

CrisisWatch

A monthly bulletin on current and potential conflicts
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July 2015 – Trends

↓ Deteriorated situations

[Cameroon](#), [Chad](#), [Egypt](#), [Kashmir](#), [Turkey](#), [Yemen](#)

↑ Improved situations

[Colombia](#)

August 2015 – Watchlist

💣* Conflict risk alerts

[Turkey](#), [Yemen](#)

☪️ Conflict resolution opportunities

[Iran](#), [South Sudan](#)

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.

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

Central Africa

➔ **Burundi** Electoral commission (CENI) 24 July announced President Nkurunziza's victory in 21 July presidential elections boycotted by opposition and accompanied by violence in Bujumbura. UN, U.S. said elections not credible; opposition leader Agathon Rwaso 25 July rejected result after 22 July calling on Nkurunziza to form unity govt to avoid violence, but attended opening session of new parliament 27 July, 30 July was named deputy speaker, breaking unity of opposition. Violence in Bujumbura intensified throughout month including police killing six alleged gang members after several policemen were killed 1 July. CENI 7 July announced Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD won 77% of votes in late June legislative and district elections; UN 2 July said elections not free and fair. EAC 6 July appointed Ugandan President Museveni as mediator in Burundi crisis; Museveni met with stakeholders 14-15 July, govt 19 July failed to appear and asked to adjourn talks. Opposition members living abroad 15 July announced creation of national council to restore Arusha agreement, oppose Nkurunziza; council set to hold first meeting end of month. Army 13 July said 31 militants who crossed border from Rwanda killed 10 July, some 170 captured; Kigali denied militants came from Rwanda.

- ["Burundi's Nkurunziza wins presidential vote boycotted by rivals"](#), Reuters, 25 July 2015.

↓ **Cameroon** Suicide bombings attributed to Boko Haram (BH) intensified: at least 40 killed, tens injured in four separate attacks in Fotokol and Maroua throughout July. Following attacks, wearing of burqas banned in Far North and Littoral provinces, some mosques and Islamic schools closed, public Muslim gatherings forbidden in Maroua. Govt early month expelled some 450 Nigerians without documents from country, 28 July announced deployment of 2,000 additional troops in Far North. French President Hollande visited 3 July, said will support fight against BH. Nigerian President Buhari visited 29-30 July, discussed cooperation against BH.

- ["Au moins 11 morts dans un double attentat-suicide au Cameroun"](#), *Le Monde*, 13 July 2015.

➔ **Central African Republic** UN 13 July expressed concern about 30 June National Transitional Council (NTC) decision to refuse refugees right to vote in Oct presidential polls; Transitional Constitutional Court 21 July said decision unconstitutional. Electoral census closed in Bangui 27 July after opening late June, opened in all other provinces late July. Militia members including ex-Seleka rebels 28 July clashed over control of Markounda city in NW, at least 26 killed. Two UN peacekeepers injured in clashes with militants near Cameroon border 27 July. Anti-balaka leader Sébastien Wenezaoui entered govt 21 July after reshuffle.

- ["CAR court says refugees can vote in upcoming elections"](#), Al Jazeera, 22 July 2015.

↓ **Chad** Boko Haram (BH) attacks intensified: at least seventeen killed, 80 injured in 11 July suicide attack on N'Djamena's main market; at least 39 killed in suspected BH raids on Lake Chad villages throughout month; army 25 July launched military operation against BH on Lake Chad islands, 30 July announced it killed 117 BH fighters.

Govt 3 July adopted new anti-terrorism law; opposition leader Saleh Kebzabo 21 July warned law could be used to curtail freedom of assembly.

- [“Suicide bombing in Chad: Boko Haram suspected, at least 17 people killed”](#), International Business Times, 11 July 2015.

➔ **DR Congo** Establishment of provinces continued throughout month, increasing number of provinces from eleven to 26, following 11 July govt announcement of end decentralisation process. Electoral commission 28 July announced elections for provincial governors to take place 6 Oct instead of 31 Aug. Parliament 4 July began special session to discuss legislation required for local elections. Attacks on civilians attributed to Ugandan Allied Defence Forces (ADF) rebels continued in Beni: nine killed 14 July, three killed 24 July.

- Jean-Marie Guéhenno, [“No Running Away: UN Peacekeeping’s Race Against Time in DR Congo”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 20 July 2015.
- [“Le Katanga officiellement démembré au profit de 4 nouvelles provinces”](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 16 July 2015.

➔ **Rwanda** Both houses of parliament 14 July supported constitutional change to allow President Kagame’s bid for third term; govt 20 July announced national consultation on amending constitution to be held until Aug 11.

- [“Rwanda elections: MPs back move to let President Paul Kagame run for unprecedented third term”](#), *Independent*, 14 July 2015.

Horn of Africa

➔ **Ethiopia** Newly-formed armed opposition group “Arbengoch Ginbot 7 Unity and Democratic Movement” (AGUDM) 2 July took first military action in Western Tigray state, bordering Eritrea; some 50 reported killed. PM Desalegn confirmed clashes, warned authorities will take direct military action against Eritrea for alleged support to Ethiopian armed opposition groups. Federal police 10 July said counter-attack launched against group, killing 30.


- [“Ethiopian opposition group threatens armed resistance”](#), VoA, 25 July 2015.

➔ **Kenya** Al-Shabaab attacks continued throughout month including several IED attacks in Lamu county and 6 July attack on quarry worker residences in Soko Mbuji, Mandera county, that left fourteen dead and ten injured. Al-Shabaab militants 17 July occupied Kiunga Milimani, Lamu, for several hours; 7 July ambushed bus convoy in Milihoi. Senior intelligence officer shot dead in Mombasa 2 July by suspected radical groups. Inter-clan disputes over boundaries continued in NE: two killed 22 July in clashes in Wayama Jibril, Garissa county; two Ajuran clan men killed 21 July in attack by group from Dagodia clan amid administrative disputes between Eldas and Wajir North constituencies in Basir, Wajir county. Intercommunal livestock raids also continued in north: Pokot raiders 6, 14 and 20 July attacked Turkana homesteads in Katila, Turkana county: two killed, four injured, at least 2,150 livestock seized. Attempted livestock raid by Samburu men on Turkana herders in Marti area, Baragoi, Samburu county, repelled 25 July; four injured in gunfire exchange.

- [“Al-Shabab kills quarry workers in Mandera gun attack”](#), BBC News, 7 July 2015.

➔ **Somalia** Long-anticipated “Operation Juba Corridor” offensive began 19 July with AMISOM and Somali forces deposing Al-Shabaab from two major strongholds, Bardheere (Gedo) and Dinsoor (Bay), 23 and 22 July respectively. Senior Al-Shabaab commanders Ismail Jamhad and Jama Dere and several other militants reportedly killed mid-July in U.S. drone strike near Bardheere. Al-Shabaab attacks continued including simultaneous attacks on two Mogadishu hotels popular with govt officials and parliamentarians: ten killed on 10 July, twenty killed 26 July. Somalia Federal Govt (SFG) President Hassan late July officially acknowledged elections not possible in 2016. New Galmudug Interim State assembly 4 July elected first president, Abdikarim Guled, former security minister and close ally of SFG President Hassan Sheikh. Neighbouring Puntland condemned new administration as SFG plan to destabilise Puntland. Armed Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamaa militia meanwhile declared own president of rival “Galmudug state”. Regional administration leaders Abdiweli Gaas of Puntland and Ahmed Madobe of Interim Juba Administration (IJA) boycotted 29 July High-Level Partnership Forum (HLPF) meeting to review Somalia’s progress in political, security and economic areas due to ongoing disagreements with SFG. SFG 13 July submitted petition to International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding dispute with Kenya over sea border.

- [“No Popular Elections in 2016”](#), VOA News, 29 July 2015.

➔  **South Sudan** International community presented unified front to exert pressure on S Sudan’s warring parties to reach peace agreement: IGAD, African Union, UN, China and others, as part of new IGAD-PLUS mediation, 24 July proposed draft peace agreement, gave it to S Sudanese parties, gave them until 17 Aug to sign a final deal; S Sudanese parties dispute certain provisions but did not reject draft, raising hopes of agreement to end deadly 18-month conflict. U.S. President Obama late July visited Addis Ababa, met with regional leaders and Heads of State 27 July, discussed sanctions and other penalties for warring parties if they do not sign deal by 17 Aug. UNSC 2 July imposed sanctions on six govt and opposition generals. Most of ten SPLM Former Detainees (FDs), returned to Juba to mark Independence Day 9 July; notably the two most senior generals did not return. Low-level conflict in Maridi and Mundri forced over 4,000 civilians to flee parts of Western Equatoria.

- [“Obama and African leaders to consider sanctions in South Sudan’s civil war”](#), *Guardian*, 26 July 2015.

New Crisis Group Africa Report N°228, [South Sudan: Keeping Faith with the IGAD Peace Process](#), 27 July 2015. Talks led by East Africa’s IGAD offer the best chance to end South Sudan’s spreading war. International partners must put aside their disillusionment and rally to the regional body’s new IGAD-PLUS mechanism to help mediators reach a deal.

➔ **Sudan** President Bashir 2 July announced negotiations on National Dialogue will resume following end of Ramadan mid-July: Islamist Just Peace Forum announced it will rejoin dialogue, Islamist Reform Now said it will not participate. Sectarian Umma Party leader Sadig al-Mahdi 7 July called for new process supported by UNSC Chapter VII resolution; SPLM-N also called for new process, abandoning current AUHIP mediation. Clashes between SPLM-N and govt forces continued at reduced level due to rainy season in S Kordofan and Blue Nile; use of cluster bombs reported in Thabo county, S Kordofan 10 July. Govt 5 July announced deployment of 1,800 troops and

police in E Darfur to prevent clashes between Ma'alia and Rizeigat ethnic groups. Sec Gen of radical Islamist Tayar El Umma El Wahida group rearrested 1 July several days after release from prison after reaffirming his support for Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL).

- [“Sudanese president calls for resuming national dialogue after Ramadan”](#), Sudan Tribune, 3 July 2015.

➔ **Uganda** Authorities 9 July arrested presidential hopeful and former PM Amana Mbabazi; opposition Forum for Democratic Change presidential candidate Kizza Besigye also arrested; both released same day. Local govt representatives from Uganda and DRC 28 July failed to reach agreement on reopening of Vurra border crossing, closed early July following conflict at border.

- [“Ugandan police arrest two opposition leaders”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 9 July 2015.

Southern Africa

➔ **Madagascar** Over a hundred MPs 1 July filed motion of no confidence against Prime Minister Ravelonarivo's govt for failing to resolve country's socio-economic troubles, among other grievances; motion failed 3 July.

- [“Assemblée nationale – Les députés censurent le gouvernement”](#), *L'Express de Madagascar*, 1 July 2015.

➔ **Mozambique** Govt 13 and 27 July accused opposition Renamo of violating Sept ceasefire, launching attacks against police units 3 July and attacks against army 27 July in Tete province. Malawian press 27 July reported some 678 Mozambicans have fled across border into Malawi seeking asylum since 3 July. Renamo 6 July reiterated demands for greater stake in provincial affairs; leader Afonso Dhlakama threatened to expel provincial governors and district administrators from Manica, Sofala, Tete, Zambezia, Nampula and Niassa provinces.

- [“Renamo violates ceasefire deal”](#), *The Herald*, 28 July 2015.

➔ **Zimbabwe** President Mugabe 6 July reshuffled cabinet; prominent Information Minister Jonathan Moyo reappointed as Minister for Higher Education. Mugabe 3 July announced three by-elections for seats of three ZANU-PF heavyweights Kudakwashe Bhasikti, David Butau and Ray Kaukonde, expelled from parliament in June, to be held 19 Sept.

- [“Mugabe demotes Moyo in reshuffle”](#), *NewsDay*, 7 July 2015.

West Africa

➔ **Burkina Faso** Transitional authorities and Presidential Guard (RSP) reached compromise 16 July after RSP 30 June accused PM Zida of inventing kidnap plot against himself, demanded his resignation along with other military officers in govt: Zida to remain PM but President Kafando to assume defence portfolio; Colonel Auguste Denise Barry, thought to be close to Zida, dismissed 19 July as minister of territorial administration, decentralisation and security. Kafando 27 July named Colonel

Sidi Paré minister of security. ECOWAS Court of Justice 13 July struck down provision of new electoral code which banned supporters of former President Compaoré's Oct 2014 attempt to modify constitution from contesting Oct elections. National Transition Council 16 July voted on resolution to charge Compaoré for treason, and members of his last govt for assault, murder and financial wrongdoings.

- ["Kafando maintient le premier ministre Zida mais lui retire la défense"](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 17 July 2015.
- For latest briefing, see [Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°112, Burkina Faso: Meeting the October Target](#), 24 June 2015.

➔ **Côte d'Ivoire** Voter roll update ended 12 July: electoral commission announced 344,295 new voters registered. Some parties within opposition coalition National Coalition for Change (CNC) 7 July called for boycott of electoral commission's activities. Former PM Charles Konan Banny named CNC president 22 July. Ivoirian court 6 July indicted twenty for crimes committed during 2010-2011 post-election crisis, including two former rebel leaders allied to President Ouattara, Cherif Ousmane and Losséni Fofana, and pro-Gbagbo General Guiai Bi Poin.

- ["Un scrutin présidentiel sous haute surveillance"](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 23 July 2015.

➔ **Guinea** Dialogue between govt and opposition remained stalled: international partners 3 July proposed signing of interim agreement to take stock of points of accord already identified, following opposition's 27 June withdrawal. Opposition rejected proposal, said it included agreements not yet discussed; opposition leader Cellou Dalein Diallo 9 July resumed calls for general street protests. Authorities 9 July indicted ex-junta leader Moussa Dadis Camara for complicity in massacre and other crimes committed by security forces in Sept 2009. Indictment comes amid concerns over announced Camara-Diallo alliance following late-June meeting. Electoral commission (CENI) 11 July presented voter roll for Oct presidential election: 900,000 new voters validated in country, 65,000 abroad; Kankan region, ruling party stronghold, showed highest number of new voters.

- ["Un dialogue très tendu est en cours entre le pouvoir et l'opposition"](#), *Libération*, 12 July 2015.

➔ **Guinea Bissau** PM Pereira confirmed 2 July following National Assembly's unanimous vote of confidence 25 June. Investigation into alleged corruption by FM Mario Lopes da Rosa, reported adversary of President Vaz and ally of Pereira, continued, Lopes da Rosa stripped of diplomatic passport. Council of Ministers 15 July accused judiciary of bias following launch of investigation, called for debate on role and functioning of judiciary.

- ["Chefe da diplomacia proibido de sair da Guiné-Bissau"](#), RFI, 10 July 2015.

➔ **Liberia** Govt 12 July reported seven Ebola cases, one death over previous three weeks amid disease's resurgence in neighbouring Guinea and Sierra Leone. Preparations for UNMIL drawdown continued, UN SRSG for West Africa 2 July reiterated organisation will continue to support country after drawdown.

- ["Liberia finds two new Ebola cases, reviving fears"](#), Deutsche Welle, 1 July 2015.

➔ **Mali** Committee of the Agreement (CSA), established to oversee implementation of 20 June peace deal, met 3-5 July and late July; participants failed to agree on rules

to share responsibilities within committee, scope of mission, and on individual representatives, slowing implementation progress. Several attacks attributed to jihadi groups throughout month, including 2 July attack on MINUSMA convoy in Tumbuktu region by presumed al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) assailants, six peacekeepers killed. Attacks prompted increased operations by govt and French Barkhane authorities: Barkhane forces 5 July reported AQIM leader Ali Wadossene killed during operation. Armed forces 14 July arrested over fifteen suspected Islamist fighters in Zegoua, near Ivoirian border.

- Jean-Hervé Jezequel, "[Mali's Peace Deal Represents a Welcome Development, But Will it Work This Time?](#)", *Guardian*, 1 July 2015.
- "[Accord d'Alger pour la paix au Mali: le plus dur reste à faire](#)", *Jeune Afrique*, 6 July 2015.

➡ **Niger** Boko Haram (BH) attacks continued in Diffa region near Nigerian border including 15 July attack that left some twelve villagers dead and 18 July attack in Bosso that left sixteen dead. Army reported forces killed some 32 BH fighters 15-17 July. Electoral commission 29 July announced upcoming election dates: first round of presidential elections planned 21 Feb 2016, second round 20 March 2016 and local elections 9 May 2016.

- "[16 Niger villagers killed in Boko Haram attack: official](#)", AFP, 18 July 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°227, *The Central Sahel: A Perfect Sandstorm*, 25 June 2015.

➡ **Nigeria** President Muhammadu Buhari 2 July sacked head of domestic intelligence services Ita Ekpenyong; 13 July sacked national security adviser Sambo Dasuki as well as military top brass inherited from predecessor Goodluck Jonathan. Intelligence services moved against former President Jonathan's top security aides: 16 July arrested and detained former chief security officer Gordon Obuah for six days. Next day raided former National Security Adviser retired Col. Sambo Dasuki's homes, reported it was recovering incriminating items, hinted at pressing treasonable felony charges. Boko Haram (BH) raids intensified in NE: insurgents attacked over fourteen towns and villages in Borno state throughout month, killing over 275 civilians. BH also continued suicide attacks, with thirteen attacks in Borno, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau and Yobe states 1-26 July, killing at least 265 civilians. Govt forces increased counter-attacks, including at least twenty insurgents reportedly killed 26 July in Dikwa area, Borno state. Over 70 killed throughout month in communal and political violence in Benue, Plateau, Niger, Nasarawa, Zamfara and Rivers states.

- "[Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari sacks entire military top brass as Boko Haram strikes](#)", AFP, 13 July 2015.

Asia

North East Asia

➔ **China (internal)** Shenyang police 13 July shot dead three alleged “Xinjiang terrorists” and injured woman in raid, also reportedly captured sixteen suspected terrorists; Uighur rights group said those arrested and shot were Uighurs trying to flee country. Police 24 July conducted anti-terrorist raid in Wenzhou, Zhejiang, arrested two Uighurs accused of planning bomb attack in Shijiazhuang mall.

- [“The ethnic roots of China’s Uighur crisis”](#), Al Jazeera, 21 July 2015.

➔ **China/Japan** Japan’s lower house 16 July passed two controversial security bills aimed at allowing Self Defence Forces (SDF) to conduct military operations overseas for first time since WW2; China called legislation “unprecedented”, warned of effects on regional security environment. During mid-July visit to Beijing, Japanese envoy reportedly discussed a leaders’ summit in Sept with Chinese counterparts. Japan 21 July released defence white paper stressing threat posed by China, including latter’s mobilisation of larger vessels around disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in East China Sea (ECS). China said white paper “ignores facts, makes irresponsible remarks on China’s normal military growth and maritime activities”. Japan 22 July unveiled photos of Chinese oil rigs in ECS, said constructions “extremely regrettable”; China said Japan provoking confrontation; rigs are on Chinese side of medium line. Japan 7 July announced maritime SDF and coastguard will hold naval drills in preparation for incidents related to China’s ECS construction activities.

- [“Japan demands China halt oil exploration in part of East China Sea”](#), Reuters, 21 July 2015.

➔ **Korean Peninsula** Reports emerged 22 July DPRK has upgraded a launch tower to accommodate larger space launch vehicles; U.S. warned it against “destabilizing activities”. ROK and U.S. 29 June-9 July ran “Combined Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore Exercise” on west coast. Some ten DPRK soldiers crossed Military Demarcation Line (MDL) 11 July, returned north after ROK army fired warning shots. Amid ongoing severe drought UNICEF warned lives of many DPRK children at risk. Two ROK citizens who had been in China near DPRK border sentenced to life for espionage by DPRK court; ROK confirmed their citizenship, denied spying accusations.

- [“North Korea erects long-range missile launch pad that can fire largest missiles yet”](#), International Business Times, 21 July 2015.

South Asia

➔ **Afghanistan** Govt officials met with Taliban leaders outside Islamabad 7 July, marking minor breakthrough in President Ghani’s efforts to restart peace talks. Senior Pakistani official said talks conducted with approval from Taliban leadership, apparently confirmed by 15 July statement signed by Mullah Omar; however, several insurgent commanders expressed scepticism. Second round of talks scheduled for end-July,

but Taliban 30 July rejected participation after govt claimed to have “credible information” that Mullah Omar died in April 2013. Ghani facing continued opposition from lawmakers, who 5 July rejected his third nominee for defence minister. Security continued to deteriorate, with unprecedented number of insurgent attacks. Eighteen Afghan Local Police (ALP) members killed 3 July as insurgents overran outposts in Wardak province. In Faryab province hundreds of Taliban reportedly attacked parts of Qaisar, Almar and Pashtun Kot districts, took control of part of Almar district. Taliban reportedly captured Sar-e Pul province’s Kohistanat district late month. Khost provincial officials 12 July reported 27 civilians killed in suicide car bomb outside Khost city. Residents in northern Kunduz province 5 July complained about behaviour of some 7,000 irregular armed militiamen raised to block Taliban in north. Fighting between insurgent groups also reaching unprecedented intensity as Taliban battled self-declared Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL) factions in east. Number of U.S. drone attacks doubled in July, with over 100 strikes, most prominently against IS targets. Avowed IS groups reportedly seized control of several Taliban enclaves in Nangarhar province but subsequently lost most to Taliban counter-offensives.

- [“Amid uncertainty over Mulla Omar’s fate, power struggle flares up in Afghan Taliban movement”](#), The News (Pakistan), 27 July 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°268, [The Future of the Afghan Local Police](#), 4 June 2015.

► **Bangladesh** Amid allegations of corruption and criminality, and accusations of inept and repressive governance, PM Sheikh Hasina mid-July undertook major cabinet reshuffle, reportedly considering action against corrupt ministers, Awami League (AL) parliamentarians, advisers, and senior/mid-level party members. Senior leader of Jubo League, AL’s youth wing, expelled mid-July over extortion allegations. Cabinet 13 July approved draft “Public Services Act, 2015”, requiring law enforcers to obtain govt permission before filing charges against public officials; prompted criticism from civil society groups. Addressing parliament 7 July, PM Hasina said special tribunal would be formed to try cases against Zia and 37 other Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) members under 2009 Anti-Terrorism Act. BNP’s acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, arrested Jan on charges of vandalism and arson, released on bail 14 July. Zia appeared before court trying two graft cases against her 23 July. Former telecommunications minister Abdul Latif Siddique, charged with hurting religious sentiments, released on bail 29 June; some Islamist parties and groups mobilised demanding death sentence. Police 27 July arrested eight suspected extremists including Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen head. Controversial International War Crimes Tribunal 1 July decided to try Razakar (militia) commander and three other militia members accused of committing atrocities during 1971 independence war; 16 July sentenced a Jamaat-i-Islami leader to death for war crimes; Supreme Court 29 July upheld death sentence against former minister and senior BNP member Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, convicted by ICT in 2013.

- [“Death for big town’s big devil”](#), *Daily Star*, 30 July 2015.

► **India (non-Kashmir)** Police early July reported four Maoist leaders killed by fellow rebels in Chhattisgarh’s Sukma district amid rebel infighting. Maoist insurgents abducted and killed four policemen in Chhattisgarh 13 July. Top Maoist leader alias Sylvester Minz killed in clash with security forces in Jharkhand 25 July. Police report-

ed two Maoists killed in clash in Kandhamal district, Odisha 27 July; locals claimed dead were innocent. Several members of Naga militant group National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN(K)) killed by security forces in clashes during month, amid stepped up operations against group, accused of forcibly recruiting two school boys. Two students killed in crossfire between Assam Rifles and suspected NSCN(K) 16 July. One child killed, one injured in attack by suspected tribal militants in Dima Hasao district, Assam 21 July.

- [“India making inroads in Maoist stronghold”](#), Al Jazeera, 23 July 2015.

↓ **Kashmir** Surge of clashes across Line of Control (LoC) dividing Kashmir and Working Boundary dividing Pakistan and Indian-administered Kashmir. Pakistan 6 July reported shelling near Sialkot from Indian side of Working Boundary; India 10 July said Pakistani sniper shot Indian border guard dead across Line of Control (LoC). 10 July meeting between Pakistani and Indian PMs on sidelines of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in Russia issued short joint statement condemning terrorism, pledging to cooperate in eliminating it; agreed to meetings between national security advisors, between director generals of Pakistan Rangers and Indian Border Security Force, and between directors general of military operations; sides also agreed to release detained fishermen, to discuss ways to expedite trial for 2008 Mumbai bombing. Despite statement, cross-border clashes intensified. Punjab Rangers 15 July said Indian Border Security Forces fired near Sialkot; India claimed to be responding to Pakistani shelling in which a civilian died. Pakistani military same day claimed it shot down Indian drone. Islamabad 17 July formally protested alleged Indian ceasefire violations to UN Military Observer’s Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), soon after a teenaged Pakistani girl reportedly killed in LoC crossfire. UNMOGIP members 20 July visited Sialkot district in Pakistan’s Punjab province to inspect sites reportedly affected by Indian shelling. Five people killed in series of attacks on Indian side around Sopore late month; one injured in Srinagar 24 July. Ten killed, including three militants, in day-long clash between police and gunmen in India’s northern frontier state Punjab 27 July; National Security Adviser Ajit Doval called incident “very serious”, other officials suggested Pakistani involvement.

- [“Militancy spike in Jammu and Kashmir after 15 years”](#), Economic Times, 28 July 2015.

➔ **Nepal** Constituent Assembly 7 July endorsed draft constitution; major parties agreed to fast-track drafting process and aim for promulgation by mid-Aug. 8-23 July public opinion collection process truncated from one month to fifteen days, two days only allocated for consultations. Draft constitution widely labelled regressive, criticised for not addressing longstanding demands including delineation of federal provinces, entrenching secularism in preamble, and granting of citizenship by descent through mother. Demonstrations demanding amendments to these and other provisions in several southern Madhesi towns 20-21 July obstructed public consultation programs, dozens injured; police criticised for using excessive force. Right-wing monarchist Rastriya Prajatantra Party (Nepal) also launched demonstrations 20 July demanding enshrinement of Hinduism as official state religion. Citing public feedback, major parties 27 July discussed replacing secularism provision—previously enshrined in 2007 Interim Constitution – with “religious freedom” in new constitution, casting further doubt on protection of minority religions. Breakaway faction of Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist launched nationwide strike 24 July against draft constitution and May

2015 India–China trade agreement for allegedly violating Nepal’s territorial sovereignty; vehicles torched, schools shut down, over 200 arrested.

- [“Fast Track to Nowhere”](#), *The Kathmandu Post*, 16 July 2015.

➔ **Pakistan** Media 3 July reported military had concluded operation “Khyber-II” 15 June, three-month operation intended to retake control over militant strongholds in Tirah and Bara valleys. Several soldiers killed in militant attacks in N and S Waziristan early July. Militants 9 July bombed school in Khyber Agency. Ongoing incidents in Balochistan included suicide bomb attack in Quetta marketplace 5 July injuring nineteen; gunmen killed two Balochistan Constabulary members 13 July; nine alleged militants killed in paramilitary operations in Khuzdar and Awaran districts 20 July. Balochistan’s apex committee 27 June announced amnesty package for Baloch insurgents who disarm and renounce violence, but with no commitment to address Baloch grievances, including military’s extrajudicial killings and other rights violations. Paramilitary Rangers 17 July conducted raid on Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) HQ in Karachi, detaining two senior MQM members and others for “facilitating hate speeches”; in subsequent raids reportedly arrested scores of MQM workers. Non-govt Human Rights Commission of Pakistan 15 July noted increase in extrajudicial killings in Karachi during Rangers-led counter-terrorism operation against criminal networks, from 191 in first half of 2014 to 255 in same period 2015. Sindh’s PPP govt 17 July extended Rangers broad policing powers in Karachi for another year. EU Council 20 July expressed concern about recent govt measures limiting NGOs’ freedom. Three-member judicial commission 22 July rejected allegations by Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of organised rigging in 2013 election after three-month probe; PTI accepted findings.

- [“In Pakistan, detainees are vanishing in covert jails”](#), *New York Times*, 25 July 2015.

New Crisis Group Asia Report N°271, [Revisiting Counter-terrorism Strategies in Pakistan: Opportunities and Pitfalls](#), 22 July 2015. Pakistan’s six-month-old counter-terrorism strategy has failed to end the operations of violent jihadi groups, while military-led measures continue to undermine the civilian government. A winning strategy will have to include structural and governance reform, both to stop jihadis exploiting the absence of rule of law and to address the root causes of extremist violence.

➔ **Sri Lanka** President Sirisena’s 26 June dissolution of parliament triggered two weeks of battles within United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA) and its main constituent, Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Sirisena’s months-long effort to prevent former President Rajapaksa’s return to active politics ended 3 July, when UPFA announced it was nominating Rajapaksa for seat in 17 Aug parliamentary elections, angering supporters of Sirisena, still UPFA chairman. Sirisena 14 July speech reiterated his opposition to Rajapaksa’s candidacy, vowed never to appoint him as PM even if UPFA won majority of seats, announced he would not campaign for UPFA; speech seen as major political blow to Rajapaksa and UPFA’s chances of electoral victory and boost to coalition led by United National Party (UNP). Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and Janath Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) will run independent campaigns, also strongly opposed to Rajapaksa and UPFA. Rajapaksa 27 July launched UPFA manifesto with Sinhala nationalist themes, criticised TNA’s 25 July call for federal political solution; UNP and JVP also reiterated opposition to federalism. Election outcome expected to have major impact on the chances for further progress on rule of law reforms, post-war

reconciliation and accountability. Northern Province Chief Minister CV Wigneswaran travelled to U.S. and UK, reiterating calls for international investigation into alleged genocide by govt against Tamils and Tamils self-determination. One person reported killed, 13 injured in shooting at election rally in Colombo 31 July.

- Alan Keenan, [“Rajapaksa Returns to Test Sri Lanka’s Democracy”](#), Inside Story, 16 July 2015.
- [“How a Rajapaksa comeback would shake up Sri Lankan politics”](#), Deutsche Welle, 15 July 2015.

South East Asia

➔ **Indonesia** Crowd of around two hundred people attacked group of Muslims and set mosque on fire in majority-Christian Tolikara in Papua province 17 July; one attacker shot dead by police, eleven wounded.

- [“Papua police chief to be replaced after Tolikara”](#), *Jakarta Post*, 31 July 2015.

➔ **Myanmar** Govt and ethnic armed groups met for eighth formal round of negotiations 22-24 July but no breakthrough reached on Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) due to disagreements over remaining amendments to text and exclusion of six rebel groups; negotiations to resume first week of Aug. Sporadic fighting continued in Kachin, Shan, Karen and Rakhine states; army 11 July launched airstrikes on Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in Kachin state; KIA 11 July initiated rocket attack on govt forces in Shan state, one KIA member reported killed in military counter-attack. Democratic Karen Ben Army (DKBA) and army early July clashed in dispute over newly-constructed Asia Highway in Kayin state. Election Commission early July announced 8 Nov date for general elections. Parliament 8 July voted on second of two constitutional amendment bills proposed by ruling USDP in June; most provisions again vetoed by military, only minor changes slightly broadening lawmaking and taxation authority of regions and states approved. National League for Democracy 19 July announced Ko Ko Gyi, leader of 1988 student protests, will run in Nov election. Parliament 7 July approved controversial Buddhist Women’s Special Marriage Bill restricting interfaith marriage by Buddhist women, criticised by human rights and women’s groups. Govt released almost 7,000 prisoners given presidential pardon 30 July, including a small number of political prisoners.

- [“Government warns ethnic armies against prolonging ceasefire talks”](#), *Myanmar Times*, 23 July 2015.

➔ **Philippines** House of Representatives Ad Hoc Committee on Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) 12 July announced resumption of BBL talks in Aug. President Aquino 27 July called for passage of BBL in State of the Nation Address. National Bureau of Investigation and National Prosecution Service joint fact-finding mission 16 July recommended investigation of 102 MILF and BIFF militants linked to 25 Jan clash in Mamasapano that killed 44 police commandos and eighteen MILF. Almost daily clashes in south, including: security forces 16 July conducted raid in Sulu, three Abu Sayyaf Group members killed; one soldier killed in BIFF attack in Maguindanao 6 July. New People’s Army (NPA) 11 July also conducted raid in Misamis Oriental, one soldier

killed, one captured. NPA 27 July ambushed military convoy in Kalinga, three soldiers killed. Security forces 21 July arrested high-ranking NPA leader Ernesto Lorenzo.

- [“Rufus: BBL deliberations to resume August despite petitions in Supreme Court”](#), MindaNews, 12 July 2015.

➔ **South China Sea** UN tribunal began deliberations 7-13 July on whether it can hear Philippines’ legal challenge against China’s nine-dash line claim and rights to exploit natural resources in disputed areas of SCS. China, which does not accept court’s jurisdiction, 22 July urged Philippines to return to bilateral talks. Philippine navy 13 July began repairing military ship grounded deliberately on Second Thomas Shoal in 1999 to mark its claim in SCS; Beijing 15 July said it “strongly protests” refurbishment of “illegally grounded” vessel. Philippines 15 July reopened former U.S. naval base in Subic Bay as military outpost to cover SCS; 21 July stationed fighter jets there. China 23 July commenced ten-day naval drill in SCS, 28 July conducted air and sea drills. U.S. 17 July announced its navy’s readiness for military action in SCS. U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander 18 July joined surveillance flight over area. Vietnam 24 July demanded halt to Chinese naval drill near Paracel islands. Followed visit by senior Chinese official to Hanoi mid-July.

- [“America-China: Heading for South China Sea clash?”](#), Diplomat, 20 July 2015.

➔ **Thailand** Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) 21 July received 30-day extension to complete revisions to 315-article draft constitution and present them to National Reform Council (NRC) 22 Aug; follows late June announcement by Election Commission that referendum on draft constitution could be held Jan 2016. CDC 6 July replaced controversial “open list” system with single constituency for party-list system. National Legislative Assembly deputy chairman 20 July said current govt could stay in office until early 2017, election may not take place until Dec 2016. Criminal Court 14 July convicted ten members of alleged “lèse majesté network” for distributing online content it said insulted monarchy, sentenced them to three to five years in jail; justice minister mid-July sought cooperation from France and Japan to extradite lèse majesté suspects. Govt criticised over decision to hand over 109 Uighurs who fled China to Chinese authorities early July. Violence in south continued with series of bomb attacks in Narathiwat, Pattani during month, several killed, dozens injured including civilians and security forces. Security forces 20 July killed two wanted insurgents during raid in Pattani; gunmen 6 July killed village chief, wounded three in Yala; motorcycle bomb 10 July exploded in Songkhla, killed three civilians, wounded three others; seventeen injured in platoon-sized attack on defence volunteer base in Yala 30 July.

- [“A look at southern Thailand’s smoldering insurgency”](#), Deutsche Welle, 20 July 2015.

New Crisis Group Asia Report N°270, [Southern Thailand: Dialogue in Doubt](#), 8 July 2015.

The insurgency that has plagued southern Thailand for more than a decade continues to fester. Peace talks have collapsed and rifts between the government and separatists remain deep. Resolving the conflict requires Bangkok to accept pluralism and decentralisation, and rebels to articulate their goals and commit to a dialogue process.

Europe and Central Asia

Balkans

➔ **Bosnia** Republika Srpska (RS) legislative assembly 15 July voted to hold referendum on authority of national courts and Office of High Representative (OHR) over ethnic Serbs; OHR, U.S. criticised decision, Bosniak delegates to RS assembly 23 July vetoed referendum. Govt 27 July adopted reform plan required for progress on EU integration; thousands protested 30 July against labour law passed as part of reforms. During 11 July commemoration of 1995 killing of over 7,000 Bosniak men and boys by Serbs in Srebrenica, some mourners attacked Serbian PM Vučić; Bosnian and Serbian leaders meeting 22 July pledged cooperation despite attack. Russia 8 July vetoed UNSC resolution calling 1995 Srebrenica killings “genocide”.

- [“Bosnian Serb referendum meets chorus of condemnation”](#), Balkan Insight, 16 July 2015.

➔ **Kosovo** Ethnic Serb MPs 20 July blocked law on creation of Kosovo army. Violent incidents in Serb village Goraždevac 8-9 July: two cars shot at, Molotov cocktail thrown at monument to Serb victims of war. Parliament 23 July passed resolution requesting probe into alleged corruption in EULEX mission. Authorities 11 July cut water supply in Pristina citing “security issues” following arrest of five suspects reportedly linked to Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL), accused of planning to poison reservoir. Police 7 July arrested man suspected of taking part in May shootout in Kumanovo, Macedonia.

- [“Serb list blocks drafts aimed at forming Kosovo army”](#), B92, 20 July 2015.

➔ **Macedonia** Agreement between four main political parties reached 15 July, in step to end political crisis around alleged widespread illegal surveillance by govt. EU-mediated deal stipulates resignation of PM Gruevski by Jan 2016, interim govt to be sworn in, parliamentary elections in April 2016. Opposition 21 July said govt cancelled follow-up meeting on implementing reforms, accused it of stalling. Skopje court 1 July ruled trial of opposition leader Zoran Zaev for attempting to blackmail Gruevski should proceed. Member of ethnic Albanian party Democratic Union for Integration shot dead in Kumanovo 24 July; local party head surrendered to police, claimed self-defence.

- [“EU mediation helps end political deadlock in Macedonia”](#), Deutsche Welle, 15 July 2015.

New Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°75, [Macedonia: Defusing the Bombs](#), 9 July 2015. Macedonia is being shaken by twin political and security crises, both of which could escalate into violent confrontation or worse. While another civil war in the Western Balkans is not imminent, there is a serious threat to regional stability that the country’s leaders and international partners need to contain.

Caucasus

➔ **Armenia** Police 6 July removed remaining protesters opposing electricity price increase from Yerevan main street; some 40 protesters briefly detained, around a thousand moved to nearby Freedom Square. Protest leaders 21 July said they will continue demonstrations. Govt 3 July launched investigation into alleged police violence and abuses during protests in June. Russian military 7 July conducted combat readiness check of troops stationed in Armenia.

- [“Armenian police disperse protest after 2 weeks”](#), AP, 6 July 2015.

➔ **Azerbaijan** Baku court 30 July sentenced high-ranking opposition member Asif Yusifli to 7.5 years’ jail for fraud and forgery; Yusifli denied charges, said verdict politically motivated. Baku court 1 July sentenced nine people to between four and 15 years’ jail for joining Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL).

- [“U.S. senators denounce Azerbaijan’s crackdown on civil society”](#), RFE/RL, 8 July 2015.

➔ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Tensions along contact line increased: Azerbaijan defence ministry 16 July announced “intense” military exercises with heavy artillery, told hospitals to be ready for “possible military action”; Armenia 2 July announced it received \$200m Russian loan to buy weapons, modernise army. One Azeri, five Armenian soldiers reportedly killed in clash along contact line 25 July; Azerbaijan 29 July said it shot down Armenian drone near contact line, NK de facto authorities denied. European Council President Donald Tusk said status quo in NK unacceptable to EU, peaceful settlement a priority.

- [“Azerbaijan holds army drill, risking escalation with Armenia”](#), Bloomberg Business, 16 July 2015.

➔ **Georgia** President Margvelashvili 13 July accused Russia of violating international law following demarcation activities by Russian troops stationed in breakaway republic South Ossetia (SO) early month, which put portion of strategic oil pipeline under SO control. EU foreign policy chief Mogherini 15 July condemned Russian demarcation, warned against “provocative” actions. Army 8 July began joint military exercises with NATO countries. Over 3,000 protested in Tbilisi 18 July, denouncing Russia as “occupier”, calling for its withdrawal from SO and Abkhazia.

- [“Georgia accuses Russia of violating international law over South Ossetia”](#), *Guardian*, 14 July 2015.

➔ **North Caucasus (Russia)** Responding to late June announcement of Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL) “governorate” in NC, Chechen leader Kadyrov 15 July said there will be no IS bases or branches in Chechnya. Russian National Antiterrorist Committee (NAK) operations continued: two members of Kizilyurt gang linked to several terror incidents reportedly killed in early month two-day pursuit in Dagestan, which also left one Russian soldier dead; six militants reported killed in 23 July raid in Kabardino-Balkaria. Following split within insurgency in which many swore allegiance to IS, Caucasus Emirate (CE) 5 July announced new leader Magomed Suleymanov (Abu Usman Gimrinsky), former Sharia judge of Dagestani insurgency. New leader (amir) of Dagestan’s CE mountain sector appointed after returning from fighting in Syria.

- Ekaterina Sokirianskaia, [“Turning Chechnya’s Precarious Stability into Peace”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 2 July 2015.
- [“Chechen leader rejects claims of Islamic State branches in Muslim North Caucasus region”](#), International Business Times, 15 July 2015.

New Crisis Group Europe Report N°237, *North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (IV): Economic and Social Imperatives*, 7 July 2015. For two decades, the NC conflict has been among Europe’s deadliest. Recently, victims were fewer, but risks from growing IS influence in the insurgency are growing. To prevent a new rise in violence, Moscow must promote transparent governance as well as social and economic opportunities in the NC.

Eastern Europe

➔ **Ukraine** Fighting, mostly involving heavy artillery, resumed in second half of month: eight Ukrainian soldiers reported killed, sixteen injured in separatist attack 15 July. Increasing tension and violence in western Ukraine: at least one dead, seven injured in standoff between police and ultra-nationalist Right Sector 11-13 July in Zakarpattia; Right Sector 21 July rallied in Kiev against govt policies, said will start campaign to organise referendum on President Poroshenko’s impeachment, recognition of volunteer militia units. Poroshenko 1 July proposed constitutional changes to give some self-determination to separatist-controlled regions; parliament 16 July voted to send proposal to Constitutional Court. Russia and separatists 2 July criticised proposal, said leaders of breakaway Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics (DPR and LPR) not consulted. DPR 2 July announced local elections on 18 October, under auspices of expected law on special status of breakaway areas; 18 July said it will withdraw heavy weaponry from line of separation. Some 2,000 Ukrainian troops 20 July began military drills with NATO countries; Russia 21 July said exercises disrupting implementation of Minsk agreement. U.S. 24 July announced it will begin training Ukrainian troops; will supplement ongoing U.S. training of National Guard, which will end in Nov. Responding to western criticism at slow pace of reform, parliament adopted four laws aimed at unblocking \$2.7bn due from IMF and World Bank in Aug.

- Paul Quinn-Judge, [“Disorder Spreads Among Russian-Backed Ukrainian Rebels”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 16 July 2015.
- [“Police in Western Ukraine clash with paramilitary group”](#), *New York Times*, 12 July 2015.

Western Europe/Mediterranean

➔ **Cyprus** UN-led reunification talks continued 10 and 27 July between Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci and Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades. Leaders 27 July agreed individual rights to property must be respected, resolved to appoint independent Property Commission to settle claims. Turkish President Erdogan 20 July expressed support for negotiations.

- [“Individual rights to property must be respected, say leaders”](#), *Financial Mirror*, 27 July 2015.

⚠️* **Turkey** Month saw collapse of state-PKK ceasefire in place since 2013 following marked increase in violent incidents particularly in SE Turkey, Islamic State (IS, former-

ly ISIL) blamed for 20 July suicide bomb attack in Suruc killing 32. Two police killed by PKK-affiliated group 22 July. Border guard killed by IS militant 23 July, one police officer killed by PKK same day. Amid increasing tensions Turkey announced agreement for opening bases to allied forces fighting IS on 23 July and launched airstrikes on IS positions in Syria (killing at least 35 IS members according to Turkish military) on 24 July; and struck PKK positions in N Iraq starting on 25 July, continuing through end of July with seven waves of bombardment. Govt also arrested hundreds of suspected IS and PKK members inside Turkey 24 July onwards. PKK said 2013 truce has lost meaning; President Erdogan 28 July said peace process “with those who threaten our national unity and brotherhood” is impossible. Turkey and U.S. 28 July reportedly agreed in general terms on plan to drive out IS from part of Syrian territory along Turkish border. NATO ambassadors same day expressed solidarity with Turkey at meeting in Brussels to discuss Syria and Iraq, in session requested by Turkey. Kurdish forces claimed Turkish tanks shelled Kurdish-held villages in N Syria 26 July; Ankara denied targeting Syrian Kurds, stating it only targeted IS in Syria and PKK in N Iraq. PKK 24-31 July killed eleven Turkish security officers, bringing total during July to eighteen.

- [“Turkey steps up pressure on Kurds as Turkey’s peace process falters”](#), Dalje, 28 July 2015.

Central Asia

➔ **Kyrgyzstan** Anti-terrorist operations in Bishkek and nearby Lebedinovka village 16 July; six militants killed, seven arrested. Govt said militants were members of Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL), led by two Kazakhs imprisoned in 2014 for attempted travel to Syria using illegal passports but escaped in April; one blew himself up 1 July during arrest. Security services reported large find of weapons and explosives following Bishkek raid, said group plotting attacks on post-Ramadan prayers and Russia’s Kant air base. Bishkek 17 July condemned U.S. State Dept bestowal of 2014 Human Rights Defender Award on jailed rights defender Azimjan Askarov; PM Sariev 21 July denounced 1993 cooperation agreement with U.S. President, set 4 Oct date for parliamentary elections.

- [“4 militants die in shootout in the capital”](#), *New York Times*, 16 July 2015.

➔ **Tajikistan** Authorities reported they arrested two men planning terrorist attacks. Russia late June supplied 120 armoured vehicles specialised for mountainous terrain to 201st Russian military base; began training 1,000 Tajik soldiers.

- [“The far outpost of great powers”](#), RFE/RL, 21 July 2015.

➔ **Turkmenistan** Registration of candidates underway 27 June-22 July for 16 Aug parliamentary elections and local administration polls. Opposition media 2 July reported increase in arrests near Iranian border of people linked to Afghan militant groups; 400 people reportedly detained since Feb, 300 still being held. Arrested reportedly include six officials from defence ministry, nine police, several officials from prosecutor’s office. Media 6 July asserted coffins containing four officers and eight draftees arrived in Ashgabat, all served in Tagtabazar district in Mary province near Afghan border. No official explanation provided for deaths; Russian media 8 July reported servicemen killed by IS reconnaissance group that crossed border.

- [“Afghanistan’s Central Asian spillover”](#), RFE/RL, 10 July 2015.

Latin America and the Caribbean

↑ **Colombia** Peace process re-emerged from deepest crisis yet with new temporary, unilateral FARC ceasefire starting 20 July; govt responded 25 July suspending bombardments on guerrilla camps. Came after 12 July joint announcement to accelerate confidence building measures and speed up talks by shifting work to parallel working groups; also agreed to invite representatives from UNSG and UNASUR presidency to join technical discussions on bilateral ceasefire and FARC disarmament. Compliance with commitments to be reviewed after four months, when President Santos will decide if talks continue. In another positive step, FARC 19 July released army lieutenant Cristian Moscoso, held since 7 July. Joint humanitarian demining program temporarily suspended following 15 July accident killing military deminer. Santos 6 July announced new military commanders: Alberto Mejía (army), Carlos Bueno (air force) and Leonardo Santamaría (navy). Talks with ELN continue to move slowly: Commander Gabino's 4 July message stating group ready to negotiate disarmament failed to generate positive public dynamic amid accusations ELN was behind two small bomb attacks 2 July in Bogotá; in reaction, authorities detained thirteen social leaders alleged to be members of ELN urban cell, triggering accusations of criminalising social movements. UNODC 2 July reported 44% increase in coca cultivation in 2014, and 52% hike in potential cocaine production. Attorney general's office 27 July began exhumation work at Medellín rubbish dump thought to be one the world's largest mass graves. Former paramilitary leader El Alemán released 30 July after completing maximum eight year prison term stipulated under 2005 Justice and Peace law.

- Christian Voelkel, "[Verificación del fin del conflicto armado: los retos y las opciones](#)" *Razón pública*, 20 July 2015.
- Javier Ciurlizza, "[El Rubicón del proceso de paz](#)", *La Silla de la Paz*, 2 July 2015.
- "[Colombia, FARC rebels reach major de-escalation deal](#)", AFP, 13 July 2015.

New Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°32, *On Thinner Ice: The Final Phase of Colombia's Peace Talks*, 2 July 2015. Recent advances have given Colombia's peace talks between the government and FARC a much-needed respite, but, amid an escalation of violence, the risks of an involuntary collapse are real. Saving the process requires conflict de-escalation, swift progress on the agenda and rallying popular support.

➔ **Guatemala** Congressional committee 3 July recommended congress lift President Perez Molina's immunity to allow prosecutors to investigate corruption links amid ongoing govt corruption scandal. Authorities 9 July arrested president's son-in-law and former secretary Gustavo Martinez on charges of influence trafficking; former energy Minister Edwin Ramón Rodas Solares and several others charged same day. Members of congress and political candidates also caught up in corruption investigations, including Lider party's VP candidate Edgar Barquin, under investigation for money laundering and illegal campaign financing; accusations could disqualify Lider presidential candidate Manuel Baldizón, frontrunner in Sept elections. International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) 16 July presented report on illegal funding of political parties, examining near total impunity for electoral crimes, including illicit funding by private interests and organised crime; activists renewed calls to postpone elections so changes to electoral laws can be passed and implemented. Official medical

report 7 July determined former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt, accused of genocide and crimes against humanity, unfit for trial, which may imply cancellation of trial.

- Arturo Matute, [“La Oportunidad de Guatemala”](#), Esglobal, 15 July 2015.
- [“Guatemalan fraud probe opens doors for president to face trial”](#), teleSUR, 3 July 2015.

➔ **Haiti** Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) 9 July officially opened campaign for 25 Oct presidential elections and possible 27 Dec run-off. CEP president attended donor conference in New York mid-July seeking to fill \$26mn funding gap for polls. Slow pace of recruitment for poll workers and scepticism over police capacity to tackle electoral violence continued to fuel mistrust among population, doubts among international partners. Organisation of American States 9 July sent special mission to Dominican Republic and Haiti to gather information on situation of Haitian migrants amid deportation crisis.

- [“Haiti pleads for international help on elections”](#), *Miami Herald*, 16 July 2015.

➔ **Mexico** Powerful drug trafficker Joaquín Guzmán, alias “El Chapo” escaped from federal maximum-security prison 11 July; prison director fired, federal court opened proceedings on three prison employees charged with aiding escape. Rights activists 2 July said army issued orders to “take down” presumed criminals in night-time operations; allegation raised further questions about June 2014 shooting of 22 suspected kidnappers in Tlatlaya municipality, Mexico state. International groups of experts appointed by Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, investigating Sept 2014 disappearance of 43 students, faulted govt for failing to provide access to military officers stationed in city of Iguala at time of abductions for investigation into disappearances. Attorney general’s office 26 July confirmed 129 bodies found in over sixty clandestine graves in Guerrero state following investigation into students’ disappearance.

- [“How El Chapo’s tunnel could bury the rival who jailed him, Mexico’s president”](#), *Washington Post*, 14 July 2015.

➔ **Venezuela** Ahead of elections scheduled for 6 Dec comptroller general’s office mid-July banned prospective opposition alliance MUD parliamentary candidates María Corina Machado, Enzo Scarano and Daniel Ceballos from holding public office for one year. Administrative decision based on alleged irregularities in their respective declarations of assets but widely seen as bid to block popular MUD figures from competing. Economic crisis worsened, with black market dollar surpassing Bs.600, 100 times official rate; with supplies of imported wheat running out, bread shortage taking hold; supermarkets looted 31 July in Ciudad Guayana, one person reported killed. Govt mid-July moved against heavily armed criminal gangs in Caracas and some rural areas: some 200 police and National Guard 13 July stormed Caracas stronghold known as Cota 905, killing fifteen and detaining 100. Relations between govt and neighbouring Guyana worsened over Essequibo territorial dispute; Guyanese authorities 14 July rejected longstanding UN “good offices” mechanism, seeking to take matter to International Court in The Hague.

- [“Venezuela bans another opposition politician from holding office”](#), Reuters, 18 July 2015.

New Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°33, [Venezuela: Unnatural Disaster](#), 30 July 2015. Alongside growing political tension, the collapse of Venezuela’s economy and health-care system are leading to an equally dangerous social crisis. To stave off a humanitarian disaster that could well turn today’s polarisation violent, Venezuela needs an emergency program, careful reform of price controls, political consensus, and international support.

Middle East & North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

➔ **Israel-Palestine** Tensions between Salafi-jihadi groups and Hamas in Gaza continued to rise following 19 July bombing of at least five vehicles belonging to Hamas and Islamic Jihad; Hamas security forces same day arrested two Salafi-jihadi suspects, said investigation ongoing. Hamas earlier denied involvement in 1 July attack by IS affiliate in Sinai on Egyptian forces (see Egypt). Hamas leaders made several statements alluding to indirect talks with Israel over possible lifting of Gaza's blockade, and possible new prisoner exchange, with Israel seeking return of two of its citizens reportedly held in Gaza. Hamas leaders 17 July held rare meeting with Saudi Arabia's King Salman, sparking hopes of rapprochement. In W Bank, negotiations continued on forming new Palestinian unity govt following June announcement by Palestinian Authority (PA) that it would resign. PA arrested over 250 Hamas members in W Bank over several weeks beginning in June, citing security concerns; Hamas condemned arrests, threatened retaliation. Israeli forces shot dead several Palestinians including teenager in W Bank 3 July, 18 year old in Qalandiya refugee camp 27 July. Increased pressure from pro-settlement lobby over 29 July destruction of 24 residential units built unlawfully in Beit El settlement and amid divisions within Israel's coalition govt: to allay pressures Netanyahu re-authorized 300 settlement units in Beit El and promised 504 additional settlement units in E Jerusalem. Palestinian child killed in arson attack in W Bank 30 July, Israeli police said settlers suspected of carrying out attack. Netanyahu condemned 14 July Iran-P5+1/EU3+3 nuclear deal (see Iran), said it paves way for Iran to develop nuclear weapons.

- ["Quick thoughts: Nathan Thrall on the Gaza Strip one year after Israel's Operation Protective Edge"](#), Jadaliyya, 7 July 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°159, [The Status of the Status Quo at Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade](#), 30 June 2015.

➔ **Lebanon** Internal political stalemate endures amid rising tensions between March 8 coalition and March 14 coalition. 9 July cabinet session witnessed heated argument between PM Salam and Aounist FM Gebran Bassil, latter accusing PM of violating constitution, encroaching on prerogatives of president. General Michel Aoun, leader of Christian Free Patriotic Movement, called rally 9 July in attempt to press for his election to presidency and appointment of his son-in-law as head of army, but turnout low. Several wounded in clashes between supporters of Sunni Future Movement and Hizbollah-linked Resistance Brigades south of Beirut 1 July. Videos leaked from Roumieh prison showed security officers beating and humiliating Sunni Islamist inmates, feeding into growing sense of persecution among families and sympathisers, and raising concerns about effectiveness of govt's policy toward extremism. Hizbollah and Syrian army continued offensives against Syrian militants in Zabadani, key militant stronghold along Lebanon's eastern border with Syria, part of wider operation seeking to wrest control of Qalamoun region from Syrian militants (see Syria).

- Sahar Atrache, ["Lebanon's Deceptive Resilience"](#), Middle East Eye, 23 July 2015.

- [“Lebanese Christian party rallies against Sunni prime minister”](#), Reuters, 9 July 2015.

New Crisis Group Middle East Report N°160, *Lebanon’s Self-Defeating Survival Strategies*, 20 July 2015. Lebanon is surviving internal and regional strains remarkably well, but this resilience has become an excuse for tolerating political dysfunction. If the political class does not take immediate steps like holding long-overdue elections, fighting corruption and promoting rule of law, its complacency will only make an eventual fall harder and costlier.

➔ **Syria** Pace of opposition gains continued to slow, attacks continuing without significant gains: 2 July offensive on Aleppo repelled by Syrian army, 100 rebels killed; 24 July attack on Daraa left at least eleven civilians, eighteen regime soldiers and 50 rebels dead. Growing tensions within Islamist-led Jaish al-Fateh coalition amid perception that it failed to provide governance in Idlib province, and failure to implement agreement between its factions to share power, alienating international donors and local civilians. U.S. 7 July acknowledged its program to train and equip opposition fighters to combat IS had trained only 60 individuals. U.S.-led coalition airstrikes against Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL) continued: two senior IS leaders reported killed in 13 July airstrikes in NE; at least 23, including six civilians, reported dead in 5 July strikes in Raqqa. Following 20 July IS suicide attack in Turkish town near Syrian border in which 32 people killed, Turkish govt 24 July launched airstrikes on three IS positions in Syria, 27 July announced it will work with U.S. to create “IS-free zone” along Turkey-Syria border (see Turkey). Kurdish People’s Protection Unit (YPG) 27 July said Turkish tanks shelled Kurdish troops near strategic Kobani town. Kurdish forces 7 July reportedly recaptured at least ten villages seized by IS early month north of Raqqa. Seven including Ahrar al-Sham commander killed in double bombing in Idlib province blamed on IS cell or sympathisers 13 July. Deadly regime air strikes continued, including scores killed in Aleppo, Idlib provinces.

- [“Four reasons Syrian ‘safe zone’ unlikely to work”](#), Irin, 29 July 2015.

Gulf

➔ **Bahrain** Two policemen killed, six injured in bomb explosion in Shiite village Sitra 28 July, several reportedly arrested amid speculation over “foreign” link to attacks; Iran denied responsibility. Tensions with Iran deepened: authorities 25 July announced ambassador to Iran recalled after repeated “hostile” Iranian statements, said arms smuggling plot by two Bahrainis with reported ties to Iran foiled. EU parliament 9 July passed resolution calling for ban on exports of tear gas and crowd-control equipment to Bahrain, end to rights abuses. Rights campaigner Nabeel Rajab pardoned by King Hamad mid-July after serving three months of six-month sentence for insulting public institutions on Twitter. Sunni Muslim opposition leader Ibrahim Sharif arrested 12 July for incitement to overthrow govt and “hatred of the regime” in 10 July speech; U.S. expressed concern.

- [“Bomb kills two policemen in worst Bahrain bombing in months”](#), Reuters, 28 July 2015.

➔ ✂ **Iran** Historic agreement between Iran and P5+1 (EU3+3) on Iran’s nuclear program reached 14 July after twelve years of crisis and 22 months of arduous negotiations. Resulting Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) established most rigorous verification and inspection mechanism ever negotiated, rolls back extensive sanc-

tions regime imposed on Iran. U.S. Obama administration 19 July submitted deal to Congress, triggering 60-day review period; Iranian parliament will also scrutinise deal but without deadline or obligation to vote. UNSC 20 July unanimously endorsed agreement, triggering 90-day period to “adoption day” when Iran will begin implementing key nuclear commitments and U.S. and EU will issue waivers and regulations necessary for lifting of sanctions. Iran and IAEA 14 July also reached agreement on roadmap for resolving outstanding issues by 15 December.

- Crisis Group Statement, [“The Triumph of Nuclear Diplomacy”](#), 14 July 2015.
- [“The Iran agreement is a disaster for ISIS”](#), *Guardian*, 28 July 2015.

➔ **Iraq** Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL) attacks and suicide bombings continued throughout month including 18 July car bomb in Khan Bani Saad town that killed some 120 and injured at least 130. Shiite militias and central govt 12 July announced beginning of second large-scale military operation to retake Anbar governorate from IS, 27 July launched attack on Ramadi. Fighting around first target, Falluja, quickly reached stalemate: IS reportedly planted booby-traps around city blocking militias from entering and confining Falluja’s residents to city. UN report released mid-month estimated nearly 15,000 civilians killed Jan 2014-April 2015 by conflict in Iraq. Kurdistan Regional Govt (KRG) early month said it was exporting crude oil from Kirkuk fields independently of Baghdad; move violates earlier agreement between KRG PM Barzani and Iraq’s Oil Minister Abdel Abdul Mahdi. KRG placed in difficult position of choosing between solidarity with longstanding economic partner Turkey or Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) after Turkey launched strikes against PKK militants in northern Iraq late July (see Turkey).

- [“Iraq launches new offensive to drive Isis from Anbar province”](#), *Guardian*, 13 July 2015.

➔ **Kuwait** At least 26 suspected militants reportedly detained following 26 June bombing of al-Sadeq mosque that left 26 dead. Interior ministry 30 July said Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL) network uncovered, several detained.

- [“Kuwait says uncovers Islamic State network”](#), Reuters, 30 July 2015.

⚠️ **Yemen** Fighting intensified throughout month as hopes for Ramadan ceasefire failed to materialise and Saudi/anti-Huthi coalition launched new military offensive. Huthi/Saleh alliance 14 July suffered first major defeat since start of war in March when Yemeni fighters trained in Saudi Arabia and backed by Saudi-led coalition airstrikes captured Aden international airport. Fighters consolidated control over most of Aden, made some progress in southern governorates including retaking military bases in Shebwa and Lahj, during military push dubbed “Operation Golden Arrow”; coalition forces said will use Aden to launch further military operations. UN-brokered ceasefire announced for 10 July broken almost immediately by coalition airstrikes; Huthis 10 July threatened significant military escalation in response to increased airstrikes. Saudi-led coalition 25 July announced unilateral five-day ceasefire to allow humanitarian aid, immediately broken by both sides. Ceasefire announcement came day after coalition airstrike killed at least 65 civilians in residential compound in Mokha, Human Rights Watch said killings an apparent war crime. UN 2 July raised Yemen to level-three humanitarian crisis; humanitarians continued to warn of coming famine if naval blockade is not eased; World Food Program’s ship berthed in Aden 21 July for first

time since conflict began. UN raised civilian death toll to 1,900 as of 28 July, with 202 deaths in previous twelve days.

- [“UN: civilian death toll in Yemen fighting up to nearly 1,900”](#), AP, 28 July 2015.

North Africa

➔ **Algeria** At least 22 killed early July in outbreak of communal violence on unprecedented scale between Malekite Arab and Ibadite Amazigh (Berber) communities in Ghardaia region. President Bouteflika 8 July deployed army to region to restore calm; PM Sellal vowed to “impose peace by force”. Dozens arrested including activist Kameledine Fekhar, who previously called for UN intervention to end “genocide” against Amazigh community. Bouteflika 4 July announced project for constitutional revision in final stage, but gave no date for reform; also countered opposition demands for early presidential elections amid concerns about his health, stressing he would finish his term. At least eleven soldiers killed 18 July in suspected Islamist ambush in Ain Defla. Bouteflika late July reportedly replaced three senior army officers: head of counter-espionage unit, presidential security and Republican Guard amidst rumours of foiled coup attempt.

- [“Algeria’s president orders crackdown on ethnic unrest”](#), AP, 8 July 2015.

↓ **Egypt** Militant attacks continued to rise ahead of 3 July anniversary of former President Morsi’s 2013 overthrow and following late June assassination of general prosecutor: at least 100 militants, seventeen soldiers reportedly killed 1 July in major clashes and attack on military checkpoints and town of Sheikh Zuwayed in North Sinai; Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL) Egyptian affiliate “Sinai Province” claimed responsibility. Authorities countered 2 July launching airstrikes against militants, 19 July said 59 militants killed in previous two days as part of ongoing campaign. IS claimed 16 July strike on naval ship near Sharm al-Sheikh. Govt 25 July extended state of emergency in N Sinai by three months. Italian consulate in Cairo bombed 11 July; one killed, nine injured. At least six killed mid-month in clashes between security services and demonstrators protesting in support of ousted President Morsi and banned Muslim Brotherhood. Cabinet early July drafted law criminalising reporting of terrorism statistics that contradict govt figures; widely criticised as attack on free speech. President Sisi 9 July signed new electoral law, removing final block to delayed parliamentary elections expected to be held by year-end.

- [“Egypt extends state of emergency in North Sinai by three months”](#), Reuters, 25 July 2015.

➔ **Libya** UN-led talks between rival Libyan factions resulted in preliminary political agreement signed 11 July by several participants but not Tripoli-based General National Congress (GNC). Agreement envisions creation of consensus-based national unity govt in Tripoli with power over foreign and security policy and oversight of state finances and institutions; would also extend term of Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR) for at least another year and establish a “State Council” absorbing GNC members. Role and powers of this Council remained unclear prompting GNC’s refusal to sign agreement. Despite partial signing of agreement, country remains profoundly unstable: fighting between rival armed groups in Benghazi continued throughout early July; clashes between groups affiliated with Islamic State (IS, for-

merly ISIL) and other Islamist groups continued in Derna. In West, IS-affiliated groups launched two successful attacks in Misrata including 6 July attack that destroyed two fighter jets in city's military airport. Four Italian construction workers kidnapped 19 July in Zawiya, 100km west of Tripoli. In South, fighting between Tebu and Tuareg militias reignited in towns of Sebha and Ubari; tentative new ceasefire reached 25 July. Former dictator Qadhafi's son Seif, former intelligence chief Abdullah al-Senussi and former PM sentenced to death by Tripoli court 28 July.

- Crisis Group Statement, ["The Libyan Political Dialogue: An Incomplete Consensus"](#), 16 July 2015.
- Claudia Gazzini, ["A Short Rope of Hope for War-Shattered Libya"](#), Al Arabiya, 21 July 2015.
- ["Tripoli parliament stays away from signing of Libya peace agreement"](#), Reuters, 12 July 2015.

➔ **Tunisia** National state of emergency extended 31 July for two more months in wake of June Sousse attack, with security forces granted exceptional powers to bar strikes or public meetings dangerous to public order and to increase media controls. Parliament 24 July passed anti-terror law introducing death penalty for terrorism, fifteen days detention without lawyer; rights group criticised law as draconian. Govt continued overtly anti-Islamist measures in aftermath of Sousse attack including closure of some 80 mosques, banned public recitation of prayers marking end of Ramadan Eid feast mid-July. Interior Ministry late July said almost 100,000 arrested Jan-July 2015 in fight on terrorism and crime. Govt 13 July announced leader of al-Qaeda-linked Oqba Ibn Nafaa brigade killed, group nearly wiped out. Authorities 8 July announced construction of protective wall along border with Libya.

- ["Environ 100.000 arrestations en sept mois, selon le ministère de l'Intérieur"](#), HuffPost Tunisie, 29 July 2015.

New Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Report N°161, ["Reform and Security Strategy in Tunisia"](#), 23 July 2015. Tunisia's security apparatus is dysfunctional, at once fragmenting, asserting authority over democratic institutions, and failing to block significant jihadi advances. Without a comprehensive new strategy including reform of Tunisia's internal security forces, the country will continue to stumble from crisis to crisis, and to swing between chaos and renewed dictatorship.
