

1 August 2008, N°60

CrisisWatch:

- summarises briefly 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 information sources (all references mentioned are hyperlinked in the electronic version of this bulletin);
- 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;
- alerts readers to situations where, in the coming month, there is a particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict, or a particular conflict resolution opportunity (noting that in some instances there may in fact be both); and
- summarises Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers that have been published in the last month.

CrisisWatch is compiled by Crisis Group's Brussels Research Unit, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of our some 135 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 60 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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August 2008 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alerts



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CENTRAL AFRICA

- **Burundi** Implementation of mid-June peace agreement fragile but progressing. Govt refused to recognise FNL as political party without name change, prompting 6 July FNL suspension of combatant assembly and disarmament. Govt 9 July accused FNL of delay and fresh recruitment. Parties 14 July agreed to resume implementation; some 3,000 FNL combatants assembled since 21 July, but few weapons handed in. UN 6 July released \$1.3m (from Peacebuilding Fund) for 1-year national consultation on transitional justice mechanisms. 2 of 22 defectors from governing CNDD-FDD sacked June from parliament arrested for alleged security threats.
- [“Government questions lack of weapons as FNL fighters assemble”](#), IRIN, 28 July 2008.
 - [“Rebel group slowing peace process, says government”](#), IRIN, 10 July 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°131, [Burundi: Finalising Peace with the FNL](#), 28 Aug. 2007.

- **Central African Republic** Spokesperson for FDPC, only major rebel group not signatory to 21 June comprehensive peace agreement, reportedly said group demanding tripartite meeting with APRD, gov't. APRD 25 July claimed not consulted over amnesty bill (to be discussed by parliament 1 Aug), armed forces breaching ceasefire. MONUC mandate 12 July transferred to new Central African Community force MICOPAX I. UN Peacebuilding Commission visited Bangui 10-12 July.
- [“CAR opposition fears political consensus lapses”](#), Afrol News, 25 July 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°136, [Central African Republic: Anatomy of a Phantom State](#), 13 Dec. 2007.

- **Democratic Republic of Congo** Main opposition Congolese Liberation Movement (MLC) suspended participation in parliament for 1 week to push gov't to investigate 6 July death of local MLC politician, blaming elite military unit. Soldier before military tribunal for killing testified 18 July that death was ordered by Kinshasa governor – accusation denied, governor appeared before tribunal 28 July. Rebel attack on environment group vehicle in gorilla park in eastern Congo killed 2, amid reports of renewed North Kivu clashes between Nkunda's CNDP and Mai-Mai rebels. International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecution filed appeal of trial chamber decisions to stay trial of and release Ituri militia leader Thomas Lubanga. Former VP Jean-Pierre Bemba appeared before ICC 4 July on charges of atrocities committed in CAR, after 3 July transfer from Belgian custody. Parliament unanimously passed amnesty law 12 July for acts of war and rebellion, but not for atrocity crimes, committed in east; awaiting senate approval.
- [“Soldier alleges Kinshasa governor ordered murder”](#), Reuters, 18 July 2008.
 - [“DRC rebel leader Bemba transferred to Hague court”](#), VOA, 3 July 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°140, [Congo: Four Priorities for Sustainable Peace in Ituri](#), 13 May 2008.

- **Rwanda** Parliament 17 July unanimously passed bill granting former presidents immunity for crimes committed but not prosecuted during time in office. Move perceived as response to French, Spanish judicial accusations against President Kagame for role during genocide. Callixte Mbarushimana, major genocide fugitive and FDLR official, arrested 7 July in Frankfurt airport. UNSC 18 July announced extension of ICTR mandate until end 2009; gov't affirmed continued support despite frustrations with progress. 13-year UNSC arms embargo lifted 10 July. Gacaca courts' jurisdiction extended 1 July to cover rape. Rwandan prosecutors 30 July accused 670 Burundians of participating in genocide; said would issue some international arrest warrants.
- [“Rwanda to continue cooperating with ICTR”](#), *New Times*, 22 July 2008.
 - [“Rwanda gives ex-leaders immunity”](#), BBC, 17 July 2008.

- **Uganda** Peace process continued to falter as deal still without LRA leader Joseph Kony signature. Kony 16 July made fresh demands on conditions for talks, following call for security and supplies; gov't granted LRA negotiator James Obita amnesty 31 July. President Museveni reiterated 23 July no further negotiations, as defence chief threatened military action. South Sudanese President Salva Kiir called for continued negotiations, as South Sudanese lawmakers 7 July recommended ICC defer warrants against LRA. Reports emerged that UPDF implicated in June, July attacks in Southern Sudan, some previously blamed on LRA; Uganda rejected claims. State media 20 July reported Museveni to run for fourth term in 2011; tensions rising within ruling NRM. Rebel Allied Democratic Forces requested peace talks 29 July to end 12-year insurgency in west; gov't agreed.
- [“Uganda's ADF rebels seek peace talks with gov't”](#), Xinhua, 29 July 2008.
 - [“Uganda denies responsibility for attack in Southern Sudan”](#), VOA, 7 July 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°46, [Northern Uganda Peace Process: The Need to Maintain Momentum](#), 14 Sept. 2007.

HORN OF AFRICA

- **Chad** Chad 25 July rejected Sudan's 18 July offer to resume diplomatic ties, severed in May, unless Khartoum abandons links with Chadian rebels. N'Djamena 13 July alleged airspace violations by Sudan; 16 July released statement supporting ICC action against Sudanese President Bashir (see Sudan). UNSG Ban 10 July urged political dialogue between gov't and rebel groups, amid reports N'Djamena favouring renewed offensives. Oxfam and Médecins sans Frontières 10 July suspended activities in Kerfi, eastern Chad, due to 8, 9 July attacks on personnel and facilities. In 2 July arrest of Ahmat Israel Bichara, radical Muslim spiritual leader threatening holy war, army killed some 70 followers; 50 others wounded, 4 soldiers killed.
- [“Oxfam and MSF suspend activities in Kerfi following attacks”](#), IRIN, 11 July 2008.
- **Ethiopia** 4 opposition parties united 1 July to protest “diminishing political space”, as parliament passed repressive media law. Gov't 12 July announced arrest of 8 “Eritrean-trained” OLF and ONLF rebels, suspected of planting April, May bombs in capital. Ogaden rebels claimed 33 soldiers killed in early July

clashes, accused govt of blocking aid to region.

- [“Ethiopia says arrests 8 bombers”](#), Reuters, 13 July 2008.
- [“Ethiopia rebels say Addis starving Ogaden”](#), AFP, 11 July 2008.

➡ **Ethiopia/Eritrea** UNSC terminated UNMEE peacekeeping mission 31 July, after Eritrea forced troop withdrawal Feb. Both countries played down fears of war as disputed border without international presence for first time in 8 years.

- [“Eritrea allays fears over new war”](#), BBC, 31 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°141, [Beyond the Fragile Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Averting New War](#), 17 June 2008.

➡ **Kenya** Finance Minister Amos Kimunya resigned 8 July after 2 July parliamentary no-confidence vote and attorney general-led inquiry into alleged fraud in sale of govt-owned Nairobi hotel. PM Odinga, Justice Minister Karua 16 July attacked govt record on graft, as 2 more ministers faced scrutiny. Commission investigating post-election violence began hearings 9 July: intelligence chief testimony revealed pre-election warning of violence eruption. 6-month mediation talks closed 31 July; team to monitor reform implementation, as parliamentary bills tabled to restart constitutional review process. Human Rights Watch echoed claims troops committed human rights abuses in operations against Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) in Mount Elgon, as Médecins sans Frontières accused army of blocking activities in region.

- [“Hotel saga reveals Kenya cracks”](#), BBC, 10 July 2008.
- [“Kenyan shuffle”](#), *Economist*, 9 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°137, [Kenya in Crisis](#), 21 Feb. 2008.

➡ **Somalia** Divisions in Islamist opposition threatening already fragile June peace deal, as hardliner Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys 23 July claimed leadership of Asmara-based opposition Alliance for Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) from moderate Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed; UN envoy Ould-Abdallah dismissed claim. Aweys rejected govt-ARS Djibouti deal for failing to set firm deadline for Ethiopian troop withdrawal, though ARS central committee 19 July endorsed agreement despite missed ceasefire deadline. Aweys said 28 July would not negotiate with Ahmed’s faction, promised to pacify country through Islamic law. Violence continued: Al-Shabaab attacked govt headquarters in Baidoa 7 July, killing 4 soldiers; some 19 killed in end-month Beledweyne clashes. PM Nur Hussein Hassan called for immediate UN troop deployment agreed in June deal, Ould-Abdallah urged “decisive” UN action 23 July; AU extended AMISOM mandate by 6 months but 23 July said incapable of stabilising situation, Rwanda promised troops by year-end; 1 peacekeeper killed 1 Aug. Humanitarian operations threatened by apparent targeting of aid workers and lack of navy escorts for food shipments. Gunmen shot dead UNDP Somalia head in Mogadishu 5 July; 4 other Somali nationals working for local NGOs, WFP and 3 elders helping distribute food killed in month. Islamists denied targeting aid workers, blamed govt and Ethiopian forces; Aweys 23 July promised protection.

- [“Prolonging the agony”](#), ISN, 29 July 2007.
- [“Al-Qaeda-linked cleric to lead Somali opposition”](#), *Mail and Guardian*, 23 July 2008.
- [“Continuing to fail”](#), *Economist*, 3 July 2008.

➡ **Somaliland (Somalia)** Mid-month standoff after Somaliland troops seized strategic coastal town Las Qoray in disputed Sanaag region; Puntland threatened retaliation, amid reports Somalia arming Puntland. Police 7 July reportedly killed 3 while dispersing protest against local administration decision in Somaliland capital Hargeisa.

- [“Fears of military clash growing between Somaliland and Puntland”](#), VOA, 11 July 2008.
- [“Three killed as Somaliland police open fire on protestors”](#), Garowe Online, 7 July 2008.

➡ **Sudan** International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo 14 July applied for arrest warrant for Sudanese President Bashir on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes – much-feared regime response so far restrained; progress on stalled Darfur peace process and CPA implementation possible as judges consider application. AU, Arab League, China warned of damage to peace process. Ruling NCP organised ICC protests. Bashir in rare Darfur visit 23 July, accompanied by U.S., UK officials, emphasised peace efforts – rebels reported subsequent army attacks. Plans for politically inclusive conference on Darfur reported 31 July. Retaliation fears prompted increased UN security, compounded by 17 July killing of UNAMID peacekeeper that followed 9 July attack killing 7 UNAMID. AU 21 July requested UNSC defer ICC prosecution; France, UK said too soon to consider. UNSC 31 July extended UNAMID 1 year, noted AU request; U.S. abstained from vote. Northern, southern armies withdrew end-July from disputed Abyei region following May clashes, allowing joint force deployment. Khartoum offer to resume diplomatic ties with Chad, cut after May rebel attack on capital, rejected: 8 JEM sentenced to death for involvement (see Chad). New election law signed 7 July: prospect of first free elections in 23 years in 2009; opposition and former rebels’ support tempered by concern over NCP advantage. Southern SPLM leader Salva Kiir 27 July announced would run for presidency. Sudan claimed Ethiopian soldiers killed 19 in 7 July attack on northern military camp; Ethiopia dismissed incident, blamed poorly demarcated border.

- Comment by Nick Grono and Fabienne Hara (Crisis Group), [“Security Council should make President meet benchmarks”](#), allAfrica.com, 25 July 2008.
- Crisis Group statement, [“Opportunities and Risks for Peace in Sudan”](#), 14 July 2008.
- [“Sudan rallies behind leader reviled abroad”](#), *New York Times*, 28 July 2008.
- [“Sudan passes election law ahead of key 2009 vote”](#), Reuters, 7 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°50, [Sudan’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement: Beyond the Crisis](#), 13 Mar. 2008.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

➡ **Comoros Islands** President Sambi appointed new govt 11 July after peaceful June Anjouan election. Former rebel leader Bacar expelled 20 July from French Reunion, taken to Cotonou, Benin. 10 close Bacar allies escaped jail 19 July, fled to French Mayotte.

- [“Cautious optimism after calm Anjouan elections”](#), IRIN, 2 July 2008.

- ➡ **Zimbabwe** In historic face-to-face meeting, rivals President Mugabe and MDC opposition leader Tsvangirai 21 July agreed to negotiate on way out of violent, 4-month election crisis. Parties, including MDC faction led by Mutambara, agreed to 2-week talks on formation of power-sharing govt – substantial challenges remain, including leadership and duration of govt, role of security services. Talks began 24 July in Pretoria, halted 29 July with reported deadlock, due to resume 3 Aug. Talks brought lift to much-criticised mediator South African President Mbeki, leading expanded team including AU and UN as demanded by MDC. State violence declined from June peak, but MDC say new MPs routinely harassed, over 1,500 supporters still detained, some 120 MDC killed since Apr. Reports of reprisal attacks near Bulawayo on ruling ZANU-PF cadres by Zimbabweans returning from May violence in South Africa. EU 22 July extended sanctions targets: now 168 individuals and, for first time, companies linked to Mugabe govt; U.S. expanded sanctions 25 July. G8 leaders 8 July vowed to tighten sanctions, but UNSC resolution 11 July blocked by Russia, China vetoes. Economic crisis deepened as inflation over 2m% amid acute shortages and reports of large-scale ZANU-PF capital flight.
- [“Who will hold real power after talks in Zimbabwe?”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 27 July 2008.
 - [“Humanitarian organisations remain out in the cold”](#), IRIN, 23 July 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°51, [Negotiating Zimbabwe’s Transition](#), 21 May 2008.

WEST AFRICA

- ➡ **Côte d’Ivoire** Govt 21 July halved ministers’ pay and re-introduced fuel subsidies after 6 July withdrawal, ending week-long protests in Abidjan. President Gbagbo 22 July threatened to dissolve “ineffective” consensus govt, 24 July said voter identification delays put 30 Nov elections at risk, prompting opposition outcry. Bouaké calm early month after ex-rebel FN soldiers rioted mid-June, with talks ending 2 July. But mixed FN-army gendarmes 26-27 July blocked Bouaké-Yamoussouko road in further non-payment protests. Arab donors 1 July agreed \$463m loan for infrastructure development, reinsertion of ex-combatants. UNSC 29 July renewed mandate of UNOCI, French peacekeepers for further 6 months.
- [“Ministers cut own wages to end public sector strike”](#), IRIN, 21 July 2008.
 - [“UNOCI calls for immediate launch of identification process”](#), African Press Organisation, 17 July 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°139, [Côte d’Ivoire: Ensuring Credible Elections](#), 22 Apr. 2008.
- ➡ **Guinea** Govt 15 July postponed electoral census to 1 Aug ahead of late 2008 elections, citing financial constraints.
- [“ECOWAS, UN meet Guinea stakeholders”](#), Afrique en ligne, 9 July 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°52, [Guinea: Ensuring Democratic Reforms](#), 24 June 2008.
- ➡ **Guinea-Bissau** Opposition party PAIGC 26 July withdrew from national stability pact after PM Cabi failed to consult on dismissal of several officials. Electoral census held 3-26 July ahead of Nov elections; low turnout reported. In ongoing anti-drugs struggle, 3 Venezuelan crew and 2 airport staff including

head of air-traffic control arrested 19 July after plane cocaine load seized; rumours of army involvement.

- [“Bissau opposition pulls out of unity government”](#), Reuters, 27 July 2008.
- [“Bissau must deal ‘properly’ with drug plane - U.N.”](#), Reuters, 23 July 2008.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°142, [Guinea-Bissau: In Need of a State](#), 2 July 2008. The international community must encourage reform in Guinea-Bissau to counter the risk of it becoming a narco-state and political no-man’s-land for criminal and terrorist networks. A chance now exists for much needed democratic reforms, thanks to the signing of a stability pact by major political parties. Foreign partners must galvanise efforts and seize what appears to be a genuine opportunity.



- ➡ **Liberia** Govt 9 July acknowledged deteriorating security, police criminality as violent crime reportedly peaked early July. Justice minister 4 July disclosed plans to combat security service inefficiency.
- [“Fear on the rise as crime wave hits Liberian capital”](#), AFP, 14 July 2008.
- ➡ **Mali** Algeria resumed mediation role, kick-starting talks between govt and Tuareg rebels: parties 21 July committed to ceasefire, release of hostages/prisoners and refugee return. Algerian delegation in Bamako 14-17 July discussed security cooperation including joint border patrols to combat Tuareg rebellion. Several kidnapped, weapons seized in rebel raid on Tessalit police base 19 July.
- [“Mali government, Tuareg agree ceasefire deal – Algeria”](#), Reuters, 22 July 2008.
 - [“Gunmen attack Mali outpost, seize soldiers, weapons”](#), Reuters, 19 July 2008.
- ➡ **Niger** In further retaliatory attacks, Tuareg rebel group Niger Justice Movement (MNJ) reportedly 10 July shelled northern army garrison town Agadez after MNJ commander captured 27 June; no casualties reported. MNJ 3 July called on Algeria to mediate. Some 30,000 marched 10 July, Niamey, against ongoing power and food shortages. Rights groups 29 July demanded investigation into \$5b China oil deal, alleging secrecy.
- [“Niger rebels attack northern town with mortars”](#), Reuters, 12 July 2008.
- ➡ **Nigeria** Niger Delta (ND) militant group MEND suspended 2-week ceasefire 12 July in protest at UK pledge to assist govt secure Delta. ND violence, targeting oil sites and Nigerian soldiers, continued with reports of community-led attacks; at least 10 killed 16-17 July in Rivers, Bayelsa States; 12 foreign oil workers briefly kidnapped 24 July, 8 others 26 July. MEND claimed responsibility for 2 major 28 July attacks on Shell pipelines, earlier threatened to destroy Bonny Island facilities. Army 22 July accused local politicians of backing militants, 30 July reported at least 4 killed in clashes between vying militant groups. Govt 16 July scrapped plans for Delta peace summit after local opposition and 10 July withdrawal of proposed chair Gambari. Militant group opposed to 14 Aug transfer of Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon attacked Cameroon border guards 13 July: 10 reportedly killed in 22 July clashes. Court 31 July

ordered transfer delay, govt appeal expected. Soldiers 4 July blocked major roads in Akure, Ondo State, over alleged UN pay cuts for peacekeepers in Liberia. Senate inquiry report accused 2 aviation ministers, arrested 1 July, and ex-Abuja minister el-Rufai of massive corruption under previous administration. Election of Cross River State governor annulled and David Mark's senate presidency upheld, in continuing appeals of 2007's flawed elections.

- "Oil wealth in Nigeria leaves the majority behind", *International Herald Tribune*, 21 July 2008.
- "Tension over Bakassi Peninsula", ISN, 21 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°135, *Nigeria: Ending Unrest in the Niger Delta*, 5 Dec. 2007.

➡ **Senegal** Parliament 29 July approved controversial law extending presidential term from 5 to 7 years effective from 2012. Ruling PDS party 27 July promised to block critical media, urged boycott. 1 killed 22 July in violent robbery reportedly by separatist rebels in Casamance region. Constitutional amendment passed allowing prosecution of past war crimes in step towards trial of exiled ex-Chadian President Habré.

- "Execution-style murder underscores resurgent violence", IRIN, 23 July 2008.

➡ **Sierra Leone** Local elections held 5 July; UN envoy Schulenburg said "generally fair". UN Peacebuilding Fund 17 July approved \$17m for social reform projects. Army deployed in Tongo ahead of elections after series of inter-party attacks. 58 arrested 13 July over large cocaine load intercepted from Venezuela; tightened drug bill approved 21 July.

- "S Leone pledges cocaine crackdown", BBC, 22 July 2008.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°143, *Sierra Leone: A New Era of Reform?*, 31 July



2008. Sierra Leone has made much progress since the civil war ended in 2002, but solidifying peace requires a genuinely national project to defuse continuing social and economic time bombs. President Ernest Bai Koroma must build public confidence in his agenda at a time when donor support is gradually being cut. With most people still desperately poor, the growing numbers of jobless, socially alienated youth present a perennial security threat.



Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

➡ **Kazakhstan** At 23 July U.S. Helsinki Commission hearing, Asst Sec State Boucher called for democratic progress by end-2008, ahead of OSCE chairmanship 2010; President Nazarbayev in June reaffirmed commitment to reform.

- "The state extends its reach over oil and gas sector", EurasiaNet, 23 July 2008.

➡ **Kyrgyzstan** Constitutional court 3 July ruled unconstitutional restrictions on demonstrations approved by parliament in

June. Economic growth forecast cut, projected inflation raised to 29% amid fears of energy shortages; selective power, water cuts introduced late July. Unofficial reports asserted President Bakiyev's unexpected Moscow trip 17 July was request for emergency aid.

- "Three years on, Kyrgyz president taken to task for rampant nepotism", RFE/RL, 10 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°150, *Kyrgyzstan: The Challenge of Judicial Reform*, 10 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Tajikistan** Head of supreme court 16 July accused Uzbek security forces of orchestrating June 2007 explosion that damaged court building. Accusation followed sentencing of suspect for role in blast; Uzbekistan reportedly refuses to hand over 2 other suspects. Journalists 18 July rejected draft code of conduct. Increased govt pressure on RFE/RL as govt called for criminal investigation into "insulting" coverage of first family.

- "Tajik public, press break decade of silence", RFE/RL, 15 July 2008.

➡ **Turkmenistan** RFE/RL commentator Sazak Durdymuradov, detained since 20 June at psychiatric hospital, released 4 July; reportedly suffered beating, electroshock torture for refusing to stop broadcasts. President Berdymukhamedov 22 July called for overhaul of constitution to reflect commitment to market economy, democracy, human rights. Govt signed agreement with Gazprom 25 July on gas prices after lengthy negotiations; Gazprom to pay "market" rates, offer interest-free credit for infrastructure development.

- "Berdymukhamedov plays waiting game, continues to vex the Kremlin", EurasiaNet, 7 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°60, *Turkmenistan after Niyazov*, 12 Feb. 2007.

➡ **Uzbekistan** Fire and explosions 9-10 July at Kagan military base near Bukhara: officials said 3 dead, 21 injured; eyewitnesses reported extensive casualties. Authorities investigating incident as terrorist attack. RFE/RL contributor Toshpulat Yuldasev fled to Kyrgyzstan citing fear in face of increased govt pressure. President Karimov 8 July ratified UN protocol on preventing human trafficking. Human Rights Watch warned its Uzbek office faced closure due to continued bureaucratic obstruction.

- Comment by Andrew Stroehlein (Crisis Group), "Uzbekistan: the ghost of sanctions", *European Voice*, 18 July 2008.
- "Uzbekistan continues to drift away from Russia, but not necessarily toward the West", EurasiaNet, 15 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°76, *Political Murder in Central Asia: No Time to End Uzbekistan's Isolation*, 14 Feb. 2008.

NORTH EAST ASIA

➡ **China (internal)** Further talks between govt and Dalai Lama envoys 1-2 July, latter expressed disappointment at lack of progress; more talks agreed for Oct. Security forces claimed 10 July success foiling purported "terrorist" plots against Olympics; 5 Uighur Muslim suspects killed in related crackdown, 82 detained in Xinjiang. China and Russia FM signed agreement 21 July settling 40-year border dispute.

- "Across China, security instead of celebration", *Washington Post*, 19 July 2008.

↳ **Mongolia** 4-day state of emergency imposed after 1 July riots in which 5 killed, some 700 arrested, followed disputed 29 June elections. Opposition parties demanded recounts in some districts, though independent observers said polls largely well conducted. Riots saw destruction of governing MPRP headquarters. All 25 Democratic Party MPs walked out of 23 July swearing-in ceremony.

- [“Mongolian MPs boycott parliament”](#), BBC, 23 July 2008.
- [“In election dispute, a challenge for Mongolia’s democracy”](#), *New York Times*, 8 July 2008.

↳ **North Korea** Six-party talks resumed 10-12 July, after 9-month delay, following Pyongyang’s 26 June nuclear declaration: DPRK pledged to disable main reactor at Yongbyon by Oct. U.S. Sec State Rice held bilateral talks with FM Pak Ui-chun in highest level encounter yet between U.S. and DPRK; talks focused on methodology for verifying declaration. ROK President Lee called for renewed talks on denuclearisation, humanitarian cooperation in 11 July address to National Assembly, but same-day shooting of South Korean tourist at Mt. Keumgang, and DPRK’s refusal to investigate, seriously strained relations.

- [“Rice hails talks with North Korea”](#), *Financial Times*, 23 July 2008.
- [“Message to U.S. preceded nuclear declaration by North Korea”](#), *Washington Post*, 2 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°62, [After the North Korea Nuclear Breakthrough: Compliance or Confrontation?](#), 30 Apr. 2007.

↳ **Taiwan Strait** Regular direct cross-strait charter flights began 4 July. U.S. Pacific Command head Adm Keating 17 July said U.S. arms sales to Taiwan frozen as part of “administration policy” amid warming cross-strait ties. 5 former ministers who served under former president Chen Shui-bian indicted on corruption charges 15 July for misuse of expense accounts, in ongoing corruption scandal surrounding Chen.

- [“Taiwan opposes Chinese attempt to change island’s name for Olympics”](#), AP, 25 July 2008.
- [“Delay in U.S. arms sale to Taiwan stirs concerns”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 July 2008.

SOUTH ASIA

↳ **Afghanistan** Brazen 7 July car bomb attack outside Indian embassy killed over 40 including 2 senior diplomats; deadliest attack in capital since 2001. Kabul accused Pakistan intelligence agency, ISI, of involvement; suspended meetings with Islamabad 15 July until “bilateral trust” restored. Anger at civilian casualties caused by international forces continued, including over 6 July Nangarhar wedding party bombing that killed some 40, reportedly many women and children. 9 U.S. troops killed in 13 July attack on Kunar province outpost as U.S. deaths in Afghanistan outpaced those in Iraq. Thousands of Hazaras protested in Kabul, Bamian over recent clashes with nomad Kuchis in Wardak province amid ongoing pastoral land disputes. President Karzai fired attorney general after latter announced would stand in presidential elections due 2009. Senior Taliban commander Abdul Razaq reported killed, Taliban Helmand commander Mullah Rahim detained in Pakistan.

- Comment by Samina Ahmed (Crisis Group), [“Talking to the Taliban is foolish”](#), *Financial Times*, 24 July 2008.

- [“U.S., Afghan troops leave combat outpost after deadly clash”](#), *Washington Post*, 17 July 2008.
- [“Afghanistan to boycott meetings with Pakistan”](#), *Dawn*, 15 July 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°158, [Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words?](#), 24 July 2008. The Karzai government and its international supporters must become much better at countering sophisticated Taliban propaganda if they are to defeat an insurgency that is driving a dangerous wedge between them and the Afghan people.



↳ **Bangladesh** Matiur Rahman Nizami, Jamaat-e-Islami leader, freed on bail 15 July following May arrest on corruption charges.

- [“Bangladesh Islamic leader freed”](#), BBC, 15 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°151, [Restoring Democracy in Bangladesh](#), 28 Apr. 2008.

↳ **India (non-Kashmir)** String of some 15 explosions in Gujarat city Ahmedabad 26 July killed at least 45, injured over 160. “Indian Mujahideen” claimed role, as in May Jaipur blasts. Bombs came day after 7 small explosions in Bangalore killed 1, injured 6. Police said discovered 10 unexploded bombs in Surat, Gujarat, 29 July. 24 police killed in Malkangiri, Orissa blast 16 July, blamed on Maoist rebels.

- [“Indian cities on alert after bomb blasts kill 45 people”](#), *Financial Times*, 28 July 2008.
- [“Serial bombs’ hit India’s IT hub”](#), BBC, 25 July 2008.

↳ **Kashmir** New ceasefire violations by both sides along Line of Control included reported 12-hour gunfire exchange 28 July, marking month of deterioration in Indo-Pakistani relations. Tensions sparked by deadly, well-organised bombings targeting Indian interests: 7 July blast at Kabul embassy (see Afghanistan), bombings in Bangalore and Ahmedabad 25, 26 July (see India). 21 July composite dialogue talks remained on track, but India said process “under stress”. Violence in India-controlled Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) increased with numerous attacks, including 19 July bus attack that killed at least 9 Indian soldiers. J&K regional govt fell 7 July after resignation of chief minister in wake of June Hindu shrine dispute.

- [“Bombings may threaten India-Pakistan relations”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 July 2008.
- [“Dialogue under stress: India”](#), *Dawn*, 22 July 2008.

↳ **Nepal** Constituent Assembly elected as president Ram Baran Yadav, Nepali Congress candidate from the Tarai, in 21 July run-off. Maoists initially refused to form unity govt, but 25 July said would relent if 3 conditions met: minimum 2 years in power, dissolution of opposition alliance, support for “minimum program”. Yadav 29 July asked Maoists to form govt quickly. UN mission (UNMIN) extended 6 months 23 July.

- [“Nepal Maoists rethink opposition”](#), BBC, 25 July 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Reports N°155 and N°156, [Nepal’s Election: A Peaceful Revolution?](#) and [Nepal’s New Political Landscape](#), 3 July 2008. In two reports, Crisis Group reviews the April Constituent Assembly elections and explains how Nepal’s major parties must cooperate in a coalition government led by the Maoists, who won the vote, to help the world’s newest republic avoid political instability.



➤ **Pakistan** Peace agreement with Sunni militant sect in Lashkar-i-Islami in Bara, Khyber agency reached 9 July after 12-day military operation: govt said would end curfew imposed 28 June, release captured militants. Baitullah Mehsud 17 July threatened attacks on Awami National Party-led NWFP govt and ANP leaders if operations against militants continued. Scattered attacks elsewhere: 6 July Islamabad bombing killed 18; 7 July explosions in Karachi wounded some 40. Violence erupted in Balochistan following security operations there. In 28-30 June Washington visit, PM Gilani sought support, promised to tackle militancy.

- "Quit operations, Taliban warlord warns Pakistan regional leaders", *Guardian*, 19 July 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°157, *Reforming Pakistan's Police*, 14 July 2008.  Major reforms to the dysfunctional police force are urgently needed if the newly elected government is to ensure a secure state, efficient counter-terrorism measures and avoid giving the military a new pretext to derail the democratic process.

➤ **Sri Lanka** Sri Lankan Army captured LTTE coastal base at Vidattaltivu 15 July, believed to be major logistics centre and port of entry for arms smuggled from India. Humanitarian situation in LTTE-controlled north worsened; tens of thousands newly displaced without adequate shelter, supplies. Army chief cited saying insurgency could last "forever", despite earlier predictions of conventional defeat. Tigers offered limited ceasefire during SAARC summit 26 Jul-4 Aug, but govt dismissed. TMVP leader Karuna released from British jail and returned to Sri Lanka to recommence political work.

- "Sri Lanka military says captures key rebel camp", Reuters, 20 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°146, *Sri Lanka's Return to War: Limiting the Damage*, 20 Feb. 2008.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

➤ **Indonesia** Commission on Truth and Friendship, convened by Indonesia and Timor-Leste (T-L) to examine human rights violations in T-L in 1999, submitted final report to President Yudhoyono, T-L President Ramos-Horta 15 July. Report held Indonesian military, police and civilian govt "institutionally responsible" for abuses carried out by Timorese militias set up and armed by Indonesian military. Yudhoyono expressed regret for country's actions, but legal action unlikely. Campaigning began for Apr 2009 parliamentary elections.

- "CTF implicates generals in 1999 East Timor violence", *Jakarta Post*, 16 July 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°78, *Indonesia: Implications of the Ahmadiyah Decree*, 7 July 2008.  An Indonesian govt decree restricting activities of the Ahmadiyah sect demonstrates how hardline Islamic groups, which have little political support, have been able to influence government policy.

➤ **Myanmar/Burma** Tripartite Core Group presented report at ASEAN FMs summit 20-21 July: estimated post-cyclone recovery costs at \$1b. UN OCHA head 22 July said relief operations progressing but aid needed in remote areas. ASEAN FMs said Aung San Suu Kyi's continued detention

"deep disappointment". 15 July bus bombing outside Yangon reportedly killed 1. U.S. hardened sanctions 29 July, targeting military control over precious stones.

- "In Myanmar, UN relief chief sees progress but calls for aid to reach most vulnerable", UN News, 22 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°144, *Burma/Myanmar: After the Crackdown*, 31 Jan. 2008.

➤ **Philippines** Talks between Manila and MILF reached agreement on crucial "ancestral domain" issue, which could lead to expansion of autonomous Muslim region in Mindanao. But full details not released and significant hurdles remain. Key issue in talks was timing of referendum in south on joining new autonomous entity: now due 1 year after signing of formal "framework agreement" (scheduled 5-6 Aug in Kuala Lumpur). President Arroyo called on legislature to delay 11 Aug elections due in existing ARMM autonomous region after MILF argued vote would prejudice future expanded entity.

- "Arroyo asks Philippine Congress to stop Muslim elections", Reuters, 30 July 2008.
- "Philippines, rebels reach deal on Muslim homeland", Reuters, 27 July 2008.

➤ **Thailand** Tensions with Cambodia rose after Preah Vihear temple, subject of historic border dispute, granted UNESCO World Heritage status; troops in border standoff since Cambodia briefly detained 3 Thai protesters 15 July. Bilateral talks 21 July failed to resolve, but resumed 28 July following Cambodian elections. Thai govt opponents used row to force resignation of FM Patama 10 July. Deputy leader of governing PPP Yongyuth disqualified from parliament over vote-rigging charge, could mean party dissolution. Ongoing violence in south increased, despite 17 July "ceasefire" announcement by man claiming to represent insurgent umbrella group thought defunct since 1987.

- "More talks planned on temple row", BBC, 24 July 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°140, *Southern Thailand: The Problem with Paramilitaries*, 23 Oct. 2007.

➤ **Timor-Leste** President Ramos-Horta and PM Gusmão indicated satisfaction at Indonesia President Yudhoyono's regret for human rights violations surrounding Timor's 1999 referendum (see Indonesia). Ramos-Horta said would not seek further judicial proceedings. Ramos-Horta proposing new amnesty legislation for perpetrators of 2006 violence. Police in Dili 7 July used tear gas to disperse student protest.

- "Indonesia admits guilt over Timor", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°148, *Timor-Leste's Displacement Crisis*, 31 Mar. 2008.



BALKANS

➤ **Bosnia** Arrest of former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic 21 July (see Serbia) mostly greeted with celebrations; pro-Karadzic and Mladic posters appeared in some Republika

Srpska towns, removed by authorities. ICTY appeals chamber 3 July overturned 2006 war crimes conviction of Bosnian Muslim Naser Oric. Dutch court 10 July ruled it had no jurisdiction to hear civil suit against UN by survivors of 1995 Srebrenica massacre, affirming UN immunity. 7 Bosnian Serbs convicted, 4 acquitted of genocide in Sarajevo court 29 July for role in Srebrenica, first such trial in Bosnia. Office of High Representative 7 July called for Federation talks over cash crisis.

- [“Europe needs a wake-up call. Bosnia is on the edge again”](#), *Observer*, 27 July 2008.
- [“Balkan end-games”](#), *Economist*, 17 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°180, [Ensuring Bosnia's Future: A New International Engagement Strategy](#), 15 Feb. 2007.

➡ **Kosovo** Debate over UNMIK presence and handover to EU rule of law mission (EULEX) continued: Serbian FM Jeremic denounced UNSG Ban's 17 July report to UNSC ordering reconfiguration by Oct, including UNMIK drawdown and increased EU role. UN envoy Zannier in Belgrade 23 July to discuss future of mission; told UNSC 25 July UNMIK's legal powers curtailed since June entry into force of constitution. UN and EU concluded technical talks 29 July. Zannier 29 July said reconfiguration further delayed; Russia 25 July strongly opposed reconfiguration. Kosovo authorities issued first passports 30 July. Serbia's Kosovo Minister Bogdanovic 11 July said ruling DS will participate in parallel Serb Assembly. Kosovo govt 28 July announced plans to redeploy courts, customs services in Serb-dominated north. UNDP 1 July, OCSE 3 July reported failings in Kosovo judiciary. Brussels donor conference 11 July pledged €1.2b aid. IMF recognised independence in 15 July response to membership application. ICTY prosecutors 16 July filed appeal of Apr acquittal of former KLA leader Ramush Haradinaj.

- [“Failing to start the blue car in Kosovo”](#), BBC, 29 July 2008.
- [“Kosovo Serbs feel heat from all sides”](#), BBC, 14 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°47, [Kosovo's First Month](#), 18 Mar. 2008.

➡ **Macedonia** Parliament 26 July approved PM Gruevski's VMRO-DPMNE coalition govt with largest ethnic Albanian party DUI. 9 wounded in 4 July shoot-out between DUI, opposition Albanian DPA supporters in Radusa village. DPA 11 July announced parliament boycott; opposition Social Democrats 17 July joined walkout after arrest of party VP Zoran Zaev, charged with abuse of authority as Strumica mayor. President Crvenkovski 31 July called for end of boycott, said would pardon Zaev. Name row escalated after fresh talks opened 11 July at UN: PM Gruevski in 14 July letter to Greek PM Karamanlis demanded recognition of Macedonian minority in Greece, property return; Athens rejected as “provocative”. ICTY 10 July cleared former Macedonian interior minister of command responsibility for 2001 murder of 7 ethnic Albanians, co-defendant found guilty.

- [“Pro-EU government takes power in Macedonia”](#), *EU Observer*, 28 July 2008.

➡ **Serbia** Former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic arrested 21 July in Belgrade by Serbian authorities, 13 years after ICTY indictment for genocide, war crimes. Karadzic extradited to Hague 30 July, appeared before ICTY 31 July, refused to enter plea. Arrest major step towards ratification

of Apr Stabilisation and Association Agreement, but Bosnian Serb army commander Ratko Mladic remains at large, EU stressed his arrest prerequisite for accession. Nationalists held small, daily demonstrations after arrest; over 10,000 attended rally 29 July with scores, including many police, injured in clashes. Parliament 7 July approved new pro-EU govt led by President Tadic's DS and former rival SPS. PM Cvetkovic pledged to achieve EU candidate country status by end 2008 and speed up economic, other SAA reforms. Govt 24 July announced reinstatement of ambassadors withdrawn from EU states recognising Kosovo.

- Comment by James Lyon (Crisis Group): [“The Banality of Evil”](#), Tribunal Update (IWPR), 23 July 2008.
- [“Pride and pragmatism”](#), *Guardian*, 31 July 2008.
- [“Triumph for Serbia's pro-EU president”](#), *Financial Times*, 22 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°49, [Will the Real Serbia Please Stand Up?](#), 23 Apr. 2008.

CAUCASUS

➡ **Armenia** Some 5,000 in anti-govt rally in Yerevan; opposition announced month of daily protests. Small signs of Armenian-Turkish rapprochement as President Sarkisian 6 July met Turkish President Gul in Astana, Kazakhstan; invited Gul to watch football match in Yerevan Sept.

- [“Armenian president rules out repeat elections”](#), RFE/RL, 21 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°48, [Armenia: Picking up the Pieces](#), 8 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Azerbaijan** Ahead of Oct presidential elections, opposition candidate Eldar Namazov filed complaint against Central Election Commission for failure to start campaign. Russian President Medvedev visited 3 July to discuss energy deal. Opposition journalist Khalil allowed to leave for France 24 July.

- [“President hardens rhetoric on democratization, human rights”](#), EurasiaNet, 21 July 2008.

➡ **Chechnya (Russia)** Continued clashes between security forces, militants saw 5 police, 1 militant killed; rebels fatally shot prosecutor 18 July in Grozny. Roadside bomb near Belgatoy village killed police commander. President Kadyrov 20 July called on Russia to withdraw army from properties occupied “without legal basis”. Mass grave of 300 alleged victims of 1999 Russian attack unearthed 2 July.

- [“Chechen strongman calls on Russian army to give up premises”](#), AFP, 19 July 2008.

➡ **North Caucasus (non-Chechnya)** Spiralling violence throughout region, particularly targeting officials: in Ingushetia, gunmen 24 July opened fire on house of PM Kharun Dzeitov; deputy mufti wounded in separate shooting. Former Karabulek police chief Akhmet Murazbekov shot dead 15 July. Anti-narcotics official fatally shot 6 July in Barsuki village. Further 2 dead after car bomb 30 July outside Nazran police station, 1 officer killed 11 July. Some 15 militants raided Muzhichy village 8 July, killing 3. In Dagestan, 2 clashes between security forces, militants in Derbent 9, 15 July saw 3 militants, 1 police, 1 civilian dead. In Republic Kabardino-Balkaria, several attacks on police killed at least 5. In Karachayev-Cherkessia region, 3 police killed in grenade attack 18 July.

- [“What happened in Muzhichi?”](#), Prague Watchdog, 10 July 2008.
- [“War comes to Ingushetia”](#), ISN, 7 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°192, [Russia's Dagestan: Conflict Causes](#), 3 June 2008.

➡ **Georgia** Tensions remain high in breakaway regions: in Abkhazia 6 July 4 explosions near administrative border with Georgia, 1 bomb in Gali district left 4 dead; further explosion 27 July in Gali. De facto leader Bagapsh rejected both 8 July U.S. proposal of international police force, German plan including direct talks on confidence-building measures and refugee return revealed by German FM Steinmeier 17 July in Tbilisi. In South Ossetia (SO), 2 killed in 4 July clashes between Georgian army and separatist forces, shelling of Tskhinvali following attack on Tbilisi-backed head of SO administration Dmitri Saakoyev. 1 killed in blast 25 July; shoot-out reported 29 July. SO authorities 8 July briefly detained 4 Georgian servicemen at border, accused of spying. In ongoing row with Russia, Tbilisi 10 July withdrew ambassador after Moscow flew 4 planes over SO “to prevent military scenario”; parties traded accusations in 21 July UNSC debate. Georgia national security commission official threatened retaliation in case of further airspace intrusion. Moscow 30 July started withdrawal of 400 railway forces deployed in Abkhazia in May. During 9-10 July Tbilisi visit U.S. State Sec Rice urged Russian restraint.

- [“Conflict mediation faces hurdles”](#), ISN, 24 July 2008.
- [“Bombs, political bombshells rock Abkhazia dispute”](#), RFE/RL, 6 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°193, [Georgia and Russia: Clashing over Abkhazia](#), 5 June 2008.

➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs visited Baku, Yerevan 27-28 July to discuss Nov 2007 Madrid proposals. Armenia, Azerbaijan presidents to discuss proposals 1 Aug in Moscow. Armenian serviceman reportedly killed 19 July in attempt to cross border in Tovuz region.

- [“Presidential election presents opportunity for Azerbaijan, OSCE Special Envoy says”](#), Trend News, 30 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°187, [Nagorno-Karabakh: Risking War](#), 14 Nov. 2007.

EASTERN EUROPE

➡ **Belarus** Some 50 injured in 4 July explosion at Minsk concert marking independence day, further unexploded bomb later found. President Lukashenka dismissed 2 leading security officials; police briefly detained 4 opposition activists.

- [“Belarus blast delivers shock to the system”](#), RFE/RL, 10 July 2008.

➡ **Moldova** In renewed effort to resolve Transdniestrian conflict OSCE, Russia, Ukraine as mediators, EU, U.S. as observers held separate meetings with President Voronin, Transdniestrian leader Korolyov 21-23 July.

- [“Moldova pushes for Transdniestrian settlement”](#), RFE/RL, 27 July 2008.

➡ **Ukraine** President Yushchenko 24 July accused former ally MP David Zhvania of 2004 poisoning. German Chancellor Merkel visited Kiev 21 July to discuss, EU, NATO bids, energy

issues. PM Tymoshenko 23 July announced deal on natural gas prices with Gazprom.

- [“Merkel's Ukraine visit signals crucial shift”](#), RFE/RL, 21 July 2008.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➡ **Basque Country (Spain)** Wave of ETA arrests: police 24 July detained 9 alleged members including leader Arkaitz Goikoetxea near Bilbao; further 8 arrested 22 July in Bilbao. Blasts targeted holiday resorts: 4 bombs 20 July in Laredo, Noja, ETA claimed responsibility; further explosion 29 July in Torremolinos; bomb 20 July in Getxo; no casualties.

- [“Investigation of ETA cell reveals blueprint for violence”](#), Reuters, 27 July 2008.

➡ **Cyprus** Greek Cypriot leader Christofias, Turkish Cypriot leader Talat 25 July announced 3 Sept start of reunification talks after agreed “in principle” to “single sovereignty and citizenship” at 1 July preparation meeting. UN 17 July confirmed former Australian FM Alexander Downer as special adviser. Turkish PM Erdogan visited 19 July to mark 34th anniversary of Turkish invasion, underlined support for Talat; Christofias condemned visit.

- [“Cyprus sets date for peace talks”](#), BBC, 25 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°194, [Reunifying Cyprus: The Best Chance Yet](#), 23 June 2008.

➡ **Turkey** Political crisis averted as constitutional court judges 30 July ruled by narrow margin against AKP ban on charges of anti-secularism; but half of state aid cut. Istanbul hit by terrorism: 2 successive bombs 27 July in Gungoren district killed 17, injured at least 150; police claimed suspect had PKK links. Assault on U.S. embassy 9 July saw 3 police, 3 assailants dead; police arrested 10 suspects. Police 1, 23 July arrested some 46 alleged members of ultra-nationalist Ergenekon network accused of coup plot including 2 high-ranking retired generals. AKP member and former PM Abdullahi Sener quit party 11 July after announcing plans for new party 5 July. Rising number of PKK-army clashes in south eastern regions throughout month killed 10 soldiers, some 60 PKK; further 65 reported dead in 24, 28-30 July airstrikes into northern Iraq. PKK 8 July kidnapped 3 German climbers on Mount Ararat demanding end of crackdown on group in Germany – freed 20 July. PM Erdogan 10 July signed strategic agreement with Iraq to boost security ties.

- [“A narrow scrape for democracy”](#), *Economist*, 31 July 2008.
- [“Arrests, court case reveal that Turkey is dangerously polarized”](#), EurasiaNet, 2 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°184, [Turkey and Europe: The Way Ahead](#), 17 Aug. 2007.



Latin America / Caribbean

➡ **Bolivia** Confusion ahead of 10 Aug recall referendum for president, VP, departmental prefects: constitutional court 23 July ordered national electoral court (CNE) to suspend poll pending decision on constitutionality; CNE 24 July refused,

said to go ahead as planned. 6 of 9 departmental electoral courts (CDE) 30 July also asked CNE to suspend. Earlier, opposition prefects said would accept referendum, had threatened boycott June.

- [“Seis cortes electorales piden que se suspenda el referéndum de Evo Morales”](#), ABC, 30 July 2008.
- [“Bolivia: «el revocatorio sí se hace»”](#), BBC, 23 July 2008.
- For background, see Latin America Report N°18, [Bolivia: Rescuing the New Constitution and Democratic Stability](#), 19 June 2008.

🏠 **Colombia** In significant blow to FARC, Colombian army 2 July rescued former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, 14 other hostages. Former Cuban President Castro 5 July urged FARC to release all hostages. Estimated 4m demonstrated 20 July in Colombia and worldwide against kidnappings. FARC 5 July called for continued hostages-for-prisoners swap; 16 July rejected any negotiation with President Uribe, despite govt statement 13 July would forgo mediators, seek direct contact with FARC. Diplomatic and commercial relations with Venezuela – strained since March airstrike – reestablished after Uribe met Venezuela President Chávez 11 July. Colombia 20 July joined Brazilian-led South American Defence Council. Uribe 18 July said would not call referendum to validate 2006 re-election, as previously threatened, after constitutional court 2 July ruled 2004 constitutional amendment permitting re-election legal. Main coalition party head Carlos Garcia arrested 25 July, suspected of ties to paramilitaries.

- Comment by Andrew Stroehlein (Crisis Group), [“Medellín: Revival and Risk”](#), openDemocracy, 8 July 2008.
- [“Backslaps and smiles as warring neighbours kiss and make up”](#), *Guardian*, 13 July 2008.
- [“Colombia: a miraculous rescue, and what comes next”](#), openDemocracy, 7 July 2008.
- For background, see Latin America Briefing N°17, [Making Military Progress Pay Off](#), 29 Apr. 2008.

🏠 **Ecuador** Constituent Assembly 24 July overwhelmingly approved draft constitution; referendum due 28 Sept. New charter would strengthen executive, increase presidential term limit from 1 to 3, redraw institutional framework. President Correa 13 July reiterated no resumption of diplomatic relations with Colombia while President Uribe in power; rejected mediation attempts by Venezuela President Chávez. Govt 8 July seized 2 TV stations and nearly 200 companies in debt dispute stemming from 1990s financial crisis; Finance Minister Fausto Ortiz resigned in protest. Ecuador indicated U.S. must end anti-drug operations from Manta airbase by Nov 2009.

- [“La Asamblea Constituyente de Ecuador aprueba el proyecto definitivo de Carta Magna”](#), *El País*, 25 July 2008.
- [“Ecuador’s president angrily rejects mending fences with Colombia”](#), *Los Angeles Times*, 13 July 2008.

🏠 **Haiti** Chamber of Deputies 17 July ratified economist Michele Pierre-Louis as new PM; Senate confirmed 31 July. Dozens of ex-soldiers seized 2 military buildings 30 July, surrendered to police after 24 hours; demanded 14-year back pay, reinstatement of armed forces.

- [“Haiti lawmakers ratify 2nd female prime minister”](#), AP, 1 Aug. 2008.
- [“Ex-soldiers end standoff in Haiti after talks”](#), AP, 30 July 2008.

🏠 **Venezuela** Diplomatic relations with Colombia reestablished (see Colombia). Comptroller general’s anti-corruption ban for Nov state and municipal elections reduced from 371 to 258 candidates; still includes most prominent opposition candidates. Supreme court yet to rule on challenges to constitutionality; public discontent over court’s silence increased.

- [“Chávez acorrala a la oposición”](#), *El País*, 18 July 2008.

Crisis Group Latin America Report N°27, [Venezuela: Political Reform or Regime Demise?](#), 23 July 2008. Hugo Chávez’s radical course and increasingly autocratic Bolivarian revolution are under growing pressure from former supporters alienated by government mismanagement, food shortages, inflation, public insecurity and corruption.



Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

🏠 **Israel/Occupied Territories** Month-old Israel-Hamas Gaza ceasefire holding but tenuous, while intra-Palestinian tensions increased. Israel reopened borders early July after re-closures following rocket and mortar fire violating truce. Hamas 10 July arrested 3 Palestinians from rival faction for rocket fired in response to killing of Palestinian at border. Goods and fuel into Gaza increased, but UN said supplies still insufficient. Gaza bombs 24-25 July killed 7, including Qassam Brigades members; assailants unknown, but Hamas arrested over 150 Fatah supporters in response. Palestinian Authority (PA) then arrested some 50 Hamas cadres in Ramallah. Egypt briefly opened Rafah border 2-3 July – security forces clashed with hundreds of Palestinians at crossing. Israel launched raids on West Bank businesses, charities accused of Hamas links; Palestinian PM Fayyad 9 July condemned actions. Israel-PA peace talks continued but no visible progress; PM Olmert 28 July said deal by year-end unlikely. Israel completed controversial prisoner swap with Hizbollah 16 July; continued indirect negotiations with Damascus (see Lebanon, Syria). Tensions with Tehran continued to escalate with Iranian missile tests 9-10 July (see Iran). Facing continuing corruption probe, Olmert 30 July announced would resign as PM after Kadima party elections, due 17 Sept.

- [“Ehud Olmert says he’ll go, at last”](#), *Economist*, 31 July 2008.
- [“Hamas arrests dozens after blast”](#), BBC, 26 July 2008.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°79 [Ruling Palestine II: The West Bank Model?](#), 17 July 2008. Over the past year, the West Bank has witnessed real progress, but there is a natural ceiling against which, without changes in the overall political environment, the authorities in Ramallah are already bumping.



🏠 **Lebanon** National unity govt formed 11 July following tensions after May Qatari-brokered agreement to resolve protracted crisis. As provided in Doha accord, Hizbollah-led opposition selected 11 ministers – sufficient for veto, ruling

“March 14” coalition 16, President Suleiman remaining 3. Sectarian clashes in Tripoli continued with 4 killed, scores wounded 8-9 July despite late-June ceasefire and army deployment; 9 killed 25-26 July. Suleiman and Syrian counterpart Assad met in Paris 12-13 July during Euro-Mediterranean summit; agreed to open embassies. Diplomatic strain further eased with 21 July Beirut visit by Syrian FM Walid Mouallem. Hizbollah-Israel prisoner swap, agreed under UN-backed German mediation, carried out 16 July, after Hizbollah 12 July provided report on Israeli soldier missing since 1986. Exchange included remains of 2 soldiers seized in 2006 war (deaths previously unconfirmed) for 5 Lebanese prisoners, including man jailed 1979 for brutal raid killing child, and remains of some 200 mostly Lebanese, Palestinian. Gun battle 19 July between Fatah and Jund al-Sham Palestinian factions at Ein al-Hilweh refugee camp killed 3; roadside bomb and further fighting 29 July.

- [“Israel, Hezbollah carry out dramatic swap of captives from 2006 war, Lebanese militant”](#), AP, 16 July 2008.
- [“New cabinet formed in Lebanon”](#), *New York Times*, 11 July 2008.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°78, [The New Lebanese Equation: The Christians’ Central Role](#), 15 July 2008. With the recent formation of a new government, the Lebanese crisis is entering a new phase focused on the 2009 parliamentary elections in which the Christian community will play a decisive role.



➡ **Syria** President Assad attended 13 July summit in Paris for new Union for Mediterranean, meeting with Lebanese President Suleiman (see Lebanon). Israeli PM Olmert also attended, though no discussion with Assad. Turkish-mediated indirect talks between Israel and Syria continued, more due Aug; Assad said direct negotiations possible but unlikely before new U.S. president takes office. 30 July Olmert announcement will resign as PM Sept raised doubts about progress.

- [“Syria, Israel to hold new talks next month”](#), Reuters, 30 July 2008.
- [“The view from Club Med”](#), *Economist*, 14 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°63, [Restarting Israeli-Syrian Negotiations](#), 10 Apr. 2007.

GULF

➡ **Iran** Tensions increased after Iran test-fired long-range missiles 9-10 July, following Israel’s June military exercises. Tehran threatened to close Strait of Hormuz – blocking oil exports – if attacked. U.S. said tests “provocative”. EU foreign policy chief Solana said no clear response from Iran at 19 July Geneva meeting on June UNSC P5 plus Germany and EU nuclear program proposal, offering freeze on new sanctions for freeze on new centrifuges. Solana and Iranian chief negotiator Saeed Jalili agreed to speak again in 2 weeks; further sanctions threatened if no answer by then. Senior U.S. official William Burns attended Geneva meeting – first high-level U.S. participation in talks on nuclear issue – amid reports U.S. considering establishing diplomatic presence in Iran, first since 1979. President Ahmadi-Nejad discussed new economic reform plan, proposed direct cash payments to families, replacing subsidies. French company Total

became latest international oil company to announce no new investments in Iran.

- [“Iran fails to accept deal on nuclear works, but agrees to further talks”](#), *Guardian*, 19 July 2008.
- [“Coming to a city near you?”](#), *Economist*, 10 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°51, [Iran: Is There a Way Out of the Nuclear Impasse?](#), 23 Feb. 2006.

➡ **Iraq** Main Sunni bloc rejoined govt 19 July, nearly 1 year after withdrawal over allegedly sectarian security operations. Parliament 22 July approved electoral law with controversial provision for poll postponement or power sharing in Kirkuk – Kurds abstained, then 2 members of presidency council vetoed, sending bill back to parliament. Turkey concluded strategic agreement with Iraq 10 July during Turkish PM Erdogan Baghdad visit. Negotiations with U.S. on security pact continued; PM Maliki 7 July suggested memorandum of understanding, raised prospect of U.S. troop withdrawal timetable. Continued bombings hit Baghdad, Falluja and Mosul. Female suicide bombers in Baghdad 28 July killed at least 25 Shiite pilgrims; attack same day in Kirkuk killed at least 25. Iraqi forces started major offensive 29 July in Diyala province, which saw string of deadly suicide attacks in month. Handover of Anbar province security to Iraqis still on hold after June postponement; Qadisaya province handed over 16 July. Turkish military 24, 29 July reported airstrikes on PKK targets in northern Iraq.

- Comment by Joost Hiltermann (Crisis Group), [“Iraq’s Kurds have to choose”](#), *Globe and Mail*, 30 July 2008.
- [“Security better, politics still stuck”](#), *Economist*, 31 July 2008.
- [“What should Big Oil’s role in Iraq be?”](#), BBC, 2 July 2008.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°77, [Failed Responsibility: Iraqi Refugees in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon](#), 10 July 2008. While the security situation in Iraq shows progress, Iraqi refugees remain stranded, jobless, deprived of essential services. Host countries and the wider international community must do more now.



➡ **Bahrain** Court 13 July sentenced 11 Shiites 1-7 years on charges arising from Dec anti-govt demonstrations, amid rights groups’ allegations of torture. 225 detained since events released 30 July.

- [“Bahrain releases Shiites arrested during protests”](#), AP, 30 July 2008.

➡ **Yemen** President Saleh 17 July said battles between govt and al-Houthi Shiite rebels in north had ended, but low-level clashes reported late-month and at least 4 killed in 5 July explosion in Saada province. Unrest continued in south with 7 July bomb attack on protest, 22 July police clash with demonstrators. Explosives-packed vehicle rammed police station 25 July, killing at least 2; al-Qaeda linked group claimed responsibility.

- [“Yemen terrorism: Soft approach to jihadists starts to backfire as poverty fuels extremism”](#), *Guardian*, 30 July 2008.
- [“Yemen’s Saleh says fighting with rebels has ended”](#), Reuters, 17 July 2008.

NORTH AFRICA

➤ **Algeria** Suicide bomb on military convoy 23 July injured 13 soldiers, as attacks on govt and foreign targets continued. Military experts gathered 21-22 July to discuss cooperation with UN to combat armed Islamic groups. 2 Christian converts convicted 2 July for “weakening” Islam; appeal expected.

- [“Al-Qaeda’s sinister creep into North Africa”](#), *Times*, 29 July 2008.

➤ **Egypt** Attempt by Gamal Mubarak aide and MP Ahmed Ezz to amend anti-monopoly bill, backed by trade minister, sparked speculation over govt split. Fierce political debate continued over new child rights law that Muslim Brotherhood (MB) parliamentarians allege breaches Sharia law. Further MB arrests during parliament by-elections: 39 detained including 3 leaders detained in Kafr el-Sheikh late month. Govt claimed further successes in dismantling al-Qaeda networks, arresting over 100 late June; rights groups say cases fabricated. Angry diplomatic exchange followed 22 June forcible closure of Iranian TV station Al-Alam, Cairo, over film glorifying ex-President Sadat’s assassins.

- [“Egypt raids Iranian TV bureau”](#), VOA, 24 July 2008.
- [“Egypt’s child protection law sparks controversy”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°76, [Egypt’s Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration?](#), 18 June 2008.

➤ **Mauritania** PM El Waghef resigned govt 3 July to avoid no confidence vote by ruling PNDD-ADIL amid continuing socio-

economic strains and objections to presence of ex-President Taya elements in govt; new all-PNDD-ADIL cabinet appointed 16 July, also headed by Waghef, prompting criticism from opposition parties. 2 *El Houriya* journalists arrested for defamation 21 July – paper alleged magistrates bribed.

- [“Doubts, problems face new Mauritanian government”](#), VOA, 16 July 2008.

➤ **Morocco** Some 35 arrested in early-month raids across country for al-Qaeda activity. Opposition groups including major socialist and Islamist parties reportedly in talks over possible alliance against new political grouping Movement of Democrats (MD) ahead of 2009 municipal elections. Al Jazeera Rabat bureau chief fined, rights activist jailed 6 months, for falsely reporting deaths in police suppression of riots in southern town of Sidi Ifni in June.

- [“Al Jazeera Morocco chief fined”](#), Al Jazeera, 12 July 2008.
- [“Morocco arrests al-Qaeda suspects”](#), BBC, 3 July 2008.

➤ **Western Sahara** Polisario Front (PF) said 28 July ready for fifth round UN-led talks but not until UN special envoy Peter van Walsum replaced, given recent statement independence unrealistic. PF 23 July alleged Saharawis attacked in Einterfet with complicity of Moroccan police, urged UN action.

- [“Frente Polisario calls on UN to end Morocco’s ‘colonial practices’”](#), RFI, 23 July 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°66, [Western Sahara: Out of the Impasse](#), 11 June 2007.

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