

1 September 2008, N°61

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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September 2008 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alerts

Philippines



Conflict Resolution Opportunities

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CENTRAL AFRICA

- ➡ **Burundi** Little progress in peace agreement implementation despite several meetings starting 18 Aug between President Nkurunziza and FNL leader Agathon Rwasa. Sides reportedly agreed twice-weekly meetings, joint commission to address impasse, principle of FNL integration into institutions. FNL earlier demanded 50-50 share of positions in power sharing. Both sides traded accusations of serious violation of May ceasefire after 22 Aug clash killed 1 soldier. Rwasa claimed security forces plot to kill him in 26 Aug letter to Nkurunziza. Opposition parties 20 Aug denounced covert political and ethnic census of civil servants ordered by Senate.
- [“Burundi president meets with rebel leader”](#), VOA, 19 Aug. 2008.
 - [“Partage du pouvoir, le Palipehutu/FNL place haut la barre”](#), *Burundi Tribune*, 17 Aug. 2008.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°53, [Burundi: Restarting Political Dialogue](#), 19 Aug. 2008. Despite progress with return of FNL leader Agathon Rwasa and enhanced political dialogue, Burundi's political crisis is not solved and may yet jeopardise the country's future stability. The current political impasse stems from the crisis within the ruling CNDD-FDD leadership and President Nkurunziza's refusal to conclude a power-sharing agreement with opposition leaders.



- ➡ **Central African Republic** Peace process stalemated as rebels, opposition parties withdrew from national political dialogue talks over amnesty law and composition of dialogue committee. Govt 1 Aug presented law granting amnesty to govt, rebel forces for offences since Patisse overthrow March 2003, but only to govt forces for pre-2003 abuses. Rebel groups APRD, UFDR and FDPC, and UFDN opposition coalition withdrew demanding extension of pre-March 2003 amnesty to all; authorities 16 Aug granted APRD permission to form political party. Confrontations reported between army and APRD elements in north west including 2 killed, 4 wounded 7 Aug.
- [“CAR rebels step up raids after quitting talks-army”](#), Reuters, 13 Aug. 2008.
 - [“Central Africa rebels, parties quit talks en masse”](#), Reuters, 5 Aug. 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** Heavy fighting between army and General Nkunda's CNDP rebels broke out 28 Aug in North Kivu following early month reports of rearming and recruiting; casualty figures unconfirmed. Nkunda mid-month alleged provocative govt attacks against his positions, govt 30 Aug sealed border with Uganda to cut off “supply source”. Army and Mai Mai rebels reportedly clashed in North Kivu, killing 7 on 16 Aug, while fighting broke out between FDLR elements in South Kivu. Increased tensions also reported in Ituri. MONUC and FARDC troops jointly deployed late Aug following reported

LRA attacks in east. MONUC 1 Aug reported some 70 RUD, FDLR rebels surrendered 31 July to joint UN-govt North Kivu reception centre. UNSG Ban Ki-moon 12 Aug said internal UN investigation found evidence some peacekeepers may have been involved in sexual exploitation. New investigation launched into senior North Kivu peacekeeper's alleged public declaration of support for CNDP rebels. Algerian Leila Zerrougui appointed new MONUC deputy head 28 Aug.

- [“Heavy fighting threatens East Congo peace deal”](#), IRIN, 29 Aug. 2008.
- [“Tensions still rife in Ituri despite progress in DDR”](#), IRIN, 22 Aug. 2008.
- [“Congo groups 're-arming' in east”](#), BBC, 1 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°140, [Four Priorities for Sustainable Peace in Ituri](#), 13 May 2008.

- ➡ **Rwanda** Justice ministry 5 Aug released Mucyo report accusing French govt of aiding and arming Hutu fighters before and during 1994 genocide; demanded legal action. French govt rejected report as “unacceptable”. ICTR appeals chamber 29 Aug overturned 2006 genocide conviction, 25-year jail sentence of former army officer. President Kagame 15 Aug dissolved lower chamber ahead of 15 Sept parliamentary elections; campaign began 25 Aug, 355 candidates contesting seats.
- [“Mitterrand legacy under heavy scrutiny”](#), *Australian*, 11 Aug. 2008.
 - [“France rejects Rwanda's charge of links to '94 genocide”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 6 Aug. 2008.

- ➡ **Uganda** UN envoy Joaquim Chissano 17 Aug reported LRA leader Joseph Kony ready to sign final peace agreement on condition of meeting chief mediator Riek Machar; govt ruled out further talks 19 Aug. Kony said 22 Aug no deal until ICC arrest warrant lifted; Chissano claimed ICC negotiations ongoing. Kony failed to attend 24 Aug meeting with LRA negotiators and Chissano; U.S. applied personal sanctions to Kony 28 Aug. Govt 6 Aug started implementing certain Juba Peace Agreement provisions, including IDP resettlement, ceasing military activities in north. UPDF said 2 Aug will deploy along Sudanese border to prevent harassment of locals by alleged SPLA soldiers. Reports emerged that former pro-govt militias and UPDF responsible for recent murders in north, claiming to be LRA, using LRA weapons. Division deepened in ruling NRM over Museveni's fourth term bid, launched 5 Aug; 4 opposition parties signed coalition agreement 4 Aug.
- [“Chissano in Gulu to salvage LRA-Govt peace deal”](#), IRIN, 18 Aug. 2008.
 - [“Drums of war across the borders”](#), *Economist*, 14 Aug. 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** Security situation remains fragile: reported clashes between rebels, pro-govt militias continuing on eastern border – rebels reported many killed. Court sentenced former President Hissène Habré, currently in Senegal and due to be tried there for atrocity crimes during 1982-1990 rule, to death 15 Aug for planning govt overthrow early 2008. 4 Aug explosion in N'Djamena market killed 7, attributed to rocket from Feb 2008 rebel attack. Bilateral relations with Sudan reopened 1 Aug.

- “Large numbers killed in Chad clashes: rebels”, AFP, 19 Aug. 2008.
- “Habre death sentence won’t alter Senegal case-Chad”, Reuters, 19 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Ethiopia** Govt circulated draft law on NGOs, law criticised for curbs it would impose on freedom of rights groups. Editor of major weekly *Reporter* arrested 22 Aug after publishing article critical of labour practices; released on bail 27 Aug.

- “Ethiopia releases newspaper editor”, AFP, 28 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Ethiopia/Eritrea** Despite 31 July termination of UN peacekeeping mission on border, status quo prevailed, with Ethiopia stressing intention to pursue dialogue with Eritrea to resolve border dispute.

- Comment by Daniela Krosiak (Crisis Group) “Unfinished Peace in the Horn of Africa”, *Daily Star*, 8 Aug. 2008.
- “Urgent need for dialogue after departure of UNMEE, says analyst”, IRIN, 1 Aug. 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** Justice Minister Karua 22 Aug announced new committee to oversee confession, surrender of illegally acquired wealth as part of proposed amnesty law. Former anti-corruption czar John Githongo, returning 19 Aug after 3 years self-exile, supported amnesty for economic crimes following full confessions. Attorney General Wako in address to commission of inquiry into post-election violence said should be no amnesty for perpetrators, as PM Odinga again called for release of 300 suspects. Controversy emerging over Kenya Human Rights Commission report on violence, with early version naming planners and perpetrators including senior officials, later version reportedly exonerating many. Leaked memo proposing high salaries to PM, vice-president’s wives provoked outrage.

- “Kenya anti-graft tsar back with warning”, *Financial Times*, 20 Aug. 2008.
- “Struggling for peace”, BBC, 19 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°137, *Kenya in Crisis*, 21 Feb. 2008.

➡ **Somalia** Violence escalated across country, with southern port Kismayo falling to Islamist insurgents 22 Aug after 3 days of fighting killed at least 100, as political crisis between President Yusuf and PM Nur Adde intensified. 18 Aug deal between Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and faction of opposition Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) established political and security committees, set 30-day ceasefire deadline, 120 days for requested stabilisation force authorisation and deployment, and Ethiopian troop withdrawal. Both sides called for enlarged peacekeeping force as UNSC 19 Aug extended AMISOM mandate by 6 months. ARS said ceasefire dependent on Ethiopian troop withdrawal schedule; Al-Shabaab and Eritrea-based ARS hardliners including Sheikh Aweys rejected agreement. PM, president and parliament speaker 26 Aug signed deal in Addis to mend rift. Ethiopian PM Meles suggested possible policy shift on involvement in Somalia, including potential troop withdrawal; FM criticised TFG divisions. Row sparked by PM’s dismissal of Mogadishu governor and Yusuf ally, Mohammed Dheere, with two thirds of cabinet ministers resigning 1 Aug. Yusuf accused top Ethiopian army chief

in Somalia 17 Aug of connections with insurgents. Major clashes between Al-Shabaab and govt, Ethiopian troops in Mogadishu and elsewhere, including 15 Aug Ethiopian attack on 2 minibuses killing 60. 3 aid workers, 1 AU peacekeeper killed through month; 2 foreign journalists, 2 local staff abducted. UNHCR Somalia boss freed 27 Aug after 2 months captivity; Medecins sans Frontières closed clinic in capital. Pirates seized 4 ships, 130 crew in 48 hours 20-21 Aug.

- “Ethiopia signals shift as Somalian war drags on”, *Financial Times*, 28 Aug. 2008.
- “Thousands displaced as insurgents take control of Kismayo”, IRIN, 25 Aug. 2008.
- “Conditions may be ripe for Al Qaeda in Somalia”, *Los Angeles Times*, 25 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Somaliland (Somalia)** Somaliland interior minister 11 Aug claimed militants with links to Al-Shabaab organising outside Burao in south; claim dismissed by opposition. Police 26 Aug arrested journalist reporting on opposition party convention.

- “Somaliland opposition dismisses govt’s al Shabaab allegations”, Garowe Online, 12 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Sudan** Ruling NCP stance hardened against July International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor’s application for President Bashir arrest warrant. Bashir said 20 Aug will ask UNAMID peacekeepers to leave if ICC issues warrant. UNSC divided over invoking Art 16 of Rome Statute to defer investigation, as UN 19 Aug reported strengthened security measures in case of hostile reaction. Darfur rebel groups rejected new govt-SPLM agreed framework for Sudan People’s Initiative (SPI) to resolve Darfur conflict. Army launched new offensive: 26 Aug killed more than 30 in weapons hunt in southern Darfur IDP camp, drawing protest resignations from Darfur govt officials and condemnation from UNAMID. UN, activists urged review of some 50 death sentences for rebels accused of May attack on capital. NCP and SPLM agreed 8 Aug on composition of Abyei administration: Bashir appointed SPLM member as chief administrator, NCP member as deputy. UN peacekeeping mission reported 10 Aug north and south armies still not fully withdrawn from region, but joint forces operating. 4 days print-run of *Sudan Tribune* seized for criticising govt on North-South peace deal roll-out. Sudan and Chad agreed 1 Aug to restore bilateral relations. Some 70 killed in 20 Aug clashes between Rizeigat and Misseriya over water, land in southern Darfur; govt responded with rapid reconciliation mechanism. Swiss group 26 Aug reported build up of troops, weapons in Nuba Mountains. Unidentified group hijacked passenger plane leaving Darfur 26 Aug, all but crew released in Libya 27 Aug.

- “The drift back to war”, Small Arms Survey, Aug. 2008.
- “Sudan forces surround Darfur camp after raid-rebels”, Reuters, 26 Aug. 2008.
- “Rebels say Sudan in new offensive in north Darfur”, AP, 13 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°50, *Sudan’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement: Beyond the Crisis*, 13 Mar. 2008.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

➡ **Angola** Campaigning began 5 Aug ahead of 5 Sept parliamentary elections, first since 1992. Opposition parties, rights groups accuse govt of extensive pre-poll abuses,

including squeezing out opposition media and campaigning, interference in electoral commission. Founding UNITA member Jorge Valentim 19 Aug defected to ruling MPLA.

- ["Marching towards riches and democracy?"](#), *Economist*, 28 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Comoros Islands** Large rallies in Anjouan and Moroni reportedly called for President Sambi's resignation over price hikes, non-payment of salaries, failure to deliver reform. UNDP representative 22 Aug warned of potential instability across country despite hopes following Anjouan's peaceful June elections.

- ["Concerns over possible social unrest"](#), IRIN, 22 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Zimbabwe** No progress in power-sharing talks between ZANU-PF leader Mugabe, opposition MDC leader Tsvangirai and MDC faction leader Mutambara. Talks stalled mid-month over division of executive powers as Mugabe and ZANU-PF hardliners demanded Tsvangirai accept semi-ceremonial PM role. Further talks in margins of SADC summit 16-17 Aug and in South Africa 29-31 Aug failed to break impasse; regional leaders increasingly concerned talks ineffective. Mugabe unilaterally convened parliament 26 Aug, in breach of 21 July talks agreement, and began appointments to Senate, governorships 24 Aug. In blow to ZANU-PF, MDC-Tsvangirai MP Lovemore Moyo elected parliamentary speaker after gaining 11 ZANU-PF and MDC-Mutambara votes. State violence, intimidation down since June peak, but reports 2 killed in continuing ZANU-PF attacks on MDC supporters in rural areas; 2 MDC MPs arrested before speaker vote. ZANU-PF 29 Aug lifted 3-month ban on aid agencies, issued new currency 1 Aug removing 10 zeros from dollar.

- Comment by Gareth Evans (Crisis Group), ["Impasse for Zimbabwe"](#), *Guardian*, 19 Aug. 2008.
- ["Zimbabwe talks 'end without deal'"](#), BBC, 31 Aug. 2008.
- ["Zimbabwe opposition wins key post"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 26 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°51, ["Negotiating Zimbabwe's Transition"](#), 21 May 2008.

WEST AFRICA

➡ **Côte d'Ivoire** Some progress in delayed electoral preparations, but concerns that 30 Nov polls increasingly unlikely. UNOCI 10 Aug delivered first batch of equipment for voter registration; initial EU mission arrived 6 Aug to assess conditions for 100 observers; identification process extended to 12 Sept. President Gbagbo 30 Aug nominated as Ivorian Popular Front party candidate. UNOCI 14 Aug began 6-month \$4m ex-combatant reintegration initiative. Some 300 ex-rebel FN forces protested in Bouaké 18-24 Aug in further unrest over non-payment of military demobilisation packages.

- ["Report-Ivory Coast's west safer, fear of militia lingers"](#), Reuters, 15 Aug. 2008.
- ["Poll expert sees Ivory Coast elections delay"](#), Reuters, 4 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°139, ["Côte d'Ivoire: Ensuring Credible Elections"](#), 22 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Guinea** In series of political reshuffles, President Conté early month sacked long-time ally and high-level minister Soumah, replacing with son-in-law Kéira. Move widely thought linked to Conté's 1 Aug rescinding of significant mining concession

contract in Simandou. Electoral commission 28 Aug announced national polls, set for Nov, likely to be again postponed due to funding shortfalls and June govt changes. Health workers' 2-day countrywide pay strike 11-12 Aug suspended after govt talks. Guinean army chief 12 Aug apologised over 200 civilians killed in police crackdown on early 2007 anti-Conté protests.

- ["Guinea confusion grows as Conte sacks ally again"](#), Reuters, 4 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°52, ["Guinea: Ensuring Democratic Reforms"](#), 24 June 2008.

➡ **Guinea-Bissau** President Vieira 5 Aug dissolved National Assembly following opposition PAIGC withdrawal from govt alliance last month, reversing Apr law extending MPs' mandate until 16 Nov elections. Vieira ally Correia sworn in as PM 9 Aug leadin new loyalist interim govt. Authorities 8 Aug said military coup plot foiled, alleged ringleader navy chief Na Tchuto captured in Gambia 13 Aug.

- ["Guinea-Bissau coup plotter held"](#), BBC, 12 Aug. 2008.
- ["Crisis-hit Bissau gets new government until polls"](#), Reuters, 9 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°142, ["Guinea-Bissau: In Need of a State"](#), 2 July 2008.

➡ **Liberia** UNSG Ban Ki-moon 15 Aug recommended UNMIL mandate extended to Sept 2009 and police units expanded due to security risks. Controversy over Senate presidency after 5 Aug vote to suspend temporary president Nyenabo, later ruled unconstitutional by Supreme Court. Anti-corruption commission set up 22 Aug following donor, opposition calls to fight graft.

- ["With a little help from her friends"](#), *Economist*, 21 Aug. 2008.
- ["Nyenabo survives removal plot"](#), *Analyst*, 6 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Mali** July's Algeria-brokered ceasefire between govt and Tuareg rebels held. Joint commission set up 20 Aug ahead of 28-30 Aug talks on forming mixed police units, security in north. Rebels released 24 hostages late month, some 70 allegedly still captive.

- ["Joint Malian-Tuareg commission to prepare new round of talks"](#), AFP, 20 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Niger** Rebel group Niger Justice Movement (MNJ) leader Ag Alambo 19 Aug denied earlier reports that group promised to end attacks, but confirmed readiness to participate in externally led mediation. At least 1 killed, up to 40 injured, in 24 Aug explosion in Zinder province during arms handover by surrendering Saharan Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARS) rebels; officials claim blasts accidental. Army late-month claimed large landmines stockpile seized at Chad border.

- ["Explosion at Niger arms handover"](#), BBC, 25 Aug. 2008.
- ["Niger rebel says Saharan Tuaregs to set down guns"](#), Reuters, 19 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Nigeria** President Yar'Adua 21 Aug sacked heads of army, navy, chief of defence, in assertion of executive control. Series of high-profile anti-corruption arrests, including ex-Adamawa State Governor Haruna, ex-deputy chairman of ruling PDP party George, and current chair of Niger Delta Development Commission Edem. Niger Delta militancy continued: kidnappings targeting foreign workers reported; militants destroyed gas pipeline in Rivers State 12 Aug, oil pipeline in Delta State 19 Aug. Oil vessel on Bonny River hijacked 24 Aug, 8 hostages taken. 4 soldiers killed in attacks on security forces

in Rivers and Delta States. Militant group Movement for the Niger Delta (MEND) claimed 6 members, 29 soldiers killed in 30 Aug offensive; army denied. Governor Amaechi requested additional military support after 30 killed in gang clashes in Port Harcourt. Bakassi Peninsula handed to Cameroon 14 Aug amid tight security, prompting crossing of up to 60,000 into Nigeria and unconfirmed attacks on Cameroonian forces by Niger Delta-linked militants.

- "Master of his commanders", *Economist*, 28 Aug. 2008.
- "Rising risk in the delta", IRIN, 15 Aug. 2008.
- "Nigeria turns over disputed territory to Cameroon", *International Herald Tribune*, 14 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°135, *Nigeria: Ending Unrest in the Niger Delta*, 5 Dec. 2007.

➡ **Sierra Leone** Ruling APC party youths 13 Aug attacked opposition SLPP offices in further inter-party clashes; govt-called meeting between parties ended in violence including police attacks on journalists. President Koroma suspended Transport Minister Sesay 4 Aug after brother's arrest following 21 July cocaine load seizure.

- Comment by Donald Steinberg (Crisis Group) "Sierra Leone's Convalescence", *International Herald Tribune*, 8 Aug. 2008.
- "Unrest 'appalls' S Leone leaders", BBC, 14 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°143, *Sierra Leone: A New Era of Reform?*, 31 July 2008.



Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

➡ **Kyrgyzstan** President Bakiyev 6 Aug enacted legislation further tightening restrictions on freedom of assembly. Govt 26 Aug announced severe power cuts in response to chronic energy shortage; measures expected to last all winter, trigger further increase in food prices. Govt 5 Aug apologised for mistaken 4 Aug police raid on U.S. soldiers apartment, citing organisational failings.

- "Kyrgyzstan tightens rules on public assembly", RFE/RL, 6 Aug. 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°79, *Kyrgyzstan: A Deceptive Calm*, 14 Aug. 2008. President Bakiyev has turned Kyrgyzstan in effect into a one-party state and failed to deal with real problems of corruption and economic crisis. As winter sets in, a further deterioration in living conditions could spark serious anger among a public worn by power cuts and rising fuel prices. If anger turns to violence, it risks being brutal and xenophobic.



➡ **Tajikistan** At 28 Aug Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Dushanbe, concern among Central Asian members focused on relations with Russia in wake of Georgia crisis; in final statement states urged resolution "peacefully, through dialogue", made no reference to Russian recognition of South Ossetia, Abkhazia independence (see Georgia). WFP pledged \$10m food supply for coming year, citing famine risk after significant food, fuel price rises since Aug 2007.

- "SCO fails to back Russia over Georgia", RFE/RL, 28 Aug. 2008.
- "Tajikistan's man in London", *New Statesman*, 15 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Uzbekistan** Media, rights groups accused govt of under-reporting deaths, suppressing coverage of 10 July munitions base explosion in Kagan, which official figures say killed 3. Govt now claims blast caused by accidental fire; dismissed terrorism. 2 journalists, 1 rights activist arrested 5 Aug, Samarkand, for "hooliganism". Govt 19 Aug made first of several promised aid deliveries for South Ossetia (see Georgia).

- "Losing control", ISN Security Watch, 6 Aug. 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)** 16 paramilitary officers reportedly killed in 4 Aug attack by Uighur Muslims in Kashgar, Xinjiang. Turkistan Islamic Party issued threat against Olympics 7 Aug, warned Muslims to stay away from Games. Several pipe bombs exploded 9 Aug in Kuqacounty, Xinjiang, 2 dead; police claimed they subsequently killed 8 attackers. 3 police killed in knife attack outside Kashgar 12 Aug.

- "Photos support account by China of deadly attack", *New York Times*, 23 Aug. 2008.
- "18 'foreign terrorists' arrested in northwest China", *Daily Times*, 6 Aug. 2008.

➡ **North Korea** North Korea threatened 26 Aug to reactivate plutonium making facilities at Yongbyon as talks stalled over modalities for verification of country's June nuclear declaration: generally seen as more negotiating brinkmanship rather than signalling talks breakdown. Impasse over removal of DPRK from U.S. state sponsors of terrorism list as 45-day notification period expired 11 Aug: U.S. demanding verification first, Pyongyang ceased dismantling facilities 14 Aug. Controversy continued over July shooting of ROK tourist on Mt Kumgang: North issued statement 3 Aug blaming tourist and criticising Seoul's response. WFP requested \$60m in food aid from Seoul as dire warnings over malnutrition in North persist.

- "N. Korea threatens to restore plutonium plant", *New York Times*, 26 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°62, *After the North Korea Nuclear Breakthrough: Compliance or Confrontation?*, 30 Apr. 2007.

➡ **Taiwan Strait** During late Aug commemoration of 1958 PLA bombardments of Kinmen, President Ma Ying-jeou renewed pledges to promote peace with China. Earlier, Taipei carefully announced plans to request "participation" in UN agencies. Former President Chen Shui-bian and wife Wu Shu-chen quit DPP 15 Aug after party announced investigation into their abuse of campaign funds.

- "Taiwan to seek participation at UN", *Financial Times*, 11 Aug. 2008.

SOUTH ASIA

➡ **Afghanistan** Angry exchanges over 22 Aug coalition airstrikes in western province of Herat: UN 26 Aug said

“convincing evidence” of some 90 civilians killed, while U.S. claimed only 5. Karzai sacked 2 Afghan army officials over incident. Afghan cabinet called for greater regulation of foreign forces, more effective curbs on aerial bombing. 3 female expat humanitarian workers and Afghan driver killed in vehicle ambush in Logar province 13 Aug. 10 French soldiers killed 18 Aug near Kabul, deadliest attack on foreign soldiers since 2001. 9 labourers killed in attack on main U.S. base in east in Khost 18-19 Aug; NATO said it repelled wave of other attacks same night.

- [“Afghans want a deal on foreign troops”](#), *New York Times*, 25 Aug. 2008.
- [“Insurgency scars line Afghanistan’s main road”](#), *New York Times*, 13 Aug. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°158, [Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words?](#), 24 July 2008.

➡ **Bangladesh** Local polls held 4 Aug in 4 cities, 9 municipalities as state of emergency “eased” in voting districts. No party affiliations allowed, some confusion over voter identification reported. Candidates backed by Awami League reportedly led polls. Supporters of ex-PM Zia rioted 25 Aug, demanding her son be released from detention for medical treatment; 1 killed outside Dhaka college. India ordered night-time curfew on shared border 25 Aug.

- [“Supporters of Bangladesh’s ex-PM go on rampage”](#), Reuters, 25 Aug. 2008.
- [“Bangladeshis vote in ‘gateway to democracy’ poll”](#), Reuters, 4 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°151, [Restoring Democracy in Bangladesh](#), 28 Apr. 2008.

➡ **India (non-Kashmir)** 8 killed, including 6 police, in 21 Aug Bihar clash with Maoists. At least 10 killed in Orissa Hindu-Christian fighting late month, thousands displaced; police suggested Maoist provocation. 10 Students’ Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) members arrested 16 Aug, suspected of July Ahmedabad bombings. Supreme Court 6 Aug upheld ban on SIMI, in effect since 2001.

- [“A new day, a new mastermind”](#), *Tehelka*, 30 Aug. 2008.
- [“Mobs burn east India churches after Hindu deaths”](#), Reuters, 25 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Kashmir** Violence grew in India-controlled Kashmir, as protests sparked by planned Hindu shrine land transfer resumed. 4 killed in independence rallies 25 Aug in Srinagar, several party leaders detained for curfew violations; over 25 reported killed by Indian police in 2 weeks. Indian security forces killed prominent separatist leader Sheikh Abdul Aziz as he led march towards Line of Control (LoC) 11 Aug; several killed in LoC battles in month.

- [“Peaceful protests in Kashmir alter equation for India”](#), *Washington Post*, 28 Aug. 2008.
- [“Four killed as Kashmir protesters defy curfew”](#), Reuters, 25 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Nepal** Constituent Assembly 15 Aug elected Maoist (CPN(M)) leader Prachanda new PM with 80% of votes. Prachanda announced coalition govt 22 Aug with third- and fourth-placed parties in Apr elections, UML and MJF; CPN(M) to hold finance, defence ministries, UML in second position with deputy PM, home ministry, and MJF foreign

affairs. Nepali Congress party refused to join Maoist-led govt. Prachanda made first foreign visit as PM to Beijing, attending Olympics and meeting Chinese PM and president. Heavy flooding in Tarai plains displaced over 35,000 mid-month.

- [“Cabinet gets its full shape; three more ministries formed”](#), eKantipur, 31 Aug. 2008.
- [“Guerrilla chief to head government in Nepal”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 15 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°156, [Nepal’s New Political Landscape](#), 3 July 2008.

➡ **Pakistan** President Musharraf 18 Aug announced resignation, following 7 Aug decision by PPP and PML-N coalition parties to begin impeachment proceedings. Coalition collapsed 25 Aug after PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif said PPP head Asif Ali Zardari failed to honour 7 Aug agreement on reinstating judges sacked by Musharraf in Nov. New president to be elected 6 Sept by national and provincial assemblies: Zardari and PML-N candidate Said Siddiqui, former chief justice, among candidates. Military operations continued in FATA particularly in Bajaur agency, where over 250,000 displaced. Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for 19 Aug suicide attack on hospital in Dera Ismail Khan, NWFP, killing 32; threatened more if Bajaur operations continue. Over 60 killed, 100 injured, in 21 Aug bombing at ordnance factory near Islamabad. Govt banned TTP as terrorist organisation, rejecting offers of ceasefire.

- Comment by Robert Templer (Crisis Group), [“Seize this chance to support Pakistani democracy”](#), *Financial Times*, 1 Sept. 2008.
- [“Pakistani push in tribal areas triggers a flood of refugees”](#), *Washington Post*, 27 Aug. 2008.
- [“Governing coalition collapses in Pakistan”](#), *Washington Post*, 26 Aug. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°157, [Reforming Pakistan’s Police](#), 14 July 2008.

➡ **Sri Lanka** Govt gained further territory in north as forces neared de facto LTTE capital Killinochchi. Tens of thousands more displaced, with tight restrictions on humanitarian aid causing severe hardships. Govt won provincial council elections in North-Central and Sabaragamuwa provinces after campaign marred by assaults, shootings and widespread intimidation of opposition. After 5 months detention without charge, Tamil journalist J.S. Tissanayagam accused of publishing allegedly terrorism-supporting magazine. 44 injured in Colombo bombing 30 Aug.

- [“Sri Lanka journalist denied bail”](#), BBC, 25 Aug. 2008.
- [“Thousands flee homes in S Lanka”](#), BBC, 14 Aug. 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** 1 killed in 9 Aug celebration of World Indigenous Day in Papua after police opened fire in response to raising of Morning Star flag. Trial of Muchdi, former intelligence (BIN) deputy director, in relation to 2004 death of human rights lawyer Munir, began 21 Aug in South Jakarta district court.

- [“Muchdi’s motive revenge, court hears”](#), *Jakarta Post*, 22 Aug. 2008.

- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°78, *Indonesia: Implications of the Ahmadiyah Decree*, 7 July 2008.

➡ **Myanmar/Burma** UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari made 5-day visit to country 18 Aug, but failed to secure meetings with either Gen. Than Shwe or Aung San Suu Kyi, calling efficacy of UN effort into question. Suu Kyi supporters claim she refused visit, began hunger strike over lack of progress. Separate visit made 4 Aug by new UN rapporteur on human rights Quintana. Indonesian parliament lifted block on appointment of ambassadors between countries but invited 4 NLD reps to Indonesian president's independence day address.

- "Suu Kyi refusal to meet envoy sends a strong message, say observers", *Irrawaddy*, 25 Aug. 2008.
- "New UN rights envoy visits Burma", BBC, 4 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°144, *Burma/Myanmar: After the Crackdown*, 31 Jan. 2008.

↘ ↗ **Philippines** July agreement on ancestral domain issue for Mindanao scrapped amid escalating clashes between govt, paramilitary forces and MILF. Supreme Court issued temporary restraining order on initialled agreement 4 Aug, as opponents of inclusion in new "Bangsamoro Judicial Entity" rallied in North Cotabato. MILF troops occupied 13 towns there; ensuing clashes with security forces displaced estimated 160,000. Separate fighting by MILF faction in Lanao del Norte 18 Aug killed some 24 civilians; tens more killed in govt push that followed. Govt negotiator said 22 Aug Manila no longer interested in deal, MILF must disarm. Malaysia 28 Aug extended its participation in monitoring mission by 3 months.

- "Pursuit of accord with separatists poses risks for Philippine president", *New York Times*, 24 Aug. 2008.
- "Philippines drops Muslim peace deal after dithering", Reuters, 22 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°152, *The Philippines: Counter-insurgency vs. Counter-terrorism in Mindanao*, 14 May 2008.

➡ **Thailand** Series of bombings in Songkhla 2 Aug hit South's largest city, Hat Yai; Songkhla town affected for first time. Cabinet approved deployment of some 2,500 additional paramilitary rangers to South 5 Aug. Former PM Thaksin and family fled to UK 11 Aug to escape corruption trials, 10 days after wife's sentencing to 3 years for tax evasion. Large demonstrations began 25 Aug, led by People's Alliance for Democracy, calling for PM Samak's resignation.

- "Thai leaders face huge protests", BBC, 26 Aug. 2008.
- "Seven bombs hit southern Thai tourist towns", AFP, 3 Aug. 2008.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°80, *Thailand: Political Turmoil and the Southern Insurgency*, 28 Aug. 2008. Despite its political woes, Thailand's embattled government needs to give more attention to tackling the bloody insurgency in the Muslim-dominated Deep South. Although there is little immediate prospect of a negotiated settlement, there is much the government could do in areas such as education, justice and development. It should also consider long-term political solutions including ways of granting some degree of devolution of power.



➡ **Timor-Leste** Leaked UN report of investigation into Feb attacks on president highlighted weakness of Timorese forces' response, slowness of UN. Leaked autopsy findings on rebel Alfredo Reinado killed in same incident showed shot 4 times at close range. Separate UN report noted increase in complaints about abuses by security forces. IDP camp at Dili airport, one of country's largest, closed without incident.

- "UN critical of East Timor human rights", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°148, *Timor-Leste's Displacement Crisis*, 31 Mar. 2008.

PACIFIC

↘ **Fiji** PM Bainimarama reversed pledge to hold elections by March 2009; said time needed to set up new electoral system. Labour party left military-led govt in protest 17 Aug. Regional leaders threatened 21 Aug to suspend Fiji from Pacific Islands Forum if no progress made towards polls by end 2008.

- "Fiji faces suspension from Pacific nation group", AP, 21 Aug. 2008.
- "Fiji Labour Party pulls out of military government", AP, 17 Aug. 2008.



Europe

BALKANS

➡ **Bosnia** Leaders of 6 parties in ruling coalition met 26 Aug in attempt to resolve deadlock on issues related to implementation of SAA with EU; no major agreements. Bosnian war crimes court 26 Aug indicted former Republika Srpska special police member Zoran Tomic with genocide for role in 1995 Srebrenica massacre.

- "Bosnian constitutional talks derailed by election campaign", *BalkanInsight*, 28 Aug. 2008
- "Bosnia leaders agree only that they disagree", *BalkanInsight*, 25 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°180, *Ensuring Bosnia's Future: A New International Engagement Strategy*, 15 Feb. 2007.

➡ **Kosovo** UNMIK began downsizing 11 Aug: 70% of staff to leave in first phase, around 600 to remain; fewer cuts in Serb areas. UN and EU signed technical arrangement 18 Aug to transfer UNMIK assets to EULEX. EU mission to operate under "UN umbrella". Belgrade continued to insist EU mission requires UNSC approval, wants role in shaping mission. Russia 27 Aug affirmed backing of Belgrade, despite its recognition of South Ossetia, Abkhazia independence (see Georgia). Serbia submitted draft resolution to UNGA 15 Aug seeking advisory opinion from International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Kosovo's independence declaration. Kosovo authorities rejected negotiations with Belgrade on 6 areas identified in June UNMIK reconfiguration plan, denounced any possible UNMIK-Belgrade deal on police, courts, customs in Kosovo Serb areas. PM Thaci appointed Fehmi Mujota defence

minister 6 Aug, to lead establishment of new 2,500-strong Kosovo Security Force replacing civilian Kosovo Protection Force. Kosovo's first senior diplomats appointed 29 Aug, new privatisation agency also created. Several hundred Kosovo Serbs 25 Aug protested reinstallation of customs cameras at border between Kosovo and Serbia. Ethnic Albanian and Serb residents clashed 27 Aug in north Mitrovica suburb.

- ["Parallel bars"](#), *Economist*, 28 Aug. 2008.
- ["Zannier says UNMIK will not completely leave Kosovo..."](#), SEE Times, 21 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°47, [Kosovo's First Month](#), 18 Mar. 2008.

➡ **Macedonia** Continued deadlock over UN-sponsored name talks with Greece. Sides discussed proposals in New York 13-14 Aug with UN envoy Nimetz. Macedonia continued lobbying foreign counterparts, attempted to expand talks to other issues, including recognition of Macedonian Orthodox Church; UN said focus to remain on name issue. Macedonia 14 Aug accused Greece of increasing pressure by conducting military exercises near border. Parliament 28 Aug adopted resolution supporting property claims of 1946-49 refugees from Greece. Nimetz visited Skopje and Athens 21-22 Aug, but both sides rejected options put forward. U.S. 13 Aug reiterated name dispute should not impede NATO admission. Political divisions in govt continued. PM Gruevski criticised President Crvenkovski's early Aug pardon of Social Democrat VP Zoran Zaev and blocking of five bills passed during July parliamentary boycott. Crvenkovski announced intent to stand against PM Gruevski in 2009 parliamentary elections, criticised Gruevski's handling of name issue.

- ["Athens, Skopje trade accusations over deadlocked name talks"](#), SEE Times, 26 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Serbia** Serbian ambassadors previously recalled from EU countries recognising Kosovo independence reinstated starting 11 Aug, in face of opposition from nationalist DSS. EU 26 Aug said further progress on accession depends on capture and transfer to The Hague of Bosnian Serb war crimes fugitive Ratko Mladic. Former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, conducting own defence at The Hague, refused to enter plea 29 Aug; judge entered not guilty pleas to all 11 charges. Vojvodina Social Democrats pushing for greater autonomy for province.

- ["EU tells Serbia to act on Mladic"](#), *BalkanInsight*, 26 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°49, [Will the Real Serbia Please Stand Up?](#), 23 Apr. 2008.

CAUCASUS

➡ **Armenia** Thousands in 1 Aug opposition rally in Yerevan; former presidential candidate Ter-Petrossian called for President Sarkisian's resignation. Head of commission investigating March violence Samvel Nikoyan 29 Aug accused police of not cooperating. Further relaxation of Armenian-Turkish tensions as Turkish President Gul invited Armenia to newly-proposed Caucasus union initiative (see Turkey).

- ["How can the human rights situation in Armenia be improved?"](#), RFE/RL, 3 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°48, [Armenia: Picking up the Pieces](#), 8 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Azerbaijan** Grenade attack on Abu Bakr mosque in Baku 17 Aug killed 3. 1 soldier killed 30 Aug in clash with alleged Islamists at border with Dagestan. State-owned SOCAR oil company announced exports through Iran after 5 Aug closure of BTC pipeline (see Turkey), halt of deliveries through Georgia (see Georgia).

- ["Azeri president to oversee mosque blast probe"](#), Reuters, 18 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°191, [Azerbaijan: Independent Islam and the State](#), 25 Mar. 2008.

➡ **Chechnya (Russia)** Ongoing targeting of security forces saw 1 soldier, 2 suicide bombers killed in 30 Aug attack on Vedeno military camp; 1 soldier left dead 30 Aug after bomb attack on convoy in Serzhan-Yurt village; 2 killed 24 Aug in attack on police convoy; 1 officer fatally shot in armed attack in Urus-Martan district. 2 servicemen left dead in separate incidents 19 Aug.

- ["Two Russian officers killed in Chechnya attack"](#), Reuters, 24 Aug. 2008.

➡ **North Caucasus (non-Chechnya)** In Dagestan, attacks on police patrols left 5 officers dead in separate incidents. Russian authorities 6 Aug closed newspaper Chervonik, citing extremism charges. In Ingushetia, owner of opposition website Magomed Yevloyev fatally shot in police custody 31 Aug. 1 killed in attack on army convoy 22 Aug; security officer also killed 2 Aug. Gunmen 24 Aug attacked house of Russian MP.

- ["Ingushetia website owner killed"](#), BBC, 31 Aug. 2008.
- ["Russia's Dagestan closes newspaper for extremism"](#), Reuters, 6 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°192, [Russia's Dagestan: Conflict Causes](#), 3 June 2008.

➡ **Georgia** Devastating decline in political, security and humanitarian situation with war between Georgia and Russia over breakaway regions. After heavy clashes 1-2 Aug in South Ossetia (SO), Tbilisi 7-8 Aug launched military offensive on Tshkinvali. Russia responded immediately with massive attack with ground troops, air bombardments, naval attack; 9 Aug cited "genocide" and "responsibility to protect" its citizens. Separatist Abkhaz forces 8 Aug commenced fighting in Abkhazia, assisted by Russian planes; captured Georgian-controlled Kodori gorge 12 Aug. Tbilisi started withdrawal from SO 10 Aug, as Russian troops advanced further into Georgia, causing massive civilian displacement in SO, adjacent Georgian district of Gori. Casualties disputed: Russia reduced initial claim of up to 2,000 dead to 133 civilian and 64 Russian soldiers; Human Rights Watch documented 419 killed, mostly SO militia; Georgia says 69 civilians, 215 Georgian troops killed. UNHCR estimated 30,000 from SO, 128,000 within Georgia displaced. Tbilisi 12 Aug filed application at ICJ, accusing Russia of ethnic cleansing. ICC chief prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo said 20 Aug court analysing war crimes allegations. Fighting sparked heavy international engagement: EU, U.S. criticised Moscow's "disproportionate" response; G7 FMs 27 Aug in unprecedented joint statement condemned Russia's "excessive use of force". French President Sarkozy 12 Aug presented 6-point ceasefire agreement including end of hostilities, withdrawal of troops, international talks on separatist regions; President Saakashvili, Russian President Medvedev signed 15-16 Aug. UNSC deadlocked after Moscow, U.S.

20, 22 Aug rejected respective draft resolutions over issues of territorial integrity, implementation of 6-point agreement. Russian army official announced 23 Aug 2,600 forces to remain in "zone of responsibility" around conflict regions and in port of Poti; U.S. President Bush urged full withdrawal, accused Moscow of ceasefire breach. U.S. army-led humanitarian aid mission launched 13 Aug. Moscow 21 Aug suspended NATO cooperation. Medvedev 26 Aug recognised SO, Abkhazia independence following non-binding Duma resolution; EU, U.S. denounced move; SCO declined to support Russian recognition (see Tajikistan). Tbilisi 29 Aug cut diplomatic ties with Russia. EU leaders to discuss possible sanctions, future Moscow ties at 1 Sept extraordinary summit.

- Comment by Gareth Evans (Crisis Group), "Russia and the 'Responsibility to Protect'", *Los Angeles Times*, 31 Aug. 2008.
- Comment by Magdalena Frichova (Crisis Group) "Human cost of Georgian conflict", BBC, 14 Aug. 2008.
- "Russia says sanctions would fail", BBC, 31 Aug. 2008.
- "Russia-Georgia border scene hints at scripted affair", RFE/RL, 23 Aug. 2008.
- "The west shares the blame for Georgia", *Financial Times*, 13 Aug. 2008.

Crisis Group Europe Report
 N°195, *Russia vs Georgia: The Fallout*,
 22 Aug. 2008. The Russia-Georgia conflict has transformed the contemporary geopolitical world. The urgent need is to implement fully the 15-16 August ceasefire, and most significantly, to ensure Russian troops return immediately to pre-7 August positions. Current rhetoric in Moscow and Western capitals is eerily reminiscent of the Cold War and will do nothing to resolve the crisis on the ground in Georgia or repair the damage done to European security. The West should not isolate Moscow, but engage it in a way that is both hard-headed and conditional.



- ➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Armenian, Azeri FM's held Russian-brokered closed-door talks 1 Aug in Moscow; no agreement on "Madrid principles" reached. Azerbaijan 4 Aug returned 4 prisoners detained in April; Armenia 14 Aug freed 1 prisoner held since Feb.
 - "Karabakh war 'less likely after Georgia debacle'", Armenia Liberty, 22 Aug. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°187, *Nagorno-Karabakh: Risking War*, 14 Nov. 2007.

EASTERN EUROPE

- ➡ **Belarus** Political prisoners released ahead of 28 Sept parliamentary elections. Former presidential candidate Alexander Kazulin discharged 16 Aug, after opposition party Hramada replaced him as party head; 2 further dissidents pardoned 20 Aug. U.S. lawyer Emmanuel Zeltser – arrested in March – sentenced 3 years 11 Aug on industrial espionage charges. U.S. State Dept official David Merkel in Minsk 22 Aug to discuss relations after May/June diplomatic row.
 - "Belarus frees final prisoners in EU sanctions bid", *EU Observer*, 20 Aug. 2008.
- ➡ **Moldova** Russian President Medvedev warned President Voronin against use of force in Transdnister in 25 Aug meeting.

Romanian President Basescu and Voronin 20 Aug called for greater EU involvement in Transdnister conflict settlement.

- "Russia warns Moldova against 'Georgian mistake'", Reuters, 25 Aug. 2008.

- ➡ **Ukraine** Ukraine-Russia tensions increased amid Georgia conflict (see Georgia). UK FM Milliband in 27 Aug Minsk visit called for "widest possible coalition against Russian aggression". President Yushchenko 16 Aug announced information sharing from missile warning system with Europeans; reiterated NATO bid. Yushchenko 13 Aug announced restrictions on Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol. Some 2,500 in pro-Russian rally 22 Aug in Donetsk. President's aides accused PM Tymoshenko of cooperation with Moscow.
 - "EU fears Russia may target Ukraine after Georgia", Reuters, 27 Aug. 2008.
 - "Russian actions reignite tensions over strategic port in Ukraine", *New York Times*, 24 Aug. 2008.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

- ➡ **Basque Country (Spain)** Up to 1,000 marched in pro-independence rally 22 Aug in Bilbao. At least 10,000 evacuated from Spanish holiday resorts 17 Aug after 2 small bomb blasts; further bomb threats in French holiday resorts near Arcangues village saw some thousand evacuated as French police defused 3 bombs 8 Aug. French police 26 Aug arrested alleged ETA activist Zurutuza in Gotein-Libarrenx.
 - "ETA blamed as bombs explode on Spain's southern coast", AP, 17 Aug. 2008.
- ➡ **Cyprus** Ahead of 3 Sept opening of full-fledged reunification talks, chief negotiators met 27 Aug to discuss remaining details; failed to agree on border opening in village of Limnitis. Greek nationalists 20 Aug damaged Turkish shops, cars in ethnically mixed Pyla village.
 - "Turkish Cypriot leader aims to resolve Cyprus issue this year", *SEE Times*, 29 Aug. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°194, *Reunifying Cyprus: The Best Chance Yet*, 23 June 2008.
- ➡ **Turkey** In aftermath of resolved political crisis over potential party closure, AKP 18 Aug unveiled reform package for EU integration including constitutional changes. Chief prosecutor 6 Aug announced intent to file another case against AKP, some leaders. Govt-friendly commander Ilker Başbuğ named new army head. In wake of Georgia crisis (see Georgia), PM Erdogan launched plans for "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform" to boost ties between 3 Caucasus states, Russia, Turkey. BTC (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan) oil pipeline shut down 5-21 Aug following explosion, fire near Refahiyet; PKK claimed responsibility – oil companies, govt say cause uncertain. Kurdish rebels targeted security forces including rocket attack at police station in Mus province 6 Aug killing 1; roadside bomb in Erzincan province 11 Aug leaving 9 dead; further 4 soldiers, 2 PKK killed in rocket attack on military station in Bingol province. Ongoing PKK-army clashes saw 29 PKK, 10 govt forces killed.
 - "Turkey's military chief favours harmony", *Financial Times*, 9 Aug. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°184, *Turkey and Europe: The Way Ahead*, 17 Aug. 2007.



Latin America / Caribbean

↳ **Bolivia** Mandate of President Morales confirmed in 10 Aug recall referendum, but political deadlock continued and violence grew end-month. Morales received 67.4% of recall vote; 3 of 9 prefects, 2 from opposition, recalled. 14 Aug attempt by Morales to broach dialogue with opposition failed. Sporadic violence at pro- and anti-govt demonstrations through month: 2 miners killed 6 Aug in clashes with police. Violent demonstrations erupted in Santa Cruz 29 Aug after govt issued decree on 7 Dec constitutional approval referendum. Opposition prefects said would not carry it out in their departments; Chuquisaca prefect 30 Aug announced 30 Nov departmental autonomy referendum. VP García denounced formation of “terrorist group” in Santa Cruz. General strike in 5 opposition departments 19 Aug to protest govt use of gas revenue for pension scheme; opposition in eastern lowlands organised blockades from 25 Aug of key transport routes to Argentina, Paraguay.

- [“Bolivia’s crisis worsens as president calls new referendum”](#), AFP, 29 Aug. 2008.
- [“Aumenta la tensión en Bolivia”](#), BBC, 25 Aug. 2008.
- [“Bolivia’s political ferment: revolution and recall”](#), openDemocracy, 13 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°18, [Bolivia: Rescuing the New Constitution and Democratic Stability](#), 19 June 2008.

↳ **Colombia** 15 Aug blast in north western town Ituango killed 7, wounded 17: FARC suspected. Govt-Supreme Court tensions further increased over “parapolitics” investigations. 3 members of congress detained for paramilitary links released during month, including Mario Uribe, president’s cousin and key ally. 29 remain detained, further 38 under investigation. ICC prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo visited Colombia 25-27 Aug, confirmed ongoing analysis of domestic proceedings and alleged crimes. 5m signatures submitted 11 Aug supporting constitutional amendment to allow President Uribe second re-election; Uribe yet to comment.

- [“Uribe se enfrenta a la Corte Suprema”](#), BBC, 25 Aug. 2008.
- [“Colombia’s Uribe mulls re-election, but will he run?”](#), Reuters, 22 Aug. 2008.

↳ **Ecuador** Opinion polls indicate new constitution likely to be ratified in 28 Sept referendum. President Correa 24 Aug accused opposition of “promoting violence” during campaign. Ecuador, Colombia FMs met 15 Aug in Paraguay, but no agreement on re-establishing diplomatic relations, suspended since March.

- [“Presidente Ecuador, cerca conseguir triunfo en referendo: sondeo”](#), Reuters, 22 Aug. 2008.
- [“Primera reunión de cancilleres de Ecuador y Colombia se da en Paraguay”](#), AFP, 15 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°22, [Ecuador: Overcoming Instability?](#), 7 Aug. 2007.

↳ **Haiti** 25 Aug presidential decree officially announced Michèle Pierre-Louis as new PM, named new cabinet. Inauguration scheduled 26 Aug, delayed by Hurricane Gustav. Chamber

of Deputies 29 Aug overwhelmingly approved Pierre-Louis’s formal policy declaration, Senate to vote early Sept.

- [“Haiti edges toward ending four-month govt impasse”](#), Reuters, 29 Aug. 2008.

↳ **Venezuela** President Chávez 31 July issued 26 decree-laws – made public 4 Aug – that further strengthen govt’s economic, political and social power; opposition criticised as attempt to enact constitutional reforms rejected in Dec referendum. Chávez 18 Aug ordered takeover of Mexican cement firm Cemex’s Venezuelan assets. Supreme Court 6 Aug upheld comptroller general’s anti-corruption ban on 258 mostly opposition candidates for Nov state, municipal elections.

- [“La mexicana Cemex demandará a Venezuela ante un tribunal internacional”](#), *El País*, 21 Aug. 2008.
- [“The autocrat of Caracas”](#), *Economist*, 7 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°27, [Venezuela: Political Reform or Regime Demise?](#), 23 July 2008.



Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

↳ **Israel/Occupied Territories** Confrontation between Palestinian factions, sparked by late-July Gaza explosion, continued. Hamas launched operation 2 Aug against predominantly Fatah-linked Hillis clan, killing 10 plus 2 Hamas. Israel 3 Aug allowed some 180 fleeing Hillis clan members to cross border; after Hamas detained some 30 on return, Israel sent others to West Bank. Ceasefire between Hamas and Israel in place, but still only minimal flow of goods into Gaza; Egypt 30 Aug opened Rafah crossing for 2 days before Ramadan. In West Bank, Palestinian Authority (PA) continued crackdown against Hamas, shutting down additional organisations and ordering arrests. Israeli press 13 Aug reported peace proposal by Olmert govt including handover of 93% of West Bank, Israel to annex major settlements ceding Israeli territory equivalent to 5.5% of West Bank, possible limited refugee return – Jerusalem explicitly deferred. PA officials rejected. Israel 25 Aug released 198 Palestinian prisoners, shortly before visit of U.S. Sec State Rice, but continuing settlement activity drew strong criticism. No progress reported in latest meeting between PA President Abbas, Israeli PM Olmert 31 Aug. Israeli leadership uncertain as PM Olmert, facing further corruption allegations in Aug, due to step down after Sept Kadima party elections.

- [“Truce barely eases Gaza embargo”](#), BBC, 19 Aug. 2008.
- [“PM gives Abbas detailed proposal for final status”](#), *Haaretz*, 13 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°79, [Ruling Palestine II: The West Bank Model?](#), 17 July 2008.

↳ **Lebanon** Relative calm masked continuing instability, especially in Tripoli where 13 Aug roadside bomb at bus stop killed some 18, half soldiers. Cabinet 5 Aug unanimously approved policy statement, but with no clarification on Hizbollah’s weapons; 12 Aug approved national unity govt, confirming increased power of Hizbollah-led opposition. President Michel Suleiman 13-14 Aug met Syrian counterpart

Bashar al-Assad in Damascus: agreed to establish full diplomatic relations and negotiate border demarcation (excluding disputed Shebaa farms). Lebanese army helicopter hit by gunfire in south, pilot killed 28 Aug; Hizbollah 29 Aug handed suspect over to military court. Brig. Gen. Jean Qahwaji appointed new army chief. UNIFIL peacekeeping force mandate renewed 1 year 27 Aug.

- [“Syria and Lebanon to negotiate border demarcation”](#), AP, 14 Aug. 2008.
- [“Lebanon attack is message for army: analysts”](#), AFP, 14 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°78, [The New Lebanese Equation: The Christians’ Central Role](#), 15 July 2008.

➡ **Syria** President Bashar al-Assad continued to expand diplomatic efforts. In Tehran 2 Aug, Assad addressed Iranian nuclear program, following July promise to French President Sarkozy to facilitate, but also reaffirmed strong ties between countries. In Turkey 5 Aug, discussed Turkish-mediated indirect talks with Israel. Talks continued in Aug, but Syrian FM 25 Aug said progress insufficient to open direct negotiations. In 13-14 Aug Damascus visit, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman and Assad agreed to establish diplomatic relations (see Lebanon). Russian FM Lavrov 21 Aug said prepared to sell arms to Syria, during Assad visit; Russian diplomat 27 Aug said navy to use Syrian ports more frequently. Top army officer Brig. Gen. Muhammad Suleiman, close associate of Assad, assassinated 1 Aug by unknown assailant.

- [“Another boost for Syria”](#), *Economist*, 18 Aug. 2008.
- [“Top Assad aide assassinated at Syrian resort”](#), *Guardian*, 5 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°63, [Restarting Israeli-Syrian Negotiations](#), 10 April 2007.

GULF

➡ **Iran** Timeframe for Iranian response to UNSC P5 plus Germany and EU proposal to freeze further sanctions for freeze on enrichment expired 2 Aug. Iran sent letter to EU foreign policy chief Solana calling for “mutual clarification”. U.S., France, UK criticised Tehran for failure to respond and threatened new sanctions – Russia called for more dialogue. EU approved further sanctions 8 Aug, permitting tougher cargo inspections and restricting credit to companies trading with Iran. U.S. extended financial restrictions to 5 further Iranian companies; accused Iran of training Iraqi Shiite assassination teams. Tehran 29 Aug said 4,000 centrifuges now operating. During 15 Aug Ahmadi-Nejad visit to Istanbul, Turkey retreated from deal to purchase Iranian gas. Norwegian StatoilHydro 1 Aug halted new investments in Iran. Amid recent heightened tensions with Israel, Tehran continued military tests, including new advanced naval weapon 4 Aug and new satellite-carrying rocket 17 Aug. Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei 24 Aug expressed support for Ahmadi-Nejad; urged him to prepare for further 4 years following 2009 election, but criticised economic policies. Tehran 28 Aug said had agreed to share peaceful nuclear energy with Nigeria.

- [“Turkey pulls out of deal to buy Iranian gas under pressure from US”](#), *Guardian*, 15 Aug. 2008.
- [“Russia denies sanctions deal after Iran snub”](#), *Financial Times*, 6 Aug. 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** Parliament remained locked over provincial election law, following July presidency council veto of draft with Kirkuk power-sharing provision; lawmakers 6 Aug recessed for summer. Provincial polls due by 1 Oct, now unlikely before early 2009. Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr 8 Aug announced split of Mahdi Army into social wing and elite fighters unit, 28 Aug extended ceasefire. Draft security deal between U.S. and Iraq agreed, but U.S. troop withdrawal and immunity unresolved. Govt offensive in Diyala province making little headway; operations to arrest U.S.-backed Sunni militias drew criticism from Sunni lawmakers and U.S. military officials. Despite continued decline in overall death tolls, ruinous bombings hit many cities including Tal Afar in north, Kirkuk, Karbala and Baghdad – scores killed, including Sunni militia leaders and Shiite pilgrims. U.S. to transfer Anbar province security to Iraqis 1 Sept. Jordan’s King Abdullah in Baghdad 11 Aug – first Arab head of state visit since 2003 U.S.-led invasion; Jordan to reopen Baghdad embassy, closed since 2003 bombing. Lebanon PM Siniora visited 20 Aug. Turkish military reported 16 Aug bombing of PKK base in northern Iraq. U.S. General David Petraeus ended term as head of U.S. operation in Iraq, succeeded by chief deputy Lieutenant General Ray Odierno. UNSC renewed UNAMI mandate 1 year 7 Aug. Iraq, Chinese CNPC 27 Aug signed \$3b oil contract, first major deal with foreign company since 2003.

- [“Iraq takes aim at leaders of U.S.-tied Sunni groups”](#), *New York Times*, 22 Aug. 2008.
- [“Kurdish control of Kirkuk creates powder keg in Iraq”](#), *New York Times*, 19 Aug. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°77, [Failed Responsibility: Iraqi Refugees in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon](#), 10 July 2008.

➡ **Yemen** Govt 7 Aug claimed leader of al-Houthi Shiite rebels accepted terms for ceasefire in north and both sides exchanged prisoners; but continuing low-level violence reported. ICRC 8 Aug said “difficult or impossible” to operate in north. Govt carried out several operations in south east Hadramawt region against suspected al-Qaeda cells accused of recent attacks on govt and foreign targets; 5 militants, 2 police killed in Tarim 11 Aug. Islamic Jihad leader arrested, 5 supporters killed end month. Opposition parties threatened renewed protests 18 Aug after parliament rejected amendments to electoral law.

- [“Yemen arrests wanted Jihad leader”](#), AFP, 31 Aug. 2008.
- [“Sa’ada security situation relatively calm”](#), *Yemen Times*, 17 Aug. 2008.

NORTH AFRICA

➡ **Algeria** Deadly bombings swept country, killing some 80 in worst violence of recent years. Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb claimed attacks in retaliation for security force crackdown. 19 Aug suicide car bomb at police academy in Issers, east of capital, killed some 48; twin blasts near hotel and regional military HQ in south eastern Bouira 20 Aug killed 12, all employees of Canadian engineering company. Guerrilla ambushes 17 Aug reportedly left 11 dead; local media reported 7 soldiers killed in 27 Aug ambush. At least 8 dead

in 9 Aug suicide attack on police station in northern beach resort. Explosion near police station 3 Aug east of capital injured 20. Govt reported killing some 20 insurgents in 7, 24 Aug operations.

- [“Al-Qaida claims to have killed 130 in Algeria”](#), AP, 23 Aug. 2008.
- [“Strategic shift in North Africa militancy”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Egypt** 21 Muslim Brotherhood (MB) members arrested 27 Aug for illegal meeting, MB report 40 total arrested in month. Arrests of bloggers, political critics continued, as rumours grew of repressive draft bill on audio-visual media. Local rights group 9 Aug reported govt directive obliging internet cafes to gather users’ personal information. Exiled human rights activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim sentenced in absentia to 2 years in prison for defaming Egypt.

- [“Egypt police detain 21 Muslim Brotherhood members”](#), Reuters, 28 Aug. 2008
- [“Egypt faces new media censorship”](#), Al Jazeera, 7 Aug. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°76, [Egypt’s Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration?](#), 18 June 2008.

➡ **Mauritania** Military seized power 6 Aug in bloodless coup after weeks-long political crisis: president, PM, 3 senior officials arrested; state radio, TV closed. Move followed presidential sacking of generals accused of fomenting crisis and 4 Aug walk-out from ruling party by 48 MPs. Coup leaders promised swift “free” elections; over 100 of 146-strong parliament 13 Aug endorsed coup, but support weakened as leaders delayed

setting election timetable. Junta, led by sacked presidential guard chief General Abdelaziz, appointed former ambassador to EU Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf as new PM 14 Aug. President Abdallahi remains under house arrest; junta 30 Aug reportedly promised release. Strong international, regional condemnation: AU suspended membership 9 Aug; AU, France, U.S., World Bank suspended non-humanitarian aid, U.S., France threatened sanctions while UNSC 19 Aug condemned coup. Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb 10 Aug called for jihad to avenge Abdallahi’s overthrow.

- [“How real is Mauritania’s terror threat?”](#), BBC, 26 Aug. 2008.
- [“A bad example?”](#), *Economist*, 14 Aug. 2008.
- [“Majority of parliament is pro-coup”](#), AP, 13 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Morocco** Italian authorities 16 Aug arrested Muslim cleric linked to 2003 Casablanca bombings following 31 July Moroccan extradition request. Govt said 29 Aug had broken up “Fath al-Andalous” terror network.

- [“Italy arrests imam linked to Morocco suicide bombings”](#), VOA, 18 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Western Sahara** Polisario Front (PF) leader Mohamed Abdel Aziz mid-Aug requested UNSG Ban Ki-moon replace UN Special Envoy Peter van Walsum after his repeated statements that independence is unrealistic. PF still intend to participate in UN-backed Manhasset negotiations with Morocco if envoy removed.

- [“Independence for Western Sahara ‘not achievable’ - UN mediator”](#), AFP, 8 Aug. 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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