

December 1 2008, N°64

## 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](mailto:crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org).

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## November 2008 Trends



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## December 2008 Watchlist



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Kashmir  
Thailand



### Conflict Resolution Opportunities

Bangladesh

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## CENTRAL AFRICA

➡ **Burundi** With peace process still stalled over name of rebel group Palipehutu-FNL, chief regional mediator Charles Nqakula 7 Nov said negotiation team's mandate will expire 31 Dec without renewal, urged completion of FNL demobilisation and reintegration. Govt announced new regional summit scheduled for 4 Dec, indicated possible imposition of sanctions against the rebel movement. Skirmishes between FNL and govt forces continue to increase on ground. In sign of increasing political repression, leader of Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (MSD) party and prominent journalist Sinduhije and 37 party members arrested 3 Nov for meeting illegally and alleged coup plot, prompting strong condemnation from U.S., EU leaders and rights groups. All released except Sinduhije, who was charged 11 Nov with insulting the president.

- "Mediator gives Burundi rebels December 31 peace deadline", Reuters, 7 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°53, *Restarting Political Dialogue*, 19 Aug. 2008.

➡ **Central African Republic** Insecurity increased in northeast with 2 clashes on 8 and 11 Nov, reportedly involving UFDR, FDPC and third unidentified rebel group: govt said 14 soldiers, 2 rebels killed, but numbers disputed. Govt met APRD, UFDR rebel groups 19-20 Nov in Libreville, Gabon, agreeing to intensify disarmament and reintegration process, hold comprehensive political dialogue in Dec.

- "Central African rebels kill over a dozen troops", Reuters, 12 Nov. 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** Fighting between Nkunda's CNDP rebels, Mai Mai militia and govt troops in North Kivu continued over month. At least 50 killed in Kiwanja, Rutshuru region, in 4 Nov CNDP attack reportedly targeting civilians, and ensuing clashes with Mai Mai. Sexual violence widespread. Nkunda 16 Nov declared ceasefire, began partial withdrawal from fronts 80km from Goma, but continued campaign to consolidate control in north Rutshuru, causing new waves of displacement; 29 Nov threatened war unless govt enters talks. President Kabila 17 Nov replaced army chief-of-staff amid further reports of abuses by Congolese troops. 23 Nov demonstrations near Goma again targeted UN forces. At 7 Nov summit in Nairobi regional and international leaders called for implementation of Nairobi and Goma agreements, established facilitation team led by Benjamin Mkapa and UN Envoy Obasanjo, who led series of talks over month. MONUC chief Alan Doss 26 Nov said investigations opened into possible war crimes committed by "all belligerents". UNSC 20 Nov approved temporary 3,100 increase in MONUC troops to bolster strained UN peacekeeping effort, UNSG Ban called for EU to deploy ahead of arrival of MONUC reinforcements; Belgium said ready to provide troops. Rights groups called on UNSC to increase UN troops around Dungu, Orientale Province, to

curb continued attacks on civilians by suspected LRA rebels (see Uganda).

- Comment by Neil Campbell (Crisis Group), "Reinforcing What? The EU's Role in Eastern Congo", Reuters, 18 Nov. 2008
- "UN head outlines DR Congo 'abuse'", BBC, 25 Nov. 2008.
- "Mai Mai fighters third piece in Congo's violent puzzle", *New York Times*, 20 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°140, *Congo: Four Priorities for Sustainable Peace in Ituri*, 13 May 2008.

➡ **Rwanda** Tensions with France further increased after director of state protocol Rose Kabuye arrested in Germany 9 Nov on 2006 French warrant for complicity in 1994 assassination of former President Habyarimana. Kabuye extradited to France, indicted, released on bail 19 Nov. Kigali 11 Nov recalled ambassador from Germany, expelled German representative; AU and Great Lakes states said Kabuye entitled to immunity; massive protests against arrest in Kigali and Kampala. Rwandan authorities 11 Nov announced imminent release of arrest warrants for French officials complicit in 1994 genocide. ICTR 20 Nov rejected prosecutor's fourth request to transfer genocide cases to Rwandan courts. As fighting in DRC continued, President Kagame 5 Nov lashed out over allegations of Rwandan support for CNDP rebels, held series of talks with regional and international leaders including at 7 Nov crisis summit in Nairobi (see DRC).

- "DRC and Rwanda to resume diplomatic relations", *New Times*, 15 Nov. 2008.
- "Judicial politics of a genocide", *Economist*, 13 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Uganda** Chief mediator Machar 30 Nov said rebel LRA leader again refused to sign final peace deal and reiterated condition that ICC warrants be lifted first. Followed earlier statements by LRA spokesperson that rebels ready to sign, after mediation team 6 Nov set 30 Nov deadline and demanded cessation of cross-border attacks by suspected LRA rebels. Govt of South Sudan threatened to "finish off" rebels if deadline missed, while President Museveni promised to resume LRA food supplies as goodwill gesture. In west, peace talks between ADF rebels and govt opened 14 Nov after decade-long insurgency. UN announced over 14,500 refugees fled across border from DRC since Aug (see DRC).

- "International community issues ultimatum to Uganda LRA rebels", VoA, 12 Nov. 2008.
- "Left to their own devices", Amnesty International, 17 Nov. 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** UN 4 Nov called on govt to improve security in east as humanitarian situation worsened following Oct suspension of several aid agencies' activities. Russia and EU 5 Nov signed agreement on Russian participation in EU peacekeeping operation in Chad and CAR, incl 8 helicopters, up to 200 soldiers. UNSG Ban Ki-moon 17 Nov called for doubling of international troops in east to 6,000. Chad and Sudan agreed to deploy troops along border at mid-Nov contact group meeting; expected on ground Jan 2009. Chad, Sudan ambassadors 9 Nov returned to posts in respective capitals.

Despite Oct concerns over possible rebel campaign against govt, no reports of rebel movements towards N'Djamena.

- ["UN Secretary-General calls to double troop numbers"](#), IRIN, 17 Nov. 2008.
- ["Chad and Sudan plan deployment to secure border"](#), Reuters, 17 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Ethiopia** Govt 4 Nov warned of imminent terrorist attacks on Addis Ababa; police 5 Nov killed Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) leader Legesse Wegi, over course of month arrested over 90 Oromo nationals and opposition members including opposition OFDM leader Bekele Jirata. Opposition denounced govt's use of alleged terrorist plot as cover for mass Oromo arrests. Govt 26 Nov released 44 OLF rebels from jail. Govt investigation called groundless June Human Rights Watch reports into alleged war crimes committed during 2007 campaign against ONLF rebels; ONLF dismissed govt findings. Over 50,000 displaced by floods in Somali region.

- ["Ethiopia rebels slam government probe into abuses"](#), Reuters, 30 Nov. 2008.
- ["Charge or free ethnic Oromo terrorism suspects"](#), HRW, 27 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Kenya** Cabinet 27 Nov approved Waki report on post-election violence, paving way for creation of local tribunal to prosecute those responsible. Waki report earlier rejected by both ODM and PNU MPs, but internal party divisions continued and Nov opinion polls showed strong popular support for full Waki implementation. EU threatened sanctions if Waki recommendations not implemented; ICC said ready to act on sealed list of names if Kenya failed to do so. Cabinet also adopted recommendations of Sept Kriegler report for reform of Electoral Commission of Kenya. ECK head Samuel Kivuitu 11 Nov obtained court order preventing disbanding of body, but overruled 28 Nov by parliament. Following reportedly brutal govt crackdown on Oct interclan fighting in northeastern Mandera region, govt announced arrest of over 150 Somali and Ethiopian militiamen and promised to investigate allegations of army rape and torture. Military presence increased in Mandera region in response to early-Nov abduction of 2 Italian nuns by suspected Somali Al-Shabaab insurgents; thousands fled in fear of fighting. UN mid-month warned of possible humanitarian crisis in Somali refugee camps in Dadaab in northeast, as increasing numbers arrive from Somalia; refugee population now over 220,000.

- ["Kenya to get poll violence court"](#), BBC, 27 Nov. 2008.
- ["Thousands flee amid fears of fighting along border"](#), IRIN, 27 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Somalia** PM Nur Hassan and President Yusuf failed to agree on new cabinet or form new transitional govt by 12 Nov Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) deadline. 4th round of peace talks opened 22 Nov in Djibouti, following 21 Nov passing of June Djibouti agreement deadline for Ethiopian troop withdrawal; talks concluded 26 Nov with agreement to create 200 new parliament seats, incl 75 reserved for civil society. But expectations low and hardline Islamist groups not party to deal. UNSC 20 Nov agreed to impose sanctions on those contributing to Somalia violence and instability. Ethiopia 28 Nov announced plans to withdraw troops by end-2008. Violence continued: Al-Shabaab made further gains during month, including port towns of Merka and Barawe; 40 civilians reported killed, 70 injured in late-month clashes in Mogadishu. International outcry over late Oct stoning to death of 13-yr

old rape victim accused of adultery in Al-Shabaab-controlled Kismayo. Somali piracy activity spiralling, with 17 Nov capture of Saudi oil supertanker signalling increasing pirate capacities; EU 10 Nov launched 1st anti-piracy naval mission. Puntland region presidential candidates rejected govt-appointed election commission ahead of Jan 2009 elections.

- Comment by Daniela Krosiak and Andrew Stroehlein (Crisis Group), ["Somalie : la piraterie, fruit de la 'faillite' de l'Etat"](#), *Les Echos*, 19 Nov. 2008.
- ["Ethiopia to pull troops out of Somalia this year"](#), Reuters, 28 Nov. 2008.
- ["Power-sharing deal reached in Djibouti as TFG split widens"](#), IRIN, 26 Nov. 2008.
- ["Talks resume amid continuing violence"](#), IRIN, 24 Nov. 2008
- ["Islamists continue advance through Somalia"](#), *New York Times*, 13 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Somaliland (Somalia)** New rebel group Somali Unity Defense Alliance (SUDA) 10 Nov claimed responsibility for recent guerrilla attacks on Somaliland security forces, aiming to regain three regions currently under Somaliland control. Authorities 17 Nov announced second postponement of voter-registration due to security concerns after late-Oct bombings.

- ["Hostility rises in Hargeisa after suicide bombings"](#), IRIN, 10 Nov. 2008.
- ["New rebel outfit to fight Somaliland security forces"](#), Garowe Online, 10 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Sudan** Ahead of proposed Qatar peace conference, and in response to Sudan People's Initiative, President Bashir 12 Nov announced unconditional govt ceasefire in Darfur and militia disarmament. Darfur rebel groups said govt insincere, no ceasefire before peace deal. Ceasefire soon broken, with govt and rebels blaming each other; incidents included 2 mid-Nov govt aerial attacks reported by rebels, UN; 30 rebel fighters killed in 20 Nov insurgent attack; 21-22 Nov govt air strikes in south Darfur confirmed by UN. Govt 14 Nov confirmed purchase of 12 fighter jets from Russia. 500-strong Egyptian UNAMID battalion arrived in Darfur mid-Nov; UNAMID 25 Nov again cited troop, equipment shortages. Ruling NCP 9 Nov turned down possibility of bilateral talks with JEM in favour of inclusive peace agreement; JEM 16 Nov confirmed plans to send delegation to Qatari initiative. ICC prosecutor 20 Nov presented case for sealed indictment of 3 Darfur rebel commanders accused of Sept 2007 Haskanita attack on peacekeepers; 17 Nov provided over 700 pages additional info to Pre-Trial Chamber I judges on application for Bashir indictment. Following 17 Nov parliament approval Bashir 25 Nov appointed National Electoral Commission, needed for 2009 general elections. NCP, SPLM in late Nov agreement on press, land commission, human rights laws. FM 1 Nov said disgruntled pro-govt militia responsible for Oct kidnapping and murder of Chinese oil workers. 3 human rights activists detained 24 Nov in Khartoum; subsequently released. Over 150 journalists on 24-hr hunger strike 4 Nov to protest govt censorship; over 60 arrested 17 Nov for protesting, later released.

- Comment by Fouad Hikmat (Crisis Group), ["Is the Southern Kordofan issue a new Darfur?"](#), *Asharq Alawsat*, 25 Nov. 2008.
- ["Sudan government breaks Darfur ceasefire: UN's Ban"](#), Reuters, 27 Nov. 2008.
- ["ICC warrants sought for 3 Sudanese rebel chiefs"](#),

Washington Post, 21 Nov. 2008.

- "A gleam among the ruins", *Economist*, 20 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°145, *Sudan's Southern Kordofan Problem: The Next Darfur?*, 21 Oct. 2008.

## SOUTHERN AFRICA

➡ **Swaziland** Govt used new anti-terror law to increase pressure on opposition, banning 4 opposition groups 14 Nov and arresting pro-democracy activist and Pudemo party head Mario Masuko 15 Nov over alleged involvement in bombings during country's flawed Sept elections.

- "Swazi critic faces terror charge", BBC, 17 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Zimbabwe** Future of 15 Sept power-sharing deal still uncertain as political deadlock between ZANU-PF leader Mugabe and main MDC faction leader Tsvangirai continued. At late month talks in South Africa, parties 27 Nov signed draft constitutional amendment bill required to give legal effect to power-sharing deal, but still requires parliamentary approval. Agreement reportedly secured only after parties agreed to strictly limit scope of bill to deal's provisions: MDC says key issues still unresolved. SADC states meeting 9 Nov called for joint management of disputed interior ministry, immediate creation of unity govt, in statement seen as missed opportunity to censure Mugabe's increasing claims on power; Tsvangirai 14 Nov rejected proposal, refused to join govt, later called for mediator Mbeki's replacement. Rights groups reported rise in political violence by state and ZANU-PF militia, including harassment, arrests, rapes of MDC supporters and civilians; torture camps reportedly being re-manned; protests in Harare in 11, 26 Nov forcefully dispersed by police. Mugabe 26 Nov unilaterally reappointed Reserve Bank head Gono for further 5-year term. Series of defections from ZANU-PF to resurgent rival ZAPU-PF. South Africa 20 Nov withheld aid until representative govt formed. The Elders group of former statesmen in late month visit to highlight mounting humanitarian crisis met with regional leaders in Johannesburg; after being refused entry to Zimbabwe. UN warned 4m face starvation by Jan, cholera epidemic spreading.

- "Zimbabwe rivals head for talks on deadlock", *Guardian*, 25 Nov. 2008.
- "Barred from Zimbabwe, but not silent", *New York Times*, 24 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°51, *Negotiating Zimbabwe's Transition*, 21 May 2008.

## WEST AFRICA

➡ **Cameroon** Rebel group Bakassi Freedom Fighters 11 Nov released all 10 hostages taken in 31 Oct offshore attack on French oil vessel, reportedly in exchange for 13 Niger Delta rebels detained in Cameroon. President Biya met French officials 21 Nov to discuss military assistance in securing Bakassi area.

- "Bakassi militia free French oil hostages in Cameroon", *International Herald Tribune*, 11 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Côte d'Ivoire** Political leaders 10 Nov announced postponement of 30 Nov elections and called on electoral commission to set new date by 31 Dec. UNSC 7 Nov warned

poll delays risk disrupting north-south peace process. Army said 9 killed in 24 Nov attempt by unconfirmed group to seize weapons in western Séguéla army camp. 2 killed 20 Nov in clashes in west area of Zeaglo as armed youths attacked convoy of farmers returning to land after displacement during 2002 rebellion.

- "Ivorian poll officially postponed", BBC, 11 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°139, *Côte d'Ivoire: Ensuring Credible Elections*, 22 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Guinea** 1 killed and 20 injured early month in anti-govt protests calling for greater reduction in fuel prices. Heavy police presence reportedly retained in Boké following late Oct mass protests over failing public services.

- "Guinea, already shaken, rattled by protests", *International Herald Tribune*, 5 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°52, *Guinea: Ensuring Democratic Reforms*, 24 June 2008.

➡ **Guinea-Bissau** Optimism following peaceful 16 Nov parliamentary polls marred by 23 Nov attack on President Vieira's home in apparent assassination attempt by renegade soldiers, killing 1 bodyguard; 6 arrested. AU, UNSC condemned attack, while Senegalese President Wade strengthened troops on border. Election, judged free and fair by international observers, returned PAIGC and PM Gomes to power with 67 seats.

- "Guinea-Bissau repels attack on president", AP, 23 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°142, *Guinea-Bissau: In Need of a State*, 2 July 2008.

➡ **Liberia** UN peacekeepers 7 Nov increased patrols along Côte d'Ivoire border following unsubstantiated reports of incursions by rebel fighters.

- "UN troops in Liberia step up patrols on Ivory Coast border", AFP, 7 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Mali** Tuareg rebels from ADC group met 2 govt ministers 15 Nov to kick-start stalled peace talks: Bahanga's ATNMC rebels, blamed for bulk of attacks since mid-2007, failed to attend. Regional security conference in Bamako 11 Nov focused on cooperation to combat cross-border trafficking. 1 killed, 5 injured early month after police reportedly opened fire on crowds protesting plans to privatise water supply in Lere, Timbuktu region.

- "Tuareg rebels meet Mali ministers in bid to restart peace process", AFP, 15 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Niger** Govt for 4th time renewed state of alert in uranium-rich Agadez region, enabling extended detention without trial. Tuareg MNJ rebels 17 Nov claimed several soldiers killed in mid-month clashes in Agadez, army said deaths caused by landmines. In further blow to press freedom, Opinions editor Zakari sentenced 11 Nov for libel over alleging govt corruption. Former justice minister Loussa jailed 6 Nov for "illicit enrichment", first prosecution under 2006 anti-corruption law.

- "Niger government denies Tuareg rebel clashes", AFP, 18 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Nigeria** At least 200 killed, some 7,000 displaced in Muslim-Christian riots 28-30 Nov in Jos city, Plateau State, triggered by victory of mainly Christian-backed ruling PDP party in state local elections –bloodiest religious clashes for 4 years. Militancy in Niger Delta rose after relative lull in Oct, with signs

of potential for future escalation. At least 5 killed in 7, 11 Nov attacks on military and oil sites in Bayelsa and Rivers States; 6 militants killed 11 Nov by military Joint Task Force (JTF) forces in Rivers State; foreign workers and vessels seized, some released, over month. 2,500 new JTF troops deployed in Niger Delta, officially as part of routine troop rotation; followed by threats from militant groups to step up attacks. Dominant militia group, MEND, reportedly increasing number of Delta camps. High Court 11 Nov invalidated April 2007 election of ruling PDP party governor in Edo State, instating opposition AC candidate Oshiomhole and raising hopes for resolution of outstanding cases elsewhere. Economic and Financial Crimes Commission 3 Nov announced new cases into 10 former governors, 11 others ready for prosecution, but with no high level convictions since President Yar'Adua's election public confidence in anti-corruption drive continues to wane.

- "Death toll in Nigeria rises, army restores calm", Reuters, 30 Nov. 2008.
- "Nigerian militants threaten chaos in western delta", Reuters, 24 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°54, *Nigeria: Ogoni Land after Shell*, 18 Sept. 2008.

⇒ **Sierra Leone** 5 police officers seriously injured 25 Nov in attempt to quell student rebellion in Freetown after several students arrested for harassment. 3 Guinean pirates killed by armed forces in foiled 27 Nov raid on South Korean ship off Yeliboya.

- "Sierra Leone navy battles pirates", BBC, 28 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°143, *Sierra Leone: A New Era of Reform?*, 31 July 2008.



## Asia/Pacific

### CENTRAL ASIA

⇒ **Kazakhstan** First shipment of Kazakh oil pumped through BTC pipeline 3 Nov. Kazakh and Azeri state-run energy companies 14 Nov agreed on oil transport system across Caspian sea, to start 2013. Parliament 5 Nov ratified 2001-02 measures easing NATO and U.S. overflight requirements for Afghanistan re-supply missions, and facilitating overland supply routes between Caspian Basin and Afghanistan. Parliament 26 Nov passed religion bill, criticized by rights groups for restricting freedom of worship.

- "Kazakh lawmakers pass controversial religion bill, surprising OSCE", RFE/RL, 26 Nov. 2008.

⇒ **Kyrgyzstan** Worsening energy crisis prompted further divisions in govt and sacking of energy minister; opposition bitterly split over common vision, joint actions. Over a thousand joined various opposition parties 18 Nov in northern town Talas, protesting against corruption and nepotism. Over 1,200 delegates attended 29 Nov People's Grand Congress organized by main opposition parties; called for development and political reforms, human rights. Parliament 5 Nov modified 1991 religious freedom law to increase number of members required to register religious organizations from 10 to 200, reducing religious freedoms; issues of Hizb ut-Tahrir influence not tackled. 32 alleged Islamic activists, some purportedly

Hizb ut-Tahrir members, sentenced late month to prison terms of 9-20 years for subversion after 1 Oct demonstration in south. Pres Bakiev 19 Nov returned from medical treatment in Germany. World Food Programme 25 Nov launched winter emergency operation.

- "Antipresidential rally in Kyrgyzstan kicks off hot political winter", RFE/RL, 18 Nov. 2008.
- "Energy crisis threatens country's stability", EurasiaNet, 18 Nov. 2008.
- "Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan confront a financial disaster", EurasiaNet, 10 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°79, *Kyrgyzstan: A Deceptive Calm*, 14 Aug. 2008.

⇒ **Tajikistan** Kyrgyz border troops 24 Nov expelled some 20 Tajik farmers attempting to divert irrigation water in southern Batken oblast. 23 Nov confrontation between Kyrgyz border guards and 50 Tajiks grazing cattle in Kyrgyzstan resulted in 1 guard being assaulted and disarmed. Govt 19 Nov reported cotton harvests significantly below targets.

- "World Bank cautions Dushanbe about tough economic times ahead", EurasiaNet, 13 Nov. 2008.

⇒ **Turkmenistan** President Berdymukhamedov discussed closer political and economic ties during mid-Nov meetings in Germany and Austria; visits met with protests by rights groups. Pres Berdymukhamedov also agreed to strengthen ties with Korea during early Nov visit to Seoul. Campaigning for 14 Dec elections for expanded parliament began early-Nov; Berdymukhamedov announced 250 candidates for 125 seats, invited international observers to monitor; OSCE/ODIHR to send small Election Support Team. Helsinki Commission 19 Nov criticised recent political reforms, said elections unlikely to meet international standards.

- "Helsinki Commission hears gloomy predictions for Turkmen election", RFE/RL, 21 Nov. 2008.
- "Germany, Austria embrace realpolitik in their dealings with Ashgabat", EurasiaNet, 20 Nov. 2008.
- "Elections in Turkmenistan bring changes, at least superficially", RFE/RL, 17 Nov. 2008.

⇒ **Uzbekistan** Reports emerged 12 Nov that Uzbekistan intending to withdraw from Russian-backed Eurasian Economic Community (EEC). Authorities 18 Nov announced break-up of all-female Islamic Hizb ut-Tahrir radical cell in Tashkent. Reports of complaints from small farmers forced to give up leases on state-owned land as part of govt land consolidation effort.

- "Tashkent and Kabul", EurasiaNet, 20 Nov. 2008.
- "Moscow giving Tashkent the silent treatment", EurasiaNet, 17 Nov. 2008.

### NORTH EAST ASIA

⇒ **China (internal)** Tibetan exile gathering 17-22 Nov in Dharamsala, India, endorsed conciliatory strategy despite vocal pro-independence minority, following failure of early-month talks by envoys in China.

- "Tibetans reaffirm a conciliatory path", *International Herald Tribune*, 22 Nov. 2008.

⇒ **North Korea** North Korea 12 Nov announced restrictions on passage from South to Kaesong industrial zone in North from 1 Dec; 24 Nov said closing associated rail link. Also 12 Nov

announced no sampling by foreign inspectors allowed to verify disablement of nuclear facilities in Yongbyon; repercussions for next phase of disablement unclear. Six-Party Talks due to resume in Beijing 8 Dec.

- "N. Korea stiffens diplomatic stance", *New York Times*, 24 Nov. 2008.
- "Latest threats may mean North Korea wants to talk", *New York Times*, 19 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°62, *After the North Korea Nuclear Breakthrough: Compliance or Confrontation?*, 30 Apr. 2007.

➡ **Taiwan Strait** China, Taiwan 4 Nov signed new series of cross-strait agreements, including increase in flights, shipping and food-safety cooperation. Visit by Beijing delegation led by Chen Yunlin was most high-level visit by Chinese Communist Party official to Taiwan since 1949 split. Chinese premier Hu Jintao met with Lien Chan, former Taiwan premier and honorary KMT party chair, in margins of APEC summit 22 Nov; highest level cross-strait meeting since 1949.

- "China and Taiwan expand accords", *New York Times*, 4 Nov. 2008.

## SOUTH ASIA

➡ **Afghanistan** 12 Nov truck bomb exploded near Kandahar's provincial council building, killing 6 and injuring council members including President Karzai's brother. Same day acid attack on schoolgirls in the city left a number disfigured. 13 Nov suicide attack on military convoy in eastern Afghanistan bazaar killed at least 8. ISAF Commander McKiernan and U.S. Defence Sec Gates 21 Nov said Pentagon mulling 15,000-troop "surge" in advance of Afghanistan's 2009 elections. U.S. commander of troops in east said first new combat brigade arriving Jan to be deployed to Logar and Wardak to counter strengthening insurgency near Kabul. 4 killed in suicide bombing outside U.S. embassy 27 Nov.

- "Rise in crime, kidnapping, top Afghans' worries", *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 Nov. 2008.
- "U.S. eyes 'surge' of over 20,000 for Afghanistan", Reuters, 22 Nov. 2008.
- "U.S. commander in Afghanistan puts forward reconciliation plan", RFE/RL, 19 Nov. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°158, *Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words?*, 24 July 2008.

🏠 🗳️ 🗳️ **Bangladesh** After Election Commission announced 11-day delay to Dec parliamentary polls, BNP announced intention to join election along with Awami League (AL); much uncertainty remains regarding prospects for crucial polls. Election Commission 22 Nov announced new schedule at behest of parties: parliamentary polls 29 Dec, local upazila polls 22 January. BNP welcomed change, 1 of 4 demands to govt before it confirms its participation, party now selecting candidates. Major parties continued to insist on lifting of emergency provisions in advance of polls. Tight restrictions on campaigning remain, but AL, BNP began campaigning despite ban until 3 weeks before polls. EU 18 Nov announced it would send full observation mission, to join handful of others; UN sent assessment mission. Dhaka sent troops to Myanmar border; warships to Bay of Bengal to protest Myanmar exploration of seas for oil, gas (see Burma/Myanmar).

- "Bangladesh party 'to enter vote'", BBC, 24 Nov. 2008.

- "Myanmar exits disputed waters, troops alert-Bangladesh", Reuters, 10 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°151, *Restoring Democracy in Bangladesh*, 28 Apr. 2008.

➡ **India (non-Kashmir)** Series of coordinated attacks on key targets in Mumbai 26-28 Nov as up to 40 gunmen killed some 170 in main train station, luxury hotels, Jewish centre. Some shootings targeted U.S., British nationals; others indiscriminate. Previously unknown Deccan Mujahideen claimed responsibility; Indian security forces suggested attackers had ties to Pakistan and initial investigations pointed at Lashkar-e-Tayyaba involvement (see Kashmir). Home minister Pital resigned 30 Nov over security failures. 9 Hindu extremists arrested 4, 12 Nov for alleged role in Sept bombings in Malegaon and Modasa.

- "India police say they hold 9 from Hindu terrorist cell", *New York Times*, 11 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Kashmir** Involvement of Pakistan-based militants in 26-28 Nov Mumbai attacks (see India) prompted sharp escalation in tensions with India; India now at war-level security. Initial investigations pointed to involvement of Kashmiri group Lashkar-e-Tayyaba; believed sole surviving attacker Pakistani. Pakistan President Zardari 30 Nov appealed to India for joint approach, said deploying Pakistan military to Kashmir would hurt fight against militants. ISI chief Gen. Pasha due to visit Delhi to assist investigation. Earlier, Zardari in 22 Nov comments to press hinted at "no first use" nuclear weapons policy, called for closer contact across LoC by loosening visa regime. First state polls of 7-stage elections across Jammu & Kashmir held 17, 23 Nov. Initial reports of high turnout (50-60% by district). Separatist tensions high as separatist leaders placed under house arrest, police enforced curfews on Srinagar and other towns, and tens injured in clashes between Muslim protesters and police.

- "Pakistan in trade and arms offer to India", *Financial Times*, 24 Nov. 2008.
- "Indian Kashmir votes under tight security", Reuters, 17 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Nepal** Constituent Assembly agreed 28 May 2010 deadline for completing new constitution. Strikes over killing of 2 youths by Maoist youth wing shut down Kathmandu 20 Nov. Nepali Congress leaders maintained strong opposition to Maoist integration into army. Indian foreign minister concluded successful visit as Maoist convention held intense debates on party policy.

- "Divisions cloud meeting of Nepal's ruling Maoists", AFP, 21 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°156, *Nepal's New Political Landscape*, 3 July 2008.

➡ **Pakistan** FM Qureshi disclosed ISI "political wing" had been disbanded, allowing ISI to focus on counter-terrorism operations. U.S. cross-border missile strikes continued throughout month as Pakistan military operations continued and suicide bombings hit Tribal Areas; U.S. strike on N Waziristan 22 Nov killed 5, reportedly including man linked to 2006 al-Qaeda plot to blow up UK airliners. USAID contractor shot dead in Peshawar 12 Nov. 10 Nov highway attack near Peshawar targeted NATO supply convoys headed to Afghanistan, a dozen trucks hijacked; 2 killed in further attack 1 Dec. President, PM, convened all-party conference 30 Nov

to consider response to increased tensions with India (see Kashmir). Over 20 killed in violence between Pashtuns and Urdu-speaking mohajirs in Karachi 29-30 Nov. IMF 24 Nov agreed \$7.6bn loan.

- "Islamabad tries to take military out of politics", *Financial Times*, 24 Nov. 2008.
- "U.S. kills al-Qaeda suspect", *Washington Post*, 23 Nov. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°160, *Reforming the Judiciary in Pakistan*, 16 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Sri Lanka** Military advances in north gave govt control of entire west coast, opening first land route into the Jaffna peninsula since mid-2006. Army remained on outskirts of LTTE de facto capital Kilinochchi despite intense efforts to gain control; both sides claimed heavy losses. Estimated 300,000 displaced in north: regular govt and UN convoys providing food, but shortage of shelter materials, inadequate medical supplies and staff, and lack of sanitation putting thousands at risk with onset of monsoon rains. Increasing attacks between Karuna and Pillayan factions of the TMVP and LTTE attacks on govt targets destabilising eastern province; 13 killed on 25 Nov alone.

- "High death toll in Kilinochchi battle", *Hindu*, 25 Nov. 2008.
- "Sri Lanka army 'takes rebel area'", BBC, 20 Nov. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°159, *Sri Lanka's Eastern Province: Land, Development, Conflict*, 15 Oct. 2008.

## SOUTH EAST ASIA

➡ **Indonesia** 3 Jemaah Islamiyah members executed 9 Nov for role in 2002 Bali bombings. Country set on high alert over possibility of revenge attacks, but no violence reported in response.

- "Anger erupts after executions in Bali blasts", *New York Times*, 9 Nov. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°81, *Indonesia: Pre-Election Anxieties in Aceh*, 9 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Myanmar/Burma** Over 80 activists sentenced to terms of up to 65 years in series of secret trials. Those sentenced include leaders of Sept 2007 protests, members of 88 Generation student movement. Bangladesh, Myanmar sent warships to disputed waters in Bay of Bengal in dispute over Myanmar offshore oil and gas exploration and alleged "incursion"; talks 16-17 Nov inconclusive.

- "Burma dissidents given 65 years each in jail for fuel price protest", *Financial Times*, 12 Nov. 2008.
- "Bangladesh and Burma in oil row", BBC, 3 Nov. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°161, *Burma/Myanmar After Nargis: Time to Normalise Aid Relations*, 20 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Philippines** Clashes between army and MILF rebels now more sporadic. In biggest clash, govt said 10 MILF killed in 10 Nov Lanao del Sur fighting. Govt asked Malaysia-led monitoring team to extend stay beyond 30 Nov mandate expiry through Feb, but Malaysia withdrew its 12 of 29 IMT monitors.

- "Islamic states urge Manila, rebels to resume talks", Reuters, 13 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°83, *The Philippines: The Collapse of Peace in Mindanao*, 23 Oct. 2008.

➡ **Thailand** Political crisis escalated again as People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) renewed intensity of their protests; rampant rumours of imminent coup. State of emergency declared in Bangkok airports 27 Nov after PAD protesters occupied city's 2 airports, cancelling all flights. Protesters apparently sought to block ministers from meeting PM Somchai in Chiang Mai. Thousands of govt supporters rallied in Bangkok 30 Nov, raising fears any clashes with PAD could turn violent. Earlier, thousands surrounded parliament 24 Nov. 1 killed, 20 injured in 20 Nov grenade attack on PAD-occupied Government House. Army chief called for dissolution of parliament as business disrupted by ongoing siege of govt buildings. UK revoked visas for former PM Thaksin and wife.

- "Thai PM declares state of emergency", *Guardian*, 28 Nov. 2008.
- "Thai protesters surround Parliament", *New York Times*, 24 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°82, *Thailand: Calming the Political Turmoil*, 22 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Timor-Leste** Court of Appeals 13 Nov ruled unconstitutional AMP govt's proposed transfer of oil funds to Economic Stabilisation Fund. Govt rejected finding, further stoking political tensions with Fretilin partner, which has threatened to leave govt in move that require early elections.

- "East Timor budget ruled unconstitutional", Radio Australia, 14 Nov. 2008.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°148, *Timor-Leste's Displacement Crisis*, 31 March 2008.



## BALKANS

➡ **Bosnia** 3 main parties 8 Nov reached consensus on key political issues including process for constitutional changes, census questions, Brcko status and state property; deal hailed "historic" by observers, but implementation in doubt. 2 junior coalition parties excluded from meeting, Bosniak SZBH and Croat HDZ1990, strongly critical. European Commission 5 Nov presented negative report on Bosnia's Stabilisation and Association Agreement progress. Peace Implementation Council (PIC) 19-20 Nov decided Office of the High Representative (OHR) to remain into 2009, to be reconsidered spring 2009; UNSC 20 Nov extended EUFOR mandate in Bosnia for another year. Bosnian Croat and Bosniak leaders of Federation 5 Nov failed to agree on govt restructuring. Tension continued over state prosecutor's investigation of possible corruption in Republika Srpska (RS) govt and RS resistance to court order to turn over documentation; RS 26 Nov pressed charges against OHR deputy head Raffi Gregorian – despite diplomatic immunity – and 8 Bosnians for "conspiring against RS". Series of minor ethnic clashes between Mostar youth late-Nov saw increased police deployments.

- "Bosnia deal triggers new tensions", *Balkan Insight*, 10 Nov. 2008.
- "Bosnia's Federation government crisis deepens", *Balkan Insight*, 6 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N° 180, *Ensuring Bosnia's Future: A New International Engagement Strategy*, 15 Feb. 2007.

➤ **Kosovo** UN, U.S., EU diplomatic pressure on Kosovo throughout month to accept Belgrade-approved 6-point plan reconfiguring UNMIK and enabling long-delayed EU rule of law mission (EULEX) deployment. Plan includes significant concessions to Belgrade, including separate chains of command for ethnic Albanian, Serb police. EU agreed EULEX to be UNSC-approved, status-neutral; not to implement Ahtisaari plan. Kosovo authorities 10 Nov said 6-point plan unacceptable: breaches sovereignty, territorial integrity and constitution. Several thousand 19 Nov protested in Pristina. Kosovo 18 Nov proposed 4-point plan for EULEX deployment in accordance with Kosovo constitution and Ahtisaari plan - rejected by Belgrade. Despite Pristina's continued opposition, UNSC 26 Nov approved 6-point plan, paving way for early-Dec EULEX deployment. Kosovo govt said plan cannot be implemented. European Commission's 5 Nov progress report criticised corruption and organized crime. 14 Nov explosion at EU Special Representative's Pristina office: 3 German intelligence agents arrested, released 10 days later; previously unknown group Army of the Republic of Kosovo claimed responsibility 27 Nov, threatened further attacks.

- "UN Kosovo plan 'will destabilize Balkans'", *Balkan Insight*, 27 Nov. 2008.
- "UN approves EU Kosovo mission", *EU Observer*, 27 Nov. 2008.
- "Kosovar Albanians protest new EU deployment plan", RFE/RL, 19 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N° 196, *Kosovo's Fragile Transition*, 25 Sept. 2008.

➤ **Macedonia** Greek and Macedonian responses to latest UN proposal for ongoing name dispute reportedly negative, with Macedonia opposed to name and lack of guarantees for Macedonian language and identity. Macedonia 17 Nov filed motion at International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Greece for breaking 1995 Interim Accord, by blocking Macedonia's NATO membership under its provisional name in April 2008. Greece said move evidence that Macedonia not committed to UN talks. In ongoing internal divisions, govt criticised President Crvenkovski's 3 Nov firing of chief name negotiator; Crvenkovski said not consulted about ICJ move. European Commission progress report 5 Nov did not recommend starting accession talks for Macedonia, as hoped, due to political shortcomings.

- "Athens and Skopje in UN court over name dispute", *EU Observer*, 18 Nov. 2008.
- "Greece reponds to UN name proposal", *Balkan Insight*, 12 Nov. 2008.

➤ **Serbia** In spite of successful Belgrade efforts to secure status-neutrality of EU rule of law (EULEX) mission in Kosovo (see Kosovo), opposition parties proposed govt no confidence vote, citing Serbian cooperation with EULEX deployment. Army chief Lt. Gen. Ponos late month announced Serbia seeking changes to 1999 Kumanovo agreement to abolish buffer zone between Serbian army and NATO forces in Kosovo. ICTY Chief Prosecutor Serge Brammertz in Serbia 17-18 Nov to evaluate Serbian cooperation with court; Dec report expected to point out continued shortcomings. ICJ 18 Nov ruled it can hear 1999 Croatian lawsuit filed against Serbia for genocide during early 1990s war; Serbia announced intention to file countersuit.

- "NATO: Serbia can't rework 1999 Kosovo deal", *Balkan Insight*, 1 Dec. 2008.

## CAUCASUS

➤ **Armenia** On sidelines of 24 Nov Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) meeting in Istanbul, FM Edward Nalbandian met with Turkish counterpart and urged re-opening of border (see Turkey). After 2 Nov signing of Moscow Declaration with Azeri President Aliyev, President Sarkisian 19 Nov consulted party leaders, promised nationwide referendum on any peace deal; Ter-Petrosian-led opposition movement boycotted meeting. Prominent investigative journalist beaten by 3 assailants 17 Nov, in 7th incident of violence against journalists this year.

- "Political tensions sow discord in Armenia", *Financial Times*, 3 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N° 48, *Armenia: Picking up the Pieces*, 8 Apr. 2008.

➤ **Azerbaijan** President Aliyev re-appointed all but one minister to cabinet following 15 Oct re-election. U.S. govt, human rights organisations criticised plans to cancel all foreign radio, TV broadcasts from Jan 2009. Ruling New Azerbaijan Party 9 Nov announced initiative to remove presidential term limit.

- "In Azerbaijan, the more things change, the more they stay the same", *EurasiaNet*, 11 Nov. 2008
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°50, *Azerbaijan: Defence Sector Management and Reform*, 29 Oct. 2008.

➤ **Chechnya (Russia)** Bomb at Grozny apartment building 23 Nov killed 4. In Urus-Martan district, 1 serviceman killed in explosion 19 Nov, Russian troops shot dead militant 9 Nov. Further 4 police officers, 2 rebels killed in separate clashes throughout month. 7 women found shot dead in and near Grozny 26, 28 Nov. Political struggle between President Kadyrov and rival Russian commander Sulim Yamadaev saw Kadyrov increasingly dominant: Russian army official 8 Nov announced disbandment of Yamadaev-led Vostok and Zapad battalions; Yamadaev further accused of killing 2 businessmen 2007.

- "Chechen leader further strengthens his position", RFE/RL, 14 Nov. 2008.
- "1 Russian soldier killed, 10 wounded in Chechnya", AP, 24 Oct. 2008.

➤ **North Caucasus (non-Chechnya)** Continued violence throughout region: In North Ossetia suspected suicide bomber killed 12 at Vladikavkaz market 6 Nov – worst single attack in months. Vladikavkaz mayor assassinated 26 Nov; at least 3 more killed in 27 Nov attack on car. In Ingushetia, gunmen 22 Nov attacked police station, raided café in capital Nazran, killing 1 civilian. 2 police shot dead in separate incidents 10, 11 Nov. Mosque worker fatally shot 30 Nov by unidentified gunmen in Malgobek. Nazran district court 12 Nov ruled illegal 31 Aug arrest of website owner Yevloev, later shot dead while in custody. Amid rising ethnic tensions, new President Yevkurov promised to support displaced ethnic Ingush from North Ossetia. Continued attacks on security officials in Dagestan saw 3 police, 1 civilian left dead in attack on Makhachkala police station; 2 police killed in clash with militants near Kakashura village 24 Nov; 1 killed 19 Nov in capital Makhachkala. Charodinsky district head Murtuz Kuramagomedov assassinated by unidentified gunmen 12 Nov. Senior police officer shot dead 9 Nov in Khasavyurt. 1 rebel shot dead by police 28 Nov in Kabardino-Balkaria republic.

- "Ingushetia in 'state of civil war'", BBC, 23 Nov. 2008.

- “Russia’s Medvedev urges vigilance after bomb blast”, Reuters, 7 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°192, *Russia’s Dagestan: Conflict Causes*, 3 June 2008.

➡ **Georgia** Situation around South Ossetia (SO) and Abkhazia conflict zones remains unstable with shots fired 23 Nov at car carrying President Saakashvili and Polish President Kaczynski near SO administrative border. 2 killed, 9 injured by unmanned drone crash near SO 17 Nov. Georgian policeman shot dead near Abkhazia 15 Nov. 10 Nov Dvani blast left 2 Georgian police dead. SO militias 15 Nov left disputed Perevi village after takeover from withdrawing Russian troops caused ethnic Georgians’ flight – Russian troops returned to restore security. Informal Georgia-Russia talks in Geneva 19 Nov on refugee return, future security arrangements, included representatives of Abkhazia, SO. EU 1 Dec launched war inquiry mission; Swiss Heidi Tagliavini appointed head of mission. Mounting political pressure on Saakashvili in wake of anniversary of Nov 2007 violent crackdown on opposition: 10,000 in anti-govt rally; 350 protested 23 Nov against Nov 07 closure of independent IMEDI TV station, requested return to ‘legal owner’. Former parliamentary speaker Burjanadze 23 Nov inaugurated new opposition Democratic Movement-United Georgia, called for early elections. Saakashvili 4 Nov dismissed army chief Zaza Gogava, citing failures during August war.

- “On Rose Revolution anniversary, mixed feelings in Georgia”, *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Nov. 2008.
- “Talks on Russia-Georgia war seen as ‘constructive’”, RFE/RL, 20 Nov. 2008.
- “A tiny village emerges as a potential flashpoint”, EurasiaNet, 17 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** 2 Nov talks in Moscow between Azeri, Armenian and Russian presidents resulted in first joint declaration since 1994 ceasefire but no detailed agreement reached – parties pledged non-use of force, observance of international law, confidence-building measures; affirmed commitment to OSCE Minsk Group-proposed “Madrid principles”. U.S. Minsk Group co-chairs in 13-17 Nov visit said sides far from agreement – first joint visit to region since Aug when activities were suspended over Georgia crisis.

- “Karabakh declaration hopes and fears”, IWPR, 11 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°187, *Nagorno-Karabakh: Risking War*, 14 Nov. 2007.

## EASTERN EUROPE

➡ **Belarus** U.S. criticised President Lukashenka’s 14 Nov announcement to host Russian missiles countering U.S. missile-shield – foreign ministry 17 Nov denied plans.

- “U.S. rejects as not helpful Lukashenka missile offer”, RFE/RL, 15 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Moldova** Police 13 Nov blocked opposition rally calling for Russian troop withdrawal from Moldova. Russian Deputy PM Igor Shuvalov 14 Nov offered to mediate Transdnister settlement. Separatist authorities 3 Nov denied President Voronin entry to Transdnister.

- “Russia offers to mediate peace deal for Moldova”, Reuters, 14 Nov. 2008.

Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°51, *Georgia: The Risks of Winter*, 26 November 2008.



A failed war and a worsening economy present severe challenges to state authority in Georgia and make the need for serious reforms ever more urgent. President Saakashvili is likely to lose international goodwill if reforms are not completed. The government must restore stability to encourage foreign investment, build a truly independent judiciary, eliminate high-level corruption and make vital changes to the electoral code and presidential powers.

➡ **Ukraine** In ongoing political struggle, pro-Russian opposition accused govt of secret arms sales to Georgia during Aug war with Russia. Early parliamentary elections further delayed after parliament refused to finance poll. PM Tymoshenko 20 Nov called for “new grand coalition”, offered to resign to end political deadlock. Renewed dispute with Russia over \$2.4 b gas debts as RosUkrEnerg 26 Nov threatened gas cuts if no repayment by Jan.

- “As Ukraine staggers, its leaders quarrel”, *International Herald Tribune*, 4 Nov. 2008.

## WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➡ **Basque Country (Spain)** Suspected ETA head Mikel Garikoitz Aspiazu Rubina (“Txeroki”) arrested 17 Nov in Cauterets, southern France; charged over Dec 2006 Madrid airport bombing. 8 further militant separatists arrested 4 Nov in France by police investigating links between ETA and Batasuna political party.

- “Eta separatists down but not out”, BBC, 17 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Cyprus** Power-sharing discussed 3 Nov at 7th meeting since beginning of peace talks. Amid growing public criticism, Greek Cypriot leader Christofias stressed need for patience; UN envoy Downer saw “good progress”. Christofias 21 Nov warned against Turkish interference in negotiations. Rising tensions over offshore oil exploration as Turkish naval vessel 13, 24 Nov stopped ships conducting Greek Cypriot seismic surveys.

- “Cyprus talks resume amid mistrust”, BBC, 3 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°194, *Reunifying Cyprus: The Best Chance Yet*, 23 June 2008.

➡ **Turkey** Bomb attack 21 Nov set on fire Kirkuk-Ceyhan oil pipeline near Midyat – Kurdish rebels held responsible. Further signs of improving ties with Armenia as FM Babadjan met Armenian FM Edward Nalbandian 24 Nov in Istanbul. EU Commission in key 9 Nov progress report praised Turkish regional foreign policy achievements but criticized lack of domestic reforms, including failings in press freedom and women’s rights. Istanbul pro-Kurdish rally blocked by police 2 Nov; 27 arrested. Yuksekova Police 2 Nov clashed with 3,000-strong rally protesting Erdogan visit to Kurdish-dominated region. 2 police left dead in 27 Nov PKK attack on Iskenderun police station. 3 soldiers, 4 PKK killed 19 Nov in separate clashes near Lice and in eastern Van province. 10 Nov cross-border strikes into Iraq.

- “Turkey and Armenia in tentative talks”, *Financial Times*, 25 Nov. 2008.
- “Violent nationalism blights Turkey”, BBC, 19 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°184, *Turkey and Europe: The Way Ahead*, 17 Aug. 2007.



## Latin America / Caribbean

- **Bolivia** Govt 23 Nov ended martial law in Pando department, imposed after dozens killed in Sept demonstrations; prefect Leopoldo Fernandez still detained, awaiting trial. National electoral court (CNE) early month warned Jan constitutional referendum would be suspended if martial law not lifted. President Morales 1 Nov suspended U.S. DEA activity in Bolivia, accused of espionage and “funding criminal groups”; 20 Nov said hopeful of improving relations with incoming Obama administration.

  - “[Bolivia ends martial law in northern region](#)”, Reuters, 23 Nov. 2008.
  - “[Bolivia’s Morales diplomatic, defiant in visit to D.C.](#)”, *Washington Post*, 20 Nov. 2008.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°18, [Bolivia: Rescuing the New Constitution and Democratic Stability](#), 19 June 2008.
  
- **Colombia** Army Commander General Mario Montoya resigned 4 Nov over Oct dismissal of 26 army personnel suspected of killing 11 civilians; further 13 officers dismissed 17 Nov on similar charges. UN 1 Nov said army extrajudicial killings “widespread and systematic”; attorney general currently investigating more than 1550 cases. 2 killed, 12 injured in 30 Nov FARC attack in Putumayo department; rebels 28 Oct said still open to hostages-for-prisoners swap in open letter to Colombian intellectuals. U.S. govt report 5 Nov stated “Plan Colombia” has failed to reduce coca cultivation.

  - “[Uribe tropieza con la guerra sucia](#)”, *El País*, 17 Nov. 2008.
  - “[Colombia aid failed to halve drug making, report finds](#)”, *New York Times*, 5 Nov. 2008.
  - For latest report, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°29, [Correcting Course: Victims and the Justice and Peace Law in Colombia](#), 30 Oct. 2008.
  
- **Ecuador** National electoral council (CNE) 24 Nov scheduled general elections for 26 Apr 2009. Govt 30 Oct issued formal protest to OAS over Colombian claim of 16 FARC camps across Ecuadorian border.

  - “[Convocan elecciones](#)”, BBC, 24 Nov. 2008.
  
- **Haiti** Provisional electoral council (CEP) scheduled senatorial elections for 19 Apr 2009; Senate president Bastien rejected calls for Nov 2009 general elections. Desperate humanitarian situation continues after hurricane season.

  - “[Cuba and Haiti hard hit in hurricane season](#)”, Reuters, 14 Nov. 2008.
  - For latest report, see Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Report N°28, [Reforming Haiti’s Security Sector](#), 18 Sept. 2008.
  
- **Nicaragua** Violent protests throughout month after opposition accused ruling Sandinista party of electoral fraud in 9 Nov municipal elections. Sandinistas officially won 94 of 146 mayoralities, but independent national observers reported widespread irregularities at polling stations. President Ortega during run-up denied OAS observers access, barred 2 opposition parties from running. Supreme electoral council (CSE) 13 Nov ordered recount of key Managua vote. Pro- and

anti-govt street protests throughout month sporadically violent, dozens injured.

- “[El fraude electoral divide a Nicaragua](#)”, *El País*, 14 Nov. 2008.
  - “[How to steal an election](#)”, *Economist*, 13 Nov. 2008.
  
- **Peru** Suspected Shining Path attacks left 4 police dead, 4 injured 27 Nov in San Martín department; 3 killed, 1 injured 16 Nov in Ayacucho department.

  - “[Suspected rebels kill three police officers in Peru](#)”, Reuters, 16 Nov. 2008.
  
- **Venezuela** Gains for opposition in 23 Nov local and regional elections: won 5 states, including most populous Zulia and Miranda, and Caracas mayoralty; but President Chávez’s PSUV party kept clear majority, winning 17 of 22 states. High 65% turnout. Chávez accepted result immediately, despite harsh rhetoric against opposition during campaign. Chávez and Russia President Medvedev 27 Nov signed agreement on development of civilian nuclear program; Russian warships 24 Nov arrived in Venezuela for joint naval manoeuvres in Caribbean. Chávez 30 Nov said will seek constitutional amendment to remove presidential term limits, despite rejection in Dec 2007 referendum.

  - “[Medvedev, Chavez sign oil agreements before war games](#)”, Bloomberg, 27 Nov. 2008.
  - “[Once considered invincible, Hugo Chávez takes a second blow](#)”, *International Herald Tribune*, 25 Nov. 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 Palestinian Territories** New round of Gaza violence threatened June ceasefire, due to expire 19 Dec. Spiraling violations followed 4 Nov Israeli incursion across Gaza border to destroy tunnel. Palestinian militias fired rockets into Israel, including strikes reaching Ashkelon. Further raids and clashes left over 12 militants dead; Israel said scores of rockets fired in month, 8 soldiers wounded 28 Nov. Israel and Hamas leaders expressed commitment to ceasefire, but traded blame. Israel closed all Gaza crossings, banned entry of foreign journalists. Blockade lifted briefly; UN officials again reported supply shortages, warned of humanitarian crisis. Cairo attempted to mediate resumption of ceasefire, despite Hamas refusal to attend 10 Nov meeting on recent Palestinian reconciliation proposal. New Kadima party leader, Israeli FM Livni, and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas met Quartet representatives in Sharm el-Sheikh 9 Nov; pledged to continue Annapolis process. Israeli cabinet 30 Nov approved planned release of 250 Fatah prisoners as “goodwill gesture”. Israeli political party leaders continued campaigning ahead of Feb 2009 elections, with hardline Likud party, led by Netanyahu, ahead in polls. Outgoing PM Olmert 2 Nov announced measures against illegal settlements in West Bank, including enhanced law enforcement to curb settler violence; settlers and Palestinians clashed in Hebron 29 Nov.

- “Still talking: Annapolis one year on”, BBC, 27 Nov. 2008.
- “The return of blood and anger”, *Economist*, 13 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°24, *Round Two in Gaza*, 11 Sept. 2008.

➡ **Lebanon** Relations with Damascus strained, despite Oct establishment of diplomatic ties. Syria 6 Nov broadcast Fatah al-Islam members’ confessions to 27 Sept car bombing in Damascus, accusing Saad Hariri’s pro-Western, Sunni “Future Movement” of complicity with jihadis and indicating explosives were brought from northern Lebanon, attacker was Saudi. Interior Minister Ziad Baroud and Syrian counterpart met in Damascus 10 Nov; agreed to form committee to cooperate on terrorism and crime – visit criticised in Lebanon. National reconciliation efforts led by President Suleiman continued, but undermined by hostility between Christian leaders Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea. Suleiman announced intention to form new Christian parliamentary bloc. 2 reported Israeli agents captured in Bekaa 1 Nov, linked to Feb assassination of Hizbollah commander Imad Mughniyah in Damascus. Lebanese soldiers clashed with gunmen in Tripoli 21 Nov, killing 1. Suleiman met Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad in Tehran 24 Nov. Following 26 Nov report to Security Council, UNSG Ban said he expects UN special tribunal for 2005 assassination of former PM Rafiq Hariri to start operations 1 March 2009.

- “Hariri tribunal expected to start on March 1”, AP, 28 Nov. 2008.
- “Behind the Syria TV ‘confessions’”, BBC, 7 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°78, *The New Lebanese Equation: The Christians’ Central Role*, 15 July 2008.

➡ **Syria** Tensions with U.S. remained high following 26 Oct U.S. cross-border attack on Syrian territory. Damascus continued to reject accusations of support to terrorists. Iraq and Syria agreed to increase border security cooperation. IAEA report 19 Nov said building destroyed in Sept 2007 Israeli air strike at Al Kibar site bore similarities to nuclear reactor, found traces of uranium – but did not exclude non-nuclear use. IAEA called for further inspections, cooperation from Syria and Israel. Head of Syria’s atomic agency 21 Nov said would not allow another visit. Despite initial resistance by U.S. and others, IAEA 25 Nov approved technical aid to Syria to build power-producing reactor. David Miliband in 19 Nov visit to Damascus, first by UK foreign minister since 2001, urged Syria to promote stability in region. Syria 6 Nov broadcast confessions by Islamist militants in 27 Sept Damascus car bombing that killed 17 (see Lebanon).

- “In US defeat, UN agency approves Syria nuclear aid”, AP, 26 Nov. 2008.
- “Syrian site ‘resembled reactor’”, BBC, 19 Nov. 2008.
- “Britain urges Syria to move on Mideast peace”, Reuters, 18 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°63, *Restarting Israeli-Syrian Negotiations*, 10 Apr. 2007.

## GULF

➡ **Iran** IAEA report 19 Nov said Iran is increasing stockpile of enriched uranium and refused to allow scheduled IAEA visit to Arak heavy-water reactor. UK and France 24 Nov moved to increase informal pressure on financial and energy companies to stop doing business with Tehran. Parliament 4

Nov voted to impeach hardline Interior Minister Ali Kordan – close associate of President Ahmadi-Nejad – after he admitted Oxford University degree was forgery. Amid other attacks on president’s loyalists and deteriorating economic situation, parliament 18 Nov narrowly approved replacement, Sadeq Mahsulhi, also close to Ahmadi-Nejad. Iran 5 Nov accused U.S. helicopters of flying close to border; said would respond to any violation. State media 13 Nov reported successful test of new long-range surface-to-surface missile capable of reaching Europe. Ahmadi-Nejad 6 Nov sent official letter of congratulations to U.S. President-elect Barack Obama, who has expressed openness to talking with Tehran; he responded that “Iran’s development of a nuclear weapon ... is unacceptable”. Iraq and Iran 30 Nov exchanged remains of 200 Iraqis, 41 Iranians killed in 1980-88 war.

- “Britain and France step up business pressure on Iran”, *Financial Times*, 24 Nov. 2008.
- “The party’s over”, *Economist*, 20 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Iraq** Long-term security pact between U.S. and Iraq, providing for U.S. troop withdrawal by end of 2011, approved by Iraqi cabinet 16 Nov, parliament 28 Nov – presidency council must still sign off and public referendum required mid-2009. Terms include U.S. troop withdrawal from Iraqi towns and cities by end of June 2009, Iraqi jurisdiction over “major and international crimes” committed by U.S. troops when committed off-base and off-duty. Radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who strongly opposes any U.S. troop presence, called for protests – thousands turned out in Baghdad 21 Nov. Iraqi govt mid-month began making payments to Sunni militia members (Awakening Councils), previously paid by U.S. Parliament 3 Nov voted to reserve 6 provincial council seats, out of over 400 total, for minorities – 3 for Christians, 1 each for Yazidi, Mandaean and Shabak groups. Measure fell short of 12 seats proposed by UN. Provincial council vote now set for 31 Jan for the 14 governorates covered in law approved in Sept. Explosions still disrupting relative calm, including multiple morning rush hour bombs in Baghdad, 8 killed in Anbar 8 Nov, female suicide bomber killing 3 in Falluja 9 Nov, at least 15 killed at police checkpoint in Diyala 16 Nov.

- “U.S.-Iraqi pact has many uncertainties”, *International Herald Tribune*, 30 Nov. 2008.
- “Iraq boots the Americans out”, *Economist*, 20 Nov. 2008.
- “‘Sons of Iraq’ move hailed a success”, BBC, 18 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N° 80, *Oil for Soil: Toward a Grand Bargain on Iraq and the Kurds*, 28 Oct. 2008.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°81, *Turkey and Iraqi Kurds: Conflict or Cooperation?*, 13 November 2008. Rising acrimony over disputed territories will undermine still fragile progress in Iraq unless a package deal is reached over oil, revenue sharing, federalism and the constitution. This conflict potentially matches or even exceeds the Sunni-Shiite divide that spawned the 2005-2007 sectarian war. The current piecemeal approach to its resolution should be discarded in favour of a grand bargain involving all core issues.



➡ **Yemen** Protests in several regions followed opposition coalition’s call for boycott of electoral registration process launched 11 Nov – violent clashes with security forces reported, including protesters wounded 27 Nov in Sanaa. 2 soldiers, 1

civilian killed in southern Abyan governorate 19 Nov in clashes between govt troops and alleged Islamist militants. Human Rights Watch report 19 Nov said govt preventing humanitarian, media access to conflict-hit northern Saada region. Al Qaeda in Yemen reportedly claimed deadly Sept bombing outside U.S. embassy.

- [“Yemeni police clash with protesters”](#), AP, 27 Nov. 2008.
- [“Invisible Civilians: The challenge of humanitarian access in Yemen’s forgotten war”](#), Human Rights Watch, 19 Nov. 2008.

## NORTH AFRICA

➡ **Algeria** Constitutional amendment removing presidential term limits passed by overwhelming parliamentary majority 12 Nov, opening door for President Bouteflika to contest 2009 elections. Mayor of northern town Tamezrit abducted and killed 5 Nov; govt said Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb responsible.

- [“Algeria abolishes presidential term limits”](#), AP, 12 Nov. 2008

➡ **Egypt** Tensions in Sinai peninsula increased with wave of early Nov protests by Bedouin minority against police treatment and marginalization by govt, triggered by Oct arrests of members suspected of smuggling through Gaza tunnel: violence left 3 dead, 30 injured; 25 police briefly kidnapped. Human Rights Watch 13 Nov condemned Egypt’s “shoot-to-kill” policy at Gaza border; 1 migrant killed 24 Nov in 27th death this year. Police 29 Nov arrested further 28 members of illegal opposition group Muslim Brotherhood in coastal town Marsa Matrouh, reportedly bringing number detained to 171.

- [“New confrontation with Sinai Bedouins”](#), *Los Angeles Times*, 16 Nov. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°61, [Egypt’s Sinai Question](#), 30 Jan. 2007.

➡ **Libya** At least 11 reportedly killed in violent clashes 3-7 Nov in Kufra, southeast, between security forces battling members of Tabu tribe protesting discrimination – regional leaders later disputed scale of violence.

- [“Political violence erupts in Libya”](#), *Los Angeles Times*, 8 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Mauritania** Ruling military junta 13 Nov transferred President Abdellahi from Nouakchott to home town Lemden – still under house arrest. EU 20 Nov said move insufficient, considering “appropriate measures” against junta to increase pressure for restoration of constitutional order. High-level French delegation visited Abdellahi 29 Nov, international mission to broker solution to crisis expected 7 Dec.

- [“Donors on standby while EU considers next step”](#), IRIN, 20 Nov. 2008.

➡ **Western Sahara** Moroccan King Muhammad VI 6 Nov launched scathing verbal attack against Algerian support for region’s independence, accusing Algiers of seeking to balkanize Maghreb and demanding it re-open common border.

- [“Moroccan monarch prefers solution to Western Sahara problem”](#), Africa Online, 8 Nov. 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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**President William J. Clinton, 5 March 2007**

### Advocacy Offices

<b>Brussels</b>	brussels@crisisgroup.org +32 2 502 9038
<b>Washington</b>	washington@crisisgroup.org +1 202 785 1601
<b>New York</b>	newyork@crisisgroup.org +1 212 813 0820
<b>London</b>	london@crisisgroup.org +44 207 831 1436
<b>Moscow</b>	moscow@crisisgroup.org +7 495 455 9798

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