aug issued warrant for arrest of Borges, who denies involvement. Govt 20 Aug implemented delayed currency reform, cutting five zeroes off bolívar to create new “sovereign bolívar”; three days earlier, Maduro announced “magical” economic package, involving pegging new currency to Petro “crypto-currency” backed by oil reserves (representing an effective devaluation of 95%), and 35-fold increase in minimum wage, initially to be partly subsidised by govt; generated widespread concerns that measures will accelerate hyper-inflation crisis and cripple businesses. Several opposition parties 21 Aug held nationwide “general strike”, but response patchy. So-called “Supreme Court in exile” 15 Aug found Maduro guilty of corruption, sentenced him to jail term; National Assembly 21 Aug ratified sentence, calling on security forces to arrest him, in apparent manoeuvre by parts of opposition, principally in exile, to name alternative govt and seek military intervention. Venezuelans continued to flee country causing backlash in neighbouring countries; Peru and Ecuador announced entry restrictions while incident in Brazil 18 Aug saw residents in border town Pacaraima attack Venezuelans, prompting 1,200 to flee back across border. UN 24 Aug warned of exodus from Venezuela heading to “crisis moment” for region.

➡ Guatemala AUGUST 2018

Attorney General (AG) Consuelo Porras and International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) 11 Aug requested for third time that Supreme Court and Congress lift immunity of President Morales so he can face charges of illicit electoral financing. Supreme Court 22 August allowed pre-trial to begin. Porras and CICIG 14 Aug issued thirteen arrest warrants against politicians and business figures; police apprehended five despite govt obstruction. CICIG and Supreme Electoral Court 16 Aug signed agreement to jointly combat illicit financing in 2019 general election. Morales 31 Aug announced he will not renew CICIG mandate, which will end Sept 2019. Former AG Thelma Aldana late July confirmed willingness to stand as candidate in 2019 presidential elections. Trend of rising homicide rates continued with authorities reporting 23% increase in murders 16 June-1 Aug; 40 civil society organisations 19 Aug denounced killings of at least nineteen human rights activists and journalists in 2018; indigenous leader Juana Raymundo found dead 28 July with signs of torture. Experts 25 July voiced concern that increasingly active “citizens' security groups” could turn into armed criminal organisations, and officials called on public not to fund them. Interior ministry 6 Aug reported only 53 of 2,000 minors separated from families by U.S. immigration authorities have returned from U.S..

➔ Honduras AUGUST 2018

UN-backed political dialogue between govt and opposition, led by four mediators from region, began 28 Aug, aimed at finding solution to post-electoral crisis following Nov 2017 general election. Party representatives to discuss four main issues: presidential re-election, human rights, constitutional reform, and electoral reform. Following two-month delay, President Hernández 13 Aug finally issued executive order stating govt's commitment to participate in dialogue. Talks remained tense with lack of confidence in process on all sides; main opposition group left-wing Libre party still absent. Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2 Aug completed trip investigating human rights situation and researching 2017 post-election violence.

➔ El Salvador AUGUST 2018

National Assembly 16 Aug voted to make permanent the controversial “extraordinary measures” in place in some prisons, including extreme isolation of jailed gang members; vote entrenches security policy based on tough law enforcement, and seen by observers as likely to deepen crisis in country's jails and make possibility of dialogue with gangs more remote; also prompted criminal gangs to increase attacks against police and military in protest. Police chief Howard Cotto 7 Aug claimed murder of six police officers two weeks before vote were part of gang strategy to push for suspension of “extraordinary measures”, bringing total officers killed in 2018 to fourteen. Human rights groups continued to voice concern over measures including extreme isolation of jailed gang members. 61 MS-13 gang members, including national leaders, were condemned to over 100 years' prison 21 Aug after arrest in July 2016 “Operation Jaque”. Attorney General 28 Aug launched operation against MS-13 with 50 arrests. Month saw some progress in fight against corruption as former President Saca 7 Aug pleaded guilty to embezzlement scheme amounting to over \$300mn during his govt, becoming first former Salvadoran head of state to face prison for corruption. Govt 21 Aug established diplomatic relations with China, ending support for Taiwan (see Taiwan Strait).

➔ Nicaragua AUGUST 2018

Protestors 15 Aug marched in capital Managua demanding release of hundreds of people arrested in crackdown on anti-govt protests since April; over 400 people reported to have been killed during suppression of protests, which govt continued to label as “coup” attempts. Organization of American

States 2 Aug approved creation of working group on Nicaragua; govt 15 Aug labelled working group as “interventionist”, said it was “not welcome”. UN Human Rights Commission (HRC) 29 Aug issued report condemning govt for widespread human rights violations. Govt rejected report, accusing UN of being an “instrument of a policy of death, terror, lie and infamy”, and on 31 Aug expelled HRC team. Former VP and erstwhile Ortega ally Sergio Ramírez 18 Aug criticised govt response to protests and said levels of violence are worse than during Sandinista Revolution. Nicaraguan Association for Human Rights 6 Aug announced temporary closure of its Managua office following death threats and harassment by armed men. Thousands demonstrated across country in support of doctors 24 Aug after Medical Association 22 Aug denounced govt’s sacking of 240 of its members in apparent retaliation for supporting protests. Thousands continue to flee unrest with neighbouring Costa Rica confirming 23,000 Nicaraguans applied for asylum since June; thousands of Costa Ricans 25 Aug marched in support of Nicaraguan migrants in capital San José after anti-immigrant protests in city turned violent 18 Aug. Parliament 14 Aug approved 9.2% reduction of national budget due to economic impact of anti-govt unrest and govt repression, steepest cut in past decade.

➔ Haiti AUGUST 2018

Following July protests over increased fuel prices that left twenty dead, President Moïse 6 Aug appointed Jean-Henry Céant as new PM. Instances of unrest continued; unidentified attackers reportedly threw grenades and fired shots at parliament 20 Aug and at home of senate president 29 Aug. Shootout between Haitian civilians and Dominican soldiers at border crossing Carrizal 19 Aug left six civilians and one soldier wounded; PM Céant accused Dominican forces of violating Haitian territory. Dominican National Plan for Regularization of Foreigners expired 26 Aug leaving nearly 200,000 Haitians at risk of deportation, raising concerns over possible escalation of tensions.

➔ Mexico AUGUST 2018

New govt of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) unveiled plans to tackle criminal and conflict-related violence, and from 7 Aug held first of series of regional National Pacification and Reconciliation Fora soliciting public opinion, with promise to design security and peacebuilding policies to be announced in Nov in strict adherence to demands voiced in meetings. Some participants already rejected request from govt to “forgive but not forget”, calling for “truth” including identification of whereabouts of disappeared, and punishment of perpetrators, including state forces. Church 16 Aug announced it would participate in fora. Congress in largest opium-producing state Guerrero (south) 18 Aug passed motion supporting legislation of poppy cultivation and calling on federal authorities to legislate; AMLO govt announced it would consider de-penalising poppy cultivation and processing for domestic pharmaceutical industry, pending UN approval, and aim to de-penalise marijuana production, sale and consumption to curb organised crime revenues. AMLO’s nominee for public security secretary 15 Aug said he expects better trained and paid police to take over security provision from army; military force

to be used as last resort; that “going after kingpins” would be less of a priority than targeting gang financing; and that goal is 30-50% homicide reduction in three years. Other priorities include social and economic programs tackling root cause of organised crime, and reparations/support for victims. AMLO 1 Aug reiterated various federal institutions would be moved from capital to regions to stimulate regional growth; but some early AMLO appointments, including Manuel Bartlett, accused of previous corruption and implication in murder cases, as head of electricity commission, prompted criticism. High levels of criminal violence and conflict continued, with 2018 reportedly on course to be most violent year since records began in 1997. Security forces and crime groups, chiefly “Viagras”, clashed throughout month in Michoacán (west) during govt anti-gang “Operation Cleansing”, prompting backlash from group in form of road blocks using stolen and destroyed vehicles. Mexico and U.S. 27 Aug announced “preliminary agreement” in bilateral trade which alleviates fears of end of NAFTA trade agreement, but so far excludes Canada.

Middle East & North Africa

➔ Israel/Palestine AUGUST 2018

Violence continued along Israel-Gaza border despite talks between Israel and Hamas and temporary relaxation of Israel’s blockade on Gaza. Gazan militants 8-9 Aug fired 150 rockets into Israel, to which Israel responded with airstrikes, killing at least three Palestinians. Egypt and UN Special Coordinator for Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov continued efforts to broker truce between Israel and Hamas; Mladenov 8 Aug urged both sides to step back from brink. After Gazans reduced rate of incendiary kite launches, Israel 15 Aug reopened Kerem Shalom crossing in south following July closure and restored Palestinian fishing area to nine nautical miles from shore. Gazans continued weekly protests at border; Israeli army 17 Aug killed two and wounded hundreds during clashes along border. Israel 19-28 Aug closed Erez crossing in north Gaza. At 15 Aug Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Central Council meeting boycotted by various PLO factions and Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas condemned possible Egyptian-sponsored truce between Israel and Hamas before intra-Palestinian reconciliation, threatening to make further cuts to Gaza. Abbas 16 Aug reportedly refused to meet Egyptian interlocutors, Fatah representatives held talks with Egyptians in Cairo 25-26 Aug. U.S. State Department 24 Aug said it would redirect over \$200mn that would have paid for aid programs in Gaza and West Bank; Palestinian delegate to U.S. said move confirmed U.S. was “abandoning the two-state solution”. U.S. 31 Aug said it would no longer contribute funding for UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA); European and Arab countries criticised decision and promised to increase their contributions. Minority Druze community 4 Aug led tens of thousands in protests in Tel Aviv against law Israeli parliament passed in July that defines state of Israel as nation state of Jewish people. Tens of thousands of Palestinian citizens of Israel protested against law in Tel Aviv 11 Aug. Netanyahu 20 Aug during meeting with U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton called for “greater pressure” on Iran.

➔ Jordan AUGUST 2018

Assailants 10 Aug detonated bomb under police car at music festival in Fuheis, mainly Christian town 20km north west of capital Amman, killing one officer. Security forces 12 Aug traced suspects to building in nearby Salt; during raid suspects detonated explosives causing building to partially collapse; four security personnel and at least three suspects reportedly killed. Interior minister 13 Aug said assailants were Islamic State supporters and had planned more attacks.

➔ Lebanon AUGUST 2018

Syrian refugees in Lebanon continued to return to Syria. Hundreds returned from Bekaa region and town of Shebaa 13-14 Aug. UN refugee agency (UNHCR) head Filippo Grandi 13 Aug said it was premature to talk about mass repatriation of refugees; next day foreign ministry disagreed, arguing Syria is stable. FM Gebran Bassil 20 Aug said “there is no reason for the refugees to stay”.

🇸🇾 ⚡ Syria AUGUST 2018

After taking control of last opposition-held areas in south west, pro-govt forces intensified efforts to retake north west, raising risk of further escalation there in Sept. In north west, amid reports that govt was increasing troops in area, army 9 Aug dropped fliers in rebel-held areas of Idlib province urging people to surrender. Next day govt carried out dozens of airstrikes in Hama, Idlib and Aleppo provinces, killing at least 29 people; most intense bombing in months. UN 30 Aug called on Russia, Iran and Turkey to hold off govt campaign in north west. In south west, as pro-govt forces took last pockets of territory from Islamic State (ISIS)-affiliated militants, Jordanian army said it had shelled ISIS militants in Syria 31 July-1 Aug as they approached Jordanian border, killing some. Israel said its airstrike in Syrian-held part of Golan Heights killed seven ISIS-affiliated militants night of 1-2 Aug. Russian envoy to Syria 1 Aug reportedly said Iranian forces in Syria had withdrawn their heavy weapons at least 85km from Israeli-held Golan Heights; Israel said it was not enough, demanding Iranian-backed forces leave Syria. Iran 28 Aug said it would maintain military presence in Syria as part of cooperation agreement with Syria that Iranian defence minister signed during Damascus visit 26-27 Aug. Russia said its military police and UN peacekeepers 2 Aug began patrols in Golan Heights and that to prevent “provocations against UN posts” its military police would set up eight observation posts there, to be handed over to Syrian army once situation stable. In east, opposition Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) backed by U.S.-led coalition continued efforts to retake ISIS-held pockets. ISIS attacked army position near Deir al-Zour city 15 Aug, twelve soldiers and five militants reportedly killed. Iraq 16 Aug said its airstrike in Syria killed ISIS militants planning attacks in Iraq. UN 13 Aug estimated up to 30,000 ISIS militants remained in Syria and Iraq, about half in each country. Syrian Democratic Council, SDF’s political wing, went to Damascus early Aug for second round of talks with govt; increase in contact has yet to yield tangible results.

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➔ Bahrain AUGUST 2018

Govt 16 Aug rejected finding of UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention that jailing of activist Nabeel Rajab was “unlawful” and “discriminatory”. Amid ongoing feud with Qatar, govt 21 Aug said it would no longer issue visas to Qataris. Ali Mushaima, son of jailed opposition leader Hassan Mushaima, 1 Aug began hunger strike outside Bahraini embassy in London to protest govt’s alleged refusal to allow his father medical treatment; Hassan Mushaima taken to hospital for cancer scan 28 Aug, but son continued hunger strike end month.

➔ Iran AUGUST 2018

U.S. 7 Aug reinstated on Iran unilateral sanctions lifted by 2015 nuclear deal, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA); U.S. to re-impose sanctions on Iran’s oil exports in Nov. Supreme Leader Khamenei 13 Aug declared “there will be no war, nor will we negotiate with the U.S.”. German, French and UK FMs and EU foreign policy chief Mogherini 6 Aug issued joint statement regretting re-imposition of sanctions and updating Blocking Statute to shield European firms from U.S. penalties; next day, Mogherini encouraged European companies to increase business with Iran. U.S. 16 Aug announced creation of Iran Action Group within State Department and appointed Brian Hook as Special Representative on Iran. Iranian navy held major training exercise in Persian Gulf and army tested Fateh-110 ballistic missile early Aug. Economic situation deteriorated with value of rial falling to 100,000 to the dollar mid-Aug. Parliament 28 Aug questioned President Rouhani on his govt’s handling of economic crisis and removed labour minister 8 Aug and finance minister 26 Aug in no-confidence votes. Insecurity continued in north west near borders with Iraq and Turkey; following clashes near Oshnavieh 11 Aug Kurdish militants Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) claimed to have killed twelve Revolutionary Guards, while govt claimed to have killed eleven militants. Kurdish militants 16 Aug claimed to have killed four Iranian border guards in ambush on border post near city of Baneh. Heads of all five states on Caspian Sea – Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan – met 12 Aug in Kazakh city, Aktau and signed convention on Caspian’s legal status with implications for each country’s rights to extract resources from it; contents of convention not disclosed (see Kazakhstan).

➔ Iraq AUGUST 2018

Electoral commission 10 Aug released results from partial recount of votes cast in May parliamentary election; no major changes from initial results. Several parties continued to question legitimacy of vote due to concerns over electronic voting system and following fire in Baghdad warehouse in June that destroyed ballots preventing full recount. Supreme Court 19 Aug approved final results. Parties intensified negotiations aimed at forming largest parliamentary bloc, thereby winning PM position and right to form cabinet. PM Abadi, Shiite clerics Moqtada al-Sadr and Ammar al-Hakim and former PM Iyad Allawi 19 Aug agreed to unite their coalitions in one parliamentary bloc, but their combined seats fall short of 165 needed for parliamentary majority. Sunni politicians 15 Aug formed National Axis alliance comprising some 50 seats. Abadi 30 Aug fired Falih al-Fayyadh from positions of national security adviser and chairman of Shia militias Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU) for being involved in “partisan political matters”; Fatah Alliance, coalition of parties linked to PMU, criticised decision 31 Aug. Islamic State (ISIS)-related insecurity continued, predominantly in Kirkuk, Diyala and Salah al-Din provinces; UN 13 Aug reported 20,000-30,000 ISIS fighters remained in Iraq and Syria, about half in each country. Govt 17 Aug claimed to have killed 28 ISIS militants in two airstrikes in eastern Syria. In far north, Turkey continued operations against Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). Turkish army claimed its airstrike near Kocho town in Sinjar region 15 Aug killed senior PKK commander and airstrikes in multiple locations in Iraq 18 Aug killed seven other militants (see Turkey).

➔ Qatar AUGUST 2018

Emir Tamim bin Hamed al-Thani, Qatar’s head of state, 15 Aug pledged to invest \$15bn in Turkey, helping to slow Turkish lira’s precipitous fall (see Turkey).

➔ Saudi Arabia AUGUST 2018

As govt continued crackdown on dissent, Canada 3 Aug called for immediate release of two female activists arrested late July, Samar Badawi and Nassima al-Sada, and “all other peaceful human rights activists”. Govt 6 Aug broke off relations with Canada, sending home Canadian ambassador, pulling students with govt scholarships from Canadian schools, ceasing investment in Canada and diverting all holdings.

  **Yemen** AUGUST 2018

Intense fighting continued ahead of UN envoy's planned consultations with President Hadi's govt and Huthi leaders in Geneva 6-8 Sept; initiative could increase parties' commitment to restarting peace talks, but fighting could also escalate in Hodeida port city and elsewhere if initial discussions end in acrimony. Efforts by UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths slowed United Arab Emirates (UAE)-backed campaign to capture port city Hodeida, but UAE-backed forces 19 Aug said they had taken Durayhimi, town south of Hodeida, from Huthis, opening route to main Hodeida-Sanaa road. Infighting between Yemeni forces in Saudi-led coalition intensified: UAE-backed Salafists clashed with Saudi-linked Islamists with ties to Hadi govt in Taiz city in south 15 Aug, leaving dozens dead and injured; Security Belt forces, UAE-backed faction largely comprised of southern secessionists, clashed with Hadi govt forces in Aden 18 Aug after flag of unified Yemen was raised at military graduation ceremony. Huthi spokesperson, Mohammed Abdulsalem, 18 Aug met Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Lebanese Iran-linked movement Hezbollah reportedly in Lebanese capital Beirut. In Hodeida, alleged Saudi-led coalition mortar fire 2 Aug (apparently aiming at Huthi attack boat) hit busy shipping wharf, killing at least 28 civilians. Coalition airstrike 9 Aug hit school bus in Saada region in north, killing some 30 schoolchildren; coalition spokesperson said target was legitimate, claiming two senior Huthi commanders were on board. Under international pressure including from senior U.S. Pentagon officials and military commanders, Saudi-led coalition investigated incident. Coalition airstrike in pro-Huthi district near Hodeida 23 Aug killed at least 22 children and four women. Associated Press 6 Aug alleged that Saudi-led coalition has been recruiting and making deals with members of radical group al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula; key figures involved said that U.S. was aware of arrangements and held off drone attacks on group.

 **United Arab Emirates** AUGUST 2018

After UAE Minister for International Cooperation Reem al-Hashimy met Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed in Addis Ababa 10 Aug, Ethiopian govt said that UAE was exploring investment opportunities there, including building oil pipeline from Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa to Eritrean port city of Assab.

 **Algeria** AUGUST 2018

President Bouteflika 17 Aug dismissed army generals Said Bey and Lahbib Chentouf as part of purge in security and intelligence institutions ongoing since June. Homemade rocket 18 Aug killed two children in

Tamellaht village, Kabylia region in north; local sources said Islamist militants involved. Soldiers 19-20 Aug clashed with locals in Djanet in south east near Libyan border protesting after army killed smuggler 18 Aug, two protesters reportedly killed. Social unrest increased July-Aug especially in south following sharp fall in purchasing power and growing political uncertainty over Bouteflika's possible succession.

➔ Egypt AUGUST 2018

Authorities continued crackdown on dissent. Security forces 23 Aug arrested former diplomat Maasoum Marzouk in Cairo on charges including joining terrorist group after he called 5 Aug for referendum on govt and threatened to organise protest in Cairo's Tahrir Square. Several opposition activists reportedly arrested same day on same charges. Italian police 1 Aug arrested opposition leader close to Muslim Brotherhood Mohamed Mahsoub at Egypt's request; next day released him and refused Egypt's request for extradition. Security situation in Sinai improved slightly. Govt 12 Aug said police killed twelve alleged Islamic State (ISIS) Sinai Province (SP) militants in shootout in Arish city in north Sinai. Car bomb 19 Aug killed military officer south of Arish city. SP militants 25 Aug attacked police checkpoint on Arish-Qantara road, four police and four militants reportedly killed. Insecurity persisted in Cairo area. Police 11 Aug prevented suicide bomber entering Coptic Church in north Cairo suburb Shubra al-Kheima, he detonated his explosive vest outside church killing only himself; police next day said they had arrested six people in connection with case. Police 13 Aug said they had killed six suspected Islamist militants in south-western suburb of Cairo Sixth of October City. ISIS 26 Aug claimed attack on checkpoint west of Arish city previous day, at least four security force personnel and four militants reportedly killed. President Sisi 18 Aug signed law, approved by parliament in May, to tighten govt's control over internet usage. Egypt and UN Special Coordinator for Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov continued efforts to broker truce between Israel and Hamas (see Israel-Palestine).

🚩 ⚡ Libya AUGUST 2018

Violence erupted in capital Tripoli between armed groups linked to UN-backed Govt of National Accord (GNA) over control of territory and institutions, and could escalate further in Sept. Clashes broke out 26 Aug between fighters of Seventh Brigade, militia established by GNA's defence ministry in 2017, and coalition of armed groups operating under GNA's interior ministry. Clashes 26-31 Aug left at least 39 people dead, including at least eighteen civilians, and continued end month. Other armed groups, including some opposed to GNA from city of Misrata, threatened to join fight in Tripoli. UNSMIL 19 Aug said members of brigades nominally loyal to GNA's interior ministry had in recent weeks attacked state institutions and prevented them from working, and called on GNA to prosecute those responsible; targeted institutions reportedly include internationally recognised Tripoli-based National Oil Corporation and GNA-managed sovereign wealth fund Libyan Investment Authority. 80 members of eastern Tobruk-based parliament House of Representatives (HoR) 28 Aug called on UN political mission (UNSMIL) to restart political dialogue to change composition of Presidency Council; western Tripoli-based High State

Council and Misratan politicians issued similar statements. Progress along election roadmap remained stalled after HoR 27 Aug again failed to pass constitution referendum law. Suspected Islamic State (ISIS) militants 23 Aug attacked GNA checkpoint in Wadi Kaam area, east of Tripoli, killing at least six security personnel. U.S. airstrike in Bani Walid, about 150km south east of Tripoli, killed ISIS commander 28 Aug. Tripoli court of appeal 15 Aug sentenced 45 people to death for allegedly killing demonstrators in Tripoli during 2011 uprising against Colonel Qadhafi; 54 other defendants sentenced to five years in prison.

- **REPORT: After the Showdown in Libya's Oil Crescent**

➔ Mauritania AUGUST 2018

Govt intensified crackdown on dissent ahead of 1 Sept legislative, regional and local elections. Prominent anti-slavery activist and candidate in legislative elections Biram Dah Abeid arrested 7 Aug, charged 13 Aug with “assault on life and integrity of the person” and “threats of violence” after journalist allegedly filed complaint against him. Another anti-slavery activist Abdellahi el Housein Mesoud arrested 9 Aug and charged with “complicity” in same case. Journalists Babacar Ndiaye and Mahmoudi Ould Saibout arrested 8 Aug after posting article critical of lawyer close to govt.

➔ Morocco AUGUST 2018

Cabinet 20 Aug approved law reinstating compulsory twelve-month military service for men and women aged 19-25, scrapped in 2006. King Mohammed VI late Aug pardoned 889 detainees, including 188 people detained for taking part in demonstrations in Rif region in north to demand development and denounce corruption.

➔ Tunisia AUGUST 2018

President Essebsi 13 Aug said he would propose bill introducing equality between men and women in inheritance, one of over 90 recommendations for reforms made by presidentially-appointed commission on individual freedoms and equality (COLIBE) in June. In capital Tunis, around 5,000 people protested against reform package proposed by COLIBE 11 Aug and thousands demonstrated in support of it 13 Aug.

Repeated water cuts prompted several demonstrations throughout country early Aug. Police clashed with locals calling for reopening of Ras Jedir border crossing with Libya, closed to goods in July, 28-29 Aug in Ben Guerdane in south, district security chief injured. Interior ministry of Libya's Govt of National Accord 1 Sept said it had reopened Ras Jedir border crossing.

- **BRIEFING: Tunisie : dépasser les querelles pour restaurer la confiance**