

# CrisisWatch

A monthly bulletin on current and potential conflicts  
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## January 2015 – Trends

### ↓ Deteriorated situations

[Bangladesh](#), [Lebanon](#), [Nepal](#), [Nigeria](#), [Philippines](#), [Sudan](#), [Ukraine](#), [Yemen](#)

### ↑ Improved situations

[Sri Lanka](#)

## February 2015 – Watchlist

### 💣\* Conflict risk alerts

[Yemen](#)

### ☰ Conflict resolution opportunities

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**CrisisWatch** summarises developments during the previous month in some 70 situations of current or potential conflict, listed alphabetically by region, providing references and links to more detailed sources. It assesses whether the overall situation in each case has, during the previous month, significantly deteriorated, significantly improved, or on balance remained more or less unchanged. It identifies situations where, in the coming month, there is a risk of new or significantly escalated conflict, or a conflict resolution opportunity (noting that in some instances there may be both). It also summarises Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers published the previous month.

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**Arrows and alerts:** Up, down and side arrows signify, respectively, improved, deteriorated or unchanged situations. Conflict Risk Alerts (identified with bombs) or Conflict Resolution Opportunities (with doves) are used in addition to arrows: a bomb signifies a risk of escalated violence; a dove an opportunity to advance peace. Both bombs and doves tend to be used where events are moving fast.

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# Africa

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## Central Africa

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➔ **Burundi** Ahead of May/June elections opposition to President Nkurunziza's potential third term intensified: former ruling CNDD-FDD Senator Richard Nimbeshya 12 Jan said party gave Nkurunziza only two mandates. Opposition Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (MSD) 11 Jan appointed Alexis Sinduhije as presidential candidate. Govt and National Electoral Commission 12 Jan boycotted official launch of UN Electoral Mission (MENUB) amid ongoing discussions over MENUB's role and activities. CNDD-FDD spokesperson 29 Jan announced party open to compromise, seeking free and fair polls. Prominent radio journalist Bob Rugurika arrested 20 Jan after broadcasting investigative reports on Sept murder of Italian nuns.

- ["Violence, arrests and mistrust ahead of Burundi polls"](#), IRIN News, 16 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Cameroon** Boko Haram (BH) stepped up attacks in north but suffered several setbacks: BH fighters 12 Jan attacked military camp in Kolofata, 50 BH reportedly killed; BH 18 Jan kidnapped 80 civilians in Mayo Sava province, 24 freed next day by army. BH leader Shekau 5 Jan released video threatening large-scale attacks in Cameroon. President Biya early Jan asked for international support: Russia promised logistic assistance, U.S. promised to train troops.

- ["Shekau dares Niger, Chad, Cameroon leaders"](#), Daily Times NG, 22 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Central African Republic** Formerly secret negotiations between anti-balaka factions led by Kokate and Seleka faction led by Nourredine Adam and Michel Djotodia continued in Nairobi; led to signing 26 Jan of agreement on DDRR, amnesty for all perpetrators of violence, removal of current transitional authorities. Exclusion of CAR transitional authorities and international stakeholders caused resentment; UN, AU refuse to validate deal. In bid to obtain release of leader Andilo, anti-balaka 19 Jan kidnapped French humanitarian and CAR citizen for three days, 20 Jan kidnapped UN staffer, 25 Jan reportedly kidnapped youth and sport minister and leader of "Revolution and Justice" armed group Armel Sayo. New EU one-year military advisory mission (EUMAM RCA) established 19 Jan. In 16 Jan govt reshuffle four ministers left govt, close allies of President Samba-Panza awarded defence, justice portfolios.

- ["L'Union européenne va former les armées malienne et centrafricaine"](#), Journal de Bangui, 21 Jan. 2015.
- For latest briefing, Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°105, [The Central African Republic's Hidden Conflict](#), 12 Dec. 2014.

➔ **Chad** President Déby 14 Jan discussed Boko Haram (BH) threat with Cameroonian defence minister; Chad 17 Jan sent 2,500 troops, 400 military vehicles and combat helicopters to Cameroon's Far North province. Regional meeting 20 Jan called for UNSC to mandate regional force to combat BH; AU Commission President Dlamini-Zuma backed call, asked UN to establish fund to finance force, provide logistics.

- ["Comprendre l'implication du Tchad dans la lutte armée contre Boko Haram"](#), Journal du Cameroun, 21 Jan. 2015.

➔ **DR Congo** Violent protests in several cities 19-21 Jan followed National Assembly's 17 Jan adoption of controversial draft electoral bill linking national census to presidential elections, raising potential delay; at least fourteen reportedly killed in clashes in capital. Senate 23 Jan adopted amended version of bill passed by Assembly, omitting census-elections link. Joint ICGLR-SADC summit on military option against FDLR scheduled for 15 Jan cancelled by Angola on basis that agreement already exists, DRC govt said military action "inevitable". UNSC 8 Jan urged swift military action; FARDC 29 Jan announced launch of offensive without MONUSCO. Military operations against armed groups in eastern provinces ongoing: MONUSCO troops 5 Jan attacked FNL bases in Uvira, S Kivu; several clashes between FRPI militia and FARDC south of Bunia, Ituri.

- Crisis Group Statement, "[DRC Protests: The Government's Election Law Must be Revised – or Withdrawn](#)", 23 Jan. 2015.
- "[Le Sénat adopte l'article 8 de la loi électorale avec amendements](#)", RFI, 23 Jan. 2015.
- For latest briefing, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°107, *Congo: Ending the Status Quo*, 17 Dec. 2014.

➔ **Rwanda** Following visit by Belgian FM and cooperation minister, FM Louise Mushikiwabo 8 Jan announced "permanent political dialogue" between Kigali and Brussels. President Kagame 15 Jan criticised MONUSCO and DRC govt for not tackling FDLR rebels (see DRC).

- "[Un accord pour établir un 'dialogue politique permanent'](#)", *Le Soir*, 8 Jan. 2015.

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## Horn of Africa

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➔ **Ethiopia** Two UK citizens, one Somali jailed 4-7 years for reportedly attempting to establish Islamic state in Ethiopia, plotting attacks in conjunction with separatist Oromo Liberation Front. Opposition Unity for Democracy and Justice MP 9 Jan accused electoral board of blocking party's registration ahead of May elections; party later cleared to enter elections.

- "[3 Britons jailed in Ethiopia for attempt to 'establish Islamic State'](#)", RT, 16 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Kenya** High Court 2 Jan temporarily dismissed eight clauses of controversial Security Act, passed 18 Dec, following petition by opposition coalition and civil society. Christian priest shot dead 11 Jan by unknown gunmen in Mombasa. Army 14 Jan announced five suspected Al-Shabaab militants and one soldier killed when militants attacked army truck in Lamu county. Suspect linked to Dec Mandera quarry attack arrested late Jan. Tensions over county borders continued, one killed 9 Jan in clash between Maasai and Kisii along Kisii-Narok border.

- "[Kenyan police nab suspect behind terror attacks](#)", Xinhua, 29 Jan 2015.

➔ **Somalia** New PM Omar Abdirashidi Ali Shamarke 27 Jan announced his new cabinet list; withdrew previous proposed list following opposition by parliament ahead of scheduled vote. Al-Shabaab attacks continued: two killed in 10 Jan IED attack in Kisimayo, Lower Juba; one killed 14 Jan in explosion targeting soldiers in Bossaso, Bari; five killed 22 Jan in bomb attack outside Mogadishu hotel hosting meeting of Turkish officials, day ahead of visit by Turkish PM Erdoğan. Al-Shabaab blockade of towns in

south and central Somalia previously liberated in 2014 AMISOM-Somali National Army (SNA) offensive continued. AMISOM-SNA 23 Jan captured Bulo Jadid, Bulo Yusuf and El Jarmed villages in Bakol region. Five killed 27 Jan in clash between Kenyan forces and Al-Shabaab in Yontoy, Lower Juba region. Over twenty killed in clan clashes 21 Jan in Burdhinle and Hada-Ogle, Hiraan region. Several militants and four civilians reportedly killed 31 Jan in airstrike targeting Al-Shabaab in Dinsoor town, Bay region.

- [“Somalia Parliament forces PM to dissolve cabinet”](#), Voice of America, 18 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Somaliland** Puntland govt 22 Jan condemned Somaliland President Silanyo’s 21 Jan surprise visit to Lasanod, Sool region capital. Somaliland govt reportedly refused to allow UN monitors access to ship at Berbera port suspected of carrying weapons.

- [“Puntland condemns Somaliland leader’s visit to Lasanod”](#), Garowe Online, 22 Jan. 2015.

➔ **South Sudan** Multiple mediation processes ongoing, leading to multiple, uncoordinated agreements and processes. Three SPLM factions (govt, SPLM-IO, and separate negotiating group “SPLM 7”) 21 Jan signed symbolic agreement to “reunify” following talks mediated by Tanzania; China held talks between govt and SPLM-IO in Khartoum 12 Jan. Delayed IGAD summit postponed to 31 Jan; President Kiir and former VP and SPLM-IO leader Machar 29 Jan met in Addis Ababa to discuss terms of possible agreement. Fighting continued in Unity, Upper Nile states. SPLM-IO accused govt troops, police, pro-govt militia of series of attacks; govt counter-claimed, IGAD investigating. Warring parties clashed in Unity oil fields 5 Jan. Clashes continued in Lakes state, including attempt on life of caretaker governor; casualties now higher in Lakes conflict than in Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity.

- Casie Copeland, [“South Sudan and IGAD - Seize the Day”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 13 Jan. 2015.
- [“South Sudan’s leaders embark on new peace drive”](#), *Deutsche Welle*, 22 Jan. 2015.

**New** Crisis Group Africa Report N°223, [Sudan and South Sudan’s Merging Conflicts](#), 29 Jan. 2015. The conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan are increasingly merged. Halting drift toward a Uganda-Sudan proxy war on the Sudan-South Sudan border requires better coordination by regional organisations and more engagement by influential outside powers, notably China and the U.S., including via the UNSC. A UN-imposed arms embargo, improved border monitoring, and a UN panel of experts mandated to study the funding of South Sudan’s war are needed.

↓ **Sudan** Renewed clashes between army and rebels in Darfur and S Kordofan following Dec suspension of AUHIP talks between govt and Sudan Revolutionary Front member organisations including reported aerial bombardment 27 Jan which destroyed several villages in Golo, Central Darfur. UN report released late Jan said over 3,000 villages destroyed in targeted attacks on civilians in Darfur in last year. Parliament 4 Jan approved eighteen amendments to 2005 interim constitution including presidential appointment and dismissal of state governors, expanded role for intelligence services, and inclusion of 2011 Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). Latter amendment seen as reinforcing govt’s demand that DDPD serve as framework for talks with Darfur rebels. Preparations for April presidential and legislative elections ongoing: electoral body 15 Jan extended deadline for applications to 22 Jan; Democratic Unionist Party announced

participation; President Bashir 11 Jan officially submitted candidacy on ruling National Congress Party platform.

- [“Sudanese troops close in on last rebel stronghold in South Kordofan”](#), *Guardian*, 14 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Uganda** Following late Dec killings of two Muslim clerics, third cleric survived assassination attempt 3 Jan near Kampala; police claimed killings reprisals by rebel Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) against former supporters; eighteen charged late Jan.

- [“Uganda charges 18 for murder of Muslim clerics”](#), AFP, 30 Jan. 2015.

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## Southern Africa

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➔ **Madagascar** Govt and PM Kolo’s long-expected 13 Jan resignation catalysed by deadly protests over power shortages; President Rajaonarimampianina 15 Jan named former air force commander Jean Ravelonarivo new PM. Former coup leader Rajoelina 16 Jan issued court challenge, alleging appointment anti-constitutional. Second reconciliation meeting between current President and former presidents Zafy, Ratsiraka, Ravalomana and Rajoelina held 13 Jan, little progress.

- [“Madagascar’s ex-president opposes new PM, creating uncertainty”](#), Reuters, 16 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Mozambique** President Filipe Nyusi inaugurated 15 Jan, appointed cabinet 17 Jan. Opposition Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama continued to reject Oct election results, reiterated threat to establish secessionist “Republic of Central and Northern Mozambique”. Parliamentary session opened 12 Jan, boycotted by Dhlakama and 89 Renamo representatives. Govt-Renamo dialogue on disarmament stalled: Renamo 5 Jan refused to submit list of soldiers for integration into armed forces as required in Sept agreement.

- [“Mozambique’s new parliament faces ‘political crisis’”](#), Voice of America, 12 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Zimbabwe** Tensions persisted following President Mugabe’s early-Dec purges in ZANU-PF party, with rumours of assassination plots and attempts against senior party figures. Deputy Minister Simon Musanhu, ally of former VP Joyce Mujuru, died in mysterious circumstances 15 Jan. Didymus Mutasa, powerful figure in ZANU-PF removed in purge, returned early-Jan, issued statement declaring early Dec party congress unconstitutional; alleged Mugabe and First Lady intimidated members ahead of congress, preventing them from freely choosing their preferred party leaders. Confusion over land rights contributed to instability: heavily armed police and Central Intelligence Organisation agents 8 Jan evicted some 200 families from Arnold Farm in Mazowe, burning down houses, crops; rumours First Lady involved in “land grab” process. President Mugabe appointed AU chair 30 Jan.

- [“Former Mugabe ally fires salvo at ageing leader, political opponents”](#), APA, 13 Jan. 2015.

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## West Africa

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➔ **Burkina Faso** President Kafando 22 Jan announced presidential and legislative elections will take place 11 Oct following early-Jan discussion over election dates, composition of electoral commission; also announced diaspora not eligible to vote. UN mission 12-23 Jan assessed electoral needs, cost estimated at 50bn FCFA. New party Patriotic Governance for Revival-Patriotic Movement (COR/MP) 17 Jan named Jean-Baptiste Natama as candidate. Former ruling party Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) resumed operations following President Kafando's 31 Dec lifting of its suspension.

- ["Les élections présidentielle et législatives auront lieu le 11 octobre"](#), Jeune Afrique, 22 Jan. 2015.

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**New** Crisis Group Africa Report N°222, *Burkina Faso: Nine Months to Complete the Transition*, 28 Jan 2015. Three months after Blaise Compaoré's departure, Burkina Faso's transition is moving forward in an uncertain context. The provisional government, with the help of its international partners, should initiate urgent reforms and ensure the October 2015 elections allow for peaceful, democratic change.

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➔ **Côte d'Ivoire** Divisions within ruling Popular Ivoirian Front (FPI) and opposition Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) persisted. Former President Gbagbo's lawyers said they would appeal late-Dec invalidation of his FPI candidacy, further postponing FPI congress. Hearings began 6 Jan in trial of former First Lady Simone Gbagbo and 81 co-accused charged with crimes related to 2010-2011 post-election violence. Security forces attacked by fifteen assailants in Grabo town in SW 9-10 Jan, two soldiers killed.

- ["Les forces de sécurité attaquées dans la ville de Grabo"](#), RFI, 10 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Gambia** Security clampdown and govt reshuffle followed late-Dec reported coup attempt. FM Neneh Macdouall-Gaye 7 Jan named nine men responsible, including former Presidential Guard Chief Lamin Sanneh. U.S. federal prosecutors 5 Jan charged former U.S. Army Sergeant Papa Faal and Gambian-American businessman Cherno Njie, 30 Jan charged Alagie Barrow with planning coup following FBI report detailing plan to overthrow govt, shipment of firearms purchased in U.S.. President Jammeh reportedly unilaterally suspended Trans-Gambian Bridge project 18 Jan, claiming bridge connecting to Senegal could facilitate cross-border insurrection.

- ["Gambia 'coup plot': Inside story of a failed takeover"](#), BBC, 6 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Guinea** Dispute over electoral preparations intensified, dialogue with opposition stalled. Opposition early-Jan accused President Condé of unlawfully modifying law regulating National Institution for the Defense of Human Rights (INIDH), to his advantage; local rights NGO 6 Jan withdrew representation from INIDH. Opposition held anti-Condé rallies 7 and 22 Jan, restated demands for electoral commission reform.

- ["Alpha Condé sur tous les fronts avant l'élection"](#), *Le Monde*, 22 Jan. 2015.
- For latest briefing, Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°106, *Guinea's Other Emergency: Organising Elections*, 15 Dec. 2014.

➔ **Guinea-Bissau** Tensions between President Vaz and PM Pereira persisted. Natural Resource Minister Daniel Gomes said nothing known about \$13mn paid by Angola for bauxite mine, perceived as attack on Vaz, finance minister at time.

- [“Crise política na Guiné-Bissau continua”](#), Voice of America, 21 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Mali** Attacks in north continued to threaten Algiers peace process. Heavy fighting resumed 16-18 Jan between pro-govt and pro-Azawad groups in Tilemsi valley near Tabankort; clashes 27-28 Jan left 10 dead in Tabankort region; clashes 31 Jan in Kano village, near Timbuktu left one dead, twenty kidnapped. PM Moussa Mara 8 Jan resigned, replaced by former PM and high representative for inter-Malian inclusive dialogue Modibo Keita; new govt includes former presidential candidates Dramane Dembélé, Shoguel Kokal Maiga. MINUSMA forces 20 Jan fired on northern rebel groups near Tabankort; UN forces alleged rebels shot first, MNLA claimed MINUSMA initiated clash. Tuareg rebels 23 Jan suspended coordination with UN mission. Anti-MINUSMA demonstrations erupted in Gao 6 Jan after agreement between MINUSMA, rebels leaked online; clashes 27 Jan between anti-MINUSMA protesters and UN peacekeepers left 3 dead; UNSG said will launch inquiry, President Keita (IBK) 29 Jan visited Gao in bid to reduce tensions. Rebel attacks on MINUSMA continued with several wounded and one killed during month. Malian army also suffered attacks including 5 Jan attack by AQIM in Nampala city, near border with Mauritania, that left eight dead.

- [“Manifestation de colère à Kidal”](#), RFI, 21 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Niger** Large demonstrations in Niamey, Agadez, Zinder 16-17 Jan over President Issoufou’s participation in 11 Jan Paris march against *Charlie Hebdo* attack; bars, churches, offices of ruling Nigerien Party for Socialism and Democracy (PSDN) burned, dozens arrested. Interior ministry 18 Jan banned opposition march; PM Brigi Rafini same day urged calm. Govt 22 Jan blocked social networking sites throughout country, interior minister same day noted move was to avoid disturbances before 23 Jan day of prayer; connections reopened same day. President Issoufou 27 Jan announced increased cooperation with Algerian President Bouteflika to stem jihadi threat in Sahel. Diffa Mayor expressed concerns about Boko Haram (BH) popularity among youth. Humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate in Diffa region, host to some 150,000 Nigerian refugees; govt 27 Jan lifted 2013 ban on refugee camps in south. Chadian troops early-Jan present in eastern Niger for offensive against BH; 8 Jan entered northern Nigeria and took over Malam Fatori occupied by BH since Oct. Court 30 Jan dropped baby trafficking case against former National Assembly head Hama Amadou.

- [“Blockage des réseaux sociaux au Niger par crainte de débordements”](#), RFI, 22 Jan. 2015.

⚡ **Nigeria** Boko Haram (BH) insurgency continued in north with perhaps most deadly attack yet. BH 3 Jan launched attack on Baga, Borno state in Lake Chad region, seizing town and nearby Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) base, reportedly killing hundreds, possibly thousands; seen as major defeat for govt, strategic victory for insurgents. Other BH attacks include: 25 Jan attack on Borno state capital Maiduguri reportedly repelled by army, some 200 insurgents killed, but BH took military base north of city; 1 Feb attack on Borno state capital Maiduguri repelled by govt forces, some 80 insurgents killed. BH continued suicide bombings in Gombe, Borno, Yobe

states, some 50 killed throughout Jan. AU 29 Jan agreed to deploy 7,500-strong multinational force to fight BH, plans to lobby UNSC to finance operation. Independent National Electoral Commission 14 Jan indicated Feb elections will not be held in “high risk” areas of Borno, Adamawa, Yobe states. Pre-election violence continued despite 14 Jan pledge by presidential candidates, including People’s Democratic Party (PDP) incumbent President Jonathan, opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate Gen Buhari, not to incite violence: APC and PDP supporters clashed in several states, offices and vehicles burnt; seven APC members shot 6 Jan by opposition thugs in Rivers state; APC secretariats in Okrika and Ngo communities of Rivers state bombed 11, 16 Jan. National Conscience Party (NCP) parliamentary candidate abducted 12 Jan in Bayelsa state. National security adviser 22 Jan urged electoral commission to delay Feb elections; opposition rejected call, commission 23 Jan confirmed elections will be held 14 Feb. Nineteen vigilantes killed by bandits in Zamfara State 14 Jan; 14 killed as suspected Fulani herdsmen attacked two villages in Taraba state 17, 20 Jan; 17 killed when Fulani gunmen attacked Nwuko village in Taraba state 30 Jan.

- Comfort Ero, [“Nigeria’s elections promise a genuine contest – but avoiding unrest is vital”](#), *Guardian*, 16 Jan. 2015.
- Nnamdi Obasi, [“Nigeria’s faltering response emboldens Boko Haram”](#), Al Jazeera, 31 Jan. 2015.
- Nnamdi Obasi, [“The Soldiers are less motivated than the Boko Haram insurgents”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 18 Jan. 2015.
- [“Boko Haram claims Baga massacre and threatens Nigeria’s neighbours”](#), AFP, 21 Jan. 2015.

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# Asia

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## North East Asia

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➔ **China (internal)** Local media reported Xinjiang police shot dead six people allegedly trying to detonate bomb in Shule, Kashgar prefecture. State media reported police shot dead two ethnic Uighurs trying to cross border into Vietnam 18 Jan; govt said hundreds crossing border each year to join terrorist training camps. Five dead following clash at checkpoint in Hotan prefecture, Xinjiang late Jan. Govt extended anti-terrorism campaign introduced May 2014 to end of year.

- [“Hundreds of Chinese seeking ‘jihad training’ are caught on Vietnam border in one year: Beijing”](#), *South China Morning Post*, 19 Jan. 2015.

➔ **China/Japan** Japanese PM Abe 25 Jan said remorseful statement forthcoming for 15 Aug, 70th anniversary of WWII end; but also indicated he would not follow original wording of 1995 Murayama Statement apologising for suffering caused by Japan during war. Chinese foreign ministry 26 Jan warned Abe not to “play down history of aggression”. Japanese FM Kishida and Chinese ambassador to Japan Cheng Yonghua 9 Jan held first official meeting since Abe’s Dec 2013 visit to Yasukuni Shrine: reportedly agreed to increased cooperation; Kishida also protested entrance same day of three Chinese patrol ships into waters around disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. Chinese and Japanese defence ministries 12 Jan reached common understanding to launch maritime and air crisis management mechanism to avert unwanted clashes. Chinese aviation authorities late Dec removed warning that “defensive emergency measures” could be taken against aircraft failing to comply with regulations inside China’s East China Sea Air Defence Identification Zone, which caused protests from neighbours when introduced late 2013. China’s National Marine Data and Information Service 30 Dec launched website asserting indisputable sovereignty over Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. Japan’s cabinet 14 Jan approved record defence budget of 4.98 trillion yen (US\$42 bn), 2% increase on previous year.

- [“South Korea, China warn Japan not to backtrack on apology over wartime past”](#), Reuters, 27 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Korean Peninsula** ROK Ministry of National Defence 6 Jan issued biennial Defence White Paper asserting that DPRK nuclear threat is increasing. ROK 19 Jan announced plan to develop advanced weapons and reconnaissance satellites to enhance defence capabilities and counter evolving DPRK security threats. Defence officials from U.S., Japan and ROK late Dec signed military agreement to share intelligence on DPRK nuclear and missile threats. Cyber security threats and countermeasures fallout continued. *New York Times* reported that U.S. National Security Agency penetrated DPRK computer networks, has had access to them since 2010. Nov attacks on Sony Pictures attributed to Reconnaissance General Bureau (RGB) and Bureau 121, said to have about 6,000 hackers; many attacks said to originate in China. U.S. 2 Jan imposed additional economic sanctions against RGB for cyber operations, also two other DPRK entities, Korea Mining Development Trading Corporation and Korea Tangun Trading Corporation, and ten DPRK individuals, sanctioned for illicit arms sales and procure-

ment activities. North Korean army deserter crossed Chinese border and killed four people in Yanbian prefecture 27 Dec before being shot dead by Chinese police. ROK's *Joongang Ilbo* 8 Jan reported KPA has developed seven-day war plan.

- [“China wary as violence spills from North Korea”](#), *New York Times*, 29 Jan. 2015.

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## South Asia

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➔ **Afghanistan** Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) 1 Jan assumed formal responsibility for all combat missions following conclusion of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission and its transition into follow-up mission “Resolute Support”. President Ghani 12 Jan announced cabinet nominees after months of delay; proposed cabinet seen as implying reduced influence of former mujahidin figures, increasing influence of former members of Soviet-backed govt. Several candidates mid-month withdrew nominations, some claimed parliamentarians demanded bribes or jobs for constituents in exchange for approval. Eight nominees approved by parliament late Jan including for interior, foreign affairs and finance ministries; approval process expected to continue into Feb. Violence continued across country including Taliban deputy shadow governor for Kapisa province reported killed 15 Jan. Army commander 18 Jan confirmed some insurgent factions swore allegiance to jihadi group Islamic State; observers estimated factions only loosely affiliated with militants in Iraq and Syria, play limited role in insurgency.

- [“Islamic State adds to terror in Afghanistan”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 11 Jan. 2015.

⚡ **Bangladesh** Month saw escalating political crisis, violent clashes between opposition and govt supporters around first anniversary of disputed Jan 2014 elections boycotted by opposition Bangladesh National Party (BNP); at least 36 killed. Escalation raised fears about possible military intervention or exploitation of crisis by extremist and criminal networks; ruling Awami League (AL) denied country faces crisis, called BNP actions terrorism. Govt 3 Jan confined BNP leader Khaleda Zia to Dhaka BNP office in anticipation of BNP-led protests around 5 Jan election anniversary; move triggered deadly clashes between BNP and AL activists, at least four BNP workers killed, including two reportedly by security forces, leading Zia to call for indefinite country-wide strike, transport blockade. Zia released 19 Jan; said blockade would continue until govt agreed to dialogue, announced 48-hour strike in Dhaka, Sylhet and Khulna. Zia implicated for instigating two cases of arson during blockade; her son Tarique Rahman charged with treason 8 Jan.

- [“Thirty-four die in Bangladesh vote protest violence”](#), Reuters, 25 Jan. 2015.

➔ **India (non-Kashmir)** Scores of Bodo militants arrested in NE following late Dec Bodo attacks on Adivasi villagers in Assam state; one reported killed by police on border with Bhutan 9 Jan. Several Maoist militants killed in Odisha state, including five in joint police-paramilitary operation 5 Jan; several Maoist attacks in Chhattigarh state including two police killed mid-month.

- [“NDFB \(S\) militant killed in encounter on India-Bhutan border”](#), *Hindu*, 10 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Kashmir** Firing across Line of Control and India-Pakistan working boundary continued: fifteen soldiers and civilians reported killed late Dec/early Jan. Governor's

rule imposed on Jammu and Kashmir 9 Jan after caretaker chief minister resigned following failure of parties to establish coalition govt after Nov-Dec state elections. Several militants reported killed by police, including five in Shopian district 15 Jan; army officer, policeman killed by militants in Pulwama district 27 Jan.

- [“Governor’s rule imposed in Jammu & Kashmir”](#), *Times of India*, 9 Jan. 2015.

↓ **Nepal** Political parties failed to reach consensus on constitution draft before 22 Jan deadline despite reportedly reaching agreement on several core issues 19 Jan. Scuffles broke out in parliament during Constituent Assembly sessions around deadline as ruling parties tried to push vote on draft; Maoist opposition organised general strike, rallies. Ruling parties 25 Jan tasked committee with resolving contentious issues before vote; Maoists vowed one-month boycott of committee and more protests, insisted on consensus decision.

- [“Nepal to vote on Constitution, opposition calls for protests”](#), PTI, 25 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Pakistan** Govt and parliamentary opposition continued to cede control over national security policy to military following deadly mid-Dec Peshawar school attack by Pakistani Taliban (TTP); 6 Jan passed 21st constitutional amendment and Pakistan Army Act (amendment) bill 2015, overriding many fundamental rights and allowing military courts to try civilian terrorism suspects. Supreme Court 22 Jan decided to consider petitions against 21st amendment after Lahore High Court Bar Association 2 Jan passed resolution against military courts, Sindh High Court Bar Association 14 Jan challenged amendment through constitutional petition; outcome of consideration seen as defining test of court’s willingness to uphold judicial independence, fundamental rights. Govt closed 40 printing presses and stores, reportedly arrested 157 for hate speech or publishing hate material following late Dec adoption of counter-terrorism “National Action Plan”; 20 prisoners executed by mid-Jan following lifting of moratorium on death penalty. Jamaat-ud-Dawa (formerly Lashkar-e-Tayyaba), other jihadi groups continued to operate freely despite govt pledges to end distinction between “good” and “bad” militants, latter targeting Pakistani state, former neighbouring countries. At least 60 killed in bombing of Shiite mosque in Sindh province’s Shikarpur district 30 Jan. Dozens of militants reported killed in U.S. drone strikes including six in N Waziristan 19 Jan. Military operation continued in NW; army claimed 92 militants killed in airstrikes 27 Jan.

- [“SC to take up pleas against 21st amendment”](#), *Dawn*, 23 Jan. 2015.

↑ **Sri Lanka** Long-time President Rajapaksa conceded defeat to joint opposition candidate Maithripala Sirisena in 8 Jan presidential election; polling day largely peaceful despite widespread violence during campaign. Sirisena gained overwhelming support from Tamil and Muslim voters, about 45% of Sinhala votes. Senior members of new govt alleged Rajapaksa early morning 9 Jan attempted to declare state of emergency, called on army to stop vote-count and annul vote; move reportedly blocked by attorney general, head of police and army commander. Police subsequently launched investigations into incident and other alleged abuses of power by Rajapaksa, members of former administration. Sirisena 14 Jan announced new cabinet, dominated by United National Party, with members from all other joint opposition parties and Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) members who backed him during election. Rajapaksa 16 Jan ceded leadership of SLFP and United People’s Freedom Alliance (UFPA) to Sirisena,

formerly Rajapaksa's health minister. Sirisena 15 Jan removed northern governor with history of obstructing work of Tamil National Alliance (TNA)-led provincial council; new PM Ranil Wickremasinghe said govt will allow council to exercise full powers under thirteenth amendment although appearing to rule out fuller devolution of power demanded by Tamil parties. Wickremasinghe and FM Mangala Samaraweera confirmed govt will establish domestic investigation into alleged war crimes during civil war, expressed willingness to engage with UN HRC; govt 16 Jan lifted restrictions on foreigners traveling to north, 28 Jan reinstated chief justice impeached by former govt in 2013; justice resigned next day, Tamil candidate sworn in 30 Jan.

- Alan Keenan, "[Hope and fear battle for supremacy in Sri Lanka's presidential election campaign](#)", In Pursuit of Peace, 5 Jan. 2015.
- "[Sri Lanka appoints minority Tamil as chief justice](#)", Al Jazeera, 31 Jan. 2015.
- For latest briefing, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°145, *Sri Lanka's Presidential Election: Risks and Opportunities*, 9 Dec. 2014.

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## South East Asia

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➔ **Indonesia** Two police and one security officer found dead at Freeport mine in Papua 1 Jan, with machete and bullet wounds; police said 13 people arrested. Freeport mining company 22 Jan committed to build copper smelter in East Java; Papua governor said facilities should instead be built in Papua, where ore is mined.

- "[VP Kalla aims to bring an end to conflict in Papua](#)", *Wall Street Journal*, 7 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Myanmar** At Independence Day celebrations 4 Jan President Thein Sein presided over large military parade in Naypyitaw, first time civilian has presided over military parade since 1962. President invited leaders of sixteen main armed groups to attend celebrations. Despite late Dec round of peace talks between ethnic groups and govt, distrust remains high. President called on groups to sign Nationwide Ceasefire Accord 12 Feb, but agreement unlikely. Several days of serious armed clashes near Hpakant, Kachin state from 15 Jan between KIO and military, most serious fighting for at least a year, 1,000 civilians displaced. President 12 Jan convened meeting of 48 political stakeholders in Naypyitaw, including 29 ethnic affairs ministers; meeting reaffirmed his authority to determine participation, also attempt to show priority he is giving to ethnic issue. National Human Rights Commission 14 Jan issued statement criticising police for 22 Dec fatal shooting of protester at site of controversial Chinese-run copper mine in Letpadaung. Eleven sentenced 29 Dec for involvement in July 2014 communal violence in Mandalay. Annual UNGA resolution on human rights in Myanmar 29 Dec welcomed reforms, expressed concern about situation of Rohingya, calling on govt to protect their rights, ensure humanitarian access. UN Special Rapporteur for human rights returned for second visit: met by demonstrators in Rakhine state angry at her perceived pro-Rohingya stance; in 16 Jan statement urged focus of discussions on Rohingya be their actual situation and rights, not terminology. 2nd U.S.-Myanmar Human Rights Dialogue in Naypyitaw 14-15 Jan; followed visit by senior U.S. delegation. Yangon held first municipal elections in 60 years 27 Dec.

- "[US decries Myanmar intolerance](#)", AFP, 16 Jan. 2015.

↓ **Philippines** 44 police commandos killed in clash with MILF militants in Tukanalipao village, Maguindanao province 25 Jan, at least seven civilians also killed; clash followed police operation to capture internationally wanted Malaysian terrorist suspect Zulkifli bin Hir aka Marwan. Govt said it believed Marwan to have been killed in operation. MILF blamed police for failing to notify them of presence in area in accordance with March 2014 ceasefire. Interior Minister said clash a “misencounter”, both govt and MILF expressed hope it would not derail peace talks. Incident prompted lawmakers to suspend parliamentary hearings related to passage of proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL); two senators withdrew support for bill. Amid public outrage and calls for retribution against militants, President Aquino in televised national address 28 Jan urged legislators and public not to abandon peace process. During national day of mourning 30 Jan Aquino pledged justice for those killed. Govt and MILF peace negotiators 30 Jan signed protocol for decommissioning of rebels. At least two killed, dozens wounded in explosion in Zamboanga City, Mindanao 24 Jan; authorities said Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) responsible. Followed killings of several ASG militants by army in earlier incidents.

- [“Bangsamoro law support in Congress suffers setback”](#), *Inquirer*, 28 Jan. 2015.

➡ **South China Sea** China 6 Jan announced it has established four armed police departments in Sansha City on Woody Island, part of Paracel/Hoang Sa Islands over which Vietnam also claims sovereignty. China says Sansha City municipal govt, which it created in 2012, administers islands. Vo Cong Chanh, chairman of Hoang Sa District People’s Committee, said China’s actions illegal and threaten security, safety, freedom of aviation and navigation, put regional peace and Sino-Vietnamese relationship at risk. Vietnamese foreign ministry 8 Jan said China’s construction of military base on Fiery Cross Reef in Spratlys is violation of Declaration on Conduct of Parties in SCS.

- [“The Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam race to South China Sea defense modernization”](#), *Diplomat*, 23 Jan. 2015.

➡ **Thailand** Appointed National Legislative Assembly (NLA) 23 Jan voted to impeach former PM Yingluck Shinawatra for negligence in failing to curb corruption in her govt’s rice-pledging scheme. Yingluck appeared before NLA 9 Jan to deliver statement defending herself against impeachment bid; failed to attend second hearing 16 Jan. Office of attorney general 23 Jan announced filing of criminal negligence charge against Yingluck for alleged corruption. Assistant U.S. Sec State Daniel Russel visited 26 Jan, said impeachment “politically driven”, called for lifting of martial law. National Council for Peace and Order 13 Jan appointed Defence Minister and Deputy PM General Prawit Wongsuwan head of new task force to enforce implementation of junta policies. Internal Security Operations Command reported violent incidents and casualties in south declined in fourth quarter of 2014. In ongoing insurgent attacks and clashes, school security guard shot dead in Cho Airong district, Narathiwat 2 Jan; two suspected militants killed in clash with rangers in Cho Airong 6 Jan; three insurgents killed in clash with security forces 9 Jan in Mayo district, Pattani; teacher injured in bomb attack 19 Jan in Narathiwat’s Bacho district.

- [“Yingluck Shinawatra, Thailand’s former prime minister, lashes out at military rulers: ‘democracy has died’”](#), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 Jan. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°263, [A Coup Ordained? Thailand’s Prospects for Stability](#), 3 Dec. 2014.

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## Europe and Central Asia

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### Balkans

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➔ **Bosnia** Tripartite state presidency 29 Jan signed revised joint declaration confirming commitment to reforms, part of new initiative to revive Bosnia's EU accession bid. Initial declaration of 31 Dec revised after president of Republika Srpska entity Milorad Dodik 2 Jan refused to back it, calling it attempt to further centralise country; said new statement, which refers to constitution, 1995 peace accord and entities, acceptable.

- ["Bosnia Presidency seals EU reform declaration"](#), Balkan Insight, 30 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Kosovo** Dozens injured, over 100 arrested as police clashed with thousands of anti-govt protesters in Pristina late Jan calling for removal of Minister for Communities and Returns Aleksandar Jablanovic, accused of insulting ethnic Albanians early Jan, and for adoption of bill nationalising Trepca mine. Police used tear gas and water cannon to disperse protests, largest since 2008 independence.

- ["Running battles in the streets of Kosovo"](#), Al Jazeera, 29 Jan. 2015.

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### Caucasus

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➔ **Armenia** Thousands protested outside Russian embassy and in country's second city Gyumri mid-Jan after Russian deserter, Valery Permyakov, allegedly killed family near Russian military base in Gyumri. Soldier captured by Russian troops, Moscow announced he would be tried in close coordination with Armenian authorities, but protesters demanded he be tried in an Armenian court. At least fifteen reportedly injured as protesters clashed with police, over twenty detained. Some demonstrators reportedly called for Russian base to be closed. Six days after Permyakov's arrest President Putin phoned Armenian counterpart to express condolences.

- ["Will murders bring change to ties with Russia"](#), Eurasianet, 16 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Azerbaijan** Authorities 7 Jan announced ten arrested on suspicion of fighting in Syria, taking part in other militant activities. President Aliyev 21 Jan met with German Chancellor Merkel, dismissed criticism of human rights record. Court 27 extended pre-trial detention of RFE/RL journalist Khadija Ismayilova, detained 5 Dec on charges of inciting attempted suicide, by further two months. Journalist Seymour Hezi sentenced 29 Jan to five years' prison for hooliganism. Man self-immolated 8 Jan in Baku, authorities denied rumours death linked to demolition of homes.

- ["Azerbaijan arrests 10 for alleged militant activity in Syria"](#), RFE/RL, 7 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Armenian President Sargsyan 26 Jan noted uptick in N-K violence, warned Armenia reserves right to use "preventative strikes" if threat perceived along its borders; also said Armenia open to negotiations, building trust. N-K authorities 29 Jan denied Azerbaijan claim that its forces shot down Armenian drone near region. Azerbaijan Defence Ministry 26 Jan said seventeen Armenian

and three Azerbaijani soldiers killed in clashes in Jan, said Armenian troops violated ceasefire 124 times in previous 24 hours. N-K authorities 3 Jan accused Azerbaijan of killing two ethnic Armenian soldiers, 24 Jan said Azerbaijan violated ceasefire 1,800 times 17-24 Jan, fourteen Azerbaijani soldiers killed.

- [“Azerbaijan, Armenia trade accusations of ceasefire violations”](#), RFE/RL, 26 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Georgia** PM Garibashvili 9 Jan met with EU Foreign Policy Chief Mogherini, urged EU oppose planned pact strengthening ties between Russia and breakaway region South Ossetia; FM Beruchashvili 29 Jan warned Russia could annex region. NATO deputy SG Vershbow visited 29-31 Jan to discuss Georgian integration. Former President Saakashvili 13 Jan said “hundreds” of Georgian nationals fighting alongside Islamic State in Syria. Authorities 15 Jan reported Georgian national killed fighting in eastern Ukraine. Govt, opposition mid-month expressed support for new legislation to make joining or encouraging others to join illegal armed groups abroad punishable by prison sentence. Interior Minister Aleksandr Chikaidze 23 Jan resigned following death of man who accused him of involvement in covering up 2006 police killings.

- [“Georgia’s interior minister resigns after death of his critic”](#), RFE/RL, 23 Jan 2015

➔ **North Caucasus (Russia)** Two militants, including group leader, killed in Chechnya’s Naursky district 1 Jan, four police injured. Eight people reportedly forcibly disappeared in Chechnya following attack in Grozny 4 Dec. In Dagestan: two police killed 6 Jan when assailants opened fire on police vehicle, one insurgent killed in special operation 14 Jan in Khasavyurt district. One insurgent reportedly returned from Syria killed in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria, one alleged insurgent killed in Stavropol Kray 18 Jan. Protests against publication of cartoons depicting Mohammed, organised by local officials, gathered up to million people in Chechnya 19 Jan, 20,000 in Ingushetia 17 Jan, 20,000 in Dagestan 23 Jan. Caucasian Knot reported total number of insurgency victims in 2014 at 525, including 341 killed; down from 986 people in 2013, significant decrease in all regions except for Chechnya with 15% increase. Observers point to possible impact of very heavy security measures, outflow of militants to Syria, new schism within NC insurgency.

- [“Russian Muslims protest against Charlie Hebdo – in North Caucasus, not in Moscow”](#), ITAR-TASS, 19 Jan. 2015.

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## Eastern Europe

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➔ **Belarus** In seven-hour press conference 29 Jan President Lukashenka said Belarus would never be part of the Russian world, also said would not tolerate Western pressure; said he would run for another term in office in Nov election.

- [“Defiant Lukashenka warns Russia, West against pressuring Belarus”](#), RFE/RL, 29 Jan. 2015.

⚡ **Ukraine** Most intense fighting for months in eastern Ukraine resulted in heavy civilian and military casualties, further undermined peace talks. Fighting escalated mid-month; separatists and Moscow blamed Kyiv for attacking separatist positions at Donetsk airport, however separatists say offensive planned several weeks earlier. Ten civilians killed in missile attack on bus at military checkpoint SW of Donetsk city 13 Jan; Kyiv blamed separatists, separatists denied. Despite flurry of diplomatic activity early

Jan, planned summit for leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France in Kazakhstan 15 Jan cancelled. Govt forces pulled back from key positions at Donetsk airport 21 Jan in response to rebel gains. Thirteen people killed in attack on Donetsk bus stop 22 Jan, sides blamed each other. Separatist leader Alexander Zakharchenko 23 Jan announced plans to take control of entire Donetsk province. 30 civilians killed, dozens injured in rocket attack on govt-held city Mariupol 24 Jan. UN 26 Jan said rockets fired from separatist-held areas, intentionally targeted civilians. U.S. President Obama said U.S. considering all options short of military action against Russia. Kyiv said Russia still sending troops into Ukraine (denied by Russia), also weapons systems, military training for separatists in Russia. At emergency meeting 29 Jan EU FMs agreed to extend and expand sanctions; stressed Russia's responsibility for recent events in Mariupol, Donetsk and Luhansk, called for Russia to exert influence to induce separatists to cease hostilities, fulfil Sept commitments. Hundreds of civilians reported fleeing fighting around Debaltseve late month; dozens killed including fifteen Ukrainian soldiers 30-31 Jan. Further talks between Kyiv and separatists in Minsk 31 Jan failed to produce agreement.

- [“Ukraine crisis: ‘Dozens killed’ in east as Minsk talks open”](#), BBC, 31 Jan. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°235, *Eastern Ukraine: A Dangerous Winter*, 18 Dec. 2014.

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## Western Europe/Mediterranean

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➔ **Cyprus** Reunification talks remain stalled. Ankara 6 Jan said Turkish vessel would continue seismic research off Cypriot coast 6 Jan-15 April on behalf of Turkish Cypriots in areas close to international rig hired by Republic of Cyprus. UNSG's Special Adviser on Cyprus negotiations Espen Barth Eide 14 Jan voiced concern about impasse in talks, said things “moving in the wrong direction”. UNSC 29 Jan extended UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) until 31 July.

- [“Cyprus says no talks while Turkish ships mount a challenge on gas”](#), Reuters, 5 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Turkey** Volatile security situation in south east continues. Security forces clashed with pro-PKK groups in Sirnak province bringing death toll to seven since late Dec. One civilian died 26 Jan in clash between soldiers and villagers in SE Hakkari province. Govt 29 Jan demanded PKK disarm, relaunch peace talks 21 March. Turkey in international spotlight for jihadi transits to Syria: police report early Jan said 3,000 people linked to Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL) in country; FM Mevlut Cavusoglu 18 Jan said passage of foreign fighters constitutes “greatest threat” to Turkey. Suicide bombing 6 Jan at Istanbul police station killed police officer, Russian female perpetrator from North Caucasus linked to IS. Parliamentary votes on 5, 20 Jan decided against sending four former ministers from ruling AKP to Supreme Court on corruption charges. 26 police detained 27 Jan, suspected of illegally wiretapping politicians, civil servants, businessmen. European Parliament 15 Jan adopted resolution criticising Turkey for “backsliding in democratic reforms”, showing “diminishing tolerance” to public protest, critical media; condemned Dec police raids, journalist arrests.

- [“Turks, Kurds push for peace breakthrough despite new surge in violence”](#), Reuters, 20 Jan. 2015.

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## Central Asia

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➔ **Kazakhstan** President Nazarbayev continued mediation attempts in Ukraine crisis, 9 Jan met German Chancellor Merkel in Berlin. Planned 15 Jan meeting in Astana between Ukrainian, Russian, French and German leaders called off as fighting in Ukraine escalated. Nazarbayev held phone conversations seeking peaceful solutions to crisis with U.S. and Russian presidents. Five sentenced 15 Jan for membership of banned Islamic group Tablighi Jamaat. Prosecutor general's office reported over 700 websites determined to be "extremist" and blocked during 2014.

- ["Nazarbayev, Obama discuss ways to advance peaceful solution for Ukraine crisis"](#), Astana Times, 22 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Kyrgyzstan** Growing concerns over recruitment to Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL); Interior Ministry directorate in southern city Osh 12 Jan said IS recruitment in south rising, 21-year-old Osh resident questioned on suspicion of recruiting 60 young men from city to fight in Syria; six suspected terrorists arrested in Osh province mid Jan, alongside discovery of weapons cache. Chui province resident arrested 28 Jan on suspicion of persuading relatives to fight in Syria.

- Deirdre Tynan, ["Thousands from Central Asia joining 'Islamic State'"](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 21 Jan. 2015.
- ["In Kyrgyzstan, Syria 'jihad' recruiters changing tactics"](#), RFE/RL, 16 Jan. 2015.

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**New** Crisis Group Europe and Central Asia Briefing N°72, [Syria Calling: Radicalisation in Central Asia](#), 20 Jan. 2015. The Islamic State (IS) is attracting Central Asians to Syria and fostering new links among radicals within the region. Unless the five Central Asian governments develop a credible, coordinated counter-action plan, including improved security measures but also social, political and economic reforms, growing radicalism will eventually pose a serious threat to their stability.

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➔ **Tajikistan** Tajik citizens fighting for Islamic State in Syria released video 4 Jan threatening Tajikistan with jihad. Ten suspected members of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan arrested 7 Jan near Dushanbe with alleged cell leader. New army base to monitor militants near Afghan border reportedly being built in Kulyob district. Two border guards wounded 18 Jan while preventing armed group crossing over Afghan border.

- ["2 purported ISIL members say they want to attack Tajikistan"](#), Central Asia Online, 5 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Turkmenistan** Afghan senator 21 Jan reported presence of Islamic State fighters in Faryab province, near country's border with Turkmenistan.

- ["Islamic State fighters appear on Turkmen-Afghan border"](#), Times of Central Asia, 26 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Uzbekistan** President Karimov 12 Jan said Uzbekistan will not join Eurasian Economic Union or any "alliance similar to USSR". U.S. Deputy Asst Sec State for Central Asia Daniel Rosenblum 21 Jan confirmed U.S. transferring hundreds of military vehicles to Uzbekistan, said transfer conditional on govt making "substantial and continuing progress" on rights, freedom of expression, genuine multiparty system.

- ["US gives Uzbekistan military equipment boost"](#), Voice of America, 22 Jan. 2015.

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## Latin America and the Caribbean

➔ **Colombia** As FARC continued to maintain unilateral ceasefire, in force since 20 Dec, intensity of conflict has dropped significantly, though opposition alleges FARC continues extortion in stronghold regions. Despite apparent (but not officially acknowledged) reduction of counter-insurgency operations, FARC repeatedly claimed ongoing military attacks threaten ceasefire. President Santos 5 Jan called for ending “disconnection” between Havana talks and violent dynamics in Colombia; 14 Jan ordered negotiators to start discussions on bilateral ceasefire as soon as possible. Parties in Havana 18 Jan agreed next negotiation cycle, due to begin 2 Feb, to focus on mandate and methodology of joint technical sub-commission assigned with proposing ways of ending conflict. Efforts to open parallel peace talks with ELN progressing slowly. ELN 7 Jan reaffirmed willingness to engage in new negotiations and announced that guerrillas would consider disarming in case of successful talks; also made public nomination of group’s possibly most powerful figure Pablo to Central Command (Coce). Coce member Antonio García 16 Jan said parties remain divided over details, but had reached broad agreement on six point agenda. Santos caused stir 26 Jan when not “ruling out” that demobilised FARC members could join a future rural police force; right-wing opposition strongly rejects this option.

- Christian Voelkel, [“Colombia: The ELN’s Long and Slow March to Peace”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 19 Jan. 2015.
- Christian Voelkel, [“Anuncios de paz del ELN: ¿mucho ruido, pocas nueces?”](#), Razón Pública, 18 Jan. 2015.
- [“Santos y negociadores de paz “planean” agenda del proceso para 2015”](#), AFP, 5 Jan. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°53, [The Day after Tomorrow: Colombia’s FARC and the End of the Conflict](#), 11 Dec. 2014.

➔ **Guatemala** Former police Commander Pedro García Arredondo convicted 19 Jan for 1980 attack on Spanish embassy in which 37 died. High-risk court 5 Jan suspended retrial of ex-dictator Efraín Ríos Montt for genocide and war crimes; Ríos Montt 13 Jan failed to appear at hearing on case 13 Jan due to ill health. President Pérez Molina 7 Jan promised decision in March regarding future of International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), scheduled to end operations in Sept 2015. President said in his opinion commission’s work is “coming to an end”. Govt 26 Jan said Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras will need \$15bn over next four years to stem illegal migration; proposed “Alliance for Prosperity” calls for investments in border security, highways, electricity and industry.

- [“Aduciendo salud. Ríos Montt no asiste a reapertura de juicio por genocidio”](#), DPA, 5 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Haiti** Following failure to pass new electoral law aimed at ending political stand-off and enabling long-delayed elections to take place, parliament’s mandate expired 12 Jan; parliament dissolved 13 Jan; and President Martelly began ruling by decree. Martelly 11 Jan reached last-minute deal with opposition to form broad coalition govt, but left-wing Fanmi Lavalas party not included in agreement, accused Martelly of abuse of power. After deal reached with opposition, new “pluralist” govt formed 20 Jan, headed

by former presidential candidate Evans Paul; nine-member Provisional Electoral Council installed 23 Jan to organise long-delayed elections. Opposition leaders accused president of failing to deliver consensus govt as president's allies appointed to key positions. Anti-govt demonstrators again took to streets 8, 11, 22 and 23 Jan demanding Martelly's resignation. UNSC representatives visited 23-26 Jan to "assess pre-electoral situation".

- ["Haiti's new 'consensus' government sworn in"](#), BBC, 20 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Mexico** Federal forces 6 Jan clashed with vigilante groups who had taken over city hall of Apatzingán, Michoacán, leaving nine dead. Soldiers 12 Jan used tear gas to disperse parents and protestors trying to enter military base near Iguala, Guerrero in search for students from Ayotzinapa teaching college, missing since Sept. Attorney General Murillo Karam 27 Jan officially declared all 43 students dead, said confessions, witness testimony and physical evidence showed that members of criminal gang had killed them, incinerated bodies and then bagged and thrown ashes in river. Mass graves continue to be found elsewhere in Guerrero region, including ten bodies and eleven decapitated heads 6 Jan. Six dead and eleven wounded 21 Jan in Tamaulipas state during clashes between gunmen and state police. Journalist Moisés Sanchez found dead 24 Jan after being abducted from his home in Veracruz; former municipal police officer confessed to involvement, allegedly at request of mayor.

- ["Mexico officially declares missing students dead"](#), *New York Times*, 27 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Venezuela** Economic crisis continued to worsen, with growing anger over shortages of basic goods; govt continues to blame private sector, however polls show majority blame President Maduro. During two-week trip to China, Russia and Middle East Maduro apparently failed to obtain fresh loans to bridge fiscal gap or secure action by OPEC partners to reverse falling oil prices, despite his claim to have obtained \$20bn commitments from China. Signs of greater unity within opposition MUD coalition, overcoming disagreements over whether to take to streets demanding Maduro's resignation; factions agreed to mobilise protests while avoiding violence. Thousands marched through Caracas 24 Jan in opposition-led protest. Catholic bishops' conference issued "pastoral exhortation" demanding govt change course and calling for freeing of political prisoners, respect for human rights, transparent institutions; govt dismissed exhortation as party-political document. Authorities 23 Jan prevented former presidents of Colombia and Chile from visiting detained opposition leader Leopoldo López; their respective govts supported visit and demanded respect, Colombia said it hoped for López's prompt release. Leamsy Salazar, security official close to national assembly president Diosdado Cabello, arrived in U.S. 26 Jan allegedly to give evidence that Cabello and other high ranking Venezuelan officials are involved in drug trafficking.

- ["Venezuela: nuevas medidas económicas generan dudas y temores"](#), AP, 22 Jan. 2015.

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## Middle East & North Africa

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### Eastern Mediterranean

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➔ **Israel-Palestine** International Criminal Court (ICC) 16 Jan opened preliminary examination into possible war crimes committed in Palestinian territories since 13 June 2014; move followed UN announcement early month Palestine will join Rome Statute of ICC as full member 1 April. Israel responded by freezing transfer of Palestinian tax revenues. PA continued to refuse paying Gaza's Hamas-hired civil servants, while insisting on return of Gaza employees hired prior to Hamas takeover in June 2007; observers warned renewed civil strife in Gaza could spark more intra-Palestinian or Gaza-Israel violence. Salafi-jihadis permitted to demonstrate in Gaza 19 Jan; unidentified assailants blew up cars belonging to members of Fatah and Hamas. Hamas mid-Jan declared Fatah-affiliated employees of pre-2007 govt would no longer be allowed to collect salaries; ATMs, surveillance cameras of bank used for salary payments sabotaged. Palestinian 21 Jan injured thirteen in knife-attack on bus passengers in Tel Aviv; Israeli forces 14 Jan shot dead Palestinian outside W Bank settlement, another killed near Nablus 31 Jan. Israeli political parties campaigned vigorously ahead of 17 March election; Arab parties 22 Jan united into unprecedented single joint list, likely to increase voting among Israeli Arab citizens. Two Israeli soldiers killed by Hizbollah along Lebanese border 28 Jan in retaliation for 18 Jan Israeli airstrike in Golan Heights killing six Hizbollah members, Iranian Revolutionary Guard General (see Lebanon).

- ["ICC opens initial probe into possible war crimes in Palestinian territories"](#), *Haaretz*, 16 Jan. 2015.

↓ **Lebanon** Israel 18 Jan killed six Hizbollah members and Iranian Revolutionary Guard General in airstrike on convoy in Golan Heights; Hizbollah 28 Jan retaliated killing two Israeli soldiers across Israel-Lebanon border, with UN peacekeeper killed as Israel returned fire; both parties said they intend to avoid further escalation. Renewed Sunni-Alawite tensions in Tripoli following 11 Jan twin suicide bombing at cafe in predominantly Alawite area, killing nine; claimed by al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra. Army responded by raiding Roumieh prison; Islamist inmates purportedly connected to attack, able to communicate with outside accomplices due to chaotic prison conditions. Army 23 Jan clashed with militants near eastern border village Ras Baalbek; eight soldiers, dozens of militants reported killed.

- ["Israel 'receives message of restraint' from Hezbollah"](#), Al Jazeera, 29 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Syria** Early-Jan winter storm slowed military activity but added to hardships endured by millions of people in need of humanitarian assistance: UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) announced winter response plan underfunded by \$70mn; World Food Program said \$112mn urgently needed to cover food assistance for coming four months. Military activity increased as storm subsided: al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) launched offensive to capture sole remaining regime base in south-eastern Idlib countryside, Abu al-Duhr airbase; 13 Jan captured neighbouring Tal Salmo town from regime forces, 18 Jan claimed downing of regime cargo plane

killing 35. Kurdish forces late month pushed Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL) forces out of Kobani amid continued U.S.-led airstrikes. At least eighteen reported killed in rare clashes between regime and Kurdish forces controlling separate parts of Hasakeh city 17-18 Jan. Deadly regime airstrikes continued including scores killed in IS-held area of Hasakeh province 20 Jan, scores more in rebel-held area near Damascus 23 Jan. Russia failed to convince significant opposition figures to attend late Jan talks with regime representatives in Moscow; Damascus signalled lack of interest by lowering level of representation at talks.

- [“Kurdish forces drive ISIS out of Kobane”](#), Al Arabiya, 27 Jan. 2015.

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## Gulf

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➔ **Bahrain** Authorities 19 Jan charged head of main opposition al-Wefaq, Sheikh Ali Salman, with incitement to overthrow govt, trial began 28 Jan; several clashes between protesters and police early Jan following Salman’s detention late Dec. Senior al-Wefaq leader Jameel Kadhim sentenced to six months’ jail 13 Jan for allegedly “disrupting” Nov elections. Prominent activist Nabeel Rajab handed six-month jail sentence 20 Jan for allegedly insulting govt institutions.

- [“Bahrain begins trial of opposition leader”](#), Al Jazeera, 28 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Iran** Nuclear negotiations between Iran and P5+1 (also known as EU3+3) continued mid-month in Geneva; no progress despite hours of talks between U.S. Sec State Kerry and Iranian FM Zarif, two days of bilateral U.S.-Iran deputy-level talks, one day of discussions with full P5+1. Talks continued late month including U.S.-Iran talks in Zurich 22-23 Jan, Iran-EU3 (France, Germany and UK) talks in Istanbul 29 Jan. U.S. Congress moved forward with bipartisan sanctions legislation; Democrats supporting legislation promised no vote before 24 March deadline for reaching Iran-P5+1 framework agreement after President Obama warned new sanctions could undermine negotiations, threatened veto. More than 200 Iranian parliamentarians initiated draft legislation mandating govt to increase enrichment level to 60% if Congress imposes new sanctions. President Rouhani rebuffed by Supreme Leader Khamenei after suggesting national referendum could be held on nuclear deal: Khamenei 7 Jan said Iran should maintain confrontational posture in negotiations, revealing possible cracks in fragile consensus on need to resolve crisis. Iranian officials early Jan accused Saudi Arabia of intentionally keeping oil prices low to hurt Iranian economy, force additional concessions in nuclear talks. Iranian military officials early Jan said army delimited buffer zone 40km inside Iraq to deter potential cross-border jihadi incursions. Iranian Revolutionary Guard General killed in Israeli strike targeting Hizbollah convoy in Golan Heights 18 Jan (see Lebanon).

- Ali Vaez, [“Why new Iran sanctions bid has split Washington”](#), Al Jazeera, 28 Jan. 2015.
- [“GOP weighs next move on Iran”](#), The Hill, 30 Jan. 2015.
- For latest briefing, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°43, [Iran Nuclear Talks: The Fog Recedes](#), 10 Dec. 2014.

➔ **Iraq** Fighting between Kurdish forces and Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL) militants continued in NW amid increasing friction between Kurdish factions: attempts by U.S.-supported Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) to improve relations with local Yezidis following mid-Dec seizure of Sinjar challenged by rival Kurdish factions including Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK); mid-Jan declaration of self-administration in Sinjar, backed by PKK, denounced by Kurdistan Regional Government officials as PKK plot to separate Iraqi Kurds from Yezidis. Dozens of Kurds, scores of IS militants reported killed near Gwer SW of Erbil early Jan; dozens killed in IS attack on Kirkuk 30 Jan. Shiite militiamen accused of killing over 70 Sunni civilians in eastern Diyala 26 Jan. Fighting continued in Anbar province including scores of govt forces, IS militants reported killed in al-Jubba and near Haditha town 6 Jan. Bombings, shootings continued in Baghdad including at least 21 killed 29 Jan; suicide bomber 12 Jan killed twelve Shiite militiamen and Iraqi soldiers near Tikrit.

- [“Kurds squabble despite Islamic State threat”](#), Middle East Eye, 20 Jan. 2015.

↓🔴\* **Yemen** Govt and President Hadi 22 Jan resigned, throwing political process established through Sept “Peace and National Partnership Agreement” (PNPA) into question and raising prospect of territorial fragmentation, widespread violence. Move followed push by northern Huthis to take complete control of Sanaa 19-20 Jan: surrounded presidential palace, captured additional military positions and state institutions, put Hadi under virtual house arrest. Presidential resignation awaiting approval by parliament; observers fear Huthis could appoint presidential or military committee without adequate buy-in from other groups, causing violent backlash from Shafai (Sunni) areas and southern separatists. Several anti-Huthi demonstrations in Sanaa late month, including by thousands of protesters 24 Jan. Huthi push triggered by dispute with Hadi over draft constitution, especially proposed federal structure; Huthi fighters 17 Jan kidnapped presidential advisor allegedly seeking to force through six-region federalism without Huthi consent. Insurgent leader Abdul-Malik al-Huthi 20 Jan accused Hadi of obstructing PNPA, indicated willingness to remove president. Hadi next day accepted all Huthi demands in return for advisor’s release, Huthi withdrawal from certain military positions; agreement immediately collapsed as Huthis dictated terms of implementation under threat of military force. Security council of Aden governorate 22 Jan announced it would no longer take orders from Sanaa following Hadi’s resignation. Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP) claimed responsibility for 7 Jan attack on satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris, same day exploded car bomb outside Sanaa police academy killing over 40; observers warned group gaining strength amid Huthi expansion. Six reported killed in U.S. drone strikes late Jan.

- Crisis Group Conflict Alert, [“Yemen Conflict Alert: Time for Compromise”](#), 27 Jan. 2015.
- [“Yemen president quits amid worsening crisis”](#), Al Jazeera, 22 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Saudi Arabia** Three border guards killed by suspected jihadi militants, including suicide bomber, along Iraqi border 5 Jan; authorities 9 Jan arrested seven suspected accomplices including four Syrians. King Abdullah died 23 Jan, crown prince Salman named new king.

- [“Saudi says arrests seven Saudis, Syrians over suicide border attack”](#), Reuters, 9 Jan. 2015.

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## North Africa

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➔ **Algeria** PM Sellal 21 January announced austerity measures in response to falling oil prices, fuelling concerns over Algeria's continued ability to buy social peace; energy minister 22 Jan said country could boost oil production to compensate, avoid international borrowing. Protests throughout month in south against possible shale gas exploration ("fracking"). Authorities mid-Jan announced series of terrorist operations targeting oil and gas areas in south thwarted. Thousands demonstrated 16 Jan in capital against *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons; several police injured in clashes with protesters, dozens arrested including two Islamist leaders for illegally organising march. Govt late-Jan agreed to work together with Niger forces to tackle threat of armed groups in Sahel.

- ["Algeria walks economic tightrope as oil falls"](#), Reuters, 26 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Egypt** Dozens of protesters, one police killed on 25 Jan anniversary of 2011 uprising; over 500 arrested. President Sisi 12-13 Jan held first meetings with political party leaders ahead of March-May parliamentary elections; declined to support any party, promised to back unified national party list. Authorities same day released former deputy foreign affairs adviser to deposed President Morsi in most significant Muslim Brotherhood (MB) release to date; junior MB members reportedly offered release in exchange for signing repentance forms. Authorities 26 Jan released two sons of former President Mubarak. Court 1 Jan overturned convictions of three Al Jazeera journalists and ordered retrial following late Dec Saudi-brokered agreement requiring Qatar to close Al Jazeera's Egypt station, which has frequently given airtime to MB members. Court 31 Jan listed Hamas' armed wing as terrorist organisation; military continued to evict residents and demolish homes in Rafah to create buffer zone along Gaza border. Attacks by jihadi group Ansar Beit al-Maqdis continued including at least 30 soldiers and police killed in attacks in north Sinai 29 Jan. Assassinations of police continued including two shot dead outside church in Minya 6 Jan.

- ["Sisi cuts short overseas trip after Sinai attacks"](#), Al Arabiya, 30 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Libya** UN-convened talks held 14-15 Jan after several delays, and again 27-28 Jan; talks aimed at agreement on formation of national unity govt, ending hostilities, putting constitution back on track; representatives of internationally-recognised House of Representatives (HoR) attended but General National Congress (GNC) refused to participate. Military confrontation between forces allied to rival parliaments continued throughout month in Benghazi, west of Tripoli and around oil terminals in Gulf of Sirte. Militia loyal to former army general Khalifa Hiftar 22 Jan siezed control of Central Bank's Benghazi branch, transferred branch's database and computer systems to al-Bayda town in east; bank's vault so far intact. Some twenty Egyptian Christians kidnapped by Islamist militants early Jan, thirteen from Sirte. Leader of Ansar al-Sharia militant group confirmed dead 24 Jan, killed in Oct clashes. At least twelve killed, including French and U.S. citizen, in attack on hotel in Tripoli 27 Jan; social media linked to Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL) claimed IS responsible for attack, but self-declared Tripoli-based govt blamed military wing of internationally-recognised Tobruk-based parliament.

- ["Libyan peace talks to resume, UN says"](#), *New York Times*, 23 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Mauritania** President Abdel-Aziz early Jan called for dialogue with opposition bloc National Forum for Democracy and Unity (FNDU). FNDU rejected call; govt 22 Jan said ruling party “not against” holding early elections, as requested by opposition. Thousands protested against *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons 16 Jan; Abdel-Aziz addressed protesters, said cartoon “attack on our religion and on all religious”. Three anti-slavery activists sentenced to two years’ prison 15 Jan; subsequent protests violently dispersed by police.

- [“Mauritania activists jailed as police quash resurgent anti-slavery protests”](#). *Guardian*, 17 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Morocco** Authorities 17 Jan announced Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL) recruiting cell dismantled, 25 Jan announced Algerian suspect linked to Sept killing of French tourist in Algiers arrested near Algerian border.

- [“Morocco arrests eight over ISIS recruitment”](#), Al Arabiya, 17 Jan. 2015.

➔ **Tunisia** New President Essebsi 5 Jan nominated Habib Essid, former interior minister, new PM; nomination of cabinet delayed after several parties, including second largest in parliament An-Nahda, mid-Jan expressed opposition to Essebsi’s proposed candidates. Suspected Islamist militants 4 Jan killed policeman near El Fahes, Zahoun regions. Military court convicted blogger of insulting army, sentenced to one year jail.

- [“Tunisia parliament delays confidence vote on new government”](#), Middle East Online, 26 Jan. 2015.
- For latest briefing, see Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Briefing N°44, [Tunisia’s Elections: Old Wounds, New Fears](#), 19 Dec. 2014.

➔ **Western Sahara** Polisario Front leader Mohamed Abdelaziz 22 Jan denounced Moroccan govt’s attempt to put conditions on UNSG SR work in Western Sahara, called on UN to stop “shameless” exploitation of natural resources in region by Morocco.

- [“Polisario Front urges Security Council to stop oil drilling off Western Sahara”](#), Algeria Press Service, 27 Jan. 2015.