This document provides an overview of developments in the Mediterranean Basin and other regions of interest from 22 May — 04 June, with hyperlinks to source material highlighted and underlined in the text. For more information on the topics below or other issues pertaining to the region, please contact the members of the Med Basin Team, or visit our website at www.cimicweb.org.

Libya’s Ethnic Minorities and Upcoming Elections
By Maya Moseley

Libya’s first National Assembly elections since the fall of Moammar Gaddafi are scheduled to take place 19 June 2012, reports Time. According to political analyst Alison Pargeter, non-Arab ethnic minority groups will present unique challenges to the upcoming election as well as post-conflict national reconciliation. Arab and non-Arab groups alike are divided into over 140 tribes and clans in the country. According to the Time article, while many minority groups were marginalised during Gaddafi’s reign, others had fought in Gaddafi’s security forces for decades and remained loyal to the regime throughout the uprising. Non-Arab minority groups in Libya that were involved in the recent conflict include: the Berber, Tuareg, Tawergha and Tubu. Under Gaddafi’s “Arabisation” policies, many minority groups faced discrimination through the prohibition of languages other than Arabic, denial of access to citizenship records, and denial of housing, informs Minority Rights Group.

Demographic data for ethnic minorities is limited and varies according to sources, but it is estimated that there are 236,000-590,000 Berber in Libya, mostly residing in the Nafusa Mountains, with some of the population scattered throughout the country.

(continued on page 10)
Djibouti
Citizens of the village Karabti San, in the Tadjourah region have been constructing an eco-dome in their community, in cooperation with members of the United States Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), reports the US Army. The eco-dome might be utilised for a clinic or a school. The structure will have a large room, a small room and “living quarters on the second story”. Built with materials from the local area, the eco-dome could easily be duplicated by those who participated in the project. Once the project is complete, the Djiboutian government will bring electricity to Karabti San.

Eritrea
According to Professor Galia Sabar of Tel Aviv University, tens of thousands of Eritrean migrants are living in Israel illegally, reports the Jerusalem Post. While some of them might qualify as refugees, others do not. Sabar suggests Israel must clarify which migrants qualify, based on a UN refugee status determination (RSD) process, and decide which can be repatriated. Sabar points to incidents where the Eritrean government “actively helped discharged soldiers attain passports and make their way to Israel because of the lack of jobs in their home country”, which violates the countries’ bi-lateral agreement. In related news, a Reuters article on the recent street violence against African migrants in Tel Aviv informs that “Eritrea’s ambassador to Israel, Tesfamariam Tekeste, said in a television interview on Tuesday that Asmara would admit its citizens who return voluntarily - but not deportees”. According to Haaretz, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said on 03 June that housing is needed for the 35,000 migrants from Eritrea, Sudan and Somalia who cannot be repatriated.

Ethiopia
The Urban Water and Sanitation Services Project (UWSSP) was launched in 2007 and has benefited approximately one million people in Ethiopia. The World Bank approved additional financing of USD 150 million to support the Ethiopian government’s efforts to expand their national water supply coverage by 2015 and to enhance their sanitation services for about 1.5 million low-income residents. The project will also continue to address water loss problems. According to the report, out of 50 litres per capita per day (lpcd) produced, only 35 lpcd reached the consumers in the capital city at the start of the project.

The corporation Saudi Star Agricultural Development is leasing 10,000 hectares of land in the southwestern Gambella region to cultivate rice. The new enterprise is likely to create 5,000 jobs over the next several years, according to Bloomberg. Saudi Star plans to start growing rice on 3,000 hectares in January 2013. The Ethiopian government’s land-lease project has been controversial due to allegations that several thousand households in various regions had to be resettled, as stated in the US State Department’s Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2011 for Ethiopia. The Saudi project was delayed by one month, after gunmen killed five people in April who were working on an irrigation canal for the project, and in March 2012, opponents of the plan killed 19 students on a bus.

Africa’s second most populated country, Ethiopia, is one of four nations that received the 2012 Resolve Award by the Global Leaders Council for Reproductive Health, reports the Aspen Institute. “The award recognizes the enormous progress each has made towards making family planning and reproductive health services accessible to all of their citizens”. Ethiopia was highlighted for the increased use of contraceptives from 15% to 29% and the decrease of an average family size from 6-7 to 3-4 household members. An Aspen Institute leader offered that reproductive health is now recognised to be a vital part of development.

Somalia
In late May, African Union (AU) and Somali forces conducted Operation Free Shabelle, a week-long mission to secure the Afgooye corridor, according to an African Union Mission for Somalia (AMISOM) press release. The Afgooye corridor “is a critical corridor linking the capital Mogadishu and the agricultural town of Afgooye on the Shabelle River”. Elasha Biyaha, a town in the corridor, was the last al Shabaab stronghold and it is now under control of the Somali National Army and AMISOM troops. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) briefing notes from 29 May state that an estimated 14,000 displaced people from Afgooye fled the area to escape “military activity”. About 10,000 arrived in the capital and the remainder in Lower Shabelle and Lower Juba.

Turkey hosted the Second Istanbul Conference on Somalia, or Istanbul II, on 31 May and 01 June, with the theme “Preparing Somalia’s Future: Goals for 2015”. According to al Jazeera, representatives of over 54 countries attended, as well as United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. While the first day of the conference focused on water, energy, roads and sustainability, the second day focused on the political dimension of aid to Somalia. The AU, UN and Somalis are interested in the success of both the Somalia Roadmap and the transitional government’s mandate to end in August 2012. The Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Somalia, Augustine Mahiga, who also attended Istanbul II, called for greater investment in Somalia. “A paradigm shift in international assistance will allow partners of Somalia to build the resilience of Somali households, communities and local institutions against
crises in the medium and long-term,” reports the UN News Centre.

A recently-released World Bank report by Joakim Gundel found that in 2009, the Somali government received at least USD 94 million in revenues but reported only USD 11 million, informs Voice of America (VOA). In 2010, the government collected revenues of USD 70 million but reported only USD 22 million. In the report, the World Bank states “not all revenues and donated funds are deposited in the central bank, and it is not clear where they go”. Last year, whistle blower and former chief of Somalia’s public finance unit, Abdirizak Fartaag, alleged that an audit revealed evidence of mismanagement and misappropriation of funds.

Reuters reports that Kenyan and Somali troops captured the town of Afmadow, which is a known al Shabaab stronghold. The article notes that the seizure of Afmadow is “a crucial step in the Kenyan drive towards the southern port city of Kismayu, the hub of al Shabaab operations, about 120 km (75 miles) away”. In related news, Kenya is now a contributor of troops and resources to AMISOM. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Commission of the African Union and the Government of the Republic of Kenya was signed on 02 June 2012.

On 29 May, Somali President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed’s convoy was attacked by al Shabaab rebels while traveling between the capital and Afgoye, states Reuters. The vehicles scattered in different directions and the president was unharmed. The ensuing firefight lasted roughly 30 minutes.

Somali piracy
Agence France-Presse (AFP) reports that Puntland Maritime Police Forces (PMPF) apprehended 11 pirates in the coastal town of Hafun. However, according to Somalia Report, seven suspected pirates were arrested and subsequently released. “[T]he local media described them as innocent fishermen and teenagers”.

Reuters reports that the trial of the six Somali pirates involved in the hijacking of the French luxury yacht Ponant in 2008 has commenced in Paris. One pirate has pleaded guilty while the other five “say they are innocent and played no direct role in the assault”. In April 2008, the Ponant and its 30 crewmembers were hijacked in the Gulf of Aden and released for a ransom of an alleged USD 2.75 million. One week later, the pirates were captured by French commandos in Somalia and EUR 118,000 (USD 146,000) of the ransom payment was recovered.

Somalis involved in the kidnapping of British couple Paul and Rachel Chandler may stand trial in the United Kingdom (UK), states the Mirror. The kidnappers are currently in custody in Kenya for an unrelated attack on a French ship. The couple was seized from their yacht near the Seychelles in 2009 and held captive for one year until the captors released them for a ransom of an alleged GBP 620,000 (USD 950,000). Interpol is working with government lawyers to extradite the kidnappers to the UK for prosecution in the Chandler case.

AP reports that a federal appeals court in Richmond, Virginia expanded the 200-year-old US Supreme Court definition of piracy, saying “an armed attack on a U.S. vessel can be considered piracy even if no one ever boards or robs the ship”. The expansion will enable US prosecutors to hold attackers of US vessels accountable regardless if the attack was successful or not. Charges against five Somali pirates involved on the attack on the USS Ashland were dismissed because the attackers had not taken control or robbed the ship.

NATO’s Allied Command Operations (ACO) reports that the Netherland’s Navy commodore Ben Bekkering will assume command on 7 June of TF508, NATO’s Operation Ocean Shield; he and his staff will be embarked on the Dutch flagship HNMLS Evertsen.

Gulf of Guinea
A Greek-Owned oil tanker anchored off Lagos, Nigeria, was attacked by armed pirates, reports AFP. The 23 crewmembers retreated into the safe room and sent out a distress call. The Nigerian navy and other warships in the area were notified. The attackers abandoned the vessel after failing to gain access to the safe room. In the Gulf of Guinea, 21 attacks and four hijackings have been reported since January 2012.

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Algeria
Algeria’s National Elections Monitoring Commission found that the 10 May National Assembly elections were “neither credible nor transparent”, according to Agence France-Presse (AFP). The Monitoring Commission is composed of representatives from 44 political parties. The representatives from the ruling party and its allies have refused to sign the report. In related news, at least 14 political opposition parties in Algeria have decided to boycott Parliament in protest of the 10 May polls, reports Magharebia. The Front for the Protection of Democracy coalition alleges that the legislative elections were fraudulent and seeks to pressure the government into voiding the elections. The parties have decided to establish a “parallel parliament” that was scheduled to hold session on 26 May. Public opinion remains split over the coalition’s boycott. Further, BBC reports that more than 60 delegates walked out of the inaugural parliamentary session. Most of those who walked out were members of an Islamist coalition, the Green Algeria Alliance (AVV), which has denounced the parliamentary elections as being fraudulent.

An Algerian advisory panel on human rights informed AFP that thousands of Islamists imprisoned in 1992, in an effort to prevent the Islamic Salvation Front party from winning the country’s elections, have the right to receive compensation. The head of the panel, Farouk Ksentini, told reporters that an estimated 15-18,000 people who were taken to two desert camps in southern Algeria, languished between two to three years without a trial and others contracted diseases. In related human rights news, the US Department of State report on international human rights found the three largest human rights violations in Algeria are the restrictions of freedom of assembly, inability of citizens to affect change in government, and the lack of investigation into disappearances.

Libya
Two Tarhouna-based militia brigades took over the Tripoli airport on 04 June in protest of a militia leader’s disappearance from the airport road on 03 June, reports CNN. The group said to be involved in the airport standoff was the al-Awfeia Brigade from an area southeast of Tripoli, according to al Jazeera. The group used heavy weapons and warning shots to prevent the departure or landing of aircraft. The article suggests that the Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) has been unable to integrate the various militias operating nationwide, whose members often serve the role of police and armed forces, due to the gap in national security forces. A Tarhouna militia spokesman told CNN that the situation at the Tripoli airport had been resolved through successful negotiations with government officials to release a detained militia member. Meanwhile, the newly-released US Department of State human rights report covers violations committed by Moammar Gaddafi’s regime and forces, as well as revolutionary militias and opposition forces. According to the report, Gaddafi’s forces were responsible for the bulk of human rights abuses in Libya in 2011.

According to Libya’s Prosecutor-General Abdul Aziz al-Haddadi, civilian trials of senior officials in Moammar Gaddafi’s former government will begin on 05 June 2012, reports Reuters. While the government has been pushing for trials of former regime members, human rights activist worry if those accused will receive fair trials. The most prominent convict is Seif al-Islam, Gaddafi’s son. The International Criminal Court (ICC) says that Seif al-Islam will remain in Libya until Tripoli’s challenge to the ICC over the location of Seif’s trial for war crimes is decided, informs Associated Press (AP). In related news, a Libyan military court sentenced nineteen Ukrainians, three nationals of Belarus and two Russians for allegedly working as mercenaries for Moammar Gaddafi. The men were arrested in late August 2011 after the fall of Tripoli to revolutionary forces. One of the Russians was sentenced to life in prison while the other men were sentenced to 10 years of hard labour. The men deny all the charges and claim they were working in the oil sector in Libya. Meanwhile, al Jazeera reports that Libya’s NTC is working to re-establish the national army to integrate former soldiers and revolutionary fighters. Training centres are opened across the country and Libya’s defence minister says they intend to build a force of 100,000 soldiers to provide security across the country. Libya wants to retain at least 70% of the former army and 30% of new recruits.

Mustafa Abdel Jalil, the head of Libya’s NTC told Reuters he expected a delay in the national assembly election scheduled for 19 June. Candidates must first pass a vetting process in order to run in the elections. They are allowed to appeal the outcome in court and therefore, he believes elections will be postponed. Candidate registration closed on 23 May followed by the 10-day appeal process. However, NTC spokesman Mohammed Al-Hareizi has denied that Jalil told Reuters that the appeals process for election candidates would cause a postponement of elections, says Libya Herald. Head of the High National Election Commission (HNEW), Nuri Elabbar, confirmed that elections will be held on 19 June as scheduled. Observers have expressed doubts that elections will occur on time, due to the extension of voter registration by a week. Tripoli Post informs that the Libyan High National Elections Commissions recorded more than 2.9 million eligible voters at the close of voter registration. Additionally, there are now over 4,000 candidates running for parliamentary seats.

Libya’s National Oil Corporation (NOC) told Reuters that BP will resume its oil and gas exploration projects in the country. BP had just initiated exploration in western Libya in early February 2011 when it was forced to suspend its projects due to the revolution. According to a 2007 deal BP signed for USD 900 million, it will establish two wells.
Mali

Armed Islamist group Ansar Dine **restarted negotiations** with the Tuareg-led rebel group National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) on 02 June, regarding a power-sharing agreement for northern Mali, according to **Voice of America (VOA)**. After announcing their plan for **joint rule** over northern Mali on 27 May, talks between Ansar Dine and the MNLA collapsed on 29 May, reports the **South African Press Association (SAPA)**. According to MNLA spokesman Ibrahim Assaley, Ansar Dine sought the application of “pure and hard” Sharia law in the region. Ansar Dine also sought to prevent non-Muslim humanitarian groups from providing assistance. Security **experts warn** that northern Mali may soon turn into an “Afghanistan or Somalia” with the presence of heavily armed Islamist groups affiliated with al Qaeda, reports **Reuters**.

The African Union (AU) is set to **refer** the current crisis in Mali to the United Nations Security Council, says **Reuters**. According to the article, the Security Council may decide on an action plan to bring stability back to the country, which has experienced a military coup and lost control of the northern region to rebels in recent months. Further, the **Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR)** reports that Luis Moreno-Ocampo, prosecutor for the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a statement announcing an **investigation** into the situation in Mali. The investigation has been launched on his own initiative under the principle of “**proprio motu**”. The statement says that it will investigate war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. In related news, the recent US Department of State human rights report focused on events that took place in 2011 and found human rights **problems** related to “gender inequality, failures of the justice system and exploitative labour relationships”. The report also called attention to poor prison and detention facilities and noted the rising violence in northern Mali and presence of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Aid officials say the situation in Mali **continues to deteriorate**, causing additional forced displacements, with an estimated 320,000 Malians now in neighbouring Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger and 200,000 internally displaced within Mali. As **rainy season** approaches, concerns have risen over the situation of Malian refugees already facing a food crisis and inadequate shelter, warns **Alertnet**. According to Mark Yarnell of Refugees International, the rainy season may affect the ability of aid organisations to access camps in remote areas, thereby disrupting food distribution and mobile healthcare.

**Mauritania**

Mauritanian presidential advisor and religious scholar Aslamo Ould Sidi al-Mustafa **issued a fatwa** that allows women to run for the presidency but bans them from winning the election, says al **Arabyiya**. According to al-Mustafa, women can participate “for fun”, but they are not allowed to win, sanctioning the rigging of elections if necessary. A local women’s rights organisation, Association of Female Heads of Families, says this fatwa contradicts the constitution and is one of a series of policies by “anti-women officials” that aims to deny women equal representation.

**Morocco**

A new draft law could provide members of the armed forces in Morocco with legal immunity for “military operations” within the country. The law declares “criminal investigation shall not be applied to members of the Royal Armed Forces who are executing the orders of their commanders … during an operation inside the national territories.” The Moroccan Coalition for Human Rights Groups has urged parliament not to pass the legislation that they see as legitimising impunity.

**Nigeria**

Nigeria has begun a three day **mourning period** for victims of the fatal commercial plane crash on 04 June, according to **VOA**. On 03 June, the Dana Airlines flight was traveling from Abuja to Lagos when the pilot radioed an emergency communiqué moments before it crashed into a two-story building in a highly populated area. Nigerian **emergency services** continue to search the site of the plane crash as all 153 passengers were killed, reports **Reuters**. It is not yet known how many people were killed on the ground and the cause of the crash is yet unknown. **BBC** says that Nigerian air carriers have experienced seven **major air crashes** since 1992 and in 2007, the aviation industry was revamped to address security concerns. Elsewhere, **This Day** reports that on 03 June, at least 12 people were killed and 27 injured in Bauchi, northern Nigeria, when a **suicide bomber** attacked the Harvest Field Church and neighbouring Living Faith Church. This violence came just one day after tribal clashes erupted between the Alago and Eggons in Nasara-wa State, killing at least 50 people.

Modesto di Girolamo, an Italian engineer, has **been freed** after being kidnapped in Nigeria on 28 May, informs **BBC**. The identity of the kidnappers remains unknown. Meanwhile, in a separate **BBC** article, a German engineer who was abducted in January 2012 was **killed** during a police rescue attempt in Kano on 31 May. Al Qaeda’s North African branch claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and released a video in March, calling for Germany to free a jailed terror suspect in exchange for the release of the engineer.

**Tunisia**

Tunisia’s prime minister, Hamadi Jebali, issued a warning that the government would not tolerate attacks by violent Islamists, reports **AP**. The statement came days after Salafi Islamists attacked liquor vendors and police stations. Jebali is part of the moderate Islamist government that has been “cautious” in responding to attacks by conservative Islamists. However, **AP** reports that the Interior Ministry decided to prohibit **planned demonstrations** against Salafi extremists on 01 June. Protests had been planned for a “day of anger” on 02 June in Tunis, to protest violence used by Salafi extremist over the past few weeks. The Interior Ministry ruled the planned demonstration illegal since government permission had not been sought. In other news, the US Department of State human rights report **details improvements** in human rights since the fall of former Tunisian President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali. According to the report, citizens now experience greater freedom of assembly, expression and press.

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Egypt

The state of emergency in Egypt ended on 31 May and the ruling military, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), has stated that it would no longer enforce the Emergency Law, reports Al Masry al Youm. SCAF also released a statement saying it would continue to rule until the end of the transitional period, which will be marked by the election of the new president. According to the Washington Post, the emergency law had been in effect for more than 30 years and human rights groups have hailed its expiration.

The Egyptian Electoral Committee confirmed that the Muslim Brotherhood’s Mohamed Mursi and former Mubarak era politician Ahmed Shafiq will face each other in a run-off election on 16-17 June to determine Egypt’s next president, reports Reuters. Mursi won 24.3% of the vote, while Shafiq won 23.3% of the vote in the initial round of voting. Turnout at the 23-24 May 2012 elections was 46%. Three other presidential candidates filed complaints over voting irregularities; however, their complaints were rejected by the electoral committee. The Carter Center, one of the many election monitoring organisations in the country, released a statement saying “the Center’s limited mission found that the polling process was peaceful and orderly”. The organisation also noted that there was “an important new measure to promote transparency - counting at the polling station in the presence of candidate agents and witnesses”; however, election authorities “prohibited access to the final aggregation of national results, undermining the overall transparency of the process”. Al Jazeera reports that, following the announcement of election results, thousands of protesters took to the street in Cairo’s Tahrir Square to protest against alleged injustice in the elections. Additionally, on 28 May a fire was set to the headquarters of Egypt’s runoff presidential candidate Ahmad Shafiq; eight people have been arrested in connection to the incident.

According to Reuters, in light of the polarising effects of the two remaining presidential contenders, it could prove difficult for either one to establish an effective government that can secure foreign investment and tackle the economic crisis. Economists have said that Egypt will need a minimum of USD 11 billion over the next year to prevent a possible devaluation of its currency and a balance of payments crisis. Carina Kamel, a senior correspondent at Al Arabiya, states that the new president must work to create jobs for the 3.38 million who are unemployed (12.6% official unemployment rate), 77% of which are between the ages of 15 and 29.

Associated Press (AP) reports that, on 02 June, a judge sentenced former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and his interior minister Habib al Adly to life in prison for their involvement in the killing of protestors during the uprising that removed Mubarak from power in 2011. Mubarak’s defence team and lawyers believe that the life sentence could be easily appealed. The former president and his two sons, Alaa and Gamal, were also cleared of corruption charges. Six police chiefs were acquitted of their alleged involvement in the killings. Twenty-thousand protestors gathered in Cairo’s Tahrir Square following the verdicts, while other protestors gathered in cities across Egypt to express their anger over the light sentence and acquittals. According to Al Arabiya, Egyptian activists called for continued mass demonstrations on 05 June. In response to the verdicts issued, Egyptian pro-democracy campaigners have called for a new uprising, claiming that justice was not served. Presidential candidate Mohammed Mursi told reporters that, if elected, he would retry Mubarak and former regime officials suspected of involvement of killing protestors, reports BBC.

South Sudan

New figures from the South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics (SSNBS) indicate that annual inflation increased to 80% in May, reports the Sudan Tribune. The SSNBS attributes the rise to the unexpected increase in the cost of food and non-alcoholic beverages which was affected by heightened fuel scarcity. It is expected that the fuel shortages could worsen in coming months. Reuters reports that South Sudanese President Salva Kiir stated in a letter sent to current, former and deputy ministers that South Sudanese officials had “stolen” an estimated USD 4 billion of public money and that “most of the these funds have been taken out of the country and deposited in foreign accounts”. The president further stated that the funds should be returned in order to salvage the country’s reputation and help South Sudanese experiencing poverty.

The US Department of State’s 2011 country report on human rights revealed that conflict between South Sudan’s People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) in 2011 resulted in a series of extrajudicial killings, torture, rape and other inhumane treatment of civilians within South Sudan. The report also cites politically motivated abductions, arbitrary arrest and detention, and an inefficient and corrupt judiciary. It was noted that the South Sudanese government seldom took steps to punish offi-
cials who committed the abuses. The *Sudan Tribune* reports that the government of South Sudan strongly [denounced the report](#) and instead reiterated its commitment to protect the human rights of its citizens.

**Sudan**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) stated that initial findings from a recent mission to Sudan show that the [economic challenges](#) in Sudan are “daunting” and that the economic situation in 2012 has not improved. The IMF “recommends a two-pronged reform strategy: short-term emergency measures to regain control of, and stabilize, the economy, including fiscal consolidation, and in the medium term, a comprehensive structural reform program to recalibrate the economy in line with the country’s economic and financial potential”. The *Sudan Tribune* reports that the Union of Sudanese Businessmen (USB) has called on the Sudanese government to rethink their plan to lift [fuel subsidies](#) because the group believes the move would hurt the government since it is the biggest consumer of fuel. The government’s National Congress Party (NCP) had recently approved the plan to suspend state subsidisation of fuel products as part of austerity measures intended to rescue the failing economy.

The Sudanese army told *Agence France–Presse* (AFP) that it had killed [45](#) Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) Darfur rebels and destroyed 16 vehicles on 02 June; however, JEM spokesperson Gibril Adam Bilal said the rebels had seized an army compound, killed an unknown number of Sudanese soldiers and took 16 of their vehicles. *AFP* has acknowledged that “such casualty claims are impossible to verify from a region where access is restricted”. According to the *Sudan Tribune*, JEM military spokesman, Badawi Moussa al Sakin, reported that “JEM lost three soldiers in the operation”. Also in Darfur, the World Food Program (WFP) announced that British aid worker Patrick Noonan, who was working for WFP, has been released after [86 days in captivity](#) in the South Darfur region.

The *Sudan Tribune* reports that the leader of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), Malik Aggar, met with the African Union [mediation team](#) on 03 June to discuss the status of Blue Nile and South Kordofan states as it relates to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The meeting primarily concerned the political position of the rebel group and access of international aid groups to the rebel held areas. On 25 May, *United Press International* (UPI) reported that unexploded [cluster bombs](#) were found in South Kordofan, where the Sudanese army is fighting the SPLM-N. Human Rights Watch reports that the weapon is a [Soviet-made](#) RBK-500 cluster bomb containing AO-2.5 RT sub-munitions (individual bomblets).

According to *BBC*, at least four non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been [banned from working](#) in the eastern region of Sudan. This poor and underdeveloped region comprises the Red Sea, Gedaraf and Kassala states and has been at peace since an [agreement](#) was signed with rebels in 2006. The *BBC’s* James Copnall says there are fears in the Sudanese government that a rebellion could break out again in the area. According to an official at the Sudanese Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC), the four organisations, Save the Children Sweden, GOAL of Ireland, a Japanese humanitarian group and another Irish organisation, were asked to leave because “they failed in their planned projects” and because of a “weakness in these international NGOs”. These NGOs have not been asked to stop their activities in other parts of the country.

*Al Jazeera* reports that rights groups and lawyers have said that a Sudanese woman, Intisar Sharif Abdalla, has been sentenced to [death by stoning](#) for adultery. Sentences of stoning are rare in Sudan and human rights campaigners have raised concerns that Sudan might start applying Islamic law more strictly following the secession of mostly non-Muslim South Sudan in 2011.

**Conflict in Sudan and South Sudan**

*AFP* reports that, following Sudan’s removal of its military from the Abyei area on 31 May, the United Nations called for Sudan to also remove its [armed police force](#) as well. Sudanese foreign ministry spokesman Al Obeid Meruh told *AFP* that “we didn’t have any police at all inside the Abyei area, now or in the past”. However, on 01 June Sudan stated that its police forces, numbering 169 people, had [been redeployed](#) to an area outside of Abyei, reports *Reuters*. Also on 01 June, South Sudan filed a complaint against Sudan at the UN Security Council for Khartoum’s presence in Abyei and repeated air strikes against South Sudan.

*Reuters* reports that on 04 June, Sudan and South Sudan began their first direct [high-level talks](#) on border security since the two countries came to the brink of war earlier this year. The defence and interior affairs ministers and military figures from both countries are attending the negotiations. According to the *Sudan Tribune*, the Arab League announced its [full solidarity](#) with Sudan in its dispute with South Sudan; however, the body welcomed the resumption in talks between the two countries. Despite the progress towards negotiation, tensions are still high after South Sudan’s top negotiator, Pagan Amum, told reporters that [Sudanese warplanes](#) and artillery had bombed South Sudanese territory, reports *AFP*. Southern army spokesman Philip Aguer said that the SAF “has been bombing Northern Bahr el Ghazal...this has also involved long range artillery”. Sudan has denied the claims and *AFP* states that it has not been possible for reporters to independently verify the attacks.

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05 June 2012
Governance
In a 27 May letter to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon communicated that little progress had been made towards peace in Syria, according to Reuters. Meanwhile UN envoy to Syria Kofi Annan warns of the potential for “all out war”, reports BBC. The UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) observed continued Syrian troop activity and heavy weapons in populated areas, which is a violation of the Annan ceasefire agreement. Meanwhile on 04 June, a Syrian rebel spokesperson told Reuters that rebels are no longer committed to the peace plan and asserted their right to “defend our people”.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, urged the international community to continue their support of the Annan peace plan and called for unimpeded access to the site of a massacre in the city of Houla, which killed 108 people including 49 children, according to CNN. Pillay expressed concern that Syria might descend into a full blown civil war which will have larger regional implications. The UN leader urged, once again, that the UNSC consider referring the case of Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Syria’s ambassador to the UN, Faysal Khabbaz Hamoui, accused 600-800 terrorists of perpetrating the slaughter in Houla using Israeli-made weapons, reports the Christian Science Monitor (CSM). International reaction to the massacre has been swift, as Agence France-Presse (AFP) reports that Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United States expelled Syrian ambassadors or top envoys from their countries. AFP further reports that Arab League Chief Nabil al Alarabi will meet with UN officials on 07 June in a effort to convince the UNSC to find a solution to the Syrian violence. Arabi referred to Chapter VII of the Annan six-point plan which outlines actions the UNSC might take, “including military force, in response to threats to international peace, breaches of peace and acts of aggression”.

The New York Times reports that on 27 May, the UNSC unanimously condemned the Syrian government for its role in the massacre at Houla, with new details emerging from international observers that appeared to illicit Russian support in criticising the Syrian government. However, AGI reports that Russia claims the Houla massacre was planned by rebels and made possible by foreign aid.

In the aftermath of the Houla massacre, the UK implored Russia to intervene in the Syrian crisis before it was too late, according to the Telegraph. Meanwhile, a Russian cargo ship carrying weapons left a Russian port on 06 May headed for the Syrian port of Tartus, reports Reuters. Russian President Vladimir Putin denied Russian shipments contained weapons and said “Russia does not provide weapons that could be used in a civil conflict”, according to a separate Reuters report. Syria is one of Russia’s top weapons customers. Voice of America (VOA) states that at the closing of an EU summit with Putin on 04 June, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy said that the Russian leader and the 27-nation alliance have “some divergent assessments” regarding the situation in Syria.

With the acceleration of killings, British Foreign Minister William Hague told the Guardian that the situation in Syria is “now grave, so serious and so rapidly deteriorating”. Hague indicated that Britain was not prepared to supply arms to the Syrian opposition, or to create humanitarian corridors through military action, but if events continued to deteriorate “we would have to look at all options”. However, as diplomatic efforts continue to flounder, the Obama Administration is developing a plan that would give “US nods of approval to arms transfers from Arab nations to some vetted Syrian opposition fighters”, reports Associated Press (AP). A vetting process would help to determine if certain groups are suitable recipients of munitions to fight against the Assad regime. By some accounts, countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and UAE have already begun arming the rebels.

Lebanon
Approximately 700 protestors took to the streets in the ethnically diverse city of Tripoli on 23 May, to demand the release of an estimated 200 Lebanese Sunni Islamist leaders who were detained by Lebanese officials, according to VOA. The New York Times reports that in the latest spill-over of the conflict in Syria, 11 Lebanese men were kidnapped near the northern Syrian city of Aleppo on 22 May, officials and eyewitnesses said. Reaction to the abductions, which included protests and the blocking of main arteries in southern Beirut, necessitated Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, to broadcast an appeal for calm. Meanwhile, the Independent reported the captives where eventually released on 25 May. In other security news, CSM reports that 12 people were killed in Tripoli on 02 June with reports of mortar fire within the city.

Security
AP states that a growing pro-regime militia known as “shabiha” is thought to be carrying out some of the most grievous atrocities in the Syrian conflict. The militiamen comprise the ruling elites from the Alawite sect and UN observers believe they might be the group responsible for the massacre in Houla on 25 May. Because the pro-Assad militia is not under the control of the Syrian government, President Assad denies direct responsibility for these human rights abuses. Syrians say that shabiha is more feared than the Syrian army and security forces and civilians report that shabiha is deployed specifically to terrorise and brutalise anti-Assad populations.

AFP reports that at least 59 people were killed nationwide on 21 May. Powerful blasts were heard overnight in a number of cities.
including central Hama, northern Aleppo and the coastal cities of Banias and Latakia. In the northern Damascus neighbourhood of Qaboun, an explosive device detonated at a restaurant on 22 May killed five people, reports Reuters. State media deemed the incident a terrorist attack. Northern Damascus has recently been a centre of protests calling for the end to the Assad regime. In the wake of the bombing, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that scores of people were arrested in pre-dawn raids in several suburbs of Damascus, according to AFP. Raids also took place in Douma, Harasta and Barzen.

United Press International (UPI) reports that Syrian forces continued to conduct raids, and on 23 May, 21 buses filled with Syrian forces arrived in the town of Sheikh Maskin in Dawa province, burning down at least six homes, report residents. In Homs, heavy artillery fire began in the early morning hours while regime forces seized a neighbourhood in the city of Hama and blocked residents from entering or exiting the area.

Turkish security forces foiled a plot to kidnap Syrian rebel commander Riad al-Assad from his Headquarters in a refugee camp along the Turkish-Syrian border, reports The Independent. Accounts of the incident state that authorities arrested a Syrian intelligence operative along with two Turkish citizens after the attempted abduction.

On 24 May, Free Syrian Army spokesman Colonel Khalid al Hammoud reported that 203 Syrian soldiers defected from the al Qatifa area in the Rif Dimashq Governate, reports Asharq al-Awsat. The Syrian forces then targeted defectors with mortar strikes, which killed five.

Thirteen bound corpses were discovered in Deir el-Zour province on 29 May, many apparently executed, reports AP. The discovery comes only days after the Houla massacre where more than 100 people were killed. Major General Robert Mood, UN Observer Team Leader said he was “deeply disturbed by this appalling and inexcusable act”. CNN reports that on 31 May in the Homs province village of Bouyda, 12 factory workers were killed by shabiha, the opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

According to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), on 01 June fierce fighting between rebels and the Syrian Army broke out in in the town of Daraya on the outskirts of Damascus. Other towns in the area were heavily shelled, namely Doma, Maadamiah and Arbeen. In Homs several anti-Assad districts also reported artillery and mortar fire.

On 04 June, VOA reports that the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights claimed 75 Syrian soldiers were killed over the weekend along with at least two rebel fighters. Additionally, a Reuters video shows smoke from a tank destroyed by rebels in the town of Jericho.

Humanitarian
On 30 May, France called for the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to hold a meeting to discuss the situation in Syria while reiterating the need for humanitarian corridors so that aid can reach those communities in need, according to the Wall Street Journal.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Update No. 7 released on 31 May informs that the total number of assisted Syrian refugees in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey has reached 78,137, marking an increase of 4,822 persons from the previous week. The total number of registered Syrians in these countries is 67,212 persons, which is now almost double from two months earlier. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq, working closely with UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), reports that the Domiz camp located in Kurdistan receives approximately 50 persons each day fleeing violence in Syria. Guides were paid hundreds of dollars by fleeing persons to assist Syrian families across the border into Iraq through a number of informal crossing points.

An appeal from Refugees International, a Washington-based refugee advocacy group, was issued on 04 June calling for better assistance for Syrian refugees fleeing their country’s turmoil, according to AP. The organisation warned that the growing refugee crisis in the region could threaten the political stability of both Lebanon and Jordan and urged the international community to scale up humanitarian and development aid in order to ensure both countries remain “on firm footing”.

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We look forward to hearing from you!
The Berber, who have inhabited Libya for millennia, were banned from using their language in schools, courts, and media and faced abuse and detention for publicly identifying themselves as Berber. Those residing in the southern region of the country were often denied citizenship. Estimates on the number of Tuareg in the country vary from $17,000$ to $560,000$. The Tuareg primarily live in the southern region. The Tuareg experienced a different relationship with Gaddafi’s regime as some fought in his Islamic Legion during the 1970’s, as reported by BBC. Following the disbandment of the Islamic Legion, Tuareg continued to be recruited into Gaddafi’s armed forces. Despite the military integration of the Tuareg, they still faced much of the same marginalisation as other minorities within the country, leading many Tuareg to be critical of the regime. The Tubu are a non-Arab, dark skinned and traditionally nomadic ethnic group spread across Libya, Niger, and Chad. The Tubu inhabit the south-eastern region of the country but there are no reliable statistics on their population size. The Tubu often clashed with the ruling Arabs in the south. According to Amnesty International, under Gaddafi the Tubu faced forced evictions, arbitrary detentions and refusal of identification documents. Similarly to Gaddafi’s approach to the Tuareg, some Tubu were recruited into the armed forces. Meanwhile, the non-Arab Tawergha ethnic group are descendants of former slaves living in a coastal town named Tawergha located 250 km east of Tripoli. The population size of the Tawergha is estimated to be 35,000.

During the 2011 uprising, both Gaddafi and opposition forces sought support from the various ethnic and tribal groups in the country, suggests the United States Institute for Peace (USIP). For the Berber who fought alongside Arab rebels, the revolution was their chance to rise up against decades of repression by Gaddafi’s regime. While some Tuareg reportedly fought alongside Gaddafi’s forces, others supported the revolution, seeking an end to their marginalisation and a greater political voice. The Tubu were generally associated with supporting the anti-Gaddafi forces. However, the town of Tawergha was used by Gaddafi forces during the siege of Misrata. Allegations of some Tawergha joining Gaddafi’s forces and carrying out atrocities have led to massive reprisal attacks on the entire population of Tawergha.

In August 2011, militias from Misrata forcibly displaced the entire local population of the town of Tawergha. Since the fall of Gaddafi, the Tawergha have been subject to torture, beatings, detentions and executions. It is estimated that 35,000 Tawergha remain displaced and those in the Janzur camp, located 12 km west of Tripoli, remain vulnerable as militias have carried out raids on the camp. According to Amnesty International, the Libyan interim National Transitional Council (NTC) has failed to control militias that are detaining and torturing suspected Gaddafi loyalists. The transitional Constitution ensures protection of cultural, religious, and linguistic rights under Article one. The United Nations Human Rights Council reported the Tawergha have faced execution, detention, and arrests as recently as February 2012. Tuareg have also faced violent reprisals, as they were forced out of the town of Ghadames in retaliation for reportedly supporting Gaddafi. The only Tuareg member of the NTC resigned following the lack of government support for Tuaregs in Ghadames, explains the Integration Regional Information Networks (IRIN). According to Society for Threatened People (STP), many Tuareg fled into Algeria fearing retaliatory attacks after the fall of Gaddafi due to the assumption that all Tuareg had supported the regime.

Meanwhile, the Tubu and Berber initially supported the NTC. However, recent clashes between the Tubu and Arab tribes in Sabha and Kufra since the fall of Gaddafi have lead to scrutiny of the NTC’s commitment to Tubu rights. The clashes led to the resignation of Jomode Elie Getty, a Tubu official in the NTC as well as a secession threat due to the NTC’s failures to adequately intervene. The Berber have also been critical of the NTC, since no Berber was given a ministerial position. In March 2012, Berbers protested the NTC electoral law No. 14, which designated the country’s constituencies, demanding the government establish a constituency for Jebel Nafusa, a predominately Berber area that was split among the six western constituencies instead of receiving its own representation. According to the Libya Herald, a Jebel Nafusa constituency would create representation specifically for the Berber.

Voter registration ahead of this month’s elections was problematic for many non-Arab minorities in Libya, as many have no official documents proving their citizenship. The primary citizenship document in Libya is the family book, which Tuareg who have been in Libya for the past century possess, but those who entered the country in the last 50 years are without any documentation, rendering them stateless. The NTC allowed individuals with a driver’s license or national ID card, in addition to an alternative family document, to register to vote. Despite these relaxed regulations, thousands of displaced Tawerghans were reportedly unable to register to vote.

Reports of Gaddafi recruiting African mercenaries and the belief by Libyans that black tribes such as the Tawergha and Tawergha were fighting in his forces lead to indiscriminate attacks on Sub-Saharan Africans and black Libyans, reports al Jazeera. There were also reports of Tuareg and African migrants being forced to fight for Gaddafi it remains unclear how many voluntarily aligned themselves with his forces. The consequences of the perception of black Libyans and Africans being Gaddafi loyalists have been a severe backlash. Further, insecurity remains problematic for the electoral process as clashes in Kufra delayed electoral awareness campaigns as well as local council elections. While minority groups have continued to face hurdles in post-Gaddafi Libya, most minority groups believe the upcoming elections are key to ensuring their rights.

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