

# CrisisWatch

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

### ↓ Deteriorated situations

[Bangladesh](#), [France](#), [Kosovo](#), [Lebanon](#), [Nepal](#), [Syria](#), [Turkey](#), [Venezuela](#)

### ↑ Improved situations

[Burkina Faso](#), [Myanmar](#)

## December 2015 – Watchlist

### 💣\* Conflict risk alerts

[Venezuela](#)

### ☺ 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** President Nkurunziza 2 Nov announced “perpetrators of crimes” had five days to disarm in return for amnesty or be treated as enemies of state; scores fled Bujumbura early Nov. Daily deadly violence, shootings and repression continued in capital throughout month, including grenades thrown at mayor’s residence 16 Nov; mortar bombs exploded near presidential palace 18 Nov: son of human rights activist Pierre Claver Mbonimpa killed 6 Nov; prominent journalist and editor of Iwacu independent newspaper fled to Belgium after being questioned mid-month over alleged links to plotters of May coup attempt. Authorities 8 Nov began disarmament operations in Bujumbura’s Mutakara neighbourhood. Nkurunziza’s ultimatum and perceived “rhetorical similarities” with Rwanda in 1994 triggered increased diplomatic interventions: Rwandan President Kagame urged Burundi not to repeat Rwanda’s genocide; Ugandan defence minister 13 Nov met with Burundi stakeholders and Belgian diplomats in attempt to discuss reactivating stalled Ugandan mediation. UNSG Ban 6 Nov condemned “inflammatory rhetoric”, killing and torture; 30 Nov outlined options for addressing crisis including possible deployment of peacekeepers. UNSC 12 Nov passed resolution condemning violence and urging govt to convene inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue. EU and Belgium 13 Nov began evacuating all non-essential personnel from Bujumbura.

- Crisis Group Conflict Alert, [“Burundi: Conflict Alert”](#), 5 Nov. 2015.
- Crisis Group Statement, [“Joint NGO Statement Urging Coordinated Global Response to the Escalating Human Rights Crisis in Burundi”](#), 12 Nov. 2015.
- Thierry Vircoulon, [“Burundi: How to Deconstruct Peace”](#), IPI Global Observatory, 24 Nov. 2015.
- Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Ayo Obe, and Fola Adeola, [“AU was set up for an explosive crisis like Burundi; it must act”](#), *The East African*, 14 Nov. 2015.
- [“UN ramps up pressure on Burundian government with resolution on violence”](#), *Guardian*, 12 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Cameroon** Boko Haram attacks and suicide bombings in Far North continued, increasingly targeting civilians and leaders of local vigilante groups, with dozens of attacks and incursions in Nov killing at least 50. Insecurity in North, East and Adamoua provinces also continued, fuelled by crisis in neighbouring CAR: nine killed 12 Nov by CAR assailants in Mbere, Adamoua province; several kidnapped from North and Eastern provinces.

- [“Female suicide bombers in Cameroon attacks kill eight”](#), Reuters, 21 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Central African Republic** Electoral authority (ANE) 9 Nov announced electoral timetable: constitutional referendum scheduled for 13 Dec, first round legislative and presidential elections for 27 Dec and second round for 31 Jan 2016. Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) 25 Nov announced extension of current transition (scheduled to end 30 Dec) until 31 March to ensure no vacancy of power. ANE 14 Nov opened applications for presidential candidacies. President Samba Panza

2 Nov reaffirmed CAR “on the right track” to hold vote. However, deadly clashes and violence continued. Armed militants 16 Nov clashed with MINUSCA during operation to dismantle barriers in 3rd and 6th districts; militiamen 19 Nov disarmed UN peacekeeper patrol. Violence also continued outside capital: UN peacekeeper found dead 10 Nov following clashes between ex-Seleka fighters and MINUSCA troops at checkpoint near Batangafo, where ex-Seleka fighters same day killed five in IDP camp; armed men 11 Nov killed two Union for Peace in Central Africa (UPC) members in Bambari, prompting reprisal from ex-Seleka in IDP camp. Pope Francis visited 29-30 Nov, called for unity and “new chapter” for CAR. MINUSCA 10 Nov decided to deploy 1,140 additional troops and police plus drones ahead of Dec elections. EU 17 Nov announced new military advisory mission to succeed current one mid-2016.

- [“Pope Francis in Africa: what should be on his agenda?”](#), *Guardian*, 23 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Chad** Boko Haram (BH) attacks and suicide bombings continued despite significant army deployment in Lake Chad area: authorities 9 Nov declared twelve-day state of emergency in Lake Chad region, extended to four months after two BH attacks in Kaiga Kinguirya and Bamou 1 Nov, and in Ngouboua 8 Nov. FM Moussa Faki Mahamat announced military will conduct land operations in Lake Chad area once rainy season over, 10 Nov called for greater support for fight against BH at Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security. Creation of joint military force announced at second G5 Sahel Summit in N’Djamena 20 Nov. As economy continued to falter, unions went on strike 11 Nov over delay in payment of teachers’ salaries. President Déby urgently hospitalised in Paris 23 Nov prompting speculation over his health.

- [“Chad extends state of emergency over Boko Haram attacks”](#), Reuters, 18 Nov. 2015.

➔ **DR Congo** President Kabila announced imminent organisation of “national dialogue” covering outstanding questions for organisation of 2016 elections; opposition platform “Dynamique de l’opposition congolaise” 4 Nov organised convention in Kinshasa, underlining refusal to participate in dialogue, later joined by “G7” group of parties and former governor of Katanga province Moïse Katumbi. Catholic Church 26 Nov called on Congolese to reject possible third term for Kabila. Kabila 16 Nov appointed new Electoral Commission leadership. Clashes between security forces and youth members of National Union of Federations of Congo (UNAFEC) reported in Lubumbashi 10 Nov. Clashes erupted between police and students in Kinshasa 18 Nov. New UN SRSG and Head of MONUSCO Maman Sambo Sidikou arrived in Kinshasa 16 Nov. UN human rights office report 18 Nov accused Congolese armed forces (FARDC) of rape of fourteen women in S Kivu late Sept. Clashes between Ugandan ADF rebels and army, backed by MONUSCO, left at least thirty dead in N Kivu late Nov.

- [“Police clash with opposition protesters in Congo mining hub”](#), Reuters, 10 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Rwanda** Senate 17 Nov adopted draft constitution allowing incumbent President Kagame to run again for president should he wish; U.S. expressed concern, warned of consequences in bilateral relations should Kagame stay. Tensions with Burundi increased after Kagame 6 Nov accused Burundian authorities of “slaughter” (see Burundi).

- [“Rwandan Senate votes to allow President Kagame more time in office”](#), Reuters, 17 Nov. 2015.

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## Horn of Africa

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➔ **Djibouti** China 26 Nov announced plans for first overseas military base, signed ten-year lease for outpost with Djibouti. UNHCR 11 Nov announced influx of Yemeni refugees increasing, current refugee population in Djibouti estimated at 30,000.

- [“China retools its military with a first overseas outpost in Djibouti”](#), *New York Times*, 26 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Ethiopia** Tripartite meeting 7 Nov on renaissance dam ended without agreement on future use of contractors. Ethiopian forces reportedly killed three police in Marsabit county in Kenya 20 Nov after crossing border in pursuit of Oromo Liberation Front rebels who reportedly killed local chief in Dukale village near Kenyan border (see [Kenya](#)).

- [“Ethiopia says consultants failed to reach joint vision on GERD”](#), *Sudan Tribune*, 7 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Kenya** Army deployed to border in Sololo after three police reportedly killed 20 Nov by Ethiopian soldiers in Marsabit county; Ethiopians reportedly crossed border in pursuit of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) rebels, abducted over 20 Kenyan civilians suspected of OLF links (see Ethiopia). Al-Shabaab attacks continued: IED exploded in Mandera 20 Nov targeting policemen, no casualties; another exploded 23 Nov in Garissa county, five soldiers injured. Security forces 20 Nov announced destruction of six Al-Shabaab camps in Boni forest, recovered weapons, no casualties reported. Group of Al-Shabaab militants 27 Nov attacked Konton Village, Wajir county, along Somali border, preached to residents before retreating. Chief Justice Willy Mutunga 7 Nov warned of potential for post-election violence in 2017 amid increased cases of hate speech by politicians.

- Rashid Abdi, [“A Dying Breed of Peacemakers in Kenya’s North East”](#), *In Pursuit of Peace*, 19 Nov. 2015.
- [“KDF deployed at border after Ethiopian forces kill Kenya police”](#), *Standard Media*, 21 Nov. 2015.

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**New** Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°114, [Kenya’s Somali North East: Devolution and Security](#), 17 Nov. 2015. Clan politics, poor services, growing corruption and disarray in the security forces are undermining Kenya’s newly formed north-eastern counties, allowing the violently extremist Al-Shabaab movement to infiltrate over the border from Somalia. To build security and capitalise on devolution’s potential, national government and county elites alike must become more pragmatic and inclusive.

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➔ **Somalia** Al-Shabaab launched several successful attacks: fifteen killed including govt officials and military general in attack on Mogadishu hotel 1 Nov; fifteen soldiers killed, three military vehicles seized in 2 Nov ambush on AMISOM convoy in Baledogle; 13 Nov reclaimed strategic town of Fiidow; 14 Nov killed seventeen troops in attack on army base in Kismayo; 28 Nov killed two police in Mogadishu. Interim South West State President Sharif Hassan Adan escaped assassination attempt 11 Nov. AMISOM and Somali National Army operations against Al-Shabaab continued: six Al-Shabaab members killed 2 Nov in Bulo-Berde, Hiiraan region; nine killed, military vehicle and ammunition recovered 6 Nov in Jungal, Gedo region. Suspected drone strike

21 Nov near Balad Amin, Lower Shabelle region reportedly killed at least five Al-Shabaab members. Tensions over federal state formation process continued between and within states including at least 30 killed 22-30 Nov in Galkayo during clashes between Puntland and Galmudug militia.

- [“Al-Shabab attack kills 15 in Mogadishu hotel”](#), BBC, 1 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Somaliland** Tensions within ruling Kulmiye party continued following late Oct high profile resignations: party chairman Musa Bixi Abdi named new presidential candidate at 10 Nov party convention; three presidential aspirants boycotted convention. Violent protests erupted 12 Nov in Erigavo, Sanaag region, following police investigation into arms smuggling allegations.

- [“Rival Kulmiye camp shun upcoming party convention”](#), Somaliland Press, 8 Nov. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°113, [Somaliland: The Strains of Success](#), 5 Oct. 2015.

➔ **South Sudan** IGAD heads of state summit meant to kick-start implementation of Aug peace deal delayed until 23 Nov; former Botswanan President Mogae 27 Nov inaugurated peace deal oversight body in Juba but SPLM/A-IO refused to participate. In accordance with peace deal, Ugandan forces 2 Nov completed withdrawal of forces deployed Dec 2013 in support of govt. Armed clashes continued in southern and central Unity state in violation of ceasefire. Shilluk Agualek forces increased rhetoric against Kiir govt over control of Malakal town. Conflict continued and expanded into new regions of the Equatorias, including Mundri, Mwagi, Opari, Ezo and Nimule, as several new armed groups declared themselves. President Kiir 18 Nov announced plans to normalise exchange rate, close gap between official exchange rate and black market rate that has deepened economic crisis. Normalisation will enable S Sudan to access loans from international financial institutions and to support peace implementation plan.

- [“South Sudan peace deal at ‘critical’ stage: AU”](#), News24, 29 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Sudan** African Union-supported negotiations between govt and rebel groups from Darfur, S Kordofan and Blue Nile held 19-22 Nov in Addis Ababa: parties disagreed on definition of ceasefire; govt refused to allow humanitarian aid into rebel-held territory, proposed separate deal with SPLM-N on S Kordofan and Blue Nile. SPLM-N demanded comprehensive agreement, criticised govt decision to exclude political opposition from National Dialogue. Govt 20 Nov accused AUHIP of supporting SPLM-N in negotiations. AUHIP 23 Nov announced preparatory meeting for national dialogue to take place 7 Dec. SPLM-N 20 Nov reportedly repelled govt attack in Blue Nile, claimed govt base in Soda seized; 22 Nov called for international support of demand for humanitarian access to war-torn areas. Govt 24 Nov announced offensive in Darfur, S Kordofan and Blue Nile; SPLM-N 29 Nov mobilised troops.

- [“Sudanese security talks on the Two Areas make no progress”](#), Sudan Tribune, 23 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Uganda** Internal Affairs Ministry 5 Nov announced deployment of 27 Joint Operation Centres made up of police, army, intelligence service and govt officials to oversee Feb 2016 election security as official campaigning began.

- [“Uganda begins election campaign amid call for ‘level playing field’”](#), VOA, 9 Nov. 2015.

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## Southern Africa

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➔ **Madagascar** President Rajaonarimampianina 6 Nov said he would not reshuffle govt or dissolve parliament despite months of tension between parliament and executive, citing need for political stability. IMF 18 Nov approved \$42mn loan.

- ["Le pouvoir toujours en quête de stabilité"](#), L'Express de Madagascar, 23 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Mozambique** Govt continued hardline approach to opposition Renamo: PM do Rosário 5 Nov threatened to forcibly disarm Renamo's armed wing. President Nyusi 19 Nov continued calls for dialogue and called for restraint in disarming Renamo, rejected Renamo Gen Sec Manuel Bissopo's demand for shift from national to international mediators. Fighting between security forces and Renamo gunmen in central provinces of Sofala and Zambezia continued, govt said clashes part of continued operations to disarm Renamo.

- ["Mozambican army seeks to disarm Renamo fighters, O Pais says"](#), Bloomberg, 2 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Zimbabwe** Factionalism within ruling ZANU-PF persisted amid ongoing tensions between First Lady Grace Mugabe and VP Mnangagwa over succession. Mnangagwa's position strengthened with 6 Nov announcement of support by Defence Force Commander Constantine Chiwenga; Grace Mugabe mid-Nov dismissed rumours of presidential ambitions amid ongoing campaigning. Two ZANU-PF members killed 21 Nov, reportedly by fellow party members, in Chitungwiza suburb of Harare. Series of protests held throughout month, some led by opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), against deteriorating social, economic and political conditions; security forces responded with violence; clashes between MDC and ZANU-PF supporters also reported.

- ["Zimbabwe's Grace Mugabe says has no presidential ambitions"](#), Reuters, 20 Nov. 2015.

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## West Africa

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↑ **Burkina Faso** Presidential and legislative elections held peacefully 29 Nov, preliminary results show Movement of People for Progress (MPP) candidate Roch Marc Christian Kaboré won in first round with 53.49%, followed by Union for Progress and Change (UPC) candidate Zéphirin Diabré with 29.65%. Campaign peaceful, main issue remained extent of candidates' links to former Compaoré regime. Lawyer of former FM Djibril Bassolé, detained and indicted for participating in Sept coup, 5 Nov argued his client is a "political prisoner". Purported recording of conversation between Bassolé and Ivorian assembly speaker Guillaume Soro leaked 12 Nov, reportedly revealed alleged plan to stage attacks in Burkina Faso to prevent Sept coup failure. Commission of inquiry report on coup handed over to govt 12 Nov, leaked 25 Nov. National Transition Council (CNT) 5 Nov voted to extend legal mandate of transitional institutions until new president installed; several constitutional amendments passed including banning of any future revision of two-term presidential limit.

- ["Affaire de l'enregistrement: les avocats de Soro et de Bassolé dénoncent une manipulation"](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 18 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Côte d'Ivoire** Constitutional Court 2 Nov announced official results of Oct presidential election, confirming President Ouattara's re-election amid disagreement over voter turnout figures. Ouattara inaugurated 3 Nov, did not reshuffle govt, promised constitutional referendum to create VP post and soften presidential eligibility conditions concerning nationality.

- ["Présidentielle ivoirienne: les recours rejetés, résultats confirmés"](#), RFI, 2 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Guinea** Constitutional Court 1 Nov confirmed victory for incumbent President Alpha Condé in Oct polls, winning 57.84% of vote, followed by opposition Union for Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) candidate Cellou Dalein Diallo with 31.45%. Diallo 4 Nov reiterated rejection of results, called for protests demanding release of his supporters arrested during campaign. Justice Minister Cheick Sako 5 Nov announced release of nine prisoners for ill health or innocence; 27 still detained. UN SRSG for West Africa Ibn Chambas 3 Nov urged President Condé to form "wide consensus" govt in interest of peace; Diallo mid-Nov stated refusal to join govt. UFDG defeat revived internal tensions between Diallo supporters and supporters of party's VP Bah Oury.

- ["La cour constitutionnelle valide la réélection du président Condé au 1er tour"](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 1 Nov. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°232, [The Politics Behind the Ebola Crisis](#), 28 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Guinea-Bissau** Supreme Court 11 Nov ordered release of ex-army chief José Zamora Induta, detained for attempts against constitutional order, terrorism and conspiracy, citing expiration of his remand period; Induta released 14 Nov. UN and ECOWAS continued to pursue plans for govt stability pact amid ongoing tensions between President Vaz on one side, and ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) and PM Correira on the other.

- ["Zamora Induta libertado na Guiné-Bissau"](#), RFI, 14 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Liberia** U.S. 12 Nov lifted sanctions against govt, citing advances in democracy promotion, orderly development of political, administrative and economic institutions.

- ["Obama lifts U.S. sanctions on Liberia"](#), VoA, 12 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Mali** Peace agreement follow-up committee (CSA) early-Nov reported progress on establishment of cantonment sites to begin disarmament process and establishment of mixed patrols by parties in north. Two gunmen 20 Nov attacked luxury hotel in Bamako; some 170 hostages taken, 22 killed and rest released; radical groups al-Murabitoun and Macina Liberation Front both claimed responsibility for attack. Clashes reported 15 Nov in Fourakatane, near Nigerien border, between Daoussak communities, allegedly connected to National Movement for Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), and Fulani communities supposedly connected to radical group Movement for Oneness and Jihad (MUJAO), at least ten killed. Insecurity throughout country continued: seven IED and mine attacks targeting govt and international security forces reported since early-Nov in Gao region; armed men 28 Nov attacked MINUSMA camp in Kidal, two peacekeepers and one contract agent killed, over fourteen wounded; responsibility for attack claimed by radical Islamist group Ansar Eddine.

- Jean-Hervé Jezequel, ["What Could Be Behind the Bamako Attack?"](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 20 Nov. 2015.

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- [“Une menace terroriste omniprésente, du Nord au Sud”](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 20 Nov. 2015.
  - ➔ **Niger** Insecurity persisted in south as Boko Haram (BH) militants continued to target security forces (FDS) and civilians. FDS convoy ambushed 3 Nov near Dagaya village, killing one soldier; FDS 5 Nov raided suspected BH hideouts near village, govt 11 Nov reported FDS killed some twenty BH insurgents. BH 26 Nov attacked Gogone village near Bosso, eighteen villagers killed. Thousands gathered 1 Nov in Niamey to protest govt’s “heavy hand” on opposition, called for open and credible elections. President Issoufou 7 Nov announced plan to seek re-election; court decision forbidding political gatherings in Zinder sparked clashes between FDS and protesters same day. Some 30 parliamentarians 11 Nov issued motion to try president for “treason”, accusing him of collusion in 2014 corruption case. Former minister and presidential candidate Hama Amadou, exiled in France over charges of child trafficking, arrested 14 Nov upon arrival in Niamey; clashes between supporters and FDS ensued. Reporters Without Borders 27 Nov reported increasing arrests of journalists ahead of presidential elections.
  - [“Plus de 47 000 déplacés depuis février dans le sud-est du Niger”](#), *Jeune Afrique*, 7 Nov. 2015.
  - ➔ **Nigeria** Military spokesperson mid-Nov reported troops overran over a dozen Boko Haram (BH) camps in Borno state in first two weeks of Nov, several BH militants killed and some 81 captives rescued. Major General Yushau Abubakar 11 Nov said military will dismantle all BH camps in Sambisa forest before President Buhari’s Dec deadline. BH attacks slowed since late-Oct: suicide bomber 27 Nov killed 21 members of Shia movement near Kano state; same day attacked Bam and Gajigana villages in Borno state, killed seven and abducted scores of teenage girls. Pro-Biafran rallies sparked by early-Nov arrest of Nnamdi Kanu, leader of separatist organisation Indigenious People of Biafra, swept through south east, and Delta and Rivers state. Demonstrators forcefully dispersed and arrested by police amid allegations of some extrajudicial killings of members; police denied. Elections tribunal 7 Nov rejected election of People Democratic Party (PDP) candidate Darius Ishaku as governor of Taraba state, declared All Progressive Congress (APC) candidate Aisha Alhassan winner; ruling denounced by PDP as further slide toward “one-party country”; protests in Wukari, town in Taraba state left some eight dead 8 Nov.
  - [“Nigeria’s military vows to destroy Boko Haram as attacks continue”](#), VoA, 23 Nov. 2015.

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# Asia

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## North East Asia

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➔ **China (internal)** State media 20 Nov reported security forces have killed 28 people allegedly responsible for Sept attack on Xinjiang coalmine in which around 60 reported killed. Slain suspects reportedly include seventeen from three Uighur families, including three children. Editor of Communist party's Xinjiang Daily newspaper Zhao Xinwei fired and expelled from party for "serious violations of discipline" early month, accused of corruption, abuse of power, and "improper discussion" of gov't's security policy in Xinjiang, including making critical public comments.

- ["China acknowledges killing 28 people; accuses them of role in mine attack"](#), *New York Times*, 20 Nov. 2015.

➔ **China/Japan** Japan and China's defence ministers agreed 4 Nov that early launch of maritime communication mechanism and defence exchanges are crucial to avoid accidental clashes in East China Sea (ECS). During trilateral summit of Chinese, Japanese and South Korean leaders 1-2 Nov, PM Abe reportedly brought up concerns over China's development of gas fields in ECS, and Chinese patrols near disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. Japan reportedly planning to deploy several hundred troops to island in ECS. Japan scrambled military jets after eleven Chinese military aircraft flew near southern Japanese islands 27 Nov as part of military drill.

- ["Japan plans to deploy troops near disputed islands"](#), AP, 26 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Korean Peninsula** Visiting South Korea 31 Oct-2 Nov, U.S. Sec Defence Carter called on DPRK to shrink and eventually abandon nuclear weapons program. Chinese premier Li, Japanese PM Abe, and ROK President Park met for trilateral summit in Seoul 1-2 Nov, first since 2012: released joint statement opposing development of nuclear weapons on Korean peninsula. ROK intelligence late Nov reported prominent aide to DPRK leader, Choe Ryong Hae, exiled to farm due to differences over policy; earlier in month reportedly said DPRK possibly has ties to Islamic State – Pyongyang rejected allegations. ROK intelligence also reported DPRK conducted failed test of submarine-launched ballistic missile late month. Seoul held live-ammunition exercise in NW islands near sea border with DPRK 23 Nov, prompting rebuke from Pyongyang. UNGA committee condemned human rights abuses in DPRK.

- ["North Korea's Kim Jong Un banishes key aide to farm"](#), *Financial Times*, 24 Nov. 2015.

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## South Asia

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➔ **Afghanistan** As Taliban infighting continued over opposition among many high-ranking members to Mullah Akhtar Mohammed Mansour as new leader, prominent commanders 2 Nov created new faction headed by Mullah Mohammed Rasool Akhund, representing first formal split in movement. Clashes between rival factions broke out in Zabul province early Nov, killing 100 from both sides. Mansour 24 Nov appointed new head of Taliban political office in Qatar. President Ghani and Pakistani

PM Sharif met in Paris 30 Nov to discuss ways to revive peace talks with Taliban, improve relations. Amid ongoing fighting between Afghan forces and Taliban, Badakhshan provincial official 18 Nov reported Taliban insurgents attacked and took control of parts of Yamgan district. 88 killed in fighting between Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers and Taliban in Sangin district, Nangarhar 14 Nov; at least 65 ANA soldiers reportedly surrendered and defected to Taliban. Two Afghan soldiers and a foreign national killed, eighteen captured by Taliban following helicopter crash in Faryab province 24 Nov. Kunduz military commander 16 Nov said Afghan forces had made major gains against insurgents in Dasht-e-Archi district. Nangarhar province officials 5 Nov claimed at least 26 IS fighters killed during Afghan/U.S. military operation in Achin district. Ethnic Hazara protests reportedly numbering some 10,000 broke out in Kabul and other cities demanding justice and improved security following beheadings by Islamist militants 8 Nov of seven Hazara hostages in Jaghori district including three women and a nine-year-old girl. Unidentified gunmen 21 Nov kidnapped fourteen bus passengers, reportedly Hazaras. U.S. military inquiry 25 Nov determined “human error” behind 3 Oct airstrike on Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) hospital in Kunduz, with hospital mistaken for nearby Taliban-held govt building; MSF said investigation needed. NGO Democracy Watch Afghanistan 2 Nov warned against splitting election commission between loyalists of President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah; also warned delays in parliamentary elections would undermine stability.

- [“Protests across Afghanistan demanding better security”](#), AP, 12 Nov. 2015.

↓ **Bangladesh** Crackdown on opposition continued, with leaders Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid (secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami) and Salauddin Quader Chowdhury (former Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) member) executed 22 Nov, both convicted by International Crimes Tribunal of committing war crimes during 1971 war of independence. Supreme Court 17 Nov had rejected final appeals against death sentences, govt increased security across country, tensions high amid concerns about Islamist backlash. BNP acting Secretary General Mirza Fakrul Islam Alamgir again taken into custody 3 Nov, with 89 charges pending against him; arrest warrants issued for three BNP leaders in cases related to political violence same day. Gunmen shot and seriously injured Italian pastor and physician in Dinajpur district 18 Nov; Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility, heightening concerns about foreigners’ safety. Security personnel also targeted; one police killed, four injured by gunmen outside capital 4 Nov. One dead and three wounded following attack on mosque in Bogra district 26 Nov; IS claimed responsibility. Govt continues to deny IS presence in Bangladesh. Following late Oct deadly extremist attack on publishers, two prominent writers/scholars received death threats during month.

- [“Bangladesh on high alert after 2 opposition leaders executed”](#), AP, 23 Nov. 2015.

➔ **India (non-Kashmir)** Over a dozen suspected insurgents in clashes with police during month, including Naxal commander shot dead by police in Dantewada district, Bastar region 24 Nov, and four female Maoists killed by police in Sukma district, Chhattisgarh 22 Nov. Three villagers reportedly killed by police searching for Maoists in Kalahandi district, Odisha 15 Nov.

- [“Naxal commander killed in police encounter”](#), Economic Times, 24 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Kashmir** Firing from Pakistan-administered Kashmir reportedly killed two Indian soldiers 2 Nov. Pakistan's foreign ministry representative 4 Nov told Senate that Indian firing across LoC had killed 87 Pakistani civilians and injured 407 since Jan 2010. Indian colonel killed by suspected militants in clash in N Kashmir 17 Nov; four suspected militants and one soldier killed in three separate clashes 23 Nov; three militants killed in attack on army base in Tangdhar 25 Nov, one civilian also killed; militant group Jaish-e-Muhammad claimed responsibility for attack. Army 24 Nov said at least 60 militants active in N Kashmir. Pakistani foreign office spokesperson 5 Nov criticised Indian govt for arresting 389 Kashmiri separatists ahead of visit by PM Modi to Srinagar.

- ["Indian commandos kill militants in Kashmir army base gunbattle"](#), Reuters, 25 Nov. 2015.

↓ **Nepal** Political crisis intensified as protests by Madhesi groups over constitutional provisions continued across southern Tarai plains, surpassing 100 days since start of agitation. Vehicular movement across Indian border remained disrupted; ensuing fuel shortage exacerbated by reported distribution irregularities by national oil company. Deputy PM Kamal Thapa 4 Nov spoke at UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on disruption of supplies by India; Indian delegation expressed concern over lack of political progress and protest-related violence. Four protestors killed in police firing 22 Nov in southern district Saptari, bringing total protest-related deaths since Aug to 49. Demonstrators 14 Nov vandalised ruling party UML's Parsa district office in Tarai, 20 Nov vandalised ambulance and vehicle carrying medical supplies in Parsa and Morang districts; agitating Madhes-based parties' rally in Itahari district disrupted by local students 27 Nov. Defence Minister Bhim Rawal 28 Nov claimed Nepal Army could be deployed in Tarai. 18 Nov talks between govt and coalition of Madhes-based parties ended inconclusively; Madhesi parties demand package deal including amendments to new provincial boundaries to ensure demographic majority. Ruling UCPN (Maoist) in discussions with former vice-chairman Mohan Baidya regarding reunification. Hard-line CPN Maoist called nationwide strike 29 Nov protesting unofficial Indian blockade.

- ["Nepal crisis deepens as Madhes movement marks 100 days"](#), *Hindustan Times*, 23 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Pakistan** Military claimed airstrikes killed twenty militants in Tirah and Rajgal areas of Khyber agency 7 Nov, and 22 in N Waziristan's Shawal valley 14 Nov. Despite claims of military successes, several killed in continued attacks on security personnel. Journalist and member of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan Zaman Mehsud killed 3 Nov in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK)'s Tank district; Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility. Signs of civil-military tensions after military warned that insufficient progress on implementation of anti-terrorism National Action Plan could undermine operations against extremist groups. All-parties conference in Islamabad 2 Nov backed proposal for constitutional amendment to merge FATA with KPK, thus extending full political and other constitutional rights to tribal belt; PM Sharif instead formed five-member committee 9 Nov to examine FATA reform options, widely seen as military-devised attempt to delay debate and passage of proposed constitutional amendment; FATA-political parties alliance participants 16 Nov staged demonstration calling for merger. National Assembly 14 Nov passed Pakistan Army (amendment) bill, granting armed forces, civil armed forces and law enforcement agencies legal cover for

arrests and detentions, and allowing military courts to conceal identity of “persons concerned with court proceedings”. Separatist Baloch Republic Army leader issued statement 15 Nov requesting Baloch leaders to develop unified stance, including on possible negotiations with state conditional on military ending operations in Balochistan. Several killed in continued militant violence, including three people killed in bomb attack on train in Mastung district 1 Nov. Army Chief Sharif visited Washington DC mid-Nov for meetings with military and intelligence counterparts and VP.

- [“NA \[National Assembly\] amends Pakistan Army Act”](#), *Dawn*, 12 Nov. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°273, [Winning the War on Polio in Pakistan](#), 23 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Sri Lanka** Cabinet 18 Nov approved paper calling for abolition of executive presidency and new electoral laws, key elements of Sirisena’s original reform agenda. Followed 12 Nov state funeral of revered Buddhist monk, Ven. Maduluwawe Sobitha Thera, who helped lead civil society movement to defeat President Rajapaksa. Doubts about govt’s “good governance” credentials and commitment to pursue criminal prosecutions for corruption and abuse of power by former regime heightened after parliamentary debate 5 Nov in which Law and Order Minister Tilak Marapana defended operations of company with contract to use leased govt weapons for anti-piracy operations and currently under police investigation. Marapana previously acted as company’s lawyer earlier in 2015; resigned 10 Nov following public outcry over conflict of interest. Tamil political parties and activists in north and east organised general strike 13 Nov against continued detention of prisoners under Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and demanding PTA’s repeal; 38 prisoners eventually released over month; govt promised further releases by mid-Dec, non-committal on repeal. Govt 22 Nov revoked March 2014 ban on eight diaspora organisations and over 260 people for alleged links with Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). UN working group on enforced and involuntary disappearances visited 9-18 Nov, verified at least one secret, unauthorised place of detention, where detainees appear to have been tortured; called on govt to address legacy of tens of thousands of disappearances, with urgent reforms including key points agreed to in Sept UN HRC consensus resolution. Foreign ministry 28 Oct held consultation with civil society groups on how to structure island-wide consultation process on transitional justice reforms agreed at Human Rights Council. Finance minister presented budget to parliament 20 Nov including policies to promote reforms outlined in 5 Nov Economic Policy Statement designed to reduce budget deficits and restructure economy toward exports with added value; budget continues annual post-war increases in military expenditures.

- [“Sri Lanka releases dozens of jailed Tamils”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 11 Nov. 2015.

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## South East Asia

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↑ **Myanmar** Country held first openly-contested general election in 25 years 8 Nov. NLD won with landslide, taking 79% of elected seats in national parliament (390 seats); President Thein Sein’s ruling Union Solidarity and Development (USDP) party in second place with 8% (41 seats). Together with unelected military bloc, result gives NLD majority of 59% in bicameral national legislature, majorities in upper and lower

houses. NLD also won landslide in the fourteen state/region legislatures, winning almost every seat in seven Burman-dominated central regional legislatures, and also many seats in ethnic states, giving it control of assemblies in four states (Chin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon). Also took 49% of vote in Kachin state, meaning it can join with one of four ethnic parties that also won seats to achieve majority. Except for Arakan National Party and the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, ethnic minority parties fared badly, winning 11% of elected seats in national parliament, and faring poorly in local legislatures. Election widely regarded as credible, although problems with inclusivity as hundreds of thousands of Muslim Rohingyas, and similar number of ethnic minority voters in conflict-affected areas excluded. During meeting with political parties mid-month, Thein Sein promised smooth transition. As heavy fighting continued in central Shan state, military 20 Nov unilateral halt to attacks on SSA-North, delegation from armed group held discussions with govt 23 Nov. Heavy fighting seen mid-Nov between military and Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) around Mansi town in Kachin state. UNGA human rights committee 18 Nov adopted non-binding resolution criticising Myanmar's treatment of Muslim minority, urged change in citizenship rules to make Rohingya full citizens.

- Richard Horsey, [“After landslide victory comes the hard part”](#), Nikkei Asian Review, 17 Nov. 2015.
- Richard Horsey, [“Myanmar's Election Success”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 10 Nov. 2015.
- [“Myanmar Generals Set the Stage for their Own Exit”](#), *New York Times*, 12 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Philippines** Senate President Drilon expressed optimism that Basic Law on the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BLBAR) will be passed in their chamber before congress adjourns 16 Dec; however, bill's principal author in lower house Rufus Rodriguez 25 Nov called for “more forceful intervention” from President Aquino to address lack of quorum. BLBAR would set up new Bangsamoro govt, implementing historic Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro which brought end to decades of conflict, but time running out to pass and implement legislation before May 2016 general elections. Business representatives, envoys and local politicians called for congress to pass bill. As militant Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) beheaded Malaysian hostage 17 Nov, Aquino pledged to “further intensify” operations against ASG and other terrorist groups. Clash erupted in Maguindanao after Misuari supporters blocked road project 22 Nov. Security forces reported killing eight Islamist militants in Mindanao 28 Nov.

- [“Bangsamoro bill may be passed in December”](#), Manila Times, 26 Nov. 2015.

➔ **South China Sea** U.S. national security adviser 2 Nov stated there would be more demonstrations of U.S. military commitment to freedom of navigation in SCS. Meeting of ASEAN defence ministers and regional partners 3-4 Nov failed to issue joint concluding statement, following disagreement on reference to SCS dispute. U.S. announced two B-52 bombers flew mission “near the area” of the Spratly islands 8-9 Nov. Chinese vice FM 17 Nov told reporters China has already shown great restraint in not seizing all disputed islands occupied by other claimants. Hague arbitration tribunal began hearing case brought by Philippines against China in SCS 24 Nov. Earlier in month, Chinese FM Wang met Philippines counterpart; Philippine officials said countries agreed to resume foreign ministry consultations after two-year freeze. Ahead of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Philippines, U.S. President Obama 17 Nov announced U.S. will provide \$259mn over two years in aid to ensure

maritime security in Asia-Pacific, also reaffirmed commitment to freedom of navigation in region. At both APEC summit and ASEAN Summit in Malaysia 21-22 Nov, Obama demanded China halt land reclamation and militarisation of SCS. Chinese officials responded saying U.S. needs to stop provoking further tensions. Despite strained relations, U.S. Navy destroyer, arrived in Shanghai 16 Nov for planned naval exercises with Chinese navy. Japan and U.S. began first joint naval exercise in SCS late Oct. Chinese President Xi visited Vietnam 5-7 Nov, first such visit in ten years.

- [“Japan urges Australia to send clear message against ‘self-righteous’ Chinese military activity”](#), ABC, 22 Nov. 2015.
- [“Obama urges halt to artificial islands in South China Sea”](#), Reuters, 21 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Thailand** Two of three people arrested mid-Oct for allegedly citing monarchy for personal benefit died in military custody late Oct. Suspects had raised money for royal bicycling events in Aug and Dec this year; fourth suspect, an army colonel also charged with lèse-majesté, absconded. Arrest warrants issued 23 Nov for three more, including army major general, assistant to former army chief Udomdej Sittabutr. Udomdej 10 Nov admitted irregularities in construction of Rajapakdi Park, an army project to honour seven Thai kings; said kickbacks donated to project. Army chief announced 20 Nov army investigation found no army wrongdoing, no need for further investigation. Under public pressure, Deputy PM Prawit Wongsuwan ordered second investigative panel; General Preecha Chan-ocha, brother of PM Prayuth Chan-ocha and member of park-project foundation, to select panel members. Govt 25 Nov revealed arrest of three Red-Shirt govt opponents, alleged plot to launch attacks in Bangkok targeting royal events and govt officials. Critics sceptical, viewing news of plot as attempt to deflect attention from park scandal. Several people killed in ongoing attacks blamed on insurgents in deep south, including four killed by bomb at security checkpoint in Khok Poh district, Pattani, 12 Nov. Army spokesman said coordinated bomb and arson attacks in Yala town late Oct intended to discredit govt. Prominent Buddhist monk 29 Oct posted on Facebook that for every monk killed by Malay-Muslim militants in Deep South, ten mosques should be burned. Mid-Oct U.S. and UNHCR criticised govt’s deportation of two Chinese dissidents, who had registered as refugees, to China.

- [“Thai graft, royal insult cases threaten to embroil junta”](#), Reuters, 25. Nov. 2015.

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## Europe and Central Asia

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### Balkans

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➔ **Bosnia** Leaders of Republika Srpska (RS) entity 29 Nov said they would challenge state-level constitutional court's decision to abolish RS's annual Republic Day holiday. Gunman killed two soldiers and injured a third in suburbs of Sarajevo 18 Nov, before killing himself during confrontation with police. Bomb thrown at police station in Zavidovici 24 Nov; no injuries. Serbian PM Vucic handed over €2mn in development aid to mayor of Srebrenica during early Nov visit to town.

- ["Bosnian Serbs dismiss top court's order to change discriminatory law"](#), Reuters, 29 Nov. 2015.

⬇ **Kosovo** Mounting political tensions as opposition parties continued to block work of parliament in protest against Aug EU-backed agreement with Serbia on Serb-majority municipalities: 17 Nov again threw tear gas in main chamber during discussion of 2016 budget. One opposition MP arrested next day on suspicion of letting off tear gas in parliament, police tried to arrest another, prompting protests outside govt building in which protesters clashed with police; some twenty arrested. Over 80 reportedly arrested during large-scale protest 28 Nov, including opposition Self-Determination party leader Albin Kurti, remanded in custody for 30 days. Opposition disrupted parliament again 30 Nov. Constitutional Court (CC) suspended implementation of agreement pending review of its compliance with constitution, with decision expected Jan 2016; Serbia expressed anger over suspension of deal. Police found grenade outside CC 18 Nov.

- ["Kosovo MP Kurti sent to high-security jail"](#), Balkan Insight, 30 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Macedonia** Govt and opposition leaders 6 Nov reached deal on implementation of July agreement to end political crisis, agreeing on appointment of interim ministers from opposition Social Democrats until April elections, including interior minister, labour minister and several others. Leaders also agreed on electoral reforms, laws on protection of whistleblowers and privacy. Deal came day after appointment of twelve special prosecutors to support chief special prosecutor investigating illegal wiretapping scandal. EU progress report highlighted need for key reforms including on corruption, rule of law, consolidation of democratic institutions.

- ["Corruption, justice top agenda in Commission report"](#), Balkan Insight, 10 Nov. 2015.

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### Caucasus

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➔ **Armenia** Some 2,000 joined opposition-organised protest in Yerevan 20 Nov against proposed constitutional changes which would transfer powers from president to PM, ahead of constitutional referendum set for 6 Dec.

- ["Who benefits from constitutional reform?"](#), Eurasianet, 4 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Azerbaijan** Ruling New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) awarded 85% of votes in 1 Nov parliamentary elections, winning 69 out of 125 seats in parliament. Voter turnout 56%; main opposition parties boycotted vote. OSCE refused to send observers. Govt released rights activist Arif Yunus from jail 12 Nov for medical reasons; Yunus not allowed to leave Baku. Four Shiite Muslims and two police killed in clash in Nardaran settlement NE of Baku 26 Nov; fourteen arrested, interior ministry statement said to neutralise armed group seeking to organise mass unrest.

- [“Azeri ruling party keeps parliamentary grip in disputed vote”](#), Bloomberg, 2 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Azerbaijan continued to trade accusations of breaking ceasefire along contact line; OSCE sent monitors to front line. Azerbaijan said its forces shot dead two Armenian soldiers and wounded several in response to what it claimed was attempted attack on its positions 12 Nov; 30 Nov said Armenian forces killed an Azerbaijani soldier in shootout. OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs travelled to region later Oct, met with leaders in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, discussed concerns over mounting tensions. Armenian officials 19 Nov announced presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan to meet in Dec. Russian President Putin 11 Nov formally agreed to begin negotiations on joint Russian-Armenian air defence system.

- [“OSCE monitors frontline of Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict”](#), Liberty Voice, 22 Nov. 2015.

➔ **North Caucasus (Russia)** Counter-terrorism officials 10 Nov said militant ring-leader who had pledged loyalty to Islamic State (IS) killed in special operation in Kabardino-Balkaria; 22 Nov reported eleven suspected militants who had pledged allegiance to IS killed in special operation outside Kabardino-Balkaria republic capital Nalchik, three others died in second operation in same area, also 22 Nov. Police raided two Salafi mosques and detained parishioners in Makhachkala during Friday prayer 20 Nov; followed by clashes between Sufis and Salafis, removal of imam and appointment of new imam by Spiritual board of Muslims. Lawyer for murdered Russian opposition politician Boris Nemtsov, killed in Feb 2015; investigators have reportedly charged in absentia member of Chechen security forces with organising murder.

- [“Russian counter-terrorism agency kills 11 militants allied with IS in North Caucasus raid”](#), AP, 22 Nov. 2015.

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## Eastern Europe

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➔ **Ukraine** Month saw flare-up of skirmishing and explosions along line of separation, however few casualties reported; OSCE attributed some apparent signs of military action to live-fire exercises and demining by both sides. Sides 11 Nov blamed each other for violating ceasefire. OSCE reported patchy implementation of arms pullback from front line, with both sides failing to provide information on numbers of weapons or lists of storage sites. Crimea experienced power outage following attack on electricity pylon 20 Nov; de facto authorities declared state of emergency 25 Nov. Russia cut gas supplies to Ukraine 25 Nov over payment dispute; Ukraine same day said it had decided to stop purchasing Russian gas; also announced Russian airlines banned from flying over Ukraine. Following Normandy group meeting 6 Nov, Russian FM Lavrov noted that full implementation of Minsk agreement, scheduled for end of 2015, would extend well into 2016. Western leaders meeting on margins of G20 in Turkey 21 Nov

agreed to extend sanctions on Russia by six months until July 2016, despite calls to cooperate more closely in fight against Islamic State. Amid ongoing discussions over restructuring of Ukraine's foreign debt, President Putin mid-Nov announced Russia will extend payback period for \$3bn loan; PM Yatsenyuk rejected proposal. Kyiv faced further pressure from allies, most notably Odessa governor and former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, and U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt, to push through reforms.

- ["Putin wants to turn page from Ukraine to Syria"](#), Politico, 23 Nov. 2015.

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## Western Europe/Mediterranean

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➔ **Cyprus** Turkish PM Davutoglu 18 Nov said Greece and Turkey share "common approach" to forge Cyprus solution following meeting with Greek PM Tsipras. Turkey 20 Nov halted flow of fresh water pipeline servicing northern Cyprus following rejection by Republic of Cyprus authorities of Ankara's proposal to transfer management to private company. Turkish Cypriot authorities stated preference for local management of pipeline amid some concerns Ankara is trying to deepen Turkish-Cypriots' economic dependency on Turkey.

- ["Pipeline carrying water to northern Cyprus 'blocked due to crisis'"](#), Hurriyet Daily News, 20 Nov. 2015.

↓ **France** 130 people killed and hundreds injured in coordinated terrorist attacks claimed by Islamic State (IS) in Paris 13 Nov on concert hall and several bars and restaurants; three suicide bombers blew themselves up outside Stade de France stadium after being prevented from entering football match, killing a passer-by. Attackers detonated suicide vests or killed by police. Police killed suspected organiser of attacks and two suspected accomplices in 18 Nov raid on apartment. International manhunt launched for tenth suspect, believed to have fled to Belgium. Suspects are French and Belgian nationals, several previously known to authorities as having radicalised. French President Hollande said France at war with IS, launched airstrikes on IS strongholds in Syria and Iraq, deployed aircraft carrier to Gulf; invoked mutual defence clause of EU's Lisbon treaty; proposed UNSC Resolution 2249 calling for action against IS, passed unanimously 20 Nov; met with Russian, U.S., German and UK leaders to coordinate strategy against IS in Syria (see Syria).

- Jean-Marie Guéhenno, ["The Dangers of a European War on Terror"](#), Politico Europe, 24 Nov. 2015.

↓ **Turkey** Violence between PKK and Turkish security forces increased following 1 Nov snap elections as PKK 5 Nov declared end to 10 Oct unilateral ceasefire and PM Davutoglu 6 Nov promised to continue military operations against PKK. Ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) regained parliamentary majority with 49.5% of vote in 1 Nov poll; pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) 13 Nov called on High Election Council to annul results, citing pre-election crackdown on media, detention of pro-Kurdish parties' local operatives and attacks on HDP offices. Some 24 civilians, seventeen security forces members and nineteen PKK insurgents reported killed in clashes during month. Security forces 3 Nov began ten-day operation in Kurdish town Silvan, Diyarbakır district, engaged in fierce fighting with pro-PKK urban militia; some

seven civilians and three security officials killed, thousands reportedly fled. President Erdogan 4 Nov renamed peace process “national brotherhood and unity process”, underscoring govt’s decision to shun negotiations with jailed PKK leader Öcalan and opt for continued military operations against PKK. Prominent pro-Kurdish lawyer and rights activist Tahir Elçi killed 28 Nov in gunfight between police and unidentified gunmen during press conference calling for end to violence with PKK; shooting sparked protests in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Diyarbakır. Police continued intensified operations against Islamic State (IS); FM 18 Nov pledged intensified Turkish and U.S. airstrikes against IS along Turkish border. Russian warplane shot down 24 Nov by Turkish fighter jet after alleged violation of Turkish airspace; Moscow 29 Nov announced series of sanctions against Turkey amid ongoing standoff with Ankara. PM Davutoglu 10 Nov repeated calls for “safe haven” along border with Syria. EU leaders and PM Davutoglu reached agreement during 29 Nov migration summit: Turkey promised to help stem flow of migrants to Europe in exchange for \$3.2bn aid to help deal with 2.2mn registered Syrian refugees, visas and renewed talks on joining EU.

- Nigar Göksel and Berkay Mandıracı, [“The Road Back to Turkey’s Peace Talks”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 6 Nov. 2015.
- [“Turkey’s Kurdish rebels return to war footing”](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 5 Nov. 2015.

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## Central Asia

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➔ **Kazakhstan** With country facing economic crisis, President Nazarbayev criticised Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) 18 Nov, previously said crisis will be worse than 2007–09. Governor of National Bank sacked 2 Nov. Two Astana residents sentenced 9 Nov to five years prison for attempting to recruit three men to Islamic State, and sending widow and children to Syria.

- [“Kazakhstan’s economy: Collateral damage from low oil prices and Russia’s recession”](#), Daily Signal, 19 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Kyrgyzstan** Following Oct parliamentary elections, four parties formed coalition 4 Nov: Kyrgyzstan, Onuguu-Progress, Ata-Meken and Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK). New govt 5 Nov reduced ministries from fifteen to twelve. President Atambayev 6 Nov said presidential powers should be decreased. 22-year-old man from Batken province identified as Islamic State (IS) fighter in video threatening Russia with attacks 12 Nov; general prosecutor 11 Nov said 500 Kyrgyz citizens including 122 women currently in Syria with IS.

- [“Young man arrested in Kyrgyzstan for recruiting people to Syria, Iraq conflict zones”](#), Trend News Agency, 16 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Tajikistan** Authorities continued to link banned IRPT opposition party to former Deputy Defence Minister Abdulkhalim Nazarzoda, killed in a manhunt after shootouts in Dushanbe early Sept; IRPT denied allegations of links to attacks. Ten associates of former Emergencies Minister Mirzo Ziyoyev, killed by govt forces 2009, arrested 9 Nov after detained followers of Nazarzoda claimed they were jointly plotting to overthrow govt; Ziyoyev and Nazarzoda were commanders in United Tajik Opposition during Tajik civil war. Russian military spokesman 19 Nov said movement of Russian regiment stationed in Tajikistan from near Afghan border to near capital as intended to

raise combat capacity and readiness. Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Border Services chief 12 Nov said 4,500 Islamic militants currently on CIS's border, measures being taken to secure border. Former IRPT official sentenced 30 Nov to nine years' jail on charges of terrorism, religious extremism.

- ["Witch hunt in Tajikistan"](#), RFE/RL, 9 Nov. 2015.

➡ **Turkmenistan** President Berdymukhamedov 12 Nov met Chinese counterpart in Beijing to discuss security cooperation. U.S. Deputy Asst Sec State for Central Asia Daniel Rosenblum 18 Nov said Turkmen govt assured him it could guarantee security on Afghan border without assistance.

- ["We don't need any help with Afghan border"](#), Eurasianet, 21 Nov. 2015.

➡ **Uzbekistan** During regional visit to all five Central Asian states, U.S. Sec State Kerry 1 Nov launched "C5+1" dialogue forum in Samarkand. Security tightened in Tashkent, with interior ministry troops, National Guard and army put on alert 3 Nov; 160 people detained early Nov suspected of links with Islamic State (IS)/other extremist groups; many of those arrested reportedly migrant workers recently returned from Turkey or Russia.

- ["Kerry meets Uzbekistan leader, seen as one of world's most repressive"](#), *Guardian*, 1 Nov. 2015.

## Latin America and the Caribbean

➔ **Colombia** Following landmark agreements on transitional justice and bilateral efforts to find disappeared victims of conflict, govt 22 Nov approved legal pardons for 30 FARC guerrillas as part of “measures of confidence”; also offered to study 106 additional cases of FARC members with health problems to provide care. FARC 25 Nov agreed to proposal for uninterrupted negotiations under lockdown in order to accelerate speed of peace process. FARC negotiators 10 Nov expressed commitment to bilateral ceasefire, promised to stop recruiting fighters and purchase of arms. President Santos 18 Nov received support from UNSC permanent members for UN monitoring and verification mission for ceasefire. 11 Nov poll showed improved public perception of peace process, with 69% supporting negotiations, up from 60% in Aug, and 53% optimistic about success, up from 39%. Congress 18 Nov approved govt initiative to hold plebiscite on final text of peace agreement; FARC 10 Nov noted preference for referendum, which requires points of eventual agreement to be approved individually. Senate legislators 3 Nov rejected law guaranteeing FARC’s political participation post-conflict; FARC negotiators expressed discomfort despite Santos’ assurances to “revive” law. Inspector General Alejandro Ordonez expressed support for proposed review of pardons and amnesties granted to M-19 guerrilla fighters involved in 1985 Palace of Justice siege, raising uncertainty about long-term validity of any agreement negotiated in Havana. Former Presidents Andres Pastrana and Alvaro Uribe publicly accused FARC of maintaining links to transnational crime organisations and drug trade, citing 4 Nov report by U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Armed forces 2 Nov carried out first-ever bombing raid against New Illegal Armed Group (NIAG), killing twelve members of Los Urabeños (aka Clan Usuga) in Choco province.

- Javier Ciurlizza, [“De amnistías y otros demonios”](#), *Razón Pública*, 23 Nov. 2015.
- Javier Ciurlizza, [“La trascendental decisión de indultar a 30 guerrilleros”](#), *Semana*, 22 Nov. 2015.
- [“Colombia pardons 30 jailed FARC guerrillas”](#), AFP, 22 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Guatemala** International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), whose mandate has been extended for two years, presented eighth annual report at 13 Nov event attended by acting President Maldonado Aguirre, President-elect Jimmy Morales, head of Supreme Court and attorney general. CICIG commissioner called for additional funding for justice system noting prosecutors are present in only 10% of municipalities. Mandate extension follows series of high-profile arrests throughout the year of political figures, including former President Pérez Molina, for alleged involvement in customs fraud scheme.

- [“CICIG proposes wealth tax to fund justice and security”](#), EIU, 19 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Haiti** Provisional Electoral Commission (CEP) 5 Nov announced results of first round of 25 Oct presidential elections, indicating likely run-off between govt-backed candidate Jovenel Moise of ruling Parti Haitien Tet Kale (PHTK) and Jude Célestine of opposition League for Progress and Haitian Emancipation (LAPEH). Célestine 9 Nov rejected preliminary results following allegations of ballot stuffing and corruption by various observers. CEP member Jaccéus Joseph 12 Nov stated refusal to sign preliminary results, citing doubts over their credibility. Opposition parties, several NGOs and

student associations called for anti-corruption protests 11 Nov. Protests put down with violence 19 Nov leaving one dead, opposition presidential candidates Senator Steven Benoit and former Senator Moise Jean-Charles accused police of targeting them with rubber bullets and tear gas; presidential candidate Jean-Henry Ceant same day accused police of intimidation and harassment. CEP 17 Nov rebuffed suggestion by PM Evans Paul for independent verification of vote count; 18 Nov dismissed formal complaints on results launched by former presidential candidates. CEP 26 Nov announced campaigning and elections will go ahead, despite mounting violence.

- [“Haiti election officials refuse vote verification”](#), *Miami Herald*, 17 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Mexico** Federal investigators early-Nov reportedly found five bodies in three unmarked graves near Carrizalillo, Guerrero state, where criminal gangs compete for control of extortion and kidnapping rackets. Discovery follows interior minister’s 27 Oct announcement on new security strategy for Guerrero state, including new anti-kidnapping unit for Acapulco and construction of highway connecting coast to isolated states with strong criminal activity. “Narcomanta” (narco banner) draped from pedestrian bridge over highway in Tlalpan borough of Mexico City 6 Nov threatening more “hangings” if police did not stop protecting rival criminal groups, amid fears powerful criminal groups may now be operating in capital. Supreme Court criminal chamber 4 Nov ruled individuals should be allowed to grow and distribute marijuana for personal use; govt said it will respect ruling, called for national debate on drug use.

- [“Mexican state sees surge of violence with dead numbering ‘in the thousands’”](#), *Guardian*, 17 Nov. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°55, [Disappeared: Justice Denied in Mexico’s Guerrero State](#), 23 Oct. 2015.

⚠️ **Venezuela** Political tensions and violence increased ahead of 6 Dec parliamentary elections: local opposition Democratic Unity (MUD) alliance political leader Luis Manuel Díaz murdered 25 Nov during campaign event, one of several campaign incidents involving firearms and activists allegedly from President Maduro’s ruling PSUV. Opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez’s wife Lilian Tintori accused govt of attempting to murder her, alleging sabotage of plane she had been traveling in. Two nephews of First Lady Cilia Flores arrested in Haiti 10 Nov on drug-trafficking charges for allegedly attempting to export 800kgs of cocaine to U.S.; National Assembly head Diosdado Cabello 16 Nov claimed U.S. had “kidnapped” the two, citing intention to “damage the parliamentary election campaign and the revolution”. Case appeared to contribute to damaging govt campaign ahead of elections: latest mid-Nov poll showed 30-point lead for MUD. OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro outlined concerns over unfair election conditions in 10 Nov letter to head of electoral authority (CNE), noting govt’s use of state resources for campaigning, ban and imprisonment of opposition political leaders, MUD’s lack of access to media and state of emergency in constituencies along Colombian border; govt dismissed accusations. UNASUR election “accompaniment” mission formally constituted 18 Nov in Caracas, amid continued doubts expressed by Brazil’s and Chile’s election authorities, which declined to take part.

- Phil Gunson, [“Venezuela’s Parliamentary Elections: A Basic Guide”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 16 Nov. 2015.
- [“Venezuelan opposition politician Luis Manuel Diaz killed”](#), BBC, 26 Nov. 2015.

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# Middle East & North Africa

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## Eastern Mediterranean

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➔ **Israel-Palestine** Month saw dramatic reduction of violence at Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade following late Oct understandings between Israel and Jordan, regarding preventing provocateurs from entering site and strengthening Jordan's role there. PM Netanyahu and President Obama discussed Palestinian violence against Israeli citizens during 9 Nov meeting in Washington; Netanyahu said he remained committed to two-state solution. U.S. Sec State Kerry 24 Nov met Netanyahu and Palestinian leaders in bid to stop ongoing violence, which has seen around 100 Palestinians and around twenty Israelis killed since 1 Oct. Govt 2 Nov passed three-year minimum prison sentence for stone-throwers. Following 13 Nov Paris attacks claimed by Islamic State (IS), Israeli govt 17 Nov used emergency regulations to outlaw northern branch of Israel's Islamic movement, approved construction of 436 residential units in E Jerusalem settlement Ramat Shlomo and unfreeze 1,000 additional residential units. Netanyahu 18 Nov hinted at possibility of Israeli annexation of parts of West Bank. Severe rainstorms brought flooding to Gaza. Israel late Nov suspended EU involvement in peace process following EU's decision to label goods from Jewish settlements in West Bank.

- ["Obama and Netanyahu: A story of slights and crossed signals"](#), *New York Times*, 8 Nov. 2015.

↓ **Lebanon** At least 40 people killed, over 200 injured in double suicide bomb attack 12 Nov in predominantly Shiite neighbourhood of Bourj al-Barajneh in Beirut's southern suburb; Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility, triggering renewed fears about ability and intent of jihadi groups to expand operations in Lebanon, and for many observers highlighting limitations of govt's "security plan"; security forces arrested at least sixteen suspects. Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri 11 Nov again postponed election of president due to lack of quorum. Anti-govt protests in Beirut over ongoing trash collection crisis continued. Parliament approved a number of draft laws during rare session 12-13 Nov following informal agreements among main political parties on mainly financial issues. Two soldiers and six alleged fugitives killed during anti-drug raid in Jounieh 2 Nov. Suicide bomber 5 Nov killed at least six Syrian clerics in NE town Aarsal.

- Sahar Atrache, ["Beirut Bombing Widens Lebanon's Shiite-Sunni Divide"](#), *In Pursuit of Peace*, 13 Nov. 2015.
- ["Isis claims responsibility as suicide bombers kill dozens in Beirut"](#), *Guardian*, 12 Nov. 2015.

↓ **Syria** New escalation in conflict after Turkey shot down Russian warplane near its border with Syria (see Turkey). In response, Moscow announced unilateral economic sanctions and stepped up airstrikes along Syrian side of Turkish border, including for first time strikes in support of Kurdish YPG operations against pro-Turkey, anti-Islamic State (IS) rebels north of Aleppo. FMs representing Syrian war's key external players including Iran gathered in Vienna 11-14 Nov, following first round 30 Oct; talks represent most serious diplomatic engagement on Syrian conflict since failed

“Geneva II” talks early 2014, concluded with joint agreement on basic contours of hoped-for political process: negotiations between regime and opposition as early as Jan 2016; followed by process to “establish credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance” within six months; nationwide ceasefire (excluding IS and Jabhat al-Nusra); within eighteen months, agreement on new constitution followed by UN-monitored elections, with all Syrians entitled to vote. Disagreement between Washington and Moscow continued over whether transition will end President Assad’s rule. Responding to 13 Nov Paris attacks claimed by IS (see France), France 15 Nov intensified airstrikes on IS stronghold Raqqa, deployed aircraft carrier to Gulf; Russian President Putin 17 Nov ordered Russian army to coordinate with French military as “allies” on joint action plan. UNSC 20 Nov adopted resolution, drafted by France, calling on countries around world to take “all necessary measures” to fight IS. Russia continued its military escalation, deploying jets and launching cruise missiles simultaneously against rebels on multiple fronts. Initial regime gains in some areas matched by setbacks elsewhere: regime and allied forces progressed against assortment of non-IS rebels and IS south and SE of Aleppo respectively; in Hama, array of mainstream and jihadi groups 6 Nov thwarted regime offensives and gained ground. Regime continued barrel bombing and other aerial collective punishment tactics, biggest killer of civilians, despite Russian claims to contrary.

- Noah Bonsey, [“What the War on Islamic State Means for Syria”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 26 Nov. 2015.
- Peter Harling, [“Tuer les autres, se tuer soi-même”](#), Orient XXI, 26 Nov. 2015.
- Crisis Group, [“An Alarming New Escalation in the Syria War”](#), In Pursuit of Peace, 24 Nov. 2015.
- [“More war, diplomacy not seen breaking Syria stalemate”](#), Reuters, 26 Nov. 2015.

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## Gulf

➔ **Bahrain** Authorities 4 Nov said 47 arrested on suspicion of links with “terrorist elements in Iran”, planning attacks in Bahrain; several arrested 27 Nov on suspicion of “terror” links to Iran. Foreign ministry late Nov summoned Iranian chargé d’affaires to formally protest Iran’s perceived interference in internal affairs. Public prosecutor 5 Nov announced five convicted of conspiring with Iran to launch attacks in Bahrain, sentenced to life in prison and citizenship revoked; 10 Nov said eight sentenced to three to ten years’ jail for terrorism. Majeed Milad, senior member of opposition Al Wefaq, sentenced 11 Nov to two years’ prison for incitement to public disobedience; U.S. 7 Nov called for charges against Al Wefaq leader Ali Salman to be dropped following UN declaration his imprisonment is “arbitrary detention”. Govt late Nov rejected Human Rights Watch report documenting ongoing rights abuses, torture of detainees.

- [“Bahrain says foils plans for attack by Iran-linked terrorist group”](#), Reuters, 4 Nov. 2015.
- ➔ **Iran** IAEA 18 Nov reported Iran started dismantling parts of its nuclear program at Natanz and Fordo enrichment facilities, as agreed in July nuclear deal; twenty hard-line politicians early Nov complained deactivation of centrifuges contradicted directives of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. President Rouhani 5 Nov and UN human rights experts 11 Nov condemned new security crackdown after Revolutionary

Guards rounded up Baha'is, Iranian-Americans, journalists, activists and dissidents citing fears of Western "infiltration". FM Zarif attended both rounds of multilateral negotiations over Syria's fate in Vienna 30 Oct and 11-14 Nov, Supreme Leader Khamenei 23 Nov met Russian President Putin in Tehran to discuss Syria. Israeli intelligence 19 Nov said at least 50 Iranian military personnel killed in Syria. Rouhani 14 Nov cancelled first European trip to Italy and France after Paris terrorist attacks 13 Nov; Iran's Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi cautioned attacks represented "serious warning" for Iran.

- ["Russia resumes nuclear trade with Iran as sanctions lifted"](#), BBC, 23 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Iraq** Iraqi Kurdish forces 12 Nov launched long-awaited operation to flush Islamic State (IS) from Sinjar in Ninewa province, with air support from anti-IS coalition. Sinjar rapidly liberated, though Intra-Kurdish rivalries between Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Turkish Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) evident. Mass grave discovered mid-Nov in east of Sinjar town. Clashes in Anbar province between IS and govt backed by anti-IS coalition airstrikes continued: Iraq's military command late Nov advised all civilians to leave provincial capital Ramadi prompting speculation of imminent operation to retake city from IS. IS suicide bombings killed tens throughout month. Political tensions in Baghdad continued despite late Oct reforms to public sector salaries. Turkish airstrikes against PKK in northern Iraq continued (see Turkey).

- ["Kurds say they repelled Islamic State attack in Iraq"](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 14 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Kuwait** Six arrested late Nov suspected of belonging to cell supplying weapons to Islamic State (IS), recruiting fighters and raising money; interior ministry said cell included two Syrians and two Australian-Lebanese.

- ["Kuwait crackdown on 'IS-supporting extremist cell'"](#), BBC, 20 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Yemen** Fighting intensified in and around Taiz province as both Huthi/Saleh bloc and govt/Saudi-led coalition sought military gains ahead of second round of UN-sponsored peace talks. Huthis and aligned military forces early Nov captured lost border territories in Dalia and Lahj governorates; tightened blockade of Taiz, south of capital Sanaa. Govt/Saudi-led coalition 16 Nov announced major ground operation to recapture Taiz; hundreds of additional Sudanese troops arrived in Aden 9 Nov; President Hadi 17 Nov returned from exile in Saudi Arabia to oversee offensive. Coalition airstrikes in Sanaa decreased in response to international pressure. Govt and Huthi/Saleh bloc remain committed to UN-sponsored talks, scheduled for December. Lawlessness, including assassination of two security officers 1 Nov, and al-Qaeda and Islamic State (IS) attacks continued in South: roadside bomb 9 Nov reportedly killed at least sixteen govt soldiers in Marib province. IS 20 Nov reportedly killed at least nineteen govt soldiers and 35 militants in E Hadramout.

- ["Victory proves elusive in Saudi king's Yemen war"](#), Reuters, 2 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Saudi Arabia** Military operations continued in Yemen (see Yemen). State media 20 Nov announced country will host conference mid-Dec aimed at unifying Syrian opposition. State media 26 Nov reported sanctions imposed on at least twelve senior Hizbollah figures under terrorism crimes and financing laws. Two policemen shot dead mid-Nov in Qatif, eastern province.

- ["Yemen is turning into Saudi Arabia's Vietnam"](#), *Washington Post*, 13 Nov. 2015.

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## North Africa

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➔ **Algeria** President Bouteflika 1 Nov announced long-promised constitutional amendments to be made public soon: main Pro-Bouteflika political parties welcomed news as part of democratisation process; others expressed concerns Bouteflika's brother Said is really in control due to Bouteflika's illness. View echoed by "Group of 19" including liberation war veterans and senior political figures who presented letter to presidency 7 Nov requesting meeting with Bouteflika; presidency chef de cabinet Ahmed Ouyahia said letter "harms the institutions of the state and the interests of Algeria". Former counter-terrorism chief Gen Hassan convicted late Nov of destroying documents and disobeying military orders, sentenced to five years' prison. Economic crunch continued to loom following steep decline in oil prices: 2016 budget presented to Assembly 22 Nov, including some light austerity measures.

- ["Bouteflika in full control of running Algeria: premier"](#), AFP, 9 Nov. 2015.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Report N°164, [Algeria and Its Neighbours](#), 12 Oct. 2015.

➔ **Egypt** Second and final round of parliamentary elections held 22-23 Nov amid poor voter turnout and boycott by key opposition parties; "For the Love of Egypt" coalition again expected to win all of the 20% of seats reserved for party lists. Violence in Sinai province continued: suicide bomber and vehicle packed with explosives killed at least four police officers and wounded at least five civilians in N Sinai 4 Nov, Islamic State (IS) affiliate "Sinai Province" (SP) claimed responsibility; at least three killed and fourteen wounded by car bomb explosion outside hotel housing election judges in N Sinai 24 Nov, SP claimed responsibility; SP leader Ashraf Gharabli reportedly killed in shootout in Cairo 9 Nov. Six Sudanese migrants killed, seventeen wounded during clash between security forces and smugglers 23 Nov in N Sinai. Gunmen attack on police checkpoint killed four security personnel 28 Nov in Saqqara; militant group affiliated to IS claimed responsibility. UK, U.S. and Russia early and mid-Nov suggested bomb explosion brought down Russian plane in 31 Oct crash in Sinai, Egyptian authorities yet to reveal conclusions. Prior to UK visit President Sisi in BBC interview 4 Nov suggested outlawed Muslim Brotherhood could have role in public life. Prominent journalist and rights activist Hossam Bahgat detained by military 8-10 Nov, released after international outcry but could still be charged for disseminating false news.

- Crisis Group Statement, ["Open Letter on Egypt to the UK Prime Minister"](#), 4 Nov. 2015.
- ["Egypt votes in second round of parliamentary elections"](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 22 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Libya** Political dialogue aimed at ending rivalry between two parliaments remained deeply troubled. New UN SRSR Martin Kobler 17 Nov replaced Bernardino León, assumed responsibility for political dialogue process. Ongoing disagreement over which draft agreement should be approved: July draft that favours the internationally recognised Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR) or latest Oct draft incorporating some Tripoli-based General National Congress (GNC) objections to July draft. HoR and GNC presidents refused to allow formal vote on Oct draft; anti-deal constituencies on both sides claim majority of each parliament opposes agreement, pro-deal factions make opposite claim. Kobler 17 Nov stated "small number of out-

standing issues” remained but process continues to be marred by insecurity and spoilers. Fighting in Benghazi and Derna continued; at least sixteen killed in clashes between forces allied to HoR and Islamic State (IS) fighters in Benghazi 11 Nov; IS consolidated control in Sirte as foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq increased group’s ranks. Car bomb 24 Nov killed at least five guards and injured sixteen others at checkpoint east of Tripoli. UN report 16 Nov documented indiscriminate shelling, executions, torture, property destruction, and abduction of civilians by all parties 1 Jan-31 Oct. Tebus and Tuaregs in south signed peace agreement brokered by Qatar 23 Nov, but fighting reportedly resumed soon thereafter.

- [“New U.N. envoy pushes Libya factions to sign peace deal”](#), Reuters, 22 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Morocco** Trial of seven journalists and activists charged with threatening national security and failing to disclose foreign funding began mid-Nov. Authorities 16 Nov said four militants with suspected links to Islamic State (IS) arrested in Beni Mellal; police 28 Nov arrested three including two Turkish nationals suspected of ties to IS. Thousands 1 Nov protested in Tangier against high utility prices. King Mohammed 5 Nov pardoned 4,215 prisoners to mark 40th anniversary of “Green March”.

- [“Journalists and activists stand trial in Morocco”](#), AP, 19 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Tunisia** Political, social and security tensions continued. Bomb attack on bus in Tunis carrying presidential guard left twelve dead 24 Nov; Islamic State claimed responsibility. Authorities announced state of emergency throughout country, curfew in capital; 30 Nov announced arrest of two militants in connection with bombing and seizure of weapons cache. Jihadis linked to al-Qaeda 13 Nov beheaded teenage shepherd in Mount Mrihila, sparking widespread indignation against authorities for failure to rapidly visit family; Tunisian army launched retaliatory operation in area, three jihadis and soldier killed. Tensions within ruling Nida Tounes party as various groups vied for control: 31 deputies threatened to resign from parliamentary group raising possibility of An Nahda party becoming largest political force in Assembly; deputies threatening resignation eventually reversed decision. Internal dissent also continued within opposition An-Nahda, particularly over dismissal of several imams from Lakhmi mosque as part of policy of controlling extremist religious discourse. Weekly protests against policy organised by imams’ syndicate affiliated with Islamist trade union federation (OTT) ongoing.

- [“Blast kills 12 in Tunisia as terrorists target presidential guard”](#), *Financial Times*, 24 Nov. 2015.

➔ **Western Sahara** Moroccan King Mohammed visited early Nov, said there would be no further concessions regarding sovereignty but vowed revenues would be reinvested locally and announced large new infrastructure investment in region. UN Envoy to Western Sahara Christopher Ross late Nov visited region in bid to relaunch negotiations between Morocco and Polisario Front.

- [“Morocco king visits Western Saharan”](#), AFP, 7 Nov. 2015.