

1 May 2008, N°57

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 135 staff members across five continents, who already report on over 60 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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April 2008 Trends



Deteriorated Situations

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| Burundi (p.2) | Sri Lanka (p.6) |
| Georgia (p.8) | Uganda (p.2) |
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Improved Situations

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Nepal (p.6)
Timor-Leste (p.7)



Unchanged Situations

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May 2008 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alerts

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| Burundi | Zimbabwe |
| Georgia | |



Conflict Resolution Opportunities

Zimbabwe

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CENTRAL AFRICA

↙ ↘ **Burundi** Major army-FNL rebel clashes raged in Bujumbura and neighbouring provinces from 17 Apr; 52, likely more, reported killed. FNL shelled capital 22 Apr: Vatican embassy compound, university campus hit. Air force bombed rebel positions north west of Bujumbura 30 Apr. Peace process under threat as rebels pledged continued violence until demands met for renewed talks on power sharing; govt rejected. FNL refused to rejoin truce monitoring team, slated to resume 1 Apr, without amnesty. President Nkurunziza urged regional, international political intervention. National Assembly remains paralysed by political crisis. Former ruling CNDD-FDD leader Hussein Radjabu sentenced 3 Apr to 13 years on charges of fomenting instability; planning appeal.

- [“Shelling resumes in Bujumbura”](#), IRIN, 23 Apr. 2008.
- [“Burundi sentences former party boss to 13 years”](#), Reuters, 4 Apr. 2008.

↙ **Democratic Republic of Congo** Fresh fighting flared in North Kivu between army and Hutu FDLR rebels, forcing 25 Apr suspension of some relief operations. Inter-rebel, rebel-army clashes including Pareco, CNDP, FDLR militias continued in Kivu provinces through Apr. 63 rights, aid groups 22 Apr called for Jan Goma peace accord implementation and appointment of independent special adviser on human rights for east. Mass grave reportedly discovered in Bas-Congo, where March police-sect clashes killed some 100. ICC 29 Apr unsealed arrest warrant for militia leader Bosco Ntaganda on charges of conscripting child soldiers in Ituri 2002-2003 as former leader of FPLC; fourth ICC warrant in DRC.

- [“Dangerous DRC opportunism”](#), ISN, 24 Apr. 2008.
- [“End the horrific suffering in eastern Congo”](#), Human Rights Watch, 23 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°133, [Congo: Bringing Peace to North Kivu](#), 31 Oct. 2007.

↙ **Rwanda** 1 dead in 10 Apr grenade attack on Kigali genocide museum during annual memorial week; 1 killed as car mowed into memorial procession. Key ICTR hearing commenced 24 Apr on transfer of jurisdiction of cases to Rwandan courts.

- [“Key hearing begins for future of Rwanda genocide trials”](#), AFP, 24 Apr. 2008.

↙ **Uganda** Peace precarious as LRA leader Kony failed to sign permanent deal, amid reports of multiple civilian abductions. Kony delayed 10 Apr signing, seeking guarantees of own safety, financial security and clarification on justice mechanism; chief LRA negotiator then “quit”, reportedly fired. Govt negotiators left talks 11 Apr. Unconfirmed reports of 9 rebels killed in early Apr LRA infighting over deal, including ICC-target and Kony deputy Okot Odhiambo. UN Envoy Chissano optimistic talks salvageable, but President Museveni said Kony “not serious”. Recent abductions reported in DR Congo, Sudan, Central African Republic claimed to be LRA by rights groups – some 350 allegedly kidnapped, including some 50 children. 3 journalists arrested 26 Apr for reports critical of govt.

- [“Uganda LRA rebels reject government ultimatum”](#), VOA, 29 Apr. 2008.
- [“Hundreds abducted in Central Africa”](#), Amnesty International, 22 Apr. 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** Anti-govt rebels clashed 1 Apr with army in eastern Adé: 7 civilians killed, 47 wounded. President Déby replaced sacked PM Coumakoye with Youssouf Saleh Abbas 16 Apr – Abbas immediately offered to negotiate with rebels, who dismissed PM as powerless. 4 opposition members named ministers 23 Apr; France welcomed as reconciliation, rebel National Alliance rejected as divisive. Human Rights Watch 1 Apr reported 10,000 evicted during Feb-March state of emergency in capital. Ex-president Hissène Habré to stand trial in Senegal for abuses during 1982-90 rule.

- [“Chad rebels reject Deby cabinet as divisive ploy”](#), Reuters, 28 Apr. 2008.
- [“High civilian casualties in rebel-govt crossfire”](#), IRIN, 3 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°111, [Chad: Back towards War?](#), 1 June 2006.

↙ **Ethiopia** Opposition reported 17,000-plus candidates and 2 main parties withdrew from local elections – with some parliamentary by-elections – due to beatings, intimidation. 3 killed in 14 Apr bomb blasts at 2 Addis Ababa gas stations, perpetrators unidentified.

- [“Ethiopia votes in local elections”](#), BBC, 13 Apr. 2008.

↙ **Ethiopia/Eritrea** UNSG Ban Ki-moon warned UNMEE withdrawal could prompt Ethiopia-Eritrea war. UNSC considering options for future UN/UNMEE presence; condemned Eritrea’s continued “obstructions”. Addis Ababa severed ties with Qatar 21 Apr; cited strong links to Eritrea, support for regional armed opposition groups including in Somalia.

- [“Ethiopia severs ties with Qatar”](#), AFP, 21 Apr. 2008.
- [“UN fears new Ethiopia-Eritrea war”](#), BBC, 11 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°48, [Ethiopia and Eritrea: Stopping the Slide to War](#), 5 Nov. 2007.

↙ **Kenya** Power-sharing coalition sworn in 17 Apr, breaking 6-week impasse; move followed 13 Apr naming of 40-member cabinet with opposition ODM leader Odinga as PM. Largest cabinet since independence estimated to cost one-eighth of govt revenue; Finance Minister Kimunya warned of budget cuts in key ministries to fund cabinet. Some 10 killed in 13-17 Apr Mungiki gang protests at murder of jailed leader’s wife; major transport routes in Nairobi, Naivasha paralysed. Gang abandoned 29 Apr reconciliation talks with govt after 2 top leaders shot 28 Apr. Rights groups 4 Apr accused both military and anti-govt militia, Sabaot Land Defence Forces (SLDF), of large-scale abuses in Mt Elgon area; 6 bodies found 29 Apr blamed on SLDF.

- [“More nice jobs for the boys”](#), *Economist*, 17 Apr. 2008.
- [“Gang protests dampen Kenya’s joy over cabinet”](#), Reuters, 14 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°137, [Kenya in Crisis](#), 21 Feb. 2008.

- ☞ **Somalia** Over 100 killed in 19 to end Apr clashes: some say fighting in Mogadishu heaviest since 1991; several key towns, districts fell to Islamist militants. U.S. airstrike 1 May reportedly killed al Shabaab commander, Aden Hashi Ayro, believed al-Qaeda boss in Somalia, and some 9 others. 21 reportedly executed by alleged Ethiopian soldiers in capital mosque 19 Apr: 50 children reportedly abducted: Ethiopia denied involvement. Ethiopian forces also accused of 28, 30 Apr retaliatory attacks on civilians in Baidoa, at least 16 killed. 4 teachers – 2 Kenyan, 1 Briton of Somali origin – killed 13 Apr when suspected insurgents took control of Hiraan regional capital Beledweyne. 4 reported killed in southern town Merka in grenade attack on cinema. Further 20 killed in early Apr violence across country. Alliance for Reliberation of Somalia in Asmara agreed 10 May meeting with Transitional Federal Government – first since 2006; called for UN mediation. 8 Apr suicide attack on AU base killed 1 Burundian peacekeeper, 4 civilians. Dramatic rise in piracy including attacks on French yacht, Spanish fishing boat, Dubai-flagged cargo ship, all later released. 2 UN contractors – Kenyan, Briton – kidnapped 1 Apr, still missing; UNHCR vehicle escaped 5 Apr Puntland ambush.
- Comment by Daniela Krosiak and Andrew Stroehlein (Crisis Group), “[Oh My Gosh, Pirates!](#)”, *International Herald Tribune*, 28 Apr. 2008.
 - “[War and drought push people to breaking point](#)”, ICRC, 30 Apr. 2008.
 - “[Exiled Somali leaders want UN-mediated talks](#)”, Reuters, 16 Apr. 2008.

- ☞ **Somaliland (Somalia)** Somaliland parliament granted President Dahir Riyale 1-year term extension 10 Apr ahead of May elections; bomb exploded in parliament building 9 Apr, no casualties. 2 reported killed in 27 Apr police crackdown on rioters.
- “[Somaliland leader gets controversial term extension](#)”, Garowe Online, 10 Apr. 2008.

- ☞ **Sudan** Some 30 killed in 24 Apr violent North-South clashes in contested Abyei region between southern army (SPLA) and northern Misseriya, following early Apr reports of northern troop deployments to region. 95 killed in inter-tribal fighting in southern Lakes and Warrap states. Repeatedly delayed census, first since 1993, launched 22 Apr; seen as prerequisite to democratic elections 2009. Major army-JEM rebel clashes reported in Darfur 12 Apr, both sides claim inflicted heavy losses. Army allegedly bombed 2 villages 1 Apr, killing 1 child, Khartoum denies. AU, UN Envoys reported parties to conflict agreed in mid-month consultations to discuss security improvements, but not ceasefires or new peace talks. Mission head said 30 Apr 1,600 troops to join AU-UN peacekeeping mission June; UNMIS mandate renewed same day. 2 WFP drivers killed 7 Apr in South Sudan, 1 in Darfur 21 Apr; agency announced 17 Apr regularity of attacks forced halving monthly rations in Darfur. UN humanitarian chief 22 Apr put 5-year Darfur conflict death toll as high as 300,000; Sudan rejected.
- “[Clashes in Darfur, protests mark five years of war](#)”, Reuters, 13 Apr. 2008.
 - “[UN given access to resolve Sudan oil flashpoint](#)”, Reuters, 7 Apr. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°47, [Sudan: Breaking the Abyei Deadlock](#), 12 Oct. 2007.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

- ☞ **Comoros Islands** Ousted Anjouan leader Bacar, 21 supporters released from jail 18 Apr on French island Reunion but kept under house arrest after renegade island retaken March. France still considering Bacar’s request for asylum, while Comoros demanding his extradition. Interim President Cheikh appointed interim govt 1 Apr, confirmed elections expected in 3 months. UN fact-finding mission said island’s humanitarian situation “severe”.
- “[Anjouan road to recovery now open](#)”, IRIN, 29 Apr. 2008.

- ☞ ☞ ☞ **Zimbabwe** Govt blocked release of flawed 29 March presidential election results and launched brutal countrywide crackdown amid widespread reports of opposition MDC leader Tsvangirai victory. MDC gains create possibility for transition from ZANU-PF rule – but more violence threatens. Independent observers say no candidate won 50% needed to avoid run-off. ZANU-PF preparing for second vote; MDC stance shifting. Electoral commission 2 Apr announced historic MDC majority in simultaneous parliamentary poll; ongoing recount confirmed shift. MDC factions – Tsvangirai and Mutumbara – 28 Apr announced reuniting after 2005 split. Organised state violence against foreign journalists, polling officers, opposition activists and citizens intensified. “War veterans” deployed to rural areas, reportedly establishing detention camps. Some 300 arrested, documents seized in 25 Apr raids on MDC and Zimbabwe Election Support Network offices; MDC claimed 15 members killed. South African President Mbeki criticised for failure to denounce Mugabe and polls; Zambia, Botswana reportedly calling for more pressure. SADC 12 Apr urged release of results, joining UN, AU, G8 call. UK, U.S. proposed arms embargo late month. UNSC divided at 29 Apr Zimbabwe discussion; South Africa, China opposed aid provision and appointment of special envoy. South Africa 18 Apr refused to unload Chinese ship carrying arms for Zimbabwe.
- “[Opposition factions unite to demand Mugabe’s exit](#)”, *Guardian*, 29 Apr. 2008.
 - “[Surge in state-sponsored violence](#)”, Human Rights Watch, 25 Apr. 2008.
 - “[The stalemate turns bloody](#)”, *Economist*, 24 Apr. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°138, [Zimbabwe: Prospects from a Flawed Election](#), 20 Mar. 2008.

WEST AFRICA

- ☞ **Cameroon** Parliament voted 17 Apr to remove presidential term limits, clearing way for President Biya to continue 26-year rule past 2011. Opposition groups protested: SDF boycotted debate; case against Biya by opposition AMEC thrown out of Supreme Court.
- “[Cameroon’s descent](#)”, *International Herald Tribune*, 10 Apr. 2008.
- ☞ **Côte d’Ivoire** Electoral Commission 14 Apr set delayed presidential elections for 30 Nov to increase time for voter registration, disarmament. Govt 17 Apr signed voter identification deal with French firm Sagem. Former rebel Forces Nouvelles (FN) announced new drive to integrate troops into national army or civilian life, to begin 2 May. Dismantlement

of ONUCI observation posts in former “zone of confidence” neared completion; 2 of 17 remain. UN expert group 7 Apr report alleged multiple violations of 2004 UN arms embargo by national army and FN. Ex-rebel leader Ibrahim Coulibaly (IB) sentenced 31 March by French tribunal to 4 years, accomplice Paul Leonelli 3 years, for involvement in 2003 coup attempt.

- [“Ivory Coast rebels to relaunch disarmament: official”](#), AFP, 22 Apr. 2008.
- [“Ivorian poll date delay welcomed”](#), BBC, 15 Apr. 2008.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°139, [Côte d’Ivoire: Ensuring Credible Elections](#), 22 Apr. 2008. To avoid a return to violence, all actors must focus on creating conditions for free and fair elections, set for 30 Nov 2008. This presents a potentially explosive environment. Critical factors are: strict adherence to the 2007 Ouagadougou Peace Accord; implementation of a consensual security plan for identification and elections; a conflict prevention strategy devised with the help of Burkina Faso President Compaoré and the UN mission.



➤ **Guinea** Trade unions cancelled strike planned end March over living costs, cited positive efforts to redress concerns by “oversight committee” monitoring Jan 2007 peace accord – reports many feared repeat of Jan 07 strike crackdown. Govt 1 Apr announced end to fuel subsidies; price rises over month prompted oil, staple goods export ban 15 Apr. Peace accord “follow-up committee” stalled when business representatives withdrew late Apr, protesting slight by President Conté. Power struggle between Conté and PM Kouyate continued as Conté annulled PM decisions on Libyan investment, ceremonial reading 4, 19 Apr. UNDP appointed mediator and ex-Haitian PM Latortue urged reassessment of Jan accords to avoid return to conflict, after first mission completed 11 Apr.

- [“Guinea bans food, oil exports to curb high prices”](#), Reuters, 16 Apr. 2008.
- [“Guinea’s Conte snubs prime minister over Libya deal”](#), Reuters, 5 Apr. 2008.

➤ **Guinea-Bissau** National Assembly 16 Apr voted to extend MP terms – due to expire 21 Apr – to 16 Nov legislative elections, amid concerns President Vieira plans to dissolve parliament and appoint interim govt; majority party PAIGC opposed. 12-13 Apr clashes between rival police units killed 2 officers, 1 prisoner, circumstances unclear; Judicial Police unit head threatened resignation, Interior Minister Biote promised inquest. UN released \$6m – first tranche of funding for post-conflict reconstruction; followed early Apr UN Peacebuilding Commission assessment mission and G-B request for \$20-50m.

- [“Police kill police”](#), IRIN, 14 Apr. 2008.
- [“Bissau-Guinean civil society wants premier to resign”](#), APA, 20 Apr. 2008.

➤ **Liberia** UN SRSR Ellen Margrethe Løj 14 Apr stressed fragility of peace, continued reliance on UNMIL for security amid concerns over planned UNMIL drawdown impact. Paris Club creditors 18 Apr agreed \$254m debt relief for Liberia, conditional on IMF-set reforms. 2 Apr UNMIL report alleged corruption among court officials.

- [“UN Secretary General urges continued international support for Liberia’s recovery”](#), VOA, 23 Apr. 2008.
- [“Paris Club reaches debt deal with Liberia”](#), Reuters, 18 Apr. 2008.

➤ **Mali** Libyan-brokered “protocol of understanding” between govt and Tuareg rebels (Alliance Touareg Nord-Mali, ATNMC) signed 3 Apr: agreed ceasefire, govt scale-back of forces in north, release of 33 soldiers captured by ATNMC in March; remains fragile. Govt official 8 Apr said military given no orders to abide by ceasefire, distrusts ATNMC pledge. Further talks stalled after Algeria refused to take over mediation effort. In north town Kidal: several killed 2 Apr in army airstrikes on ATNMC bases; 1 Tuareg Malian army officer, 1 Tuareg civilian killed 11 Apr, responsibility disputed; many reportedly displaced. 3 Tuareg negotiating release of 2 Austrian hostages held north Mali assassinated mid-month.

- [“Mali not following truce with desert rebels”](#), Reuters, 8 Apr. 2008.
- [“Mali Tuareg rebels in peace pact”](#), BBC, 4 Apr. 2008.

➤ **Niger** Toubous-led Revolutionary Armed Forces of the Sahara (FARS) 2 Apr announced joined forces with Tuareg Niger Justice Movement (MNJ); reportedly 5-6 Apr killed 7 soldiers, captured 6. Govt claimed several MNJ bases destroyed, 10 killed in 19-29 Apr offensive. National Assembly 12 Apr said rebellion threatened stability, voter registration pre-2009 elections; strengthened anti-terrorism law approved 19 Apr. Govt closed Sahara FM radio, Agadez, after station reported army abuses.

- [“Niger, hit by Tuareg revolt, adopts anti-terror law”](#), Reuters, 20 Apr. 2008.
- [“Rebels in Niger a grave threat to stability: assembly”](#), AFP, 13 Apr. 2008.

➤ **Nigeria** Lawyers challenged court order for MEND faction leader Henry Okah – charged with gun-running, treason and not seen in public since Sept arrest – to be tried in secret; ruling due 2 May. President Yar’Adua 10 Apr renewed call on African states, U.S. to help set up force to secure offshore oil facilities. Delta violence continued: gunmen killed 2, abducted 3 in separate attacks in Port Harcourt 6, 20 Apr; 4 killed when Agip oil vessels bombed 13 Apr; MEND reportedly launched various attacks on oil pipelines, severely affecting production. 4 Americans, 1 Nigerian temporarily detained 12 Apr for illegally entering Niger Delta waters, declared military zone. Election of Sokoto and Bayelsa state governors (ruling PDP) annulled 12 and 15 Apr in wake of Apr 2007 flawed elections. Countrywide violence through month: at least 12 killed in series of party supporter clashes; 15 reportedly killed in inter-communal clashes in Ogun, Anambra states early Apr.

- [“Nigeria militants claim new attacks; Shell joint venture says production hit”](#), AP, 21 Apr. 2008.
- [“Nigeria court to rule on secrecy of oil rebel trial”](#), Reuters, 23 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°135, [Nigeria: Ending Unrest in the Niger Delta](#), 5 Dec. 2007.

➤ **Senegal** Constitution changed to allow trial of ex-Chad leader Hissène Habré – under Dakar house arrest since 1990 – in Senegal for crimes against humanity during 9-year rule; France pledged funding. President Wade denied food crisis, blamed opposition for 30 March food price riots.

- [“No food crisis here, says Senegal’s president”](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 22 Apr. 2008.

➤ **Sierra Leone** 300 youths clashed with police, military in Kano late Apr over ownership of sand stock allegedly promised

by ruling APC. Police 11 Apr vowed to curb lawlessness, citing rise since Feb. UNDP announced 3-year \$80m capacity building program for SL govt.

- "Youths, police clash in Kono", *Concord Times*, 24 Apr. 2008.



Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

➡ **Kazakhstan** Govt announced wheat export ban (not flour) 15 Apr to stave off shortages; move raised supply concerns in neighbouring republics. Free-trade zone agreed with Uzbekistan 22 Apr. President Nazarbayev's former son-in-law Aliyev, following 26 March sentence in absentia for coup plot, released further evidence of alleged corruption of top officials.

- "Coup plots alleged as former presidential son-in law battles authorities", RFE/RL, 20 Apr. 2008.
- "Grain export ban stokes inflation fears elsewhere in Central Asia", EurasiaNet, 16 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Kyrgyzstan** Dozens briefly arrested in 10 Apr protests in Bishkek against govt plan to cede 3 contested areas, 4 tourist sites to Kazakhstan. Deal ratification led to 300-strong demonstration 26 Apr. In 17 Apr Astana visit President Bakiyev said Kyrgyzstan excluded from Kazakh wheat export ban, guaranteed 300,000 tons grain. Legislative changes 18 Apr removed parliament's right to review energy privatisation deals. Opposition-convoked assembly 12 Apr adopted resolution demanding dissolution of parliament, invalidation of constitution. Russian soldier serving at Kant military base shot by Kyrgyz police 20 Apr; Moscow called for inquest.

- "Russian soldier's shooting sparks diplomatic row", RFE/RL, 21 Apr. 2008.
- "Opposition calls for dismissal of parliament, new constitution", RFE/RL, 12 Apr. 2008.

See Crisis Group Asia Report N°150, *Kyrgyzstan: The Challenge of Judicial Reform*, 10 Apr. 2008. Kyrgyzstan's judiciary is neither politically neutral nor a fair channel for economic arbitration. It requires considerable overhaul to represent an independent branch of government. Improving its effectiveness is essential and the restoration of public faith necessary to undermine support for criminal and extremist groups.



➡ **Tajikistan** Diplomatic tensions with Kyrgyzstan heightened after late-March water disputes at border, involving hundreds of Tajiks, Kyrgyz border guards. Govt admitted 8 Apr to having provided false data to IMF to secure loans for agriculture sector. Independent radio station Imruz closed 8 Apr for reporting critically on internal Tajik affairs.

- "Tajik-Kyrgyz water clash a sign of things to come", IWPR, 2 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Turkmenistan** EU leaders met with Turkmen officials in Ashgabat 9-10 Apr; deal reported of 10 Bcm additional annual gas supply to EU – details unconfirmed. Gas deliveries to Iran resumed 25 Apr at doubled price, following 29 Dec cut. President Berdymukhammedov 14 Apr sacked transport

minister, Central Bank chief, other top finance officials.

- "Finance officials sacked amid talk of economic reforms", EurasiaNet, 21 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°60, *Turkmenistan after Niyazov*, 12 Feb. 2007.

➡ **Uzbekistan** At 2-4 Apr NATO Bucharest summit, President Karimov authorised NATO rail access to Afghanistan; called for new "6+3" process, adding NATO to U.S., Russia, neighbouring countries group to increase Afghanistan stability. Dissident poet Yusuf Juma sentenced 15 Apr to 5 years forced labour for Dec 2007 protest against Karimov. Uzbek arrested in Kazakhstan 20 Apr in connection with 2005 Andijon massacre. EU foreign ministers voted 29 Apr to suspend visa ban on Uzbek officials for further 6 months; pledged review in July.

- "EU keeps sanctions on Uzbekistan suspended", Reuters, 29 Apr. 2008.
- "Karimov approves overland rail re-supply route for Afghan operations", EurasiaNet, 7 Apr. 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)** Lhasa govt 24 Apr warned no tolerance for "excit[ing] popular feelings" in advance of Olympic torch relay passing through region 20 June; security tightened. 30 sentenced 29 Apr for participation in March Lhasa riots; many awaiting trial. State media announced 25 Apr govt will meet with Dalai Lama representative but continued to denounce role in violence. Reports of minor violence in Tibetan areas: attack on Garze govt offices in Donggu township, Sichuan 3 Apr left 1 official seriously injured, Tibetan exile groups said 8 civilians killed; 2 reported killed in Qinghai gun battle between alleged Lhasa rioter, police. 9 Tongxia monks arrested early month after detonating homemade bomb inside local govt offices.

- "Beijing to meet Dalai Lama's representative", *Guardian*, 25 Apr. 2008.
- "Chinese relentlessly patrol a subdued but jittery Lhasa", *Washington Post*, 15 Apr. 2008.

➡ **North Korea** Progress strained by 24 Apr U.S. accusations NK helping Syria build nuclear reactor "not intended for peaceful purposes" and continued hostile rhetoric in North-South relations. But 6-Party Talks likely to resume end May. U.S. demands on Pyongyang fluctuated in month: Washington suggested 13 Apr ready to offer nuclear assistance, removal of NK from terrorism list in exchange for acknowledgement "sharing" nuclear technology; followed by "positive" talks 22-24 Apr. Revelations of Syrian assistance increased pressure on NK for full disclosure. Inflammatory rhetoric between Koreans now worst in years, amid continued near-incursions; Pyongyang said 14 Apr would never make deal with "treacherous" Lee Myung-bak. Japan extended sanctions 11 Apr citing nuclear deadlock, unresolved kidnapping of citizens.

- "N Korea 'helped' Syria build nuclear plant", *Financial Times*, 24 Apr. 2008.
- "N. Korean Rep. calls for end of hostile U.S., S. Korea policies", *Chosun Ilbo*, 14 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°73, *South Korea's Election: What to Expect from President Lee*, 21 Dec. 2007.

- **Taiwan Strait** Historic meeting of Taiwanese VP-elect Siew and mainland President Jintao 12 Apr marked first official Beijing visit by high-ranking Taiwanese politician since 1949. But cross-strait détente tempered by President-elect Ma Ying-jeou 8 Apr statements refusing to directly engage. Ma also appointed Lai Shin-yuan, former pro-independence Taiwan Solidarity Union lawmaker, as head of Mainland Affairs Council.
- “China and Taiwan report small steps in easing tensions”, *New York Times*, 14 Apr. 2008.
 - “Taiwan president-elect cautious on swift China ties”, AFP, 8 Apr. 2008.

SOUTH ASIA

- **Afghanistan** President Karzai escaped unharmed from 27 Apr attack on military parade that killed 1 MP, ethnic minority community leader, child; later claimed by Taliban. Breach prompted 29 Apr vote of confidence in parliament: ministers of defence, interior, head of national department of security. 30 Apr gun battle in Kabul with suspected plotters killed at least 4. NATO Bucharest summit 2-4 Apr: Kabul said Afghan forces to take security lead in capital from August; France announced roughly 700 new troops to deploy in east, freeing some U.S. to redeploy to south. Several suicide attacks struck south western province Nimroz targeting local police, foreign road engineers amid increased insurgent activity there. 29 Apr suicide attack in Nangarhar province aimed at poppy eradication program killed over 15 after several months national downward trend in suicide bombings.
- Comment by Nick Grono (Crisis Group), “There is no quick fix for Afghanistan”, *Guardian*, 19 Apr. 2008.
 - “Afghan lawmakers push cultural bans of Taliban era”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 Apr. 2008.
 - “New NATO commitments lead Kabul to take greater security role”, RFE/RL, 4 Apr. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°145, *Afghanistan: The Need for International Resolve*, 6 Feb. 2008.
- **Bangladesh** Informal talks between caretaker govt (CTG) and political parties on democratic transition began mid-month; govt pledged easing emergency before general elections due by end 2008. Former PM Hasina hospitalised 18 Apr; supporters demanded she be moved abroad for treatment, threatened to boycott elections. At least 50 injured as thousands protesting food prices near Dhaka clashed with police 11 Apr; violence also erupted in capital 9 Apr when Islamists protested equal inheritance rights for women. New corruption charges announced against Hasin, Khaleda and 18 others 1 May.
- “A different sort of emergency”, *Economist*, 17 Apr. 2008.
 - “Police: 10,000 workers protest in Bangladesh for better wages to meet higher food prices”, AP, 12 Apr. 2008.

See Crisis Group Asia Report N°151, *Restoring Democracy in Bangladesh*, 28 Apr. 2008. The CTG, along with the international community, must take credible steps to restore democracy ahead of the December general elections. Despite its insistence on stamping out corruption and holding elections by Dec, its achievements have been patchy. There is an immediate need for dialogue between the CTG and the main parties. Ideally, a new consensus would not only cover pre- and post-election behaviour but also commitments on democratic functioning.



- **India (non-Kashmir)** Maoist rebels killed 8 villagers in Patna, Jharkhand 7 Apr. Bomb blast killed 3 in Siliguri, West Bengal 2 Apr; police claimed suspects said explosion accidental, bomb meant for sabotage operations in Bhutan.
- “How will Maoist gains in Nepal shape two countries’ ties?”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 22 Apr. 2008.
 - “Maoists kill eight villagers in India’s east”, Reuters, 8 Apr. 2008.

- **Kashmir** Welcoming return to democracy in Pakistan, Indian PM Singh said expected bilateral ties to improve. Islamabad has already entered into talks to liberalise visa, trade regimes. Indian police claimed arrested senior Hizbul Mujahideen militant Junaid-ul-Islam 3 Apr. Protests against alleged mistreatment of political prisoners continued.
- “India and Pakistan to review peace process in May”, Reuters, 9 Apr. 2008.

- **Nepal** Twice-postponed Constituent Assembly (CA) polls held 10 Apr under generally free and fair conditions with little violence; turnout over 60%. Maoists picked up half assembly’s first-past-the-post seats, and 240 of 601 total. Nepali Congress and UML party trailed with second, third-strongest showings; haggling underway to form power-sharing govt. Maoist leader Prachanda hopes to assume presidency. CA to convene in May; declaration of republic tops agenda as Maoists called on King Gyanendra to “go gracefully”. Royalist politician Rudra Bahadur Singh shot dead 18 Apr.
- “Big Maoist wins could reshape Nepal’s politics”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 Apr. 2008.
 - “Former rebels conciliatory after election victory in Nepal”, *Guardian*, 24 Apr. 2008.

See Crisis Group Asia Report N°149, *Nepal’s Election and Beyond*, 2 Apr. 2008. Elections for the CA 10 April risked being marred by political violence, but if all parties cooperate, it could open the next stage in the peace process. The post-poll period will likely be difficult and dangerous, shaped by the behaviour of powerful losers.



- **Pakistan** Militant Baitullah Mehsud announced ceasefire in S Waziristan, adjoining districts 23 Apr after talks began between govt and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. But Mehsud stopped talks 28 Apr citing differences over scope of military withdrawal. Ceasefire also followed release of Sufi Mohammad by NWFP govt earlier in month. UK FM Miliband called for Pakistan re-entry into Commonwealth; membership suspended after November imposition of state of emergency. 7 killed 9 Apr in Karachi as clashes broke out between lawyers allied with MQM and opponents of President Musharraf. Jalozai refugee camp, home to 70,000 Afghans, officially closed 15 Apr; clashes with police reported as refugees refused to leave.
- “Baitullah abandons peace negotiations”, *Dawn*, 29 Apr. 2008.
 - “Pakistan fury at Nato border raid”, BBC, 24 Apr. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°74, *After Bhutto’s Murder: A Way Forward for Pakistan*, 2 Jan. 2008.

- **Sri Lanka** 150-200 govt soldiers reported killed, hundreds more wounded in fierce 23 Apr battle, as govt sought to breach LTTE forward defence lines at Muhamalai. Tigers admit 25

fighters dead, govt says more than 100. Army regained control of important Catholic Church and pilgrimage site in northern town of Madhu after months of fighting. Tigers, army each blamed other for blast that killed activist priest in LTTE-held Wannai region. Highways minister, 9 others killed in likely LTTE suicide explosion in Gampaha 6 Apr. 25 Apr bus bombing, also blamed on Tigers, killed 26 in Colombo suburb. Campaigning began for key eastern provincial council elections due 10 May.

- [“Sri Lanka meets tough Tamil Tiger resistance in north”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 Apr. 2008.
- [“‘Heavy losses’ in S Lanka clashes”](#), BBC, 23 Apr. 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** Bakorpakem unit in attorney general’s office recommended ban on Ahmadiyah sect 16 Apr. In 21 Apr sentencing of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) member Abu Dujana, Jakarta district court became first to declare JI a terrorist organisation. 10-year sentence for Timor-Leste militia leader Eurico Guterres overturned by Supreme Court 3 Apr, leaving no convictions for crimes against humanity in 1999 violence.
 - [“JI declared terrorist organization, alleged military chief given 15 years”](#), AP, 21 Apr. 2008.
 - For most recent report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°147, [Indonesia: Jemaah Islamiyah’s Publishing Industry](#), 28 Feb. 2008.

- **Myanmar/Burma** Opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) claimed massive voter intimidation ahead of 10 May constitutional referendum. Campaigning against constitution forbidden, but NLD encouraging “no” vote after deciding against boycott U.S. efforts to obtain UNSC statement condemning referendum blocked by China, Russia, Indonesia. 2 minor explosions in Yangon 20 Apr; govt blamed exiled opposition group. EU ministers extended sanctions, arms embargo by 1 year 29 Apr.
 - [“Burma’s wealth gap breeds discontent”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 Apr. 2008.
 - [“Junta using threats to win referendum vote, says NLD”](#), Irrawaddy, 24 Apr. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°144, [Burma/Myanmar: After the Crackdown](#), 31 Jan. 2008.

- **Thailand** 3 parties in ruling coalition, including PPP, continued to face allegations of vote-buying and electoral fraud. Election commission recommended dissolution of Chart Thai and Machima Thipataya parties 11 Apr, PPP likely to face similar charge; state prosecutors to decide on referral to Constitutional Court. Military admitted 56-year-old imam Yapa Kaseng beaten to death in custody late March; 5 army officers face prosecution. Slight further easing in martial law, but state of emergency holds in southern provinces.
 - [“Thailand martial law to be eased”](#), BBC, 17 Apr. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°140, [Southern Thailand: The Problem with Paramilitaries](#), 23 Oct. 2007.

- **Philippines** Malaysia threatened pullout of its members of International Monitoring Team in Mindanao conflict when current mandate expires Sept 2008, citing lack of progress.

Muslimin Sema, mayor of Cotabato and Nur Misuari rival, elected MNLF chair 1 Apr, sidelining Misuari.

- [“Malaysia monitors to exit Philippines in stages-media”](#), Reuters, 24 Apr. 2008.

- **Timor-Leste** Security threat removed; 29 Apr surrender of Gastão Salsinha and 11 other fugitive rebels linked to 11 Feb attacks on President Ramos-Horta may bring increased stability. But ramifications of presidential efforts at reconciliation in month unclear: upon 17 Apr return to Dili to resume presidential duties, Ramos-Horta announced pardon of 80 criminals, including convicted former interior minister Rogério Lobato, to take effect 20 May. After surrender, Ramos-Horta said “forgave” Salsinha but that he must face courts with 5 others. State of emergency lifted 22 Apr except in Ermera, where joint police-military command now tasked with search for illegal weapons. 4 Timorese rebels also detained in Indonesia in month for suspected involvement in attacks; 3 to be deported to Dili early May. 28 Apr Australia announced withdrawal of 200 extra troops sent after Feb attacks.
 - Comment by John Virgoe (Crisis Group), [“Timor’s predicament”](#), *Age*, 23 Apr. 2008.
 - [“East Timor rebel leader surrenders”](#), Reuters, 29 Apr. 2008.
 - [“E Timor vows ‘new chapter’ with Jakarta”](#), *Financial Times*, 29 Apr. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°148, [Timor-Leste’s Displacement Crisis](#), 31 Mar. 2008.



BALKANS

- **Albania** Governing Democrats and main opposition Socialists 21 Apr passed constitutional changes to electoral system increasing proportional representation; small parties opposed. Thousands in 4 Apr rally demanding resignation of PM Berisha after deadly 15 March weapons depot blast; prosecutor general asked parliament to lift resigned defence minister Mediu’s immunity for investigation.
 - [“Ex-communist Albania changes voting system in constitutional shake up”](#), AP, 22 Apr. 2008.
- **Bosnia & Herzegovina** Parliament 16 Apr adopted long-disputed reform on oversight and coordination of police required for Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA); EU delayed SAA signing due to translation issues. FM Alkalaj, 2 deputy ministers refused resignation 25 Apr after Central Election Commission ban from public office due to conflict of interest. National Minority Council established 23 Apr. Raids of suspected terrorists continued; 1 arrested 4 Apr.
 - [“BiH clears key hurdle on EU accession path”](#), SEE Times, 17 Apr. 2008.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°180, [Ensuring Bosnia’s Future: A New International Engagement Strategy](#), 15 Feb. 2007.
- **Kosovo** Kosovo leaders, EU Special Representative Feith approved new constitution 7 Apr; adopted by parliament 9 Apr. UNSC closed session 21 Apr discussed 17 March

Mitrovica courthouse violence – UN investigation underway; also Belgrade plans to hold general elections 11 May in 16 Kosovo municipalities. UNMIK chief Rücker said only UN had authority to hold elections; proposed later polls in 5 Serb-majority municipalities. UN-EU transition uncertain: EULEX deployment delayed; Rücker 21 Apr acknowledged need to “reconfigure” UNMIK presence but said mission to stay beyond 15 June entry into force of constitution. Former KLA leader and PM Ramush Haradinaj returned to Kosovo after acquitted of war crimes by ICTY 3 Apr; criticised PM Thaci 8 Apr for lack of govt working plan, failure to reach out to Serbs; called for early elections. Kosovo and Macedonia agreed border demarcation protocol 18 Apr; opposed by Belgrade, Russia. Independence recognitions continued: 38 total.

- [“Crisis looms over Kosovo’s future”](#), BBC, 29 Apr. 2008.
- [“As Kosovo eyes future army, NATO still in for the long haul”](#), SEE Times, 7 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N° 47, [Kosovo’s First Month](#), 18 Mar. 2008.

➡ **Macedonia** Parliament dissolved 12 Apr; early elections called for 1 June. UN envoy Nimetz continued negotiations on name issue after Greece blocked NATO accession 3 Apr. Greek FM Bakoyannis 20 Apr offered financial aid, reduced visa requirements in return for name change; Skopje rejected.

- Comment by Donald Steinberg (Crisis Group), [“Which Macedonia?”](#), *Guardian*, 1 Apr. 2008.
- [“Macedonia in troubled waters following NATO summit”](#), SEE Times, 21 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Serbia** Government crisis overties with EU continued: President Tadic, Deputy PM Djelic, FM Jeremic 29 Apr signed Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA); ratification and entry into force conditioned on cooperation with ICTY. PM Kostunica condemned as “anti-constitutional”, threatened impeachment of Tadic. Signature came after concerted EU pressure for SAA before 11 May parliamentary elections; EU Regional Policy Commissioner Hubner 21 Apr threatened aid cut. ICTY chief prosecutor Brammertz, during 17-18 Apr Belgrade visit, called for better cooperation; said appeal of Haradinaj acquittal under consideration (see Kosovo). Supporters of Sandzak Democratic Party attacked in Novi Pazar 26 Apr.

- [“EU cracks door for Serbia in advance of vote”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Apr. 2008.
- [“Has Haradinaj acquittal boosted Serbian radicals?”](#), IWPR, 11 Apr. 2008.

Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°49, [Will the Real Serbia Please Stand Up?](#), 23 Apr. 2008.

The international community should refrain from counter-productive intervention in 11 May parliamentary and local elections, including offering to sign a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). The election is unlikely to change Belgrade’s policy towards Kosovo, even if a pro-Western govt comes to power. EU leaders should not appease nationalist forces by offering an SAA before Serbia has met the long-standing condition of full cooperation with the Hague Tribunal.



CAUCASUS

➡ **Armenia** Government formed following 19 Feb presidential elections: Central Bank Chairman Tigran Sarkisian appointed PM; 11 of 17 retained cabinet posts. Continued protests: several

dozen protesters clashed with police in Hrazdan province 8 Apr; 7,000 participated in first authorised rally since 19 Apr end of state of emergency in Yerevan; 21 opposition activists ended hunger strike 10 Apr after appeal by presidential candidate Ter-Petrossian. U.S. 17 Apr threatened aid cut if govt failed to engage in “national dialogue”. Yerevan 25 Apr established working group to meet Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe resolution demanding independent investigation of 1 March crackdown and release of detainees, also repeal of legal amendments restricting freedom of assembly.

- [“New government takes shape, faces big challenges”](#), RFE/RL, 17 Apr. 2008.
- [“Death toll in Armenia’s postelection violence rises to 10”](#), AP, 14 Apr. 2008.

Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°48, [Armenia:](#)

[Picking up the Pieces](#), 8 Apr. 2008. The incoming administration of Serzh Sarkisian must urgently seek credible dialogue with the opposition, release prisoners detained on political grounds, stop arrests and harassment of the opposition and lift all measures limiting freedom of assembly and expression. Unless prompt steps are taken, the U.S. and EU should suspend foreign aid and put on hold negotiations on further and closer cooperation.



➡ **Azerbaijan** Opposition journalist Agil Khalil under pressure from authorities, state-controlled media after 13 March attack. 4 Armenians 28 Apr arrested in enclave of Nakhichevan; Armenia Defense Ministry said they entered territory accidentally. Armenia 23 Apr released Azeri soldier captured 9 March. Central Election Commission announced 15 Oct as presidential election date.

- [“Opposition journalist says he is victim of vicious smear campaign”](#), RFE/RL, 10 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°191, [Azerbaijan: Independent Islam and the State](#), 25 Mar. 2008.

➡ **Chechnya (Russia)** 15 Apr gunfight between pro-Kremlin militia Vostok and soldiers loyal to President Kadyrov left 18 dead in Gudermes; public chamber called for dismissal of militia leader Sulim Yamadayev 16 Apr as Chechen President forced to deny sanctioning clash. 2 nieces of human rights ombudsman’s representative killed in 20 Apr gun attack on car. Sunzhen district police chief Ali Gaidamurov found dead after 17 Apr abduction.

- [“Standoff between pro-Russian Chechen forces”](#), Reuters, 16 Apr. 2008.

➡ **North Caucasus (non-Chechnya)** Deputy head of Ingushetia’s Supreme Court Khasan Yandiyev shot dead 13 Apr; 3-5 armed gunmen raided Karabulak Interior Ministry office 16 Apr, wounding 6 police. Military convoy attacked by unknown gunmen in Nesterovskaya village 5 Apr. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe called to reinvigorate monitoring of region 15 Apr amid reports of “alarming” human rights violations.

- [“Top judge shot dead in southern Russia”](#), Reuters, 13 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Georgia** High Russian-Georgian tensions over Abkhazia breakaway region. Moscow 29 Apr announced, 1 May commenced, unilateral increase of peacekeepers (PKF)

in Georgian populated areas of Abkhazia; threatened “military reaction” if Georgia invades, claiming it deployed 1,500 troops in Upper Kodori valley – Tbilisi denies; continues to push for changes in Russian-led PKF. NATO, EU called for lowering tensions; U.S. urged Russian restraint. Tbilisi 21 Apr accused Russia of shooting down unmanned reconnaissance plane over Abkhazia; Moscow rejected, claiming plane violated 1994 ceasefire, shot down by Abkhaz forces. Russian President Putin 16 Apr announced recognition of legal documents issued by Abkhaz and South Ossetian de facto authorities; Tbilisi condemned. UNSC 15 Apr extended mandate of UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) for 6 months. Preparations for 21 May parliamentary elections: speaker Nino Burjanadze of ruling UNM 21 Apr withdrew candidacy; New Rights party announced 7 Apr to join opposition National Council; President Saakashvili 14 Apr warned opposition against popular unrest; OSCE established election observer mission 10 Apr. France 23 Apr granted political asylum to former Defence Minister Okruashvili after sentenced in absentia 28 March to 11 years. No NATO membership action plan offered at 2-4 Apr Bucharest summit, but political commitment for eventual membership made.

- [“Moscow’s move to bolster peacekeepers angers Tbilisi, worries EU”](#), RFE/RL, 30 Apr. 2008.
- [“Russia stoking tension by Abkhazia troop boost: NATO”](#), Reuters, 30 Apr. 2008.
- [“How a tiny breakaway province could become the new cold war frontline”](#), *Guardian*, 17 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°189, *Georgia: Sliding towards Authoritarianism?*, 19 Dec. 2007.

➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Armenia and Azeri presidents failed to meet at 2-4 Apr NATO Bucharest summit. Baku submitted formal query to OSCE secretariat on appointment process for Minsk Group co-chairs. Azeri FM Mammadyarov said 15 Apr new proposals expected from Group; declared willingness to meet with new Armenian FM Eduard Nalbandian 7 May in Strasbourg. Armenian President Sarkisian 16 Apr said “independence is irreversible”.

- [“It’s back to the drawing board for Karabakh talks”](#), EurasiaNet, 16 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°187, *Nagorno-Karabakh: Risking War*, 14 Nov. 2007.

EASTERN EUROPE

➡ **Belarus** Foreign ministry 30 Apr declared several U.S. embassy staffers “persona non grata”, in continuing economic sanctions dispute. EU Council 7 Apr extended visa bans by 1 year on 41 govt officials including President Lukashenka. Police forcefully dispersed protest against trial of youth activist Katsyaryna Salauyova in front of Polatsk court; arrested 2. Minsk authorities 21 Apr barred planned 26 Apr opposition rally.

- [“Political draft”](#), ISN Security Watch, 10 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Moldova** President Voronin 11 Apr offered “broadest possible autonomy” to Transdniestrian separatist leader Igor Smirnov in first direct meeting in 7 years; no further progress.

- [“Hard path ahead to solve Moldova separatism”](#), Reuters, 21 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Ukraine** Rift in governing coalition: PM Tymoshenko 20 Apr announced plans to transform Ukraine into parliamentary republic; accused President Yushchenko of blocking initiatives

16 Apr. Our Ukraine-People’s Self-Defense bloc leader Vyacheslav Kyrylenko said proposals are threat to “territorial integrity” of country.

- [“EU official says political system holds Kyiv back”](#), RFE/RL, 8 Apr. 2008.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➡ **Basque Country (Spain)** 2 attacks on ruling Socialist Party offices: 17 Apr in Bilbao injuring 7 police and 20 Apr in Elgoibar. 3 bombs exploded 1 May in San Sebastian and Vizcaya. Police 18 Apr arrested 10 accused of pro-ETA street violence.

- [“With peace talks a distant memory, Spain braces for Basque separatist violence”](#), AP, 11 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Cyprus** Further progress in reunification talks as 6 working groups, 7 technical committees started negotiations 18 Apr under UN auspices near Nicosia. Ledra border crossing in Nicosia opened 3 Apr. Turkish Cypriot leader Talat visited Greek part of Nicosia 4 Apr. UNSG 17 Apr appointed Tayé-Brook Zerihoun as new special representative.

- [“Symbolic Cyprus crossing reopens”](#), BBC, 3 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°190, *Cyprus: Reversing the Drift to Partition*, 10 Jan. 2008.

➡ **Turkey** Ruling AK Party announced working on democratisation package in effort to avoid party ban; parliament 29 Apr amended penal code article 301 – now crime to insult “Turkish nation” rather than “Turkishness”, maximum sentence lowered from 3 to 2 years and justice minister’s consent required to open investigation. Tens of thousands in 12 Apr Ankara rally in support of secularism. Prominent Kurdish rights activist Leyla Zana sentenced 2 years for spreading “terrorist” propaganda. EU Commission President Barroso said during 9-12 Apr visit opening of 2 further EU accession negotiation chapters likely June, called on govt to speed up reforms. FM Babacan 21 Apr announced Turkey ready to “normalise” relations with Armenia. 45 al-Qaeda members arrested 1 Apr in Istanbul. 27 PKK members, 3 Turkish soldiers killed in clashes throughout month in Simak, Hakkari, Bingol and Diyarbakir provinces; army 15, 23, 27 Apr bombed PKK targets in northern Iraq.

- [“Parliament approves ‘cosmetic’ free-speech reform”](#), RFE/RL, 30 Apr. 2008.
- [“Turkey’s secular-democratic tightrope”](#), ISN Security Watch, 17 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°184, *Turkey and Europe: The Way Ahead*, 17 Aug. 2007.



Latin America / Caribbean

➡ **Bolivia** Political crisis over new constitution continued, tensions grew, ahead of 4 May referendum in Santa Cruz (SC), first of 4 provinces to vote on increased autonomy. Govt froze SC accounts 25 Apr, but reversed decision shortly after. President Morales said referendum unconstitutional but rejected MAS party calls to declare martial law, ruled out military response. Regional representatives visited country early month to mediate. Land ownership conflicts erupted, including violent clashes between Guarani indigenous people

and estate farmers in Santa Cruz mid-month. Pro-Morales Guarani People's Assembly self-declared autonomy from Santa Cruz department 20 Apr.

- "Morales descarta militarizar Santa Cruz para evitar el referéndum", *El País*, 8 Apr. 2008.
- "Bolivia: situación "compleja"", BBC, 3 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Reports N°25 *Latin American Drugs I: Losing the Fight* and N°26 *Latin American Drugs II: Improving Policy and Reducing Harm*, 14 Mar. 2008.

➡ **Colombia** Tensions with Ecuador remained high following March airstrike as President Uribe and Ecuadorian President Correa traded snipes. Bogotá accused Quito of ordering army to avoid confrontation with FARC. Correa denied accusation, said 16 Apr any FARC incursion on Ecuadorian territory treated as act of war; announced new deployments on border. OAS missions sought to defuse tensions in capitals 8, 17 Apr. Correa offered to grant belligerency status to FARC if abides by law of war and releases hostages 23 Apr. Colombia protested, stated recognition of "terrorist groups" unfounded. Mario Uribe, key ally and cousin of president, arrested over alleged ties to paramilitary groups 22 Apr; request for asylum in Costa Rica rejected. 3 further congresspeople detained early month for suspected paramilitary links. Proposed hostage exchange collapsed after FARC rejected 8 Apr French mission and again demanded demilitarisation of area.

- "Colombia/Ecuador: olla a presión", BBC, 17 Apr. 2008.
- "Colombia: who are the enemies of peace and democracy?", openDemocracy, 9 Apr. 2008.

Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°17, *Colombia: Making Military Progress Pay Off*, 29 Apr. 2008. Years of President



Uribe's intensive security operations against the FARC are beginning to produce tangible results. But military gains can only succeed if combined with a political strategy that pursues a swap of imprisoned insurgents for hostages in FARC captivity, re-establishes working relations with neighbour states, and advances integrated rural development. It is crucial to engage Ecuador and Venezuela to re-establish and strengthen border cooperation and prevent the FARC's use of sanctuaries.

➡ **Ecuador** Relations with Colombia still strained (see Colombia). Military intelligence chief dismissed 4 Apr for failing to inform President Correa early month Ecuadorian citizen killed in March airstrike had been under investigation for ties to FARC. Defence minister replaced by close political ally of Correa 8 Apr, leading to resignation of heads of armed forces, military and police. Correa announced reinforcement of military capacity with purchase of 24 Supertucano fighter planes.

- "Ecuador: renuncia ministro de Defensa", BBC, 9 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°22, *Ecuador: Overcoming Instability?*, 7 Aug. 2007

➡ **Haiti** Violent protests over rising cost of food and fuel early month killed at least 6, led to ouster of PM Alexis. Began in Les Cayes 3 Apr but soon spread across country, intensified in Port-au-Prince where protesters tried to storm National Palace 7 Apr. MINUSTAH peacekeepers targeted in Les Cayes. Alexis dismissed after no-confidence vote 12 Apr; Préval announced short-term rice subsidies 12 Apr; issued call for greater food aid,

echoed by WFP. Ericq Pierre, IABD official designated as new PM by Préval 27 Apr awaiting ratification by 2 chambers.

- "Haitians say lowering rice price not enough", Reuters, 16 Apr. 2008.
- "Haitian senators took no chances in censure vote", Reuters, 12 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Report N°21, *Consolidating Stability in Haiti*, 18 July 2007.

➡ **Venezuela** President Chávez continued pushing radical reforms rejected in Dec referendum: private enterprises in steel, cement sectors early month – including Argentine, Mexican concerns – nationalised; law taxes on foreign oil companies raised, laws on police, military reserve and education reform decreed. Police operations against radical pro-Chávez groups in Caracas slums 3 Apr met with blockade of armed individuals, demonstrations. Protesters threatened "military response" if operations continued. 17 Apr pro-Chávez United Socialist Party of Venezuela registered before National Electoral Court ahead of Nov regional elections.

- "Venezuela approves law taxing foreign oil companies' windfall profits", AP, 16 Apr. 2008.
- "Strategic move", *Economist*, 10 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°19, *Venezuela: Hugo Chávez's Revolution*, 22 Feb. 2007.



Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

➡ **Israel/Occupied Territories** Tensions and violence again intensified in Gaza, but ceasefire mediation efforts continue. Cross-border attack on Nahal Oz fuel depot 9 Apr killed 2 Israelis, at least 7 Palestinians. Israeli tanks and bulldozers sent 11 Apr near Bureij refugee camp: at least 4 teenagers dead. Further clashes in vicinity 16 Apr killed 3 Israeli soldiers – fierce retaliation same day left 22 Palestinians dead, including 5 children and Reuters cameraman. Hamas breached border in armoured vehicle 19 Apr. Israel cut fuel supplies, seriously disrupting food distribution. Mother, 4 children killed 28 Apr after Israeli airstrike – army investigating. Yet both sides continued support for Cairo's ceasefire mediation efforts. Hamas 25 Apr offered 6-month "period of quiet" in Gaza first, later West Bank; Israel dismissed. 12 other Palestinian factions 30 Apr agreed in principle to ceasefire. Former U.S. President Carter 19 Apr met exiled Hamas leader Meshaal in Damascus, deputy Israeli PM Yishai in Israel. Talks between Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel continued: U.S. President Bush scheduled to visit mid-May. Israel agreed to PA opening 20 police stations in rural areas of West Bank, following March agreement on Jenin deployment. Israel staged 5-day civil defence drill early Apr amid increased tensions with Syria, Lebanon.

- Comment by Chris Patten (Crisis Group), "Tony Blair and getting to the endgame in Palestine", *Daily Star*, 1 Apr. 2008.
- "Palestinian factions agree to truce with Israel", Reuters, 30 Apr. 2008.
- "Chickens and eggs", *Economist*, 24 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°73, *Ruling Palestine I: Gaza under Hamas*, 19 Mar. 2008.

➤ **Lebanon** Parliament failed again to elect president – post vacant since Nov. Hizbollah-led opposition did not participate in 22 Apr session; speaker Nabih Berri called on rival leaders to hold talks before new vote 13 May. Arab FMs meeting in Kuwait City with U.S. Sec. State Rice and UN, EU officials issued statement 22 Apr expressing “deep dismay”, urging Syria, Lebanon to “redefine and normalize ties”. UN reported gunmen momentarily blocked UNIFIL patrol in pursuit of suspicious truck near Tyre end-March – first UNIFIL encounter with “armed elements” since end 2006 Israel-Lebanon war. Audiotape 22 Apr allegedly by al-Qaeda deputy Zawahri urged militants to “expel” peacekeeping forces in Lebanon. 2 members of Christian Phalange Party, part of governing coalition, shot dead 20 Apr in Zahle. Johan Verbeke of Belgium appointed as new UN special coordinator for Lebanon.

- [“Lebanese lawmakers fail again to elect president”](#), AP, 23 Apr. 2008.
- [“U.N. says gunmen blocked peacekeepers in Lebanon”](#), Reuters, 23 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°69, [Hizbollah and the Lebanese Crisis](#), 10 Oct. 2007.

➤ **Syria** Signs of possible resumption of Syrian-Israeli talks, but tensions with U.S. continue. Both President Assad and Israeli PM Olmert publicly acknowledged messages exchanged. Turkish PM Erdogan stepped up behind-scenes efforts in Damascus visit 26 Apr; said talks to begin at low level. Former U.S. President Carter, in Damascus for Hamas talks (see Israel/OPT), said 21 Apr Assad believes only few issues remain but U.S. discouraging Israel from proceeding. Tensions high at border with 5-day Israeli civil defence drill, Syrian manoeuvres in response. U.S. intelligence officials 24 Apr released information accusing Syria of building nuclear reactor with North Korean assistance at site destroyed in 6 Sept Israeli airstrike; Damascus denied. IAEA to investigate claims; criticised U.S. delay in disclosure.

- [“UN probes US Syria reactor claim”](#), BBC, 25 Apr. 2008.
- [“Turkish PM visits Syria in push for Israel peace deal”](#), AP, 26 Apr. 2008.
- [“Israeli-Syrian peace talks broached, but border tension high”](#), AP, 21 Apr. 2008.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°63, [Restarting Israeli-Syrian Negotiations](#), 10 Apr. 2007.

GULF

➤ **Iran** On “national nuclear day” 8 Apr President Ahmadi-Nejad announced ongoing installation of further 6,000 centrifuges in Natanz facility, bringing total to 9,000. Move again defied UNSC calls for suspension of enrichment – third round sanctions imposed March. IAEA chief ElBaradei said 23 Apr reached “milestone” agreement with Tehran to clarify alleged weapons studies by May. Additional cabinet reshuffling followed March parliamentary elections: finance minister replaced amid major price increases; interior minister ousted. Conservatives consolidated hold in 25 Apr run-offs: now 69% of all seats. Women’s rights campaigner Khadijeh Moghaddam arrested for acting against national security 12 Apr; Nobel Prize winner Shirin Ebadi 14 Apr reported intensified death threats – Ahmadi-Nejad ordered police protection 15 Apr. Explosion at mosque in southern city Shiraz 12 Apr killed 11, wounded over 200; investigation continuing.

- [“Iran’s agreement to talks on nuclear programs raises hopes”](#), AP, 23 Apr. 2008.
- [“Ahmadinejad under fire on economy”](#), BBC, 23 Apr. 2008.
- [“Spinning out nuclear talks”](#), *Economist*, 17 Apr. 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** Deadly Basra operation initiated by PM Maliki end-March against Sadrist militias drew sharp criticism for poor troop performance, bad planning. Situation remains unstable though govt forces have fragile hold on Basra port and fighting has levelled. Senior Sadr aide Riyadh al-Nuri shot dead 11 Apr in Najaf. Clashes continued, intensified end-month, in Sadr City neighbourhood of Baghdad: hundreds killed. U.S. Gen. Petraeus, Amb Crocker in testimony to U.S. Congress emphasised “fragile and reversible” progress; recommended suspension of troop reductions. U.S. Sec. State Rice in surprise Baghdad visit 20 Apr to support Maliki. U.S., Maliki pressed for engagement of Arab neighbours. Iranian FM Mottaki reiterated support for Iraqi govt efforts to disarm Shiite militias in Basra, despite continued U.S. accusations Tehran arming, training them. Suicide bombings elsewhere killed over 100; at least 53 died in bus blast 15 Apr in Baquba. Assyrian Orthodox priest killed 5 Apr in Baghdad home. Trial of former deputy PM Tariq Aziz, accused of involvement in executions of merchants, opened in Baghdad 29 Apr.

- Comment by Peter Harling (Crisis Group), [“What history books haven’t told us”](#) (in Arabic), *Al Quds Al Arabi*, 29 Mar. 2008.
- [“Big questions remain about U.S. evidence against Iran”](#), *New York Times*, 27 Apr. 2008.
- [“Nuri al-Maliki, a dogged survivor”](#), *Economist*, 24 Apr. 2008.
- [“Dozens dead as Iraq cities bombed”](#), BBC, 15 Apr. 2008.

Crisis Group Middle East Reports N°74 and N°75, [Iraq after the Surge I and II](#), 30 Apr. 2008. The U.S. military surge contributed



to a significant reduction in violence but has reached the limit of what it can achieve. Without fundamental political changes in Iraq, success will remain fragile and dangerously reversible. [The New Sunni Landscape](#) describes the sweeping changes affecting Sunni tribes, al-Qaeda in Iraq and what remains of the insurgency. [The Need for a New Political Strategy](#) analyses reasons for the current deadlock and suggests a way forward. Both call for a different approach focusing on pressuring the Iraqi government to agree to political compromise, engaging in negotiations with a fuller range of Iraqi actors, and altering the regional climate.

➤ **Saudi Arabia** Under U.S. pressure, Riyadh insisted 23 Apr lack of embassy in Baghdad does not reflect lack of support, but insecurity. U.S. senators 24 Apr called on President Bush to halt \$123m in arms sales to Saudi if oil production not increased.

- [“Insecurity blocks Saudi embassy in Iraq”](#), AP, 23 Apr. 2008.

➤ **Yemen** Violent rioting and govt crackdown unsteadied south, while collapse of Feb peace agreement threatened in north. Fortnight of clashes between security forces and protestors in southern cities reportedly left 1 demonstrator dead; some 20 police, 30 civilians injured. Demonstrations started end-March over alleged discrimination in govt, army jobs. Large-scale fighting reported in north – including 18 killed in clashes between al-Houthi Shiite rebels and govt-aligned forces; at least another 8 killed 29 Apr – but details scarce due to media

blackout. Bomb attack 16 Apr at military checkpoint in Marib province killed 3 soldiers. UN put up blast walls, closed some offices mid-month after projectiles hit foreigners' housing complex in Saana 6 Apr – attack reportedly claimed by al-Qaeda. Blast near Italian embassy 30 Apr. MP shot dead 18 Apr in north; circumstances unclear.

- ["Yemeni police arrest 13 protesters in southern towns"](#), AP, 22 Apr. 2008.
- ["Discontent challenges government"](#), ISN Security Watch, 18 Apr. 2008.

NORTH AFRICA

➡ **Algeria** Security forces reportedly killed 10 and arrested 25 Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) suspects mid Apr, citing alleged suicide plot targeting Algiers. Human rights lawyer Amine Sidhoum convicted 13 Apr for 2006 criticism of client's 2.5 year pre-trial detention. FM Noureddine Zerhouni confirmed rejection of March Moroccan call to reopen borders 8 Apr, saying issue "not a priority".

- ["Two alleged al-Qaeda terrorists arrested"](#), AKI, 24 Apr. 2008.
- ["Algeria forces kill 10 rebel bomb plotters"](#), Reuters, 16 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Egypt** Continued bread shortages, rising living costs sparked call for general strike and protests in Mahalla al-Kubra city, Cairo and elsewhere 6 Apr: 2 killed and over 50 arrested in ensuing police crackdown. Ruling National Democratic Party won 92% seats in 8 Apr municipal elections. 3% turnout reported after Muslim Brotherhood (MB) boycotted over arrest of 900 members in run-up. Military tribunal 15 Apr sentenced 25 senior MB members up to 10 years for financing terrorism, prompting university protests; 15 acquitted.

- ["Muslim Brotherhood members jailed in Egypt"](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 16 Apr. 2008.
- ["Voter turnout low in tense Egypt"](#), BBC, 8 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Mauritania** 2 Apr escape of detainee Sidi Ould Sidna, suspect in Dec 2007 murder of 4 French tourists, prompted series of raids on Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) hideouts; 8 arrested, including Sidna, late Apr; another suspect arrested 10 Apr. Soldiers mistakenly shot French private security guard 17 Apr; security forces on high alert since Dec.

- ["Mauritania captures eight al Qaeda suspects"](#), Reuters, 30 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Morocco** 9 prisoners detained in connection with 16 May 2003 Casablanca bombing escaped Kenitra prison 7 Apr; had earlier condemned "collective punishment" of Islamists. Other Islamist prisoners in same facility began hunger strike. Spain earlier arrested 2 wanted by Morocco for 2003 attacks. Further 26 members of banned Islamic group Justice and Spirituality arrested 31 March.

- ["9 imprisoned for Casablanca blasts escape"](#), AFP, 8 Apr. 2008.

➡ **Western Sahara** UN Envoy van Walsum 21 Apr declared independence unrealistic in blow to Algeria-based Polisario Front. UNSC resolution 30 Apr called for "realism and compromise" on independence, extended UN mission (MIDURSO) for 1 year, urged further talks: statements welcomed by Morocco.

- ["UN council urges realism in Western Sahara dispute"](#), Reuters, 1 May 2008.

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President William J. Clinton, 5 March 2007

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