



CRISISWATCH

Tracking Conflict Worldwide

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

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August 2016

Global Overview

AUGUST 2016

The month saw Yemen's peace talks collapse with violence there intensifying, and the Syrian conflict escalate following Ankara's launch of a cross-border ground offensive against Islamic State (IS) and Kurdish forces, days after a major terror attack in Turkey's south east. Troop deployments in Western Sahara threatened to bring about clashes, and violence flared in the Central African Republic. In Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, security forces brutally suppressed anti-government protests, while in Gabon, the president's disputed re-election triggered violent clashes. In Asia, a suicide bombing killed over 70 people in Pakistan, while suspected militants in Thailand's southern insurgency launched attacks on targets outside the traditional conflict zone. In positive news, peace talks between the Philippines government and communist rebel groups resumed after a four-year hiatus. On 24 August, Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) declared that they had reached a final peace accord, paving the way for an end to 52 years of armed conflict.

Trends for Last Month

August 2016

✘ Deteriorated Situations

Central African Republic, Gabon,
Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Pakistan,
Thailand, Turkey, Syria, Yemen

✔ Improved Situations

Philippines, Colombia

Outlook for This Month

September 2016

⚡ Conflict Risk Alerts

Western Sahara

🕊️ Resolution Opportunities

None

Trends and Outlook

Yemen suffered a significant uptick in violence after UN peace talks in Kuwait collapsed in early August. Huthi rebels launched indiscriminate rocket attacks into Saudi Arabia, while the Saudi-led coalition resumed airstrikes on Sanaa, the capital, and Huthi strongholds in the north. In the south, an IS suicide bomb attack on a pro-government militia compound in Aden killed at least 60. The violence aggravated an already desperate humanitarian situation, with at least 10,000 people killed and more than three million internally displaced since the conflict began. As Crisis Group has warned, without an inclusive negotiated settlement Yemen risks sliding further “into state disintegration, territorial fragmentation and sectarian violence”. The war is increasingly threatening Gulf security, as violence spills over the Yemeni-Saudi border and, in southern Yemen, plays into the hands of violent jihadist groups.

The conflict in Syria escalated and Turkey’s involvement grew, as Ankara launched a major offensive in northern Syria in an attempt to remove IS from the border area and contain Kurdish YPG forces’ territorial gains. Turkey’s military operation came days after a bomb attack on a Kurdish wedding in the country’s south east, assumed to be the work of IS, which killed 56 people, mostly children, and injured more than 90. In a significant gain for the Syrian regime, the rebel stronghold Darayya outside the capital Damascus surrendered to government forces on 25 August. Meanwhile, the battle for Aleppo between Russian-backed government forces and rebels continued to rage, reportedly killing over 600 civilians in August.

A tense standoff developed in Western Sahara. Morocco’s deployment of troops and roadworks in the UN buffer zone angered the Polisario Front armed independence movement, which sent in its own troops. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said on 28 August he was deeply concerned by armed units from Morocco and the Polisario being “in close proximity”. In the Central African Republic, a convoy of former Séléka rebels, including leaders under arrest warrants, left the capital Bangui for their northern stronghold, shooting their way past security forces. The UN managed to arrest some, but others escaped, undermining already faltering efforts to disarm the country’s multiple armed factions.

In Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, security forces’ brutal responses to mounting protests have led to new spikes in violence. In Ethiopia, at least 87 protesters were reportedly killed in Oromiya and Amhara regions. In Zimbabwe, hundreds protesting against the government’s economic misrule and calling for electoral reforms fought running battles with police, with at least 50 injured. In Gabon, supporters of opposition presidential candidate Jean Ping took to the streets and clashed with security forces as soon as the

government announced President Bongo winner in the 27 August election.

In Asia, Pakistan suffered reportedly its worst ever attack targeting civil society. A suicide bombing at Quetta Civil hospital on 8 August killed over 70 people, mostly lawyers gathered to mourn Balochistan Bar Association President Bilal Anwar Kasi, who was killed the previous day. Tehreek-e-Taliban faction Jamaat-ul-Ahrar and IS both claimed responsibility for the attack. In Thailand, a series of deadly attacks on 11-12 August suggested the Malay-Muslim separatist insurgency in the Deep South may have entered a “disturbing new phase”, targeting locations outside the traditional conflict zone. Elsewhere in the region, the Philippines government and the National Democratic Front (NDFP), which includes the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People’s Army insurgent group, resumed peace talks and agreed to a ceasefire. The talks in Oslo are the first meetings since negotiations to resolve the 47-year-old conflict were suspended in 2012.

After four years of talks in Cuba, Colombia and the FARC announced on 24 August that they had reached a “final, full and definitive” peace accord. The landmark agreement brings an end to one of the world’s longest-running armed conflicts. However, Crisis Group has cautioned that major challenges remain in the months ahead. The most immediate will be a binding plebiscite on 2 October, when Colombians will vote on whether to accept the peace deal.

Latest Updates

Africa

→ Burundi AUGUST 2016

President Nkurunziza consolidated control of ruling party as regime continued to repress opposition. Ruling party CNDD-FDD at congress 20 Aug replaced party president position with sec gen and appointed Nkurunziza’s former chief of staff and civil war commander Evariste Ndayishimiye to role. Commission for inter-Burundian Dialogue 23 Aug concluded from public consultations that most Burundians favour scrapping constitutional presidential term limit; opposition said findings fabricated. Govt 3 Aug rejected UNSC resolution to deploy 228 police to Burundi, calling it violation of sovereignty. UN Committee against Torture 12 Aug condemned forced disappearances of gov’t’s political rivals and its “genocidal rhetoric”. Govt repression targeted security force members believed opposed to Nkurunziza’s third term: police 20 Aug arrested and beat Major Clément Hamenyimana in Gitega; army 19 Aug said eleven officers refused to return after missions abroad fearing arrest. Search for journalist Jean Bigirimana, missing since 22 July, found two bodies in Mubarazi river, Muramvya province early Aug, neither identified as Bigirimana. Third body reportedly found in neighbouring Gitega province. Police 21 Aug arrested 54 members of WhatsApp group in Bujumbura for spreading false rumours.

➔ Cameroon AUGUST 2016

Boko Haram (BH) continued deadly attacks in Far North, including: gunmen attacked Gambarou 10 Aug, killing five; suicide bombing at Mora 21 Aug killed four and injured 24. Military reportedly killed five BH members at Bourvari-Plateri 5 Aug in operation supported by civilian vigilante groups. Local media 16 Aug published open letter purportedly from “elites” of Adamawa region denouncing marginalisation of region.

✚ Central African Republic AUGUST 2016

Over 30 ex-Séléka rebels, including leaders under arrest warrants, 12 Aug left capital Bangui and exchanged fire with security forces at checkpoints, stopped by MINUSCA next day 50km south of Sibut, ten arrested; Popular Front for the Central African Renaissance (FPRC) leaders Abdoulaye Hissène and Aroun Gaye escaped and 17 Aug reportedly arrived in Kaga Bandoro in north. Police 16 Aug raided Hissène’s house in Bangui, seized around 700 weapons and ammunition. 22 representatives of ten armed groups 20 Aug formed disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) platform in Bangui. MINUSCA 5 Aug arrested Jean-François Bozizé, son of former President François Bozizé, under 2014 international warrant for torture, involvement in assassination and personal use of public funds; court 9 Aug granted him provisional release.

➔ Chad AUGUST 2016

Security forces used tear gas to disperse banned opposition rallies in N’Djamena 6-7 Aug; one protestor killed 7 Aug, day before President Déby’s inauguration for fifth term. French President Hollande received Déby in Paris 20 Aug, reaffirmed support for fight against terrorism and development in Lake Chad region. Four soldiers killed when vehicle hit Boko Haram landmine 27 Aug at Kaiga Kindji near Niger border.

→ Democratic Republic Of Congo AUGUST 2016

President Kabila and electoral commission (CENI) delayed setting electoral calendar, while some opposition groups continued to reject dialogue. Kabila 4 Aug said electoral calendar would not be published before end of voter registration, launched 31 July; CENI 20 Aug said elections could not be held before July 2017 due to lack of finances and voter list. In support of political dialogue Catholic Church 10 Aug began consultations with ruling party and major opposition groups. To ease tensions Kabila 18 Aug met youth activists Lutte pour le Changement (Lucha) and govt 19 Aug said it would free 24 political prisoners; opposition claimed twenty of those 24 already free. Dialogue preparatory committee convened 23-27 Aug, set dialogue for 1-14 Sept. Some opposition parties, including Union for the Congolese Nation (UNC), took part in preparatory meetings; main opposition coalition Rassemblement boycotted committee and called for general strike to be held 23 Aug, with limited success: police arrested 32 people. Police dispersed with tear gas opposition rally in Lubumbashi, Haut-Katanga 29 Aug. Armed groups continued violence against civilians in N Kivu: army said Mai Mai and Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) 6-7 Aug launched attacks in several places in N Kivu, killing fourteen people; suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) members reportedly killed 51 people in Beni, N Kivu night of 13-14 Aug; suspected ADF 22 Aug reportedly killed two people in Kiteya, N Kivu; crowd in Butembo, N Kivu killed two women suspected of supporting ADF. Attacks sparked protests in east; violent protest in Beni 17 Aug left three dead, including policeman and woman suspected of being ADF member.

- [REPORT: Katanga: Tensions in DRC's Mineral Heartland](#)

→ Gabon AUGUST 2016

Violent protests broke out after opposition candidate Jean Ping rejected President Bongo's victory in 27 Aug presidential election, announced 31 Aug. Both candidates 28 Aug claimed victory and accused each other of fraud; govt same day said process "satisfactory" despite irregularities. Govt 31 Aug announced Bongo won with 49.80% of votes, with Ping garnering 48.23%; opposition rejected results and called for recount in Haut-Ogooué province, Bongo stronghold where turnout was reportedly 99.93%. Ping supporters protested 31 Aug-1 Sept in Libreville and second city Port-Gentil, clashed with security forces, set fire to buildings including parliament building in Libreville; security forces dispersed protests with live rounds and tear gas; same night helicopters and presidential guard on ground attacked opposition HQ, reportedly killing two and injuring nineteen. Ping called for international assistance to protect population. UNSG Ban expressed "deep concern" about violence.

➔ Rwanda AUGUST 2016

Police 17 Aug shot dead one suspected terrorist in Kigali and 19 Aug killed three more and arrested three others in Bugarama, Rusizi district.

✚ Ethiopia AUGUST 2016

Clashes between anti-govt protestors and police and security forces 6-7 Aug in Amhara (NW) and Oromiya regions (centre-south) reportedly left at least 87 protestors dead and hundreds arrested. At least seven protestors reportedly killed in clashes with police in Gondar, Amhara region 6 Aug and at least 30 protestors killed in clashes in Bahir Dar, Amhara capital 7 Aug. Residents in Gondar and Bahir Dar reportedly held strikes (“stay-home protests”) from mid-Aug. Security forces 6 Aug reportedly killed over 50 protestors across Oromiya and dispersed protest in Addis Ababa. OHCHR 10 Aug stressed need for investigations into allegations of excessive use of force in both regions.

➔ Kenya AUGUST 2016

Al-Shabaab attacks decreased: militants 6 Aug attacked police camp in Basuba, Lamu county, injuring four officers. Anti-terror police 28 Aug arrested two men suspected of links to Islamic State at Malindi, Kilifi county. Clan militias killed four and injured one in two attacks 28 and 29 Aug on border between Eldas and Wajir North constituencies, Wajir county. Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) 3 Aug agreed to resign following months of protests against its perceived pro-govt bias.

→ Somalia AUGUST 2016

Al-Shabaab continued attacks against civilians and police, and govt postponed elections. In Mogadishu, militants tried unsuccessfully to assassinate MP with hand grenade 8 Aug; suspected Al-Shabaab killed local govt official 12 Aug in drive-by shooting; militants 25 Aug attacked beach restaurant killing at least ten and detonated car bomb prematurely outside Turkish embassy; AMISOM and Somali National Army (SNA) 28 Aug arrested two suspected Al-Shabaab militants in joint operation; suicide car bombing 30 Aug outside presidential palace checkpoint killed 22 people and partly destroyed nearby hotel. Elsewhere, Al-Shabaab militants fired mortars in residential areas of Baidoa, Bay region 6 Aug, killing one; militants 21 Aug carried out twin suicide attacks in market and next to local govt HQ in Galkayo, Mudug region, killing at least twenty and injuring 30; militants' roadside bomb 26 Aug injured three in Bardhere, Gedo region; Al-Shabaab 29 Aug launched assaults on four SNA checkpoints in Muri and K-50 neighbourhoods, Lower Shabelle, killing at least six. U.S.-assisted SNA troops 10 Aug attacked Al-Shabaab checkpoint in Saakow, Middle Juba region, killing three militants; SNA 12 Aug killed one Al-Shabaab commander and arrested three militants in Beledweyne, Hiraan region; SNA and AMISOM 16 Aug recaptured from Al-Shabaab four locations close to Bardhere, Gedo region. AMISOM 22 Aug said eight militants killed when Al-Shabaab ambushed its convoy near Baidoa, Bay region; SNA and AMISOM 27 Aug killed seven Al-Shabaab militants 15km from Burdhubo, Gedo region. Govt 7 Aug announced new electoral timetable: legislative elections scheduled between 24 Sept and 10 Oct, presidential vote 30 Oct. Talks to merge Hiraan and Middle Shabelle regions collapsed 18 Aug after Middle Shabelle elders refused to select proposed state's congress before presidential vote.

→ South Sudan AUGUST 2016

President Kiir contested UN-mandated regional protection force and former first VP Riek Machar travelled to Sudanese capital Khartoum, as limited fighting continued. Taban Deng Gai, who replaced Machar as first VP 26 July, received official welcome from presidents of Kenya and Sudan 16 and 21 Aug; U.S. Sec State Kerry 22 Aug and former Botswana President Mogae, chair of peace monitoring body, 28 Aug said leadership of Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) was internal matter; SPLA-IO loyal to Machar say his replacement violate Aug 2015 peace agreement. After fleeing Juba in early July, Machar late month crossed into Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and, at request of DRC President Kabila, UN provided flight within DRC; he subsequently travelled to Khartoum where he received medical treatment. Govt 5 Aug agreed in principle to deployment of regional protection force in S Sudan. Uganda 11 Aug said neither it nor Sudan would contribute troops to force. Govt 12 Aug announced new process to integrate armed groups into national army. UNSC same day authorised deployment of 4,000-strong regional protection force until 15 Dec; govt rejected resolution, 15 Aug said parliament would consider resolution. Kiir 15 Aug said govt would discuss with

international community how implementation could serve “mutual interests”. Limited fighting between former SPLA-IO rebels and govt forces continued in several places in Equatoria region, most intensely in and around Yei, former Central Equatoria state.

- [COMMENTARY: South Sudan’s Risky Political Impasse](#)
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➔ Sudan AUGUST 2016

“Sudan Call” coalition of armed and unarmed opposition groups 8 Aug signed “roadmap” peace agreement, signed by govt in March. Govt 10-14 Aug engaged in direct talks with Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) on cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access in Two Areas (S Kordofan and Blue Nile) and with Darfuri rebel groups, Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minnawi (SLM-MM), on Darfur. Govt and SPLM-N rebels 10-11 Aug failed to agree on agenda of cessation of hostilities talks, 13 Aug accused each other of hampering process; talks faltered due to disagreements on direct transportation of humanitarian aid from outside country to Two Areas and govt’s insistence on discussing security arrangements. JEM and SLM-MM accused govt of refusing to make concessions. Thabo Mbeki, African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) mediator, 14 Aug suspended talks indefinitely; govt 20 Aug said talks will resume in Sept. Govt 23 Aug said Riek Machar, S Sudan rebel leader and former first VP, receiving medical treatment in Khartoum (see S Sudan).

➔ Uganda AUGUST 2016

Inspector General of Police and regime loyalist Kale Kayihura and seven senior police officers failed to appear in court 10 Aug to answer accusations of police brutality against opposition supporters in July. After lawyer 26 Aug issued petition challenging Kayihura’s prosecution, court 29 Aug halted proceedings. Govt 11 Aug said neither Uganda nor Sudan would contribute troops to regional protection force that UNSC 12 Aug authorised to deploy in S Sudan (see S Sudan). UNHCR reported at least 97,947 S Sudanese refugees arrived in Uganda between 1 July and 30 Aug.

- [COMMENTARY: Museveni’s Post-election Politics: Keeping a Lid on Uganda’s Opposition](#)
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→ Angola AUGUST 2016

Clashes between rebel Front for the Liberation of Cabinda Enclave (FLEC) and Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) intensified late July and 4-6 Aug in several areas reportedly killing at least two FLEC and 42 FAA. Ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) party at congress 17-20 Aug re-elected sole nominee President dos Santos party leader and named his daughter Welwitschia and son José Filomeno to MPLA Central Committee.

→ Mozambique AUGUST 2016

Govt and armed opposition Renamo 17 Aug agreed to set up committee to draft new laws that could enable appointment of Renamo governors in six central and northern provinces where party claimed it won 2014 elections. Delegations suspended talks late month until 12 Sept having failed to agree ceasefire. Renamo continued attacks on civilians and police in Tete, Sofala, Manica, Zambezia and Niassa provinces including freeing 23 prisoners in Morrumbala, Zambezia 12 Aug; killing six at Nangue, Sofala 12 Aug; and wounding four in ambush between Vanduzi and Luenha river, Manica 22 Aug.

→ Zambia AUGUST 2016

President Lungu won another five-year term in 11 Aug elections with 50.35% of vote; Hakainde Hichilema of United Party for National Development (UPND) came second with 47.67%. Hichilema 19 Aug filed court petition challenging result claiming vote rigged, denied by ruling party and electoral commission. Police 16 Aug said it had arrested 133 people protesting against Lungu's re-election for destroying property; govt late month shut down three private broadcasters.

📌 Zimbabwe AUGUST 2016

Clashes between anti-govt protestors and police intensified as opposition parties joined forces. Police 3 and 17 Aug broke up anti-govt protests in Harare using batons, tear gas and water cannon. Main opposition leaders Morgan Tsvangirai and ex-Deputy President Joice Mujuru held joint rally 13 Aug, called for protest in Harare 26 Aug to demand electoral reforms before 2018 vote. Police 26 Aug fired tear gas and water cannon at opposition leaders and hundreds of demonstrators sparking running battles between protestors and police in large parts of Harare, at least 50 people injured; police arrested 68 people for public violence including burning buses, police vehicles and shops. Opposition call for protest strike 31 Aug not heeded in Harare, minor clashes broke out in second city Bulawayo.

➔ Burkina Faso AUGUST 2016

Koglweogo civilian self-defence group members 6 Aug demanded govt free members arrested following late June clashes with youths in Zongo near Ouagadougou. Koglweogo member arrested for murder in Koulpelogo province (centre-east) 23 Aug. Koglweogo 27 Aug handed over to security forces 130 weapons they had seized.

➔ Côte D'Ivoire AUGUST 2016

Following 22 July National Assembly vote in favour of constitutional referendum, President Ouattara 7 Aug said proposed new constitution will include creation of VP position and senate; opposition reiterated rejection of referendum process and proposed amendments. Voter rolls displayed 20-27 Aug in preparation for Sept/Oct referendum and Nov/Dec parliamentary elections. Antoinette Rouissa Mého, opposition party Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) member and defence witness for former President Gbagbo and his wife Simone, arrested 10 Aug, indicted 17 Aug for crimes including breach of state security.

➔ **Gambia** AUGUST 2016

Govt crackdown on dissent continued: Tina Faal, opposition Gambia Democratic Progress party member, arrested 8 Aug. Solo Krummah, opposition United Democratic Party official detained since arrest in May, admitted to hospital 8 Aug under guard and died after operation 20 Aug, party said govt did not explain why he needed operation; Krummah second party member to die in custody since May; U.S. 22 Aug called for independent investigation.

➔ **Guinea** AUGUST 2016

Estimated half a million people took part in largely peaceful opposition rally in Conakry 16 Aug; police reportedly shot dead one onlooker. Opposition party Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) MP Ousmane Gaoual Diallo 12 Aug received two-year suspended prison sentence for insulting President Condé.

➔ **Guinea-Bissau** AUGUST 2016

Amid ongoing parliamentary standoff, ECOWAS Commission chair Marcel Alain de Souza and new ECOWAS representative in G-B Blaise Diplo met PM Djá, President Vaz and main political leaders 14-15 Aug in effort to restart political dialogue, said regional bloc's mission (ECOMIB), deployed since 2012, will withdraw, citing high costs and pressure from African heads of state.

➔ Mali AUGUST 2016

After significant deterioration in security late July, rival Tuareg armed groups clashed again in Kidal region and suspected jihadist groups continued attacks in north and centre. Ethnic Imghad Self-Defence Group of Imrad Tuareg and Allies (GATIA), member of pro-unity Platform coalition, 8 Aug clashed with ethnic Ifoghas High Council for Unity of Azawad (HCUA), member of main rebel alliance Coalition of Azawad Movements (CMA); informal talks between parties in Bamako failed to reach agreement. Unidentified armed men attacked two army convoys near Tenenkou, Mopti region 8 Aug killing at least five soldiers; forced gendarmes to evacuate position in Nantaga, Mopti region 19 Aug; attacked Gathi Loumo, Mopti region, burning city hall 21 Aug; same day attacked security forces on Gossi-Hombori axis in Timbuktu region. One MINUSMA peacekeeper killed when vehicle hit mine 7 Aug in Kidal region. Inter-ethnic clashes left five dead near Tenenkou, Mopti region 27 Aug. Arrest of radio presenter Mohamed Youssouf Bathily or "Ras Bath" in Bamako 16 Aug for criticising govt sparked riots, police killed demonstrator; Ras Bath released 18 Aug but judicial process ongoing. Former Ansar Dine member Almed al-Faqi al-Mahdi appeared before International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands 22 Aug charged with destruction of mausoleums in Timbuktu.

➔ Niger AUGUST 2016

Alleged Boko Haram attack at Kimégana, Diffa region (SE) 15 Aug killed at least five, injured one. Opposition party National Movement for Development of Society-Nassara mid-Aug decided to join ruling majority, responding to President Issoufou's call to form unity govt.

➔ Nigeria AUGUST 2016

Military continued offensive against Boko Haram (BH) in NE of Borno state, vandalism eased in Niger Delta, communal and religious violence flared in several areas. Islamic State 3 Aug named Abu Musab al-Barnawi new BH leader, replacing Abubakar Shekau, who rejected appointment. Army said it killed

sixteen insurgents 14 Aug repelling BH attack in Kangarwa; air force said it killed some 300 insurgents including three key commanders 19 Aug. BH attacked Kuburubu 20 Aug killing six and abducting thirteen; next day burnt down Shawa village near Chibok. BH 14 Aug released video showing some 50 of over 200 girls abducted in Chibok in 2014, demanding govt free captured fighters in exchange for their release; President Buhari 28 Aug said govt ready to negotiate. In Niger Delta, attacks on oil installations declined relative to July. Unidentified gunmen 7 Aug killed three soldiers in Nembe area, Bayelsa state. New armed group Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate claimed three attacks on oil pipelines in Delta state 18, 19 and 30 Aug. Niger Delta Avengers and other groups late Aug suspended attacks, laid out conditions for talks. Herder-farmer clashes continued: suspected herders killed 30 in Kodomun, Adamawa state 29 July-1 Aug; killed two in Ndiagu Attakwu, Enugu state 25 Aug. Communal and religious violence flared in five other states killing at least 47: unidentified gunmen killed eleven near Godogodo, Kaduna state 2 Aug; at least five killed in clash between Share and Tsaragi communities in Kwara state same day; ten soldiers, seven civilians killed in clash between military and civilians in Kpaidna, Niger state 4 Aug; at least six killed in clash between ethnic Igbo indigenes and Hausa residents in Akokwa, Imo state 11 Aug; mob 22 Aug burnt eight to death over alleged blasphemy against Islam in Talata-Mafara, Zamfara state. Military launched operations against armed groups in Benue and Bauchi states 6 and 20 Aug, and in Niger Delta 29 Aug.

- **COMMENTARY: North-eastern Nigeria and Conflict's Humanitarian Fallout?**

Asia

➔ China (Internal) AUGUST 2016

People's Liberation Army Daily 16 Aug reported govt tested 21 new pieces of “security equipment” including drones and assault helicopters in five-day counter-terrorism exercise in S Xinjiang. Xinjiang regional govt 5 Aug passed new counter-terrorism law prohibiting spread of “distorted Islamic ideas”.

➔ China/Japan AUGUST 2016

Tensions escalated as Japan protested increasing Chinese activities in disputed East China Sea (ECS). Japan defence ministry 2 Aug released annual defence white paper; reported interception of record high of 571 Chinese aircrafts in 2015 fiscal year; also cited “deep concern” over Chinese maritime assertiveness. China responded accusing Japan of distorting China’s “justified and reasonable defence work” and “attempting to deceive” international community. Tokyo lodged series of complaints to

Chinese ambassador throughout month on Chinese activities in disputed waters in ECS: Japanese FM said Chinese Coast Guard vessels had entered contiguous zone around Senkaku/Diaoyu; Japan Coast Guard 6 Aug said some 230 Chinese fishing vessels had entered contested waters in ECS since 5 Aug, escorted by Chinese Coast Guard; Japan's *Kyodo News* 7 Aug reported a record thirteen Chinese Coast Guard vessels sighted in contested waters since 5 Aug. Tokyo 5 Aug issued protest against China's installation of first radar unit on offshore gas platform near disputed waters in ECS. Group of Japanese cabinet members and political leaders 15 Aug visited controversial Yasukuni Shrine to commemorate anniversary of Japan's WWII surrender; China condemned visit, urged Japan to "face up to and reflect upon the history of aggression". Japanese and Chinese FMs 24 Aug met in Tokyo, agreed to "make efforts" to resolve disputes and build "good atmosphere" for talks between President Xi and PM Abe at Sept G20 Summit in Hangzhou.

➔ Korean Peninsula AUGUST 2016

DPRK 3 Aug test-launched ballistic missile into Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off coast of N Japan; PM Abe called test "serious threat" to Japan. U.S. Strategic Command and ROK military said second missile was fired simultaneously, exploding immediately after launch. DPRK 24 Aug test-fired third missile from waters off NE coast; reportedly first instance of DPRK missile landing in Japan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ), prompting further condemnation from Japan; ROK FM said ROK prepared to "thoroughly respond" to any provocation from DPRK. UNSC 26 Aug issued unanimous statement condemning DPRK's missile launches. In first ever response to foreign media inquiries, Pyongyang 17 Aug confirmed resumption of plutonium production in interview with Japan's *Kyodo News*. U.S. responded same day, calling DPRK's plutonium production "clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions", urged DPRK to cease uranium enrichment. Following 24 Aug trilateral meeting in Tokyo, FMs of China, Japan and ROK urged DPRK "to exercise self-restraint regarding its provocative action, and to observe the UN Security Council's resolutions". ROK unification ministry 17 Aug confirmed defection of DPRK deputy ambassador to London, Thae Yong Ho, to South Korea, reportedly most senior DPRK official to defect since 1997; 31 Aug reported that DPRK had executed high ranking Minister Kim Yong-jin and banished two others for re-education in July.

➔ Afghanistan AUGUST 2016

Taliban 10 Aug captured four strategic districts surrounding Helmand provincial capital Lashkar Gah; Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) prevented capture of city. Taliban 14 Aug captured Dahan-e-Ghori district, Baghlan province; 20 Aug temporarily captured Khanabad district,

Kunduz. After five days of fighting, Taliban 26 Aug reportedly took control of Janikhail district, Paktia province. Hizb-e-Islami representative Ghairat Baheer 6 Aug said peace talks with Kabul govt expected to resume shortly. Unidentified militants 24 Aug attacked American University in Kabul, killing at least thirteen, mostly students. President's office reportedly said National Directorate of Security (NDS) had "reliable evidence" attack was coordinated from Pakistan; President Ghani 25 Aug asked Pakistani Army Chief General Raheel Sharif to take action against culprits in Pakistan. Ahead of end of National Unity Government's (NUG) two-year arrangement in Sept, oppositions groups reportedly criticised NUG for failure to deliver on key reforms. CEO Abdullah Abdullah 11 Aug denounced Ghani as unfit to govern, intensifying inter-factional tensions. Abdullah 8 Aug said NUG had developed roadmap for electoral reforms; President Ghani's press office 15 Aug said finalised electoral law amendments would be sent to cabinet for approval.

➔ Bangladesh AUGUST 2016

Govt crackdown on suspected jihadists including those responsible for July Gulshan and Sholakia attacks continued. Security forces 27 Aug killed three alleged militants in Dhaka, including Bangladeshi-Canadian, Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury, accused of masterminding Gulshan attack. Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) 4 Aug killed two alleged militants in Mymensingh district, reportedly linked to 7 July Sholakia attack. Law enforcement arrested at least ten alleged Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (JMB) operatives throughout month, including five reportedly arrested with explosives and detonators 11 Aug. Police 5-6 Aug detained at least eighteen suspected jihadists in four different districts, including fourteen Jamaat-e-Islami leaders and activists allegedly possessing jihadist propaganda. Police 4 Aug detained Bangladeshi-UK national Hasnat Karim and Bangladeshi Canadian permanent resident Tahmid Hasib, both present at café during attacks, for suspected involvement. Officials 13 Aug said investigation had yielded evidence of Karim's involvement, Hasib interrogation ongoing. Police 12 Aug said they had identified another "top-level militant organiser" responsible for coordinating attack. Following July announcement of plans for national convention against militancy, Bangladesh National Party (BNP) continued efforts to forge "national unity" against jihadist violence; smaller opposition parties raised objections to participating in platform that would include BNP ally Jamaat-e-Islami, several of whose members were detained for suspected involvement in attacks. BNP 6 Aug constituted new national executive committee, prompting criticism from PM Sheikh Hasina for inclusion of family members and personal staff of convicted war criminals Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Abdul Alim. Dhaka court 17 Aug issued arrest warrants for 67 leaders and activists of BNP-led opposition alliance, in connection with Feb 2015 arson case. Two separate Dhaka courts 10 Aug granted BNP chief Khaleda Zia bail in sedition and nine arson cases. International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) 10 Aug sentenced one former Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker to death, seven others to life imprisonment for crimes committed during 1971 war.

➔ India (Non-Kashmir) AUGUST 2016

Suspected Bodo militants 5 Aug opened fire on market in Kokrajhar, Assam, killing at least thirteen civilians; security forces reportedly killed one alleged militant following attack. National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) denied accusations of involvement. Security forces 17 Aug reportedly killed four alleged Maoists in raid in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh. All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and People's Joint Action Committee for Bodoland Movement 25 Aug said they would relaunch non-violent agitation for separate statehood, claiming that despite promises of talks, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) govt was "neglecting and ignoring" them.

→ Kashmir AUGUST 2016

Tensions between India and Pakistan rose as clashes between Indian police and protesters continued in wake of Indian security forces' 8 July killing of Hizbul Mujahideen leader Burhan Wani. At least five people reportedly killed 15 Aug in clash with police following India Independence day protests in Srinagar. Alleged militants 17 Aug killed one police officer, two soldiers following police ambush. Fresh protests erupted in several parts of Kashmir including Srinagar after Indian authorities 29 Aug lifted 52-day curfew in most of Kashmir; parts of Srinagar remained under lockdown. Security forces 31 Aug reportedly fired at protesters in Nadihal village, killing one and bringing civilian death toll to at least 69 since protests broke out in July. Protesters 3 Aug staged sit-in in Pakistan-administered Kashmir after Pakistan security forces blocked aid convoy of Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JD – the renamed Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, LeT) activists reportedly attempting to cross LoC with food and medical supplies. Pakistani Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan 4 Aug accused India of "open terrorism" in Kashmir at South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) ministerial summit in Islamabad. Indian PM Modi 12 Aug accused Pakistan of encouraging "cross-border terrorism" in Kashmir. Pakistan foreign secretary 15 Aug extended formal invitation to New Delhi for dialogue on Kashmir, Indian govt said talks should focus on cross-border terrorism; rejected Pakistan's "self-serving allegations" of misconduct in Kashmir. UN human rights chief 17 Aug released statement requesting "full and unhindered access" to population affected by violence in Pakistan and India-administered Kashmir in order to investigate alleged human rights violations.

→ Nepal AUGUST 2016

CPN (Maoist Centre) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal elected prime minister 3 Aug; joined by Nepali

Congress (NC) in new ruling coalition with UML in opposition. Dahal claimed addressing demands of dissenting Madhesi, Tharu, and Janajati groups and broadening buy-in for new constitution among govt's top priorities. CPN(MC) and NC 2 Aug signed three-point deal with alliance of Madhesi and Janajati parties agreeing to compensate families of those killed during constitution-related protests in southern Tarai plains, and to register constitutional amendment in parliament to address demands on federal boundaries and inclusion. In exchange, alliance supported Dahal's nomination for PM. Deputy PM Bimalendra Nidhi visited New Delhi 18-23 Aug, met with Indian PM Modi and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj; visit underscored Dahal govt's efforts to repair ties with India following difficult relations during KP Oli-led regime. Transitional justice mechanisms on truth and reconciliation and disappearances completed their case-registration period 10 Aug, have until Feb 2017 to investigate over 60,000 registered cases. Truth and Reconciliation Commission Chairperson Surya Kiran Gurung 30 Aug threatened to resign if transitional justice-related legislation was not amended in accordance with international standards, criticised govt for lack of cooperation.

Pakistan AUGUST 2016

In largest attack since March Lahore bombing, suicide bomb at Quetta Civil hospital 8 Aug killed over 70 people, mostly lawyers gathered at hospital to mourn 7 Aug killing of Balochistan Bar Association President Bilal Anwar Kasi; reportedly country's worst attack ever targeting civil society. Pakistan Bar Council 9 Aug called for nationwide strike by lawyers demanding additional security; strikes and protests by lawyers continued throughout month. Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) faction Jamaat-ul-Ahrar and Islamic State (IS) both claimed responsibility for attack; Balochistan chief minister accused Indian intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of coordinating attack. Military also suggested Indian involvement, calling attack "attempt to undermine CPEC [China Pakistan Economic Corridor]", PM Sharif 8 Aug echoed concerns that "enemies of Pakistan are after CPEC". No concrete evidence of RAW involvement found. Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah 1 Aug authorised extension of Rangers' policing authority for another 90 days, limited to Karachi. Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) leaders 6 Aug concluded two-day hunger strike, criticised Rangers' continued detention of party's mayoral candidate Waseem Akhtar. MQM worker Mohammad Waheed died 7 Aug allegedly from torture sustained during imprisonment Chief Minister Shah 18 Aug ordered release of six MQM activists, reportedly warning Rangers against detaining innocent people. Civilian and military leadership 11 Aug agreed to establish "high-level task force" to oversee implementation of 2015 National Action Plan (NAP) on terrorism; General Raheel Sharif 12 Aug said lack of progress on NAP was "affecting the consolidation phase" of Operation Zarb-i-Azb in N Waziristan. PM Sharif 15 Aug approved creation of additional Frontier Corps units in KPK to manage cross-border security. Military 16 Aug launched Operation Khyber-3 in Rajgal Valley near Pakistan-Afghanistan border; Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) 22 Aug said security forces had killed 40 militants, destroyed 43 hideouts since launch. U.S. Congress 3 Aug rejected release of \$300m in Coalition Support Funds (CSF) reimbursements to Pakistani military after U.S. Sec Defense Ashton Carter declined to certify that Pakistan had taken "sufficient action" against Haqqani Network.

→ Sri Lanka AUGUST 2016

Parliament 11 Aug passed bill on establishment of Office of Missing Persons (OMP) to investigate cases of enforced disappearance. Civil society activists criticised govt for absence of formal consultations with victims of conflict; families of missing persons 18 Aug staged protest in north demanding OMP be based in conflict-affected areas. Govt responded to protests confirming OMP local offices would be set up in conflict-affected parts of N and E. Zonal Task Forces (ZTF) comprised of local civil society organisations held public consultations on transitional justice across country during month; some participants in N and E reported intimidation and threats from military, one man allegedly tortured for testifying to ZTF in NW town Mannar. Govt pledged additional security to participants. Tamil National Alliance (TNA) politicians, including Northern Provincial Council (NPC) chief minister, claim that 107 former LTTE cadres had died from possible poisoning in govt rehabilitation centres. State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene criticised Tamil politicians for falsely accusing military, while cabinet spokesperson 10 Aug said govt would investigate allegations. In 15-16 Aug meeting in Geneva, UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination urged Sri Lanka to improve protection of ethnic and religious minorities following reports of continuing human rights violations against Muslims and Tamils of Indian origin. UNSG Ban began three-day visit 31 Aug. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, former defence secretary and brother of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, charged with corruption 31 Aug over alleged illegal transfer of state-owned weapons.

→ Indonesia AUGUST 2016

Police 5 Aug arrested 6 suspected militants, allegedly planning rocket attack on Singapore's Marina Bay from Batam Island, Indonesia. Officials reportedly identified suspects as members of Katibah Gigh Rahmat (KGR) network with possible ties to Islamic State (IS).

→ Myanmar AUGUST 2016

Four-day Panglong-21 peace conference began 31 Aug between govt and armed groups, including UNFC alliance of armed groups; UNSG Ban gave opening address. Negotiations to include three

smaller, previously excluded groups unsuccessful and they did not attend. Armed clashes between Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and govt forces took place near group's Laiza HQ 7 Aug, while KIO front-line posts were reportedly shelled 18 Aug. Followed clashes in Kachin State's Hpakant and Tanai townships starting 8 Aug; Hpakant fighting reportedly began with KIO ambush of police convoy. Govt 23 Aug appointed high-profile joint national-international Advisory Commission to find "lasting solutions" to "complex and delicate issues" in Rakhine State, where first phase of revamped citizenship verification process – issuance of "national verification cards" that can later be used to initiate citizenship claims – continues to proceed slowly due to low interest/resistance from Muslim communities. Commission to be chaired by former UNSG Kofi Annan; international members include former special advisor to UNSG Ghassan Salame, national members include Buddhists and Muslims, but no Muslims from Rakhine State. Aung San Suu Kyi visited China 17-21 Aug, met with Premier Li and President Xi, discussed major Chinese projects including Myitsone Dam, Chinese support for Myanmar peace process.

- [OP-ED: Give Burma a Chance](#)

Philippines AUGUST 2016

Govt and communist rebel group National Democratic Front (NDFP), which includes the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA) insurgent group, resumed peace talks in Oslo 22-27 Aug, first meetings since negotiations to resolve 47-year-long conflict were suspended in 2012. Parties 21 Aug agreed ceasefire for duration of talks, 26 Aug extended ceasefire indefinitely and agreed to continue negotiations 8-12 Oct. Govt and MILF negotiators conducting peace talks in Malaysia 13-14 Aug signed joint statement agreeing to increase membership of newly reconstituted Bangsamoro Transition Committee (BTC) from previous fifteen to 21 members, including new representatives from Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and indigenous communities. Meetings reportedly focused on developing more inclusive implementation plan for peace roadmap, including plans to draft new version of Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), which President Duterte hopes to implement as part of country's move toward federalism. In lead-up to talks, presidential peace adviser Jesus Dureza 4 Aug said negotiations complete, committee now entering implementation phase of new peace roadmap approved by Duterte 18 July. MILF chair Al Haj Murad Ebrahim 13 Aug said MILF has "new solidified relationship" with new administration, hopes to see "final closure" to Mindanao conflict. Duterte announced crackdown on Abu Sayyaf group after it beheaded teenage hostage 24 Aug; over 1,200 military troops reportedly raided several areas of Sulu province 26-29 Aug, killing at least 21 alleged Abu Sayyaf militants including one commander. Abu Sayyaf reportedly kidnapped at least three other hostages in Sulu province during month. Army spokesman 29 Aug reported twelve soldiers killed in clash with Abu Sayyaf in Patikul, Sulu. Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Ronald dela Rosa 23 Aug said over 1,900 people had been killed since 1 July in Duterte's "War on Drugs" crackdown; police claimed responsibility for approximately 900 deaths. UN 18 Aug condemned crackdown and extrajudicial killings.

- [OP-ED: Philippines Peace Process: Duterte Playing for High Stakes](#)
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Following contentious July arbitration ruling by Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Philippine Special Envoy to China Fidel Ramos 10-11 Aug met informally with Fu Ying, chairperson of Foreign Affairs Committee of China's National People's Congress, to "renew" Sino-Philippine relations; joint statement said discussion focused on trust building and opportunities for cooperation. Philippine President Duterte 23 Aug said talks on territorial dispute with China expected to start this year. At 13th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on implementation of 2002 Declaration on the Conduct (DOC) of Parties in the South China Sea, 15-16 Aug in Inner Mongolia, Chinese and ASEAN officials agreed on guidelines for senior diplomat's hotline for emergencies at sea and joint statement on Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES), to be discussed at China-ASEAN Summit in Sept; also set first formal timeline for binding Code of Conduct (COC) in SCS, with framework to be complete by mid-2017. U.S. think-tank Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) 9 Aug released satellite photos allegedly showing China's construction of reinforced hangars on Fiery Cross, Subi Reef and Mischief Reef in disputed Spratly islands; said size and structural features of hangars suggest military purpose. Reuters 18 Aug released report accusing Vietnam of secretly sending mobile rocket launchers to five bases in Spratly islands; Vietnam said report "inaccurate".

Month saw escalation of separatist violence in Deep South with deadly attacks targeting areas outside traditional conflict zone. Series of IEDs and incendiary devices exploded in seventeen locations across seven provinces of peninsular Thailand 11-12 Aug, killing four people and wounding at least 35; attacks targeted tourist locations including Krabi, Phang-nga, Phuket, Hua Hin. National police chief General Chakthip Chaijinda 21 Aug said bombings were work of New Generation of Malay-Muslim militants. Voters 7 Aug approved draft constitution prepared by National Council for Peace and Order's (NCPO) drafting committee; Electoral Commission reported 59% turnout, with 61% voting in favour. Voters also approved by 58% second measure allowing Senate to help select PM together with lower house. Result reflected persistent regional divide, with Bangkok and south (except for three southernmost provinces) voting in favour of new charter, most north and NE provinces rejecting it. New constitution enshrines period of "guided democracy" following general election scheduled for late 2017. PM Prayuth Chan-ocha, who has repeatedly denied any ambition to serve as PM after an election, told reporters 17 Aug that he would accept position if no other qualified candidates could be found. Prayuth visited Deep South 25 July to unveil six-year plan to develop agro-industry, sustainable energy, trade with Malaysia. At least 35 small IEDs exploded across three southernmost provinces 6-7 Aug, eve of constitutional referendum, no casualties. Two bombs exploded at hotel in Pattani 24 Aug, one person killed; third Pattani bomb same day caused no casualties.

- **OP-ED: Can Thailand Really Hide a Rebellion?**

Europe & Central Asia

➔ Bosnia And Herzegovina AUGUST 2016

Bosnia's international partners and Bosniak and Croat parties expressed increasing concern over referendum scheduled for 25 Sept in Serb-majority Republika Srpska (RS) entity on whether to continue to celebrate annual 9 Jan "RS day", which Constitutional Court (CC) in Nov 2015 ruled was unconstitutional and discriminatory.

➔ Kosovo AUGUST 2016

Row erupted over nepotism after media website Insajderi 1 Aug released what it claimed were parts of wire-tapped conversations in late 2011 between high-level ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) party officials, including President Thaci (then PM), showing influence over appointments including senior prosecutors and judges. Further leaked conversations released 4, 5 Aug, prompting protests in Pristina. PDK chief Adem Grabovci resigned 17 Aug; chief prosecutor 26 Aug announced investigation into him. Rocket-propelled grenade fired at parliament 4 Aug; police 30 Aug arrested six members of Self-Determination (Vetevendosje) party, which denied role in attack. Hand grenade thrown at public TV station 22 Aug and in Pristina suburb reportedly targeting head of state broadcaster 28 Aug; no injuries. Opposition MPs again released tear gas in parliament 9 Aug during session scheduling vote on controversial Montenegro border agreement 1 Sept. Several hundred ethnic Albanians staged protest preventing Kosovo Serb pilgrims visiting church in west 28 Aug.

➔ Macedonia AUGUST 2016

Four main political parties 31 Aug agreed to hold early parliamentary elections, already postponed twice, on 11 Dec; interim govt to be elected in Sept. Greek FM visited Skopje for meetings to improve communications between Greece and Macedonia, amid ongoing dispute between countries over official name of Macedonia, which has blocked Macedonia's EU accession progress.

➔ Armenia AUGUST 2016

Following July Yerevan hostage crisis and anti-govt protests, President Sargsyan 2 Aug promised to form govt of "national accord", said it would not include "terrorists and their defenders". Hundreds continued to protest in Yerevan calling for release of arrested members of Sasna Tsrer, group responsible for hostage-taking. Three opposition Heritage Party figures arrested late July in connection with protests released after Heritage Party 15 Aug pulled out of upcoming local elections. Yerevan police chief sacked early Aug for "failing to prevent violent attacks on protesters and journalists"; over a dozen police reprimanded/suspended.

➔ Azerbaijan AUGUST 2016

Prominent opposition movement figure Natig Jafarli arrested 12 Aug on charges of "illegal entrepreneurship and abuse of power"; several activists arrested 13 and 15 Aug on various charges. EU condemned arrests, said debates surrounding constitutional referendum scheduled for 26 Sept should be pluralistic. Govt 16 Aug launched criminal investigation into alleged supporters of Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen, who Turkish govt holds responsible for 15 July failed coup attempt; arrested four Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (AHCP) activists on charges of ties to Gülen.

➔ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) AUGUST 2016

Armenia and Azerbaijan continued to accuse each other of violating ceasefire. Facing domestic opposition over speculation of his govt's concessions to Azerbaijan (see Armenia), Armenian President Sargsyan 1 Aug asserted that there would be "no unilateral concessions" in N-K peace process. Russian President Putin 8 Aug met with Azerbaijani and Iranian presidents, 10 Aug with Armenian president, with talks focused among others on N-K settlement.

➔ Russia/North Caucasus AUGUST 2016

Four suspected militants killed during counter-terrorism operations in Botlikh district, W Dagestan 11 Aug; judge murdered in Shamil district 11 Aug, two police killed near Izberbash city 12 Aug. Russian special forces 17 Aug killed four militants in St Petersburg counter-terrorism operation reportedly targeting N Caucasus militant leaders suspected of responsibility for terrorist attacks. Two Chechen men same day attacked police in Moscow region with axes, injuring two; both attackers killed. Islamic State (IS) 18 Aug claimed men were IS supporters, marking first known declaration of IS attack in Russia outside N Caucasus, according to Chechen Ministry of Internal Affairs. Russian National Guard service 23 Aug reported it had destroyed fifteen terrorist facilities over previous week during more than 120 special operations, seized small arms and ammunition, detained over 12,000 citizens including for public order breaches. Human Rights Watch report 30 Aug accused Chechen authorities of crackdown on critics ahead of 18 Sept parliamentary and regional elections in which republic head Ramzan Kadyrov is running for office as governor of Chechnya.

➔ Ukraine AUGUST 2016

Tensions increased between Kyiv and Moscow after Russian security forces in Crimea 10 Aug reported clash with alleged groups of Ukrainian state saboteurs planning attack on infrastructure; two elite Russian troops reported killed, seven alleged Ukrainian saboteurs captured. Russia accused Ukraine of state terrorism, PM Medvedev suggested severing diplomatic relations; President Putin said that in current situation Normandy Group consultations are "senseless". However later in month Kremlin confirmed Putin would meet his French and German Normandy counterparts as planned early Sept, and Putin made clear he would not cut relations with Kyiv. Ukrainian President Poroshenko 17 Aug said he did not exclude possibility of military mobilisation in Ukraine if situation in eastern Ukraine deteriorated following Crimea incident, which he called fabricated. Russia announced major military exercises, including near Ukrainian border and around Crimean peninsula 25-31 Aug. Elsewhere clashes continued between Ukrainian forces and separatists with daily exchanges of small arms and heavy artillery fire, focused around heavily populated Zaitseve, Avdiivka and Mariinka in Donetsk region. Discussions in the

Minsk format showed modest progress as Minsk Tripartite working group 26 Aug called for indefinite ceasefire on front line with Donbas starting 1 Sept. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch 29 Aug announced release of thirteen civilians from Security Service of Ukraine (SBU)-run secret detention centre in Kharkiv who had allegedly been abducted and tortured. Luhansk and Donetsk separatist leaders Igor Plotnitsky and Alexander Zakharchenko both survived alleged assassination attempts during month. IMF again delayed release of third \$1.7bn loan tranche as Kyiv lagged in reform efforts.

- **COMMENTARY:** [Parsing Russia's Tough Talk on Ukraine](#)

➔ Cyprus AUGUST 2016

Weekly meetings between Turkish Cypriot leader Akıncı and Greek Cypriot leader Anastasiades continued, with new round of seven meetings initiated 23 Aug. Akıncı late July reported significant steps have been taken in economy, EU, property, governance and power-sharing. Turkish Cypriot media early Aug reported disagreements between Akıncı and northern Cypriot PM Ozgürkün on conduct of talks after Ozgürkün publicly criticised Akıncı, accused him of being weak.

➔ Turkey AUGUST 2016

Month saw major terrorist attack in SE, assumed to be work of Islamic State (IS), and launch of major cross-border ground offensive against IS positions in N Syria. Bomb attack on Kurdish wedding in Gaziantep province in SE 20 Aug killed 56, mostly children, and injured more than 90; came as govt continued domestic crackdown on IS-linked individuals, with scores detained during month suspected of preparing attacks, recruiting for IS. Turkish policy on Syria continued to shift: President Erdoğan 9 Aug met with Russian President Putin for first time since Turkey's downing of Russian jet in Nov 2015, reportedly discussed coordinating on Syria. Military 24 Aug began air and ground offensive "Euphrates Shield" on IS positions near Jarablus in N Syria, with Turkey-backed Syrian rebels taking control of town same day. Amid concern over recent U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish YPG gains in N Syria, Turkish shelling also targeted some YPG positions (see Syria). PM Binali Yıldırım 20 Aug stated that President Bashar al-Assad could remain in power for transitional period. Iraq's Kurdish Regional Govt President Barzani visited Ankara on 23 Aug for high-level talks. U.S. VP Joe Biden visited Ankara 24 Aug, expressed support for Turkish operations targeting IS in Jarablus. Ankara continued to press U.S. on extradition of Fethullah Gülen. PKK further escalated fight against Turkish security forces with intensification of IED attacks in Aug, two-fold increase in deaths of security forces compared to July. Violence continued to be concentrated in rural areas, mostly targeting police and military posts. 64 state

security force members, at least 51 PKK/PKK-affiliated militants, and eighteen civilians killed during month; attacks included vehicle-borne IED targeting police station in SE Elazığ province 18 Aug, killing three police and injuring over 200 including at least 60 civilians. Another vehicle-borne IED attack on police checkpoint in Şırnak's Cizre district 26 Aug killed eleven police, wounded 78. Senior PKK figure 8 Aug warned group will “spread its war to the cities”. Ankara continued to restructure state institutions and remove individuals thought to be linked to Gülen network (state-christened FETÖ/PDY) it blames for July failed coup; some 80,000 public officials reported to have been suspended since coup attempt. Govt 31 July closed all military academies, land, air and ground commands that were subordinated to defence minister.

→ Kazakhstan AUGUST 2016

Visiting Turkey 5 Aug, President Nazarbayev said Kazakhstan would extradite anyone who has “terrorist connections” with Fethullah Gülen, cleric blamed by Ankara for coup; also said schools financed by Gülen would be inspected. Govt 18 Aug extended until 2021 moratorium on selling and renting of land to foreigners, introduced May following April/May protests in major cities. Head of journalists’ union and chair of National Press Club put on trial on corruption charges 23 Aug; rights organisations claim charges politically motivated. Authorities 22 Aug announced arrest of four suspected members of radical group allegedly plotting terrorist attacks; 26 Aug announced arrest of Russian citizen suspected of recruiting for Islamic State (IS); Committee for National Security (KNB) 31 Aug announced detention of 21 alleged Islamic militants. Three more police died early Aug from injuries sustained during 18 July attack in Almaty, bringing total killed to nine. Five Central Asian FMs met with U.S. Sec State Kerry in Washington DC 3 Aug under multilateral C5+1 format; discussed security, economic integration, counter-terrorism, climate change.

→ Kyrgyzstan AUGUST 2016

President Atambayev 28 July controversially proposed amending constitution; draft of amendments to be put to referendum published 29 July, despite 2010 moratorium prohibiting any change to constitution until 2020. Amendments officially intended to expand powers of executive and legislative branches, particularly PM, and advance judicial reform. Proposals include introduction of “Supreme Values of the Kyrgyz Republic” to tackle foreign ideological influences; requirement for judges to permit auditing of their telecommunications; prioritisation of Supreme Court decisions over international agreements; and permission for special parliamentary disciplinary committees to dismiss Supreme Court and local judges. President Atambayev 31 July denied intention to become PM after his term ends in 2017.

Amendments have support of four parliamentary parties, however several high-profile political figures publicly criticised them; Atambayev delivered Independence Day speech 31 Aug denouncing critics. Chinese embassy struck by alleged suicide car bomber 30 Aug, killing attacker, wounding three Kyrgyz employees; Atambayev ordered govt to step up counter-terrorism measures, China to assist with investigation. Five Central Asian FMs met with U.S. Sec State Kerry in Washington DC 3 Aug under multilateral C5+1 format (see Kazakhstan).

➔ Tajikistan AUGUST 2016

Tajikistan 3 Aug joined China-led counter-terrorist alliance together with Afghanistan and Pakistan, Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism. Concerns about border security increased after Taliban in Afghanistan recaptured territory close to border. Afghan National Security Advisor Hanif Atmar 10 Aug discussed regional and border security issues with Tajik govt in Dushanbe. General prosecutor 4 Aug called for restoration of death penalty for those convicted of terrorism or attempting military coups; some 170 alleged supporters of former Deputy Defence Minister Abduhalim Nazarzoda, accused of coup attempt in Sept 2015, still detained. Govt issued decree giving it right to “regulate and control the content of all television and radio networks”. Five Central Asian FMs met with U.S. Sec State Kerry in Washington DC 3 Aug under multilateral C5+1 format (see Kazakhstan).

➔ Turkmenistan AUGUST 2016

Amid shortage of foreign currency, Central Bank 25 July introduced tight restrictions on currency conversion; independent Turkmen media outlets (reporting from outside country) report citizens stockpiling food. Five Central Asian FMs met with U.S. Sec State Kerry in Washington DC 3 Aug under multilateral C5+1 format (see Kazakhstan). President Berdymukhamedov visited Germany 29 Aug, first visit since 2008; said country was working on constitution reform, will introduce human rights ombudsman; is looking into new gas export routes.

➔ Uzbekistan AUGUST 2016

Govt 28 Aug reported long-serving President Karimov, 78 years old and rumoured to be seriously ill, had been hospitalised. Amid growing speculation over his state of health, Karimov's youngest daughter Lola 31 Aug reported he was recovering from a brain hemorrhage. Tensions increased with Kyrgyzstan after Uzbekistan 22 Aug detained four Kyrgyz nationals in disputed border area. Five Central Asian FMs met with U.S. Sec State Kerry in Washington DC 3 Aug under multilateral C5+1 format (see Kazakhstan).

Latin America & Caribbean

➤ Colombia AUGUST 2016

Govt and FARC 24 Aug signed “final, full and definitive” peace accord ending more than five decades of conflict, culmination of four years of talks; includes measures aiming to deal with conflict causes, including comprehensive rural reform, reforms to drug policy and coca crop substitution; truth commission and special judicial apparatus to provide redress for victims; reintegration of FARC into Colombian political system and of its fighters into civilian life. FARC to contest 2018 congressional elections, will be guaranteed ten seats in legislature. Ceasefire came into effect 29 Aug. President Santos announced plebiscite on agreement will take place 2 Oct. Opinion polls regarding plebiscite displayed contradictory results, with some showing high likelihood of defeat for peace deal; opposition 3 Aug announced it would carrying out “no” campaign rather than promote abstention. Six-month weapons abandonment process to begin following official signing of agreement late Sept. Joint groups of delegates from govt, FARC and UN verification mission 9-23 Aug carried out technical visits to 30 villages to verify they could be adapted for use as cantonment sites for FARC guerrillas. ELN guerrilla group stepped up violence: 16 Aug kidnapped four rice growers in eastern province Arauca; President Santos stated group was holding hostages in Venezuela. ELN also killed alleged rapist in small town in north 16 Aug. Clashes between ELN and Clan Úsuga drug trafficking group displaced over 170 people in west; ELN threats displaced several families in north-central Colombia; combat between armed forces and guerrilla groups, believed to be ELN and EPL (Popular Liberation Army, small regional former guerrilla group mainly dedicated to drug trafficking), displaced nearly 1,000 in NE. ELN criticised govt-FARC peace agreements for maintaining “violent, exclusionary, unequal, unjust and predatory [govt] regime”. ELN also stated it supports FARC decision for peace but maintains its “right to rebellion”.

- OP-ED: ¿Durará el acuerdo de paz de Colombia?

➔ Venezuela AUGUST 2016

National Electoral Council (CNE) 9 Aug presented timetable for recall referendum against President Maduro, specifying that signature gathering for referendum will take place late Oct. Timetable would likely push potential poll (to be held only if 20% of electorate sign petition) to no earlier than Feb 2017 – too late to trigger new elections, instead allowing ruling party to replace Maduro until his term ends in 2019. Opposition alliance MUD immediately called for major protest march in Caracas 1 Sept. Organization of American States (OAS) Sec Gen Luis Almagro backed opposition, 22 Aug made public letter to imprisoned opposition leader Leopoldo López declaring recent events “end of democracy” and “termination of rule of law” in Venezuela. Maduro 18 Aug warned of harsh response to any “attempted coup”. Ahead of 1 Sept planned protest interior ministry 28 Aug returned opposition leader Daniel Ceballos to jail. As economic crisis continued to intensify, IMF late July predicted Venezuela will be world’s worst performing country of 2016, with economy likely to shrink up to 10%, inflation to reach 700% by year’s end. UNSG Ban early Aug called situation in Venezuela “humanitarian crisis”; Venezuela’s ambassador to UN denied. Colombia and Venezuela 13 Aug officially reopened five pedestrian border crossings, sealed for over a year, for 15 hours a day; over 150,000 Venezuelans reportedly crossed border first weekend, stocking up on food, medicines.

- [OP-ED: La hora de los militares en Venezuela](#)

➔ Guatemala AUGUST 2016

Amid mounting tensions over perceived undue influence of former military officers on govt of President Morales, *El Periódico* newspaper 16 Aug reported accusations of illegal surveillance operation managed by President’s security office; plot allegedly controlled by group of former military officers serving as close advisors to president. Cases against corruption continued. High-risk court judge Miguel Ángel Gálvez 29 July indicted 53 of 57 suspects in “Co-optation of the State” case, including former President Otto Pérez and former VP Roxana Baldetti, plus members of political and business elites; accused will face charges of illicit association, illicit electoral financing, bribery, money laundering. Supreme Court (CSJ) 18 Aug lifted Congressman Luis Rabbé’s immunity, opening possibility for prosecutors to investigate him on allegations of irregular contracts during his period as president of Congress; Rabbé subsequently absconded. President Morales agreed with El Salvador and Honduras counterparts to launch new force to combat criminal gangs and drug traffickers.

- [OP-ED: Mexico is Already the Immigration 'Wall' Some Politicians Want](#)

➔ Haiti AUGUST 2016

Ahead of first round of repeat presidential elections set for 9 Oct, Organization of American States (OAS) 2 Aug stated it will again serve as electoral observer, but issued list of recommendations to reform election process ahead of polls including more training for poll workers to identify irregularities, changing indelible ink used to identify who has voted. 9 Oct ballot to feature 27 candidates for president plus candidates for legislative seats; campaigning opened 23 Aug. Election funding remained uncertain, with President Privert reportedly reaching out to private sector to raise \$55m budget announced 17 Aug. Leaked UN report appeared to confirm organisation's responsibility for 2010 cholera outbreak which killed over 10,000 people, believed to have originated with contingent of peacekeepers from Nepal.

➔ Mexico AUGUST 2016

Human Rights Commission (CNDH) 18 Aug published report holding Federal Police, attorney general's office and Michoacán state's attorney general's office accountable for violating human rights of scores of alleged criminals during May 2015 confrontation between govt forces and purported members of Jalisco New Generation Cartel; said 22 out of 42 dead civilians were victims of extrajudicial executions, announced it will pursue criminal and administrative actions against those responsible. Chief of police sacked 29 Aug to allow "transparent investigation". Suspected Sinaloa cartel operator and son of prominent drug kingpin Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, Jesús Alfredo Guzmán Salazar, kidnapped 15 Aug in Puerto Vallarta along with five others by armed group allegedly belonging to rival Jalisco New Generation Cartel, prompting concerns over increasing power of New Generation, renewed drug trafficking-related violence. New scandal revealing possible conflict of interest involving first lady's use of \$2.05m luxury apartment in Florida owned by potential govt contractor interested in running Mexico's ports; President Peña Nieto denies any wrongdoing on his or his wife's part. His approval ratings slid to 23%, lowest level yet. Free speech group Article 19 issued report showing 2016 already deadliest year for journalists in Mexico since 2010, eight killed during first six months including three in Veracruz. National statistics agency announced 2.6% increase in homicides from 20,010 in 2014 to 20,525 in 2015, first rise in four years.

- **OP-ED: Mexico is Already the Immigration 'Wall' Some Politicians Want**

➔ Paraguay AUGUST 2016

Armed group 27 Aug reportedly killed eight soldiers in roadside attack in Arroyito, N Paraguay. Interior minister said small Marxist group Paraguayan People's Army (EPP) believed to be responsible; president vowed to "personally lead the fight against these terrorists".

Middle East & North Africa

➔ Israel/Palestine AUGUST 2016

After a lull, month saw attempted stabbings and other attacks resume, including 24 Aug incident in which Israeli soldier shot Palestinian assailant dead; also Israeli raids in West Bank, dozens injured and one killed during raid in Fawwar refugee camp 17 Aug, while Israeli soldiers killed reportedly unarmed Palestinian near Ramallah in West Bank 26 Aug. Israel 21-22 Aug launched some 50 strikes on targets in Gaza in response to rocket fired from Gaza 21 Aug, claimed by Salafi group Ahfad al-Sahaba and landing in Sderot town causing no injuries. Several Palestinians reported injured in Israeli strikes. Israeli military investigation 24 Aug cleared Israeli army of wrongdoing in incidents in which dozens of civilians were killed during 2014 Gaza war, including shelling of UN school; Palestinian officials urged International Criminal Court to act. With preparations underway for Palestinian municipal elections scheduled 8 Oct, Hamas and Fatah accused each other of obstructing one another's campaigns. West Bank saw worsening water shortages. Egyptian President Sisi 23 Aug said Russia's President Putin has offered to host Israeli-Palestinian summit to find a solution; Israel reiterated it is ready for talks without preconditions, Palestinian officials remained firm on demands for talks. No date set yet for France's proposed international peace conference to convene sides for talks before end of 2016; meeting between FMs to discuss peace process reportedly scheduled for sidelines of UNGA in Sept. Israel reportedly approved 464 new homes in Jewish settlements in W Bank 30 Aug. Likud MP David Amsalem proposed law that would prevent any future criminal investigation into PM Netanyahu while he is in office, drawing opposition condemnation.

➔ Lebanon AUGUST 2016

Visiting Egyptian FM Sameh Shoukry 16-17 Aug met with counterpart and Lebanese political parties, expressed concern over lack of president and resulting political vacuum and offered support to find compromise. Election of president postponed again early Aug until 7 Sept due to lack of quorum in parliament. One person killed, eleven wounded in bomb attack in Beqaa Valley 31 Aug. Armed forces continued raids of Syrian refugee camps on Beqaa Valley, arresting dozens 22 Aug over suspicious activity, lack of proper identification. U.S. 9 Aug delivered \$50m military aid package to help Lebanon

fight militant threat from Syria, bringing 2016 total military aid to \$220m. Hizbollah early Aug reported it had deployed hundreds of reinforcements to Aleppo to support Syrian regime fighting rebels (see Syria). UNSC 30 Aug extended mandate of UNFIL peacekeeping force in south for another year.

→ Syria AUGUST 2016

Month saw new escalation as Turkey launched major offensive in north, while regime seized an opposition stronghold outside Damascus and battle for Aleppo continued. U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) dominated by Kurdish YPG fighters captured Manbij from IS 6 Aug, capping twelve-week campaign west of Euphrates river. YPG seized some areas of Hasaka in NE from regime forces 23 Aug, expanding their hold within city despite regime's first ever use of airstrikes against YPG forces. Seeking to remove IS from border area and contain growing YPG control in N Syria, Turkey 23 Aug launched air and ground offensive on Islamic State (IS) positions near Jarablus together with Turkish-backed rebels and U.S. fighter jets; next day took control of city, as operation continued west of city to seize last remaining IS-held territory along border. U.S. said Kurdish forces must retreat from Manbij area to east of Euphrates river, key Turkish demand to which U.S. agreed prior to Manbij campaign. SDF forces linked to YPG clashed with Turkey-backed forces near Jarablus; latter seized several villages from SDF 29 Aug. Battle for Aleppo between Russian-backed govt forces and rebels continued: coalition of rebel groups (including Jabhat Fath al-Sham, formerly Jabhat al-Nusra) 6 Aug broke month-long siege on east Aleppo. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported over 600 civilians killed in Aleppo during month as fighting including further regime and Russian airstrikes continued. UN continued calls for regular 48-hour ceasefire in Aleppo to allow aid delivery; proposed third round of UN-mediated intra-Syrian peace talks previously planned for late Aug deferred. Negotiations continued between Russia and U.S. on restoring cessation of hostilities agreement and initiating military cooperation against Fath al-Sham. IS-affiliated media 30 Aug reported IS chief strategist Abu Muhammad al-Adnani killed in Aleppo province. In significant gain for Assad regime, rebel stronghold Darayya outside Damascus surrendered to govt forces 25 Aug ending four-year siege; regime reported evacuation of residents and fighters complete 27 Aug. UN and Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) investigation determined regime and IS responsibility for specific chlorine and mustard chemical attacks in 2014 and 2015; separate report by OPCW also suggested that regime maintained chemical weapons agents in violation of Chemical Weapons Convention and 2013 agreement brokered by U.S. and Russia.

→ Bahrain AUGUST 2016

Govt crackdown on dissent targeted Shia clerics, including court sentencing 18 Aug of Sheikh Ali Humaidan to one year in prison for taking part in “illegal gathering” in Diraz village. UN rights experts 16 Aug urged govt to stop persecution of Shias.

➔ Iran AUGUST 2016

Russia 16-18 Aug used Nojeh air base near Hamadan in NW to launch airstrikes against rebels in Syria; some MPs said move breached constitution which prohibits foreign militaries from being based in Iran, govt 22 Aug said Russia had stopped using base “for now” and criticised Russia for publicising its use. Govt said security forces 15 Aug killed Islamic State (IS) senior member and 16 Aug killed three IS-linked militants in Kermanshah province bordering Iraq. Naval boats manoeuvred around U.S. warships in Persian Gulf area 23 and 24 Aug, provoking warning shots. Local media 28 Aug reported that member of Iran’s nuclear negotiating team suspected of espionage had been questioned and released on bail.

➔ Iraq AUGUST 2016

Leadership struggle between PM Abadi and former PM Maliki intensified as security forces continued to prepare to retake Mosul from Islamic State (IS). MPs in Maliki’s State of Law coalition 3 Aug questioned Defence Minister Khaled al-Obeidi on corruption case; Obeidi released documents implicating parliament speaker Salim al-Jibouri and two State of Law MPs. Jibouri filed defamation lawsuit against Obeidi and Supreme Judicial Council 9 Aug closed case against Jibouri for lack of evidence. Obeidi dismissed 25 Aug following parliamentary vote of no confidence. Abadi continued cabinet reshuffle: parliament 15 Aug approved five new ministers. IS attacked border guard base between Rutba and Trebil near Jordan 16 Aug killing at least nine; attacked Shiite wedding party 28 Aug at Ain al-Tamer, 50km from Karbala, killing eighteen.

- **REPORT: Fight or Flight: The Desperate Plight of Iraq’s “Generation 2000”**
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➔ Saudi Arabia AUGUST 2016

Huthi rebels in Yemen increased rocket attacks into Saudi Arabia as Saudi-led coalition increased bombing of rebel-held territory in Yemen (see Yemen).

✈ Yemen AUGUST 2016

Peace talks collapsed and fighting escalated. UN envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed 6 Aug announced talks suspended for one month; govt and Huthi rebels disagreed over sequencing of withdrawal of rebel forces from cities, disarmament and formation of unity govt. Huthis increased rocket attacks into Saudi Arabia and tried to hold territory there as Saudi Arabia-led coalition resumed airstrikes on capital Sanaa after three months' break and on Huthi northern strongholds. Saudi-led coalition airstrikes 13 Aug killed nineteen people, mostly children in Saada province (NW), 15 Aug hit Médecins Sans Frontières hospital in Hajjah (NW) killing fifteen. Saudi-led coalition renewed efforts to retake Sanaa through NW entrance at Nehm. Tens of thousands rallied in Sanaa 20 Aug in support of Huthi rebels and ex-President Saleh; Saudi-led coalition same day bombed Sanaa, reportedly killing three civilians. U.S. Sec State Kerry 25 Aug proposed new peace plan to form unity govt; Huthi rebels 28 Aug said they would restart talks when Saudi-led coalition stopped bombing. Islamic State suicide bombing on pro-govt militia compound in Aden 29 Aug killed at least 60.

➔ Algeria AUGUST 2016

Three suspected Islamist militants 3 Aug surrendered in Adrar province (S). Army found militant hideout 3 Aug in Skikda province (NE) and weapons cache 14 Aug in Boumerdes (N). Four killed by IED 5 Aug in Chechar (E). Security officials 24 Aug said Islamic State-affiliate Jund al-Khalifa had been dismantled.

➔ Egypt AUGUST 2016

Military 4 Aug said it had killed Abu Duaa al-Ansari, leader of Islamic State-affiliate Sinai Province (SP), in al-Arish, N Sinai; group 18 Aug confirmed death, announced Sheikh Abdullah as new leader. Suspected SP militants continued to attack civilians and security personnel in al-Arish area: three IED attacks killed four civilians, injured four civilians and at least eleven police; sniper 22 Aug shot dead security officer; unidentified militants 23 Aug shot dead army officer and police. Govt 11 Aug announced \$12bn agreement with IMF to support implementation of economic reforms.

➔ **Libya** AUGUST 2016

Conflict deepened between supporters and opponents of UN-backed Govt of National Accord (GNA) of PM-designate Serraj. In controversial 22 Aug vote, Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR) rejected GNA with 60 voting against, one in favour and 40 abstaining; other HoR members boycotted vote considering it illegal. GNA's Presidential Council 24 Aug acknowledged HoR vote and said it would submit revised cabinet. In Tripoli, pro- and anti-Serraj armed groups early Aug fought over control of govt buildings. In Sirte, Misratan-led forces, nominally under Serraj's command, continued to advance to retake control of city from Islamic State (IS) but suffered heavy death toll, with at least 34 killed 28 Aug. U.S. 1 Aug said it had begun airstrikes supporting anti-IS advance, carried out almost 100 in area throughout month. In Benghazi, General Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) launched strikes against strongholds of Shura Council coalition in Ganfuda neighbourhood, claiming it is an IS-affiliate and therefore legitimate target; residents accused LNA of indiscriminate shelling. Suicide car bomb attack against LNA troops 2 Aug killed 23, Shura Council claimed responsibility. In oil crescent east of Sirte, forces under control of local strongman and GNA ally Ibrahim Jedran kept control of oil terminals despite threat of LNA advances.

➔ **Mauritania** AUGUST 2016

Govt mid-Aug reportedly deployed short- and medium-range missiles at northern border with Western Sahara following Morocco's deployment of gendarmes in area in anti-smuggling operation (see Western Sahara).

➔ Morocco AUGUST 2016

Govt 16 Aug said it had arrested four suspected Islamic State members allegedly planning attacks in Casablanca. Govt anti-smuggling operation in southern Western Sahara that began 14 Aug sparked protests by Polisario Front independence movement and Mauritania (see Western Sahara and Mauritania).

➔ Tunisia AUGUST 2016

President Essebsi 3 Aug named Nida Tounes (NT) party member Youssef Chahed as PM following 30 July parliamentary vote of no confidence in PM Essid. Chahed 20 Aug named 26 ministers and fourteen secretaries of state, including representatives of six major parties and independents. Parliament 26 Aug passed vote of confidence in govt even though NT MPs and Islamist An-Nahda party members 20-21 Aug expressed reservations about cabinet composition. New govt took office 29 Aug. Jihadist attack on Mount Semmama (NW) same day killed three soldiers, wounded seven. Police 31 Aug killed two Islamist militants in Karma near Algerian border, one civilian died in clash.

➔ ⚡ Western Sahara AUGUST 2016

Moroccan troop deployment and roadworks raised tensions with Polisario Front armed independence movement, which deployed its troops in area. Polisario Front 16 Aug accused Morocco of violating ceasefire by sending troops and military equipment into buffer zone near Mauritanian border, called on UN to intervene. Morocco same day said it was conducting anti-smuggling operation and paving road. UN 18 Aug reportedly said peacekeeping mission MINURSO found no sign of suspicious military activity by Morocco, but Polisario 28 Aug said in letter to MINURSO that it was deploying troops to area “to prevent further Moroccan activities” beyond its territory. UNSG Ban 28 Aug said he was deeply concerned by “introduction of armed units from Morocco and the Polisario in close proximity”.