

1 February 2006, N°30

## 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 more than 110 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 50 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to [crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org](mailto:crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org).

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## January 2006 Trends



### Deteriorated Situations

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## February 2006 Watchlist



### Conflict Risk Alert

Nepal  
Sri Lanka



### Conflict Resolution Opportunity

Northern Ireland (UK)  
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## Africa

### CENTRAL AFRICA

↳ Burundi Government negotiations with last remaining rebel group Front National de Libération (FNL) remained stalled by internal FNL divisions. In northwest, security forces killed 10 FNL in clashes; 5 civilians died in attacks blamed on rebels. Government provisionally freed 700 political prisoners involved in 1993 assassination of President Ndadaye and resulting ethnic reprisals; those released to face questioning by truth and reconciliation commission and possible reincarceration.

- Presentation by Gareth Evans (Crisis Group), [“What difference would the peacebuilding commission make: The case of Burundi”](#), 20 Jan. 2006.
- [“Rebel group continues to threaten peace, development”](#), IRIN, 17 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°31, [Elections in Burundi: A Radical Shake-Up of the Political Landscape](#), 25 Aug. 2005.

↳ Central African Republic Security situation remained “precarious”, according to January report by UNSG Annan. Security forces backed by French army launched operation against armed gangs in north who have displaced thousands. Civil servant strike ended after President Bozize promised to pay 3 months’ salary arrears.

- [“Central Africa army hunts bandits with French help”](#), AlertNet, 20 Jan. 2006.
- [“Security situation in Central African Republic still ‘precarious,’ Annan says”](#), UN News, 9 Jan. 2006.


↳ Chad Relations with Sudan remained tense over Khartoum’s alleged support to Chadian rebels operating in Darfur. Chad offered to talk if Khartoum agreed to disarm rebels. Leader of United Front for Change and Democracy, alliance formed by 8 Chadian rebel groups in December, admitted to “friendly” relations with Sudan, but denied receiving assistance; later arrested in Khartoum by Sudanese authorities. Deteriorating security situation in eastern Chad prompted UN to reduce staff after armed men attacked town of Guereda and kidnapped 5 local officials. World Bank suspended loans to Chad and froze bank account used to collect oil revenues in response to new law granting government access to oil profits allocated to fight long-term poverty.

- [“Rebels admit ‘friendly’ ties with Sudan but deny receiving support”](#), IRIN, 18 Jan. 2005.
- [“World Bank shuts Chad oil account”](#), BBC, 13 Jan. 2006.

↳ Democratic Republic of Congo Government set first multi-party parliamentary and first round presidential elections for 29 April. Main opposition party UDPS to participate in polls, despite calling for boycott of December 2005 referendum. UN and DRC troops continued operations against militants in east: 8 Guatemalan UN peacekeepers killed in clashes in Garamba National Park 23 January while searching for Ugandan LRA rebels. 55,000 civilians reportedly fled homes after 4-day offensive by fighters led by renegade former general Laurent Nkunda in North Kivu. Fighting between government forces and Mai Mai militias increasingly destructive in Katanga region.

European leaders discussed UN call for EU rapid reaction force to assist over-stretched mission.

- [“U.N. force turns back Congo rebels”](#), CNN, 22 Jan. 2006.
- [“DR Congo adopts future constitution, sets poll dates”](#), ReliefWeb (AFP), 12 Jan. 2006.
- [“‘Thousands’ dying in DR Congo war”](#), BBC, 6 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°34, [A Congo Action Plan](#), 19 Oct. 2005.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°103,  [Katanga: The Congo’s Forgotten Crisis](#), 9 January 2006. Tensions in Katanga province could lead to acute violence in the March elections unless domestic and international actors move now to reform the army, rein in militias and eradicate impunity and corruption. Three conflicts set the stage for a tense campaign in the nation’s most mineral-rich province: rivalries between southerners and northerners, between outsiders and natives and between Mai-Mai militias and the national army. To help secure the province, the UN Mission should deploy several thousand more peacekeepers to Katanga to pressure Mai-Mai militias to integrate into the national army or demobilise. Parallel chains of command in army and administration need to be broken and the judicial system strengthened to curb abuses. Katanga cannot continue to be plundered and mismanaged by corrupt officials and substantially ignored by the international community.

↳ Republic of Congo African heads of state chose ROC as 2006 African Union chair following controversy over Sudan’s bid for leadership. Security situation in Pool region worsened due to spate of attacks by “Ninja” rebels, forcing Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières to suspend operations.


- [“Africa picks Congo as next AU head, not Sudan”](#), Reuters, 24 Jan. 2006.
- [“Red Cross staff leave Congo Pool”](#), BBC, 20 Jan. 2006.

↳ Rwanda 5 new multi-ethnic provinces replaced previous 12 as part of government decentralisation plan to weaken ethnic divisions. Elections for governor of Kigali province to be held February; other 4 appointed by government. National Electoral Commission sworn in to oversee 6 February local elections.

- [“Freedom of expression under attack”](#), Amnesty International, 23 Jan. 2006.
- [“Giving power to the people”](#), *The East African*, 10 Jan. 2006.

↳ Uganda Campaigning underway in run-up to 23 February presidential election. Supreme Court ruled President Museveni’s main challenger, Kizza Besigye, cannot be tried for terrorism by military but still faces rape and treason charges in civilian court; earlier ruled his continued detention illegal and Besigye released on bail. Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebels killed 4 in attack in Adjumani District 10 January. Museveni repeated offer that Ugandan military ready to “deal with” LRA in DR Congo if invited by UN and DRC government.

- [“Besigye court martial ruled out”](#), BBC, 31 Jan. 2006.
- [“UN rights chief condemns Uganda military”](#), CNN (AP), 12 Jan. 2006.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°35,  [A Strategy for Ending Northern Uganda’s Crisis](#), 11 January 2006. Only a comprehensive international strategy will halt the brutal insurgency of the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda. Governments committed both...

...to ending the war and achieving accountability in Uganda need to devise and apply a far-reaching plan that complements and reinforces the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictments and the peacemaking efforts of Betty Bigombe, including: apprehending ICC indictees; pressing Uganda and neighbouring states to co-operate to fight LRA incursions; getting the Ugandan military to focus on protecting civilians; supporting Bigombe's moves to renew dialogue with the LRA including incentives for its non-indicted leaders; pushing for a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration program; establishing a truth and reconciliation commission; and providing for the basic humanitarian needs of displaced persons. All these pieces have to be substantially enhanced and fitted together to make peace a reality.

## HORN OF AFRICA

➤ Ethiopia UK suspended \$88 million in direct aid over human rights concerns following November 2005 unrest related to disputed May 2005 elections; called for independent investigation into abuses in Oromia region. Government freed another 3,000 prisoners jailed during violent November election protests, after earlier release of 9,000. 129 opposition members facing charges including treason and genocide denied bail; defence lawyers boycotted proceedings, claiming government preventing them from meeting clients. 6 soldiers killed in clashes with Oromo Liberation Army.

- "Ethiopia accepts UK proposal to probe rights violations in Oromia", *Sudan Tribune*, 23 Jan. 2006.
- "Over 11,000 political prisoners freed", IRIN, 16 Jan. 2006.

➤ Ethiopia/Eritrea Tensions along disputed border eased as Ethiopia reduced force levels, but Eritrean restrictions on movement of UN peacekeepers remained in place. High-level U.S. mediation team arrived Ethiopia 19 January in effort to move border dispute forward; visit to Eritrea cancelled after access to border area refused. Eritrea accused U.S. of bias towards Ethiopia; agreed early January to accept December Claims Commission ruling that blamed it for starting 1998-2000 war.

- "Eritrea slams U.S. for 'evil' moves in border row", AlertNet, 28 Jan. 2006.
- "Less tension on disputed border, says UNMEE", IRIN, 11 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°101, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Preventing War*, 22 Dec. 2005.

➤ Somalia Breakthrough for peace process as President Abdullahi Yusuf and Speaker of Parliament Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan signed Aden declaration in Yemen 5 January to unite Jowhar and Mogadishu-based rival factions of transitional government; later agreed parliament should meet in Baidoa 26 February. Mogadishu MPs endorsed deal but PM Geedi continued to favour Jowhar. AU urged UN to make exception in arms embargo to allow foreign peacekeepers to help interim government following foreign minister's request at Khartoum AU summit. 2 former colonels and senior police officer killed in separate Mogadishu attacks, raising fears of new wave of assassinations. Various clashes between rival clans in Galguduud and Jubbada Hoose districts killed 34.

- "Interim parliament prepares to meet in Baidoa", IRIN, 31 Jan. 2006.
- "Deal for MPs to meet in Somalia", BBC, 5 Jan. 2006.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°100, *Somalia's Islamists*, 12 Dec. 2005.

➤ Somaliland (Somalia) Somaliland formally applied for AU membership. Parliament approved agenda for first session and established subcommittees including anti-corruption.

- "Somaliland and the issue of international recognition", PINR, 23 Jan. 2006.

➤ Sudan Continuing insecurity in Darfur threatened peace talks while UN announced probable re-hatting of AU mission. African leaders said would welcome UN support if mission African-led. UN-appointed expert panel recommended Security Council impose sanctions on those accused of blocking Darfur peace process. 2 main Darfur rebel groups, SLA faction led by Minni Minawi and JEM, agreed 20 January to combine political and military forces in joint "Allied Revolutionary Forces of Western Sudan". Security situation in Darfur remained volatile: UNSG Annan condemned major fighting in Jebel Marra region, including SLA attack on Golo. UN reduced staff near Chadian border, following buildup of forces in region and rising tensions between Sudan and Chad. In East, crisis temporarily averted as government forces withdrew after clashing with Eastern Front troops in SPLA and Eastern Front-held Hamashkoreb; talks to resolve situation to be held in February. Khartoum hosted AU summit dominated by controversy over 2006 chair: Republic of Congo president chosen over Sudan's due to fears of human rights record harming AU credibility.

- "U.S.: Push for strong UN force in Darfur", Joint statement by Crisis Group and Human Rights Watch, 1 Feb. 2006.
- Comment by Kofi Annan, "Darfur descending", *The Washington Post*, 25 Jan. 2006.
- "Darfur rebels' merger puts talks at the crossroad - analyst", *Sudan Tribune*, 23 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°99, *The EU/AU Partnership in Darfur: Not Yet a Winning Combination*, 25 Oct. 2005; and Briefing N°32, *Unifying Darfur's Rebels: A Prerequisite for Peace*, 6 Oct. 2005.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°102, *Sudan: Saving Peace in the East*, 5 January 2006. Eastern Sudan is a powder keg that could erupt into a new war unless the government and the insurgent Eastern Front agree to a provisional ceasefire, and internationally-backed negotiations with UN mediation begin this month, before the SPLM completes its scheduled withdrawal. To defuse the situation, Khartoum should send a senior delegation, with joint SPLM/ruling NCP party participation to negotiate sustainable peace based on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which the NCP and the SPLM signed a year ago and which offers a framework to solve Sudan's regional wars. The East, like Darfur and the South, has a legitimate claim on greater power sharing and wealth sharing in a new federal government. Unless those grievances are addressed and a piecemeal approach to peacemaking is abandoned, Sudan's vicious war cycle will spread again.



## SOUTHERN AFRICA

➤ Angola UNITA president, Isaias Samakuva, told European Parliament human rights abuses in Angola now routine and troubled Cabinda province merits special attention.

- "Oil rich but dirt poor", IRIN, 10 Jan. 2006.

Swaziland New constitution, maintaining absolute powers of King Mswati III, theoretically came into effect 26 January after statutory 6-month period after ratification; no official confirmation given. Arrests of pro-democracy campaigners continued. 16 members of banned People's United Democratic Movement appeared in court on charges of high treason; seen as attempt to silence critics of monarchy.

- "King Mswati's time is up", *The Times* (Johannesburg), 15 Jan. 2006.
- "Opposition arrests a 'desperate attempt by a dying regime'", IPS, 13 Jan. 2006.

Zimbabwe Internal split in opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) now permanent: Gibson Sibanda, who led "pro-Senate group", declared himself leader in opposition to current MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai ahead of February MDC leadership congress. Both factions appealed increasingly to ethnic loyalties rather than political principles. Desertions of mid-ranking army and police officers added to overall political and economic crisis. Government harassment of media continued with arrest of banned *Daily News* journalist. Report by AU's Human Rights Commission criticised government for abuses.

- "NGOs disappointed at AU's lack of response", IRIN, 27 Jan. 2006.
- "Africa is taking herself seriously", allAfrica.com (Zimbabwe Standard), 22 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°97, *Zimbabwe's Operation Murambatsvina: The Tipping Point?*, 17 Aug. 2005.

## WEST AFRICA

Côte d'Ivoire Situation grew extremely volatile after 4 days of widespread rioting by pro-President Gbagbo youths 16-19 January, which reportedly left 11 dead. Protesters demanded UN leave after foreign mediators announced National Assembly's expired mandate should not be extended. Opponents accused president of complicity in unrest while UN said protests "orchestrated". UN troops and agencies withdrew from Guiglo after peacekeepers killed 4 protesters who attacked UN base 18 January. Same evening Nigerian President Obasanjo held emergency talks with Gbagbo, releasing joint statement that National Assembly not dissolved. Security situation calmed 19-20 January and FPI announced return to peace process 23 January (reversing 17 January withdrawal). UN infrastructure damaged in west and nearly 400 workers evacuated, disrupting aid operations, ahead of possible imposition of targeted sanctions by UN. UN Security Council extended peacekeeping mission (UNOCI) until December 2006. Opposition leader and former PM Alassane Ouattara returned from 3 years exile 25 January.

- "Clouding Ivory Coast's peace: *Ivoirité*", *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 Jan. 2006.
- "Rioting in Ivory Coast denounced by UN as 'Orchestrated Violence'", *The Washington Post*, 22 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°33, *Côte d'Ivoire: Halfway Measures Will Not Suffice*, 12 Oct. 2005.

Guinea Union of Progress and Renewal, only opposition party in parliament, announced withdrawal from legislature in protest of December municipal elections it described as "electoral robbery".

- "Opposition party withdraws from parliament", IRIN, 6 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°94, *Stopping Guinea's Slide*, 14 June 2005.

Guinea-Bissau Supreme Court approved PM Aristides Gomes, appointed by presidential decree in November 2005. PAIGC, main party in parliament that had challenged constitutionality of appointment, denounced court decision.

- "High court deems new premier legal, sparks protests from leading party", IRIN, 30 Jan. 2006.

Liberia Cautious optimism after inauguration of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and her appointment of first 9 of 22 new ministers 16 January. New legislature elected Edwin Snowe, former son-in-law of Charles Taylor, as speaker of House of Representatives. Snowe and 3 other parliamentarians blocked from leaving country earlier in month in enforcement of UN travel ban on those with ongoing ties with Taylor. Parliament approved measures for audit of transitional government and travel block on senior officials until audit completed. Recruitment drive for new national army began 18 January.

- Comment by Mike McGovern and Mark Schneider (Crisis Group), "We must help her succeed", allAfrica.com, 18 Jan. 2006.
- Comment by Mike McGovern (Crisis Group), "The fourth leg", *International Aid Report*, Jan. 2006.
- "UN enforces travel ban on newly elected lawmakers", IRIN, 3 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°98, *Liberia's Elections: Necessary but Not Sufficient*, 7 Sept. 2006.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°36, *Liberia: Staying Focused*, 13 January 2006.



While the inauguration of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as Liberia's president on 16 January offers great hope, the country will only recover if the government and international community maintain their cooperative momentum. If the newly elected government and donors work together in a good faith partnership guaranteeing a proper flow of funds that are used transparently, the country can make real progress. However, if that sensitive partnership fails, the door will be open for a future, disastrous insurgency. The government and donors need to concentrate on several crucial points: following-through on the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Plan (GEMAP); training the new army; reforming the judicial sector; and rebuilding basic infrastructure. Donors should realise that money spent on Liberia will have a vital stabilising impact on the entire volatile region.

Nigeria Security deteriorated with series of apparently politically motivated attacks on oil production in Delta region. Several attacks on foreign companies and oil infrastructure while 4 foreign workers held hostage 11-30 January; at least 30 reported dead and oil output cut amidst threats of further assaults. Previously unknown Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta claimed responsibility for 11 January attacks, made political demands including release of Niger Delta leaders Mujahid Dokusu Asari and Diepreye Alamieyeseigha. Army deployed extra troops as oil company Shell evacuated workers from 4 sites and unions threatened withdrawal.

- "Nigeria militants free hostages", BBC, 30 Jan. 2006.
- "Oil-rich Niger Delta faces 'shocking' new wave of violence", IRIN, 27 Jan. 2006.

- ↳ Sierra Leone UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone began mandate 1 January to help consolidate peace and prepare for elections, after UNAMSIL departure. Former rebel Revolutionary United Front spokesman Omrie Golley arrested and charged with treason; case adjourned to 7 February.
  - [“Sierra Leone charges ex-rebel official with treason”](#), AlertNet, 23 Jan. 2006.
  - [“Ex-rebel arrested in Sierra Leone”](#), BBC, 13 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 Dec. 2004.



## Asia/Pacific

### CENTRAL ASIA

- ↳ Kazakhstan Prominent dissident Galymzhan Zhakiyanov released from prison 14 January. President Nazarbayev sworn in for new 7-year term.
  - [“Triumphal welcome for freed Kazak politician”](#), IWPR, 23 Jan. 2006.
- ↳ Kyrgyzstan Political breakdown gathered momentum. Sports hero and leading contender for head of National Olympic Committee shot dead, latest in string of political murders: previous head killed September 2005. Interior Ministry detained operative of National Security Service (NSS) in connection with killing and accused NSS of links with organised crime. Ryspek Akmatbayev, organiser of October Bishkek protests demanding PM Kulov’s dismissal, acquitted of murder after prosecution dropped charges. PM Kulov publicly blamed Akmatbayev and NSS chief Aybayev for rise in criminality, as parliament demanded Aybayev’s resignation. President announced governors of Jalalabad and Talas provinces to trade places, after attempt to sack Jalalabad governor - key figure in March 2005 “tulip revolution” - led to protests in both provinces.
  - [“Crime fighters fall out in Kyrgyzstan”](#), IWPR, 28 Jan. 2006.
  - [“Unsportsmanlike behaviour in Kyrgyzstan”](#), IWPR, 12 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°109, *Kyrgyzstan: A Faltering State*, 16 Dec. 2005.
- ↳ Tajikistan President Rakhmonov fired 20 top government officials in major reshuffle 30 January. Head of Defence Ministry’s Military Institute shot dead days earlier in Dushanbe. Armed men attacked prison in north killing 1 and freeing suspected member of banned Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Supreme Court upheld conviction of opposition Democratic Party head Mahmadrizi Iskandarov on terrorism and corruption charges. Closed trial began of Ghaffor Mirzoyev, former head of Presidential Guard and counter-narcotics agency. Meanwhile, prosecutors said police had arrested 99 alleged members of banned Hizb ut-Tahrir extremist group in 2005.
  - [“President’s reshuffle could set tone for election year”](#), RFE/RL, 31 Jan. 2006.
  - [“Dushanbe says Hizb ut-Tahrir is stepping up activities”](#), RFE/RL, 19 Jan. 2006.

- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, *Tajikistan’s Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?*, 19 May 2004.
- ↳ Turkmenistan President Niazov visited Moscow 22-23 January for talks on energy issues, including shipment of Turkmen gas to Russia and Ukraine.
  - [“President reshuffles government once again”](#), RFE/RL, 26 Jan. 2006.
  - [“Year in review 2005”](#), IRIN, 10 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°85, *Repression and Regression in Turkmenistan: A New International Strategy*, 4 Nov. 2004.
- ↳ Uzbekistan Activist arrested after speaking out against May 2005 Andijon massacre reportedly tried and sentenced in secret. Trials of opposition leaders Sanjar Umarov and Nodira Hidoyatova on charges of financial misdeeds began. Court suspended U.S. NGO Freedom House for 6 months for providing free internet access to human rights advocates.
  - [“Uzbek activist’s criminal trial opens outside Tashkent”](#), RFE/RL, 30 Jan. 2006.
  - [“Reveal fate of jailed activist”](#), Human Rights Watch, 20 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°38, *Uzbekistan: The Andijon Uprising*, 25 May 2005.

### SOUTH ASIA

- ↳ Afghanistan 5-year “Compact for Afghanistan” focusing on security, governance, development and counter narcotics due for signature by donors and Afghan government at London conference 1 February. Violence continued to escalate, with suicide attacks in south and east: victims included senior Canadian diplomat in Kandahar and 23 Afghans in Spin Boldak near Pakistani border. Additional 3,300 UK troops to be sent for NATO-led ISAF force expansion to south ahead of limited U.S. withdrawal: possible deployment of Dutch contingent delayed by domestic debate. Total export of opium in 2005 estimated at U.S. \$2.7 billion (52% of GDP), down from \$2.8 billion in 2004.
  - [“Officials stress long-term commitments as Afghans open ‘new chapter’”](#), RFE/RL, 31 Jan. 2006.
  - Comment by Emma Bonino (Crisis Group), [“Put democracy first in Afghanistan”](#), openDemocracy.net, 30 Jan. 2006.
  - Comment by Gareth Evans, (Crisis Group), [“World must help Afghanistan through its risky pause”](#), *Financial Times*, 29 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°107, *Rebuilding the Afghan State: The European Union’s Role*, 30 Nov. 2005.
- ↳ Bangladesh Leader of banned Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen group, Shayek Abdur Rahman, accused of orchestrating wave of bomb attacks since August 2005, reportedly arrested in India. Clashes erupted in northwest between security forces and villagers protesting arrest of leaders accused of attacking local power installations due to failing supplies, 6 killed. Nationwide strike organised by opposition Awami League held 22 January protesting election commission’s lack of impartiality. EU delegation on 2-day visit discussed election issues, extremism and corruption.

- [“Bangladesh brought to a halt by 1-day strike”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Jan. 2006.
- [“2006 a crucial year for HR, democracy”](#), *Daily Star*, 7 Jan. 2006.



India (non-Kashmir) Instability in northeast continued. National Democratic Front of Bodoland rebels called on government to hold peace talks or risk end of ceasefire. 8 National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) K faction rebels killed in attack by Indian and Myanmar forces along border; NSCN I-M faction extended ceasefire with government for 6 months. United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), suspected of series of bombings 22 January that killed 2 policemen and destruction of oil pipelines, to hold peace talks with government 7 February. ULFA and other northeast separatist groups called general strike to boycott Republic Day 26 January. Attacks by Maoists in eastern Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand states 26 January killed 2. Highway blockade followed police killing of 12 tribe members in Orissa state during 2 January land protest.

- [“Nagaland ceasefire extended by 6 months”](#), *Times of India*, 31 Jan. 2006.
- [“Assam separatists declare boycott”](#), BBC, 20 Jan. 2006.



Kashmir Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and Pakistani counterpart, Riaz Mohammad Khan, met in Delhi for third round of bilateral normalisation dialogue 17 January and agreed to sustain process. Cross-border travel links increased with additional bus and truck services; further bus link between Sikh holy cities of Amritsar and Nankana Sahib, and rail link between Rajasthan state and Sindh province to start in February. Indian troops reportedly shot dead senior leader of militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba responsible for series of blasts in New Delhi in October 2005. Clashes between Indian security forces and militants crossing Line of Control into Indian-controlled territory killed 14.

- [“‘Nine killed’ in Kashmir battle”](#), BBC, 28 Jan. 2006.
- [“Pakistan and India launch new peace bus”](#), AlertNet, 20 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°79, [India/Pakistan Relations and Kashmir: Steps toward Peace](#), 24 June 2004.



Nepal Political turmoil continued ahead of planned 8 February municipal elections. Major escalation in violence between security forces and Maoists left at least 90 dead. Royal government insisted vote will go ahead despite widespread resistance. Maoists and mainstream parties continued boycott call. EU called planned elections “another step backwards for democracy”, while former PM K.P. Bhattarai urged King Gyanendra to relinquish power and cooperate with parties. Assassination of royalist mayoral candidate Bijay Lal Das 23 January blamed on Maoists. Despite restrictions and house arrest of senior political leaders, mass protests held in Kathmandu 21 January, resulting in several hundred arrests. In significant move, China, having not previously engaged publicly, issued statement of concern over recent political developments and called for dialogue.

- [“Has diplomacy failed in Nepal?”](#), BBC, 30 Jan. 2006.
- [“Municipal polls a step backwards for democracy: EU”](#), Kantipur Online, 27 Jan. 2006.
- [“The ballot and the bullet”](#), *The Economist*, 26 Jan. 2006.
- Comment by Rhoderick Chalmers (Crisis Group), [“Is history repeating itself in Nepal?”](#), *Indian Express*, 23 Jan. 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°111, [Nepal: Electing Chaos](#), 31 January 2006. Nepal risks political collapse and increased human suffering unless the royal government calls off the 8 February municipal elections and cooperates in a broad-based peace process. King Gyanendra is inviting confrontation by forcing through polls which will not be free, fair or credible. Filling local posts with palace placemen will not bring peace closer. The conflict remains soluble, however. The political parties must settle internal differences and develop a clear agenda, and the Maoists must offer a concrete plan for disarmament and commit to a new ceasefire. The international community should show the king he does not have a blank cheque to turn the political clock back a generation by placing targeted sanctions on his family and key officials and reviewing aid funnelled through the government.



Pakistan Major military operations and militant activity continued in Waziristan tribal region and Balochistan province. Clashes in North Waziristan killed at least 37. Government claimed 12 militants killed in attack on Balochistan gas field 11 January. Baloch opposition claimed 12 custodial deaths by Frontier Constabulary. U.S. air strike killed at least 18 villagers in Bajaur tribal agency bordering Afghanistan, prompting widespread protests.

- [“Pakistan’s battle over Balochistan”](#), BBC, 27 Jan. 2006.
- [“Conflict in Balochistan: HRCP fact-finding missions”](#), December 2005-January 2006, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°43, [Pakistan’s Local Polls: Shoring Up Military Rule](#), 22 Nov. 2005.



Sri Lanka Situation approaching outright civil war after deadliest month since 2002 ceasefire. Attacks on military killed at least 80; LTTE supporters claimed over 40 Tamils killed by security forces or gunmen since early December. Norwegian peace envoy Erik Solheim arrived 23 January in last-ditch effort to avert full-scale conflict: LTTE and government agreed to talks in Switzerland early February but killing of senior LTTE officer and abduction of 5 Tamil aid workers end January dampened optimism. Norway-led Monitoring Mission temporarily suspended in Trincomalee after grenade attack amidst escalation of violence.

- [“Tigers threaten to pull out of peace talks”](#), *The Guardian*, 1 Feb. 2006.
- [“Annan hails new talks, calls on both sides to observe ceasefire”](#), UN News, 25 Jan. 2006.
- [“Truce and fiction”](#), *The Economist*, 12 Jan. 2006.

## NORTH EAST ASIA



China (internal) Beijing admitted policy of land seizures is “historic error” that led to increased rural unrest. Community in Guangdong Province claimed 2 killed by police during protest.

- [“In China, a warning on illegal land grabs”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 20 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°108, [North East Asia’s Undercurrents of Conflict](#), 15 Dec. 2005.



North Korea Kim Jong-il’s China visit 10-18 January led to speculation North interested in emulating Chinese economic reforms. South President Roh Moo-hyun appointed Lee Jong-seok, strong supporter of engagement with North, as new minister for unification.

- [“North Korea renews commitment to talks”](#), *The Washington Post*, 31 Jan. 2006.
- [“On his visit to China, Kim traveled a familiar path”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 26 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°87, [North Korea: Where Next for the Nuclear Talks?](#), 15 Nov. 2004.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°112, [North Korea and China: Comrades Forever?](#) 1



February 2006. Expecting China to compel North Korean compliance on the nuclear issue only gives Pyongyang more time to develop its nuclear arsenal. China shares the goal of North Korean denuclearisation, but given its own needs and capacities, it has its own distinct vision of how to get there and far less influence over Pyongyang than outsiders tend to believe. Much changed in China between the first North Korean nuclear dispute in 1993-1994 and the second, which began in 2002, but China's core national interest in North Korea's survival is the same as during the Cold War. With its leaders now investing their legitimacy in continued economic growth, the stakes of conflict on the peninsula have increased. China will keep trying gradually to normalise North Korea's economy, with the long-term goal of a reformed, pro-Beijing state.

- ↳ Taiwan Strait President Chen Shui-bian appointed Su Tseng-chang as prime minister, replacing Frank Hsieh, who resigned following ruling DPP's December defeat in local elections. Hsieh warned Chen's hardline stance on China alienating DPP voters. Taiwan's latest bid for observer status at World Health Organisation blocked by China.
  - [“Taiwan leader sets off a tempest”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 31 Jan. 2006.
  - [“Taiwan's Chen warned over China”](#), BBC, 23 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°42, [China and Taiwan: Uneasy Détente](#), 21 Sept. 2005.

## SOUTH EAST ASIA

- ↳ Cambodia Fears of return to authoritarian rule as PM Hun Sen continued to target political opponents with defamation lawsuits. Charges dropped against 4, but exiled opposition leader Sam Rainsy still faces 18-month prison sentence.
  - [“Annan lauds dismissal of charges against activists in Cambodia”](#), UN News, 24 Jan. 2006.
  - [“Hun Sen systematically silences critics”](#), Human Rights Watch, 14 Jan. 2006.
- ↳ Indonesia Peace process entering difficult phase after smooth GAM decommissioning and withdrawal of “non-organic” security forces. Divisions appeared in GAM over reintegration funds not reaching lower ranks. Government submitted draft of new Aceh governance law to parliament on 26 January: degree to which final law adheres to Helsinki agreement will be crucial test of good faith. Vice President Kalla met GAM leadership in Finland to evaluate implementation of peace process. EU announced extension of Aceh Monitoring Mission until 15 June 2006. Police arrested 10 suspected of assisting terrorist mastermind Noordin M. Top; 6 formally charged. Apparent failed assassination attempt against Poso police chief second direct attack on police in Poso since October. 8 suspects arrested 11 January in Timika, Papua, for involvement in August 2002 fatal attack on convoy of American-owned mining company. Security forces fired on

civilians in Paniai, Papua, killing 1, 20 January; National Human Rights Commission conducting investigation.

- [“Aceh peace accord ‘a success’: Mediator”](#), ReliefWeb (AFP), 21 Jan. 2006.
- [“Papua puppetry leaves murders unsolved”](#), Asia Times Online, 19 Jan. 2006.
- Comment by Sidney Jones (Crisis Group), [“Asking the right questions to fight terror”](#), *The Jakarta Post*, 9 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°44, [Aceh: So Far, So Good](#), 13 Dec. 2005.

- ↳ Myanmar/Burma UN special representative Razali Ismail resigned, after his entry to Myanmar refused for 2 years. Convention to draft constitution adjourned till end 2006.
  - [“Ex-UN envoy slams Burmese junta”](#), *The Bangkok Post*, 10 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°34, [Myanmar: Update on HIV/AIDS Policy](#), 16 Dec. 2004.

- ↳ Philippines Optimism surrounded talks with Muslim groups while army chief vowed not to negotiate with communists. Military and Moro National Liberation Front, based on southern island of Jolo, agreed to truce 21 January. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) said confident of agreement for ancestral homeland on Mindanao within first 6 months of 2006. Next round of informal peace talks between MILF and government to start 6 February in Malaysia despite reported clashes between MILF and government troops in south. Internal MILF dispute led to factional fighting 25 January. Clashes reported between Communist New People's Army and soldiers in northern Tarlac province 31 January.
  - [“30 killed in Tarlac, Mindanao clashes”](#), *Manila Times*, 1 Feb. 2006.
  - [“Fighting breaks out among Philippine Muslim rebels”](#), AlertNet, 26 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°110, [Philippines Terrorism: The Role of Militant Islamic Converts](#), 19 December 2005.

- ↳ Thailand Emergency decree extended until 19 April amid sustained militant attacks in south. Forced surrenders and arbitrary arrests continued to alienate locals. Insurgents torched over 100 phone installations across 4 southern provinces 18 January, contradicting government claims situation under control. Train station in Narathiwat province attacked by insurgents 29 January leaving 2 dead, same day as Muslim preacher in Yala and employee of National Reconciliation Commission in Pattani killed. Court sentenced police officer to 3 years for illegal detention of Muslim human rights lawyer, Somchai Neelaphajit, before he disappeared March 2004. PM Thaksin Shinawatra announced government officials involved in Somchai's death; called for further enquiry.
  - [“PULO peace offer should not be taken seriously”](#), *Thai Day*, 26 Jan. 2006.
  - [“No negotiating with Muslim separatists, says Thaksin”](#), *The Irrawady*, 25 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°105, [Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution](#), 18 Nov. 2005.

- ↳ Timor-Leste Border patrol shot dead 3 Indonesians, reportedly former militia members, sparking protests. President Gusmao presented report on Indonesian occupation to UNSG Annan, which attributes 183,000 civilian deaths to Jakarta.
  - [“Report cites East Timor suffering”](#), CNN, 18 Jan. 2006.


## PACIFIC

- Fiji Fears faded after army chief Bainimarama backed down from coup threat. Bainimarama opposes controversial bill giving amnesty to perpetrators of 2000 coup.
  - [“Winds of rebellion fading away in Fiji”](#), *New Zealand Herald*, 21 Jan. 2006.



## BALKANS

- Albania World Bank and IMF announced new 3-year deals; former urged Tirana to manage aid better.
  - [“Albania signs new agreements with IMF, World Bank”](#), *Southeast European Times*, 18 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°153, [“Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?”](#), 25 Feb. 2004.
- Bosnia & Herzegovina Leading parties failed to agree on new constitution in final round of U.S.-sponsored talks. First round of negotiations with EU on Stabilisation and Association Agreement started 25 January. Republika Srpska government fell after no-confidence vote in Parliament: Milorad Dodik of SNSD to try to form new government. High Rep. Paddy Ashdown confiscated funds from Serbian Democratic Party for failure to locate former leader and war crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic. Former German minister Christian Schwarz-Schilling succeeded Ashdown 31 January. EUFOR shot dead wife of Serb war crimes suspect during arrest. Argentine judge ordered extradition of Milan Lukic to ICTY.
  - [“New Bosnia chief makes economy priority”](#), *Financial Times*, 30 Jan. 2006.
  - [“US, EU ‘disappointed’ over failed Bosnian talks”](#), *Reuters*, 17 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°164, [“Bosnia’s Stalled Police Reform: No Progress, No EU”](#), 6 Sept. 2005.
- Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova, longstanding advocate of Kosovo independence, died 21 January. Rugova’s party, Democratic League of Kosovo, moved quickly to fill vacuum, indicating it will nominate party stalwart Fatmir Sejdiu for president, to be elected by Assembly after mourning period. First round of status discussions covering decentralisation in Kosovo postponed to February. Contact Group met at ministerial level in London 31 January; agreed negotiated settlement to be reached in 2006 must be acceptable to people of Kosovo - a nod toward independence.
  - [“LDK leaders jostle for Rugova’s crown”](#), *BIRN*, 27 Jan. 2006.
  - [“Kosovo’s future clouded by Rugova’s death”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 22 Jan. 2006.
  - [“The carrot is EU membership”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°165, [“Bridging Kosovo’s Mitrovica Divide”](#), 13 Sept. 2005.
- Macedonia EU suggested Macedonia not ready for full membership negotiations, warning process may take years.
  - [“Rehn: EU not yet ready for membership talks with Macedonia”](#), *Southeast European Times*, 11 Jan. 2006.

Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°41,   
[Macedonia: Wobbling toward Europe](#),  
 12 January 2006. Macedonia’s EU hopes will be dashed unless the government reforms the police and judicial sectors, and responds effectively to potential political crises and would-be spoilers. While the government has made notable progress on police reform, it has yet to tackle fundamental management issues such as creating a merit-based personnel system, decentralising authority and increasing transparency and accountability. The crippled judicial system faces a serious backlog of cases and suffers from excessive political influence. The international community should keep pressure on the government to deliver on its reform rhetoric. The EU’s decision at the end of last year to grant Macedonia candidacy status was an important boost to its prestige and self-confidence. It is now up to Skopje to decide if Macedonia will limp awkwardly or stride confidently toward European integration.

- Serbia & Montenegro EU warned association talks could be suspended if fugitive war crime suspects Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic not caught. Albanians in southern Serbia issued “Presevo Declaration” calling for inclusion of Presevo in Kosovo future status talks. EU envoy for Montenegro Miroslav Lajcak visited Podgorica for series of talks between officials and opposition on referendum; fourth round began 31 January.
  - [“EU threatens to halt talks with Serbia”](#), *ISN*, 23 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°169, [“Montenegro’s Independence Drive”](#), 7 Dec. 2005.

## CAUCASUS

- Armenia Unexplained explosions on Russian gas pipeline to Armenia and Georgia 22 January cut supplies from Russia. Negotiations with Russia on price for gas continued without agreement; PM Margarian hinted Russia’s demand for price increase could affect strategic relations.
  - [“If Russia raises gas price ‘strategic partner’ notion will have to be reviewed: Armenian PM”](#), *Arminfo*, 14 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°158, [“Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead”](#), 18 Oct. 2004.
- Azerbaijan Council of Europe Assembly conditionally ratified credentials of Azerbaijani delegation; called for improvements in May 2006 parliamentary election re-runs. Court extended pre-trial detention of 3 former senior officials accused of attempted coup; all reported to have health problems. Shootout in religious Nardaran Baku suburb left 2 police, 1 civilian dead 25 January, with conflicting accounts of who instigated clash.
  - [“Azerbaijan rejects blame for civilian casualties in shootout”](#), *RFE/RL*, 30 Jan. 2006.
  - [“Azerbaijan alleged plotters to remain in detention”](#), *RFE/RL*, 13 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°40, [“Azerbaijan’s 2005 Elections: Lost Opportunity”](#), 21 Nov. 2005.
- Chechnya (Russia) At least 16 soldiers and several militants, including senior rebel commander Supian Abdulayev, reported killed in clashes and landmine explosions.
  - [“Chechen administration says top rebel leader killed”](#), *RFE/RL*, 19 Jan. 2006.
- North Caucasus (non-Chechnya) Security forces launched operations against Daghestan militants: at least 3



police and 9 rebels reported killed including 2 senior rebel commanders. Further rebel killed in operation in Ingushetia. Ingush Supreme Court banned 2 European NGOs working with Chechen refugees for operating without authorisation.

- "Teacher's bomb sends warning to Russia", *The Sunday Times*, 22 Jan. 2006.
- "Russia says top militant killed in Daghestan", RFE/RL, 14 Jan. 2006.

➤ Georgia Unexplained explosions on Russian gas pipeline and electricity line 22 January sparked major energy crisis: power restricted to essential services, though situation returned to near normal at month-end. Georgian government suggested Moscow masterminding crisis for political aims; Moscow accused Tbilisi of "hysteria". Security situation in Gali region of Abkhazia remained tense as Georgian media reported kidnappings, death of power plant worker, while Abkhaz media reported renewed Georgian guerrilla activity. Tbilisi and Abkhaz authorities continued negotiations on security guarantees, agreed to intensify crime prevention cooperation in conflict zone. Joint Control Commission meeting on South Ossetian conflict cancelled after disagreement on location. UN Security Council extended mandate of UNOMIG peacekeeping force in Abkhazia until 31 March, but Russia withdrew support for plan based on greater Abkhaz autonomy within Georgia.

- "Russia raises fears over breakaway province", *Financial Times*, 30 Jan. 2006.
- "Energy crisis as Georgia freezes", BBC, 26 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°38, *Georgia-South Ossetia: Refugee Return the Path to Peace*, 19 April 2005.

➤ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Hopes raised of possible signing of "framework agreement" at 10-11 February Paris meeting between Azeri and Armenian Presidents Aliyev and Kocharian. OSCE High-Level Planning Group toured areas under NK occupation 21-28 January. OSCE chairman in office held NK talks in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia; said ready to aid potential peacekeeper deployment.

- "Karabakh talks: Attention turns to President Aliyev", *Eurasia Insight*, 23 Jan. 2006.
- "Karabakh talks: For Armenia, more questions than answers", *Eurasia Insight*, 23 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°167, *Nagorno-Karabakh: A Plan for Peace*, 11 Oct. 2005.

## EASTERN EUROPE

➤ Belarus Increasingly restrictive and intimidating climate for opposition presidential candidates in run-up to 19 March election. Candidate Sergei Skrebets, on trial for fraud, withdrew from election claiming would not be free and fair. Opposition leader and candidate Alexandr Milinkevich met with EU foreign ministers in Brussels, who warned Belarus of possible sanctions if election rigged. Government invited international observers to monitor poll; OSCE agreed, said sending team of experts for preliminary inspection of pre-election conditions.

- "Daddy's source", *The Guardian*, 31 Jan. 2006.
- "Supporters of opposition presidential candidates face harassment, abuse", RFE/RL, 13 Jan. 2006.

➤ Moldova Deal reached with Russia over gas prices 16 January after supply cut 1 January. No progress in multilateral talks on Transdniestria in Chisinau 26-27 January.

- "New Moldova talks make no progress on rebel region", AlertNet, 27 Jan. 2006.
- "Moldova agrees Russian gas deal", BBC, 17 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°157, *Moldova: Regional Tensions over Transdniestria*, 17 June 2004.

➤ Ukraine Repercussions of gas dispute with Russia spread to domestic politics. Parliament voted 10 January to dismiss government over 4 January gas price deal with Russia. President Yushchenko challenged constitutionality of vote. Parliament then voted to cancel deal and dismiss ministers involved. Month ended with uncertainty as Yushchenko refused to recognise government dismissal and signing of deal delayed. Bilateral tensions over the Crimea increased after Ukrainian officials took possession of Russian-operated lighthouse in Yalta 13 January. Trial of 3 former policemen charged with 2000 murder of journalist Georgiy Gongadze began 9 January; adjourned until February.

- "Risking another Slavic war", *The Washington Post*, 30 Jan. 2006.
- "Signature of Ukraine-Russia gas deal put off again", Reuters, 25 Jan. 2006.
- "Political crisis in Ukraine worsens", *Los Angeles Times*, 11 Jan. 2006.

## WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➤ Basque Country (Spain) Supreme Court ordered retrial of Arnaldo Ortega, leader of outlawed Batasuna party and convicted in 2004 for promoting terrorism. Local court banned party's rally planned for 21 January; Otegi addressed "impromptu gathering" held same day. Bombs exploded at hotel in Zaragoza province 5 January and in 2 Basque towns 26 January after ETA warnings. Bomb in Bilbao injured policeman 29 January.

- "PP demands probe into alleged Batasuna meeting", *International Herald Tribune (El Pais)*, 23 Jan. 2006.
- "From saviour to victim - the extraordinary life and death of Ramón Baglietto", *The Guardian*, 21 Jan. 2006.

➤ Cyprus Turkish FM Gul announced 10-point action plan 24 January: proposes opening of Turkish ports and airspace to Greek Cypriots, end to international blockade on traffic to Turkish Cypriot ports and airport, "practical inclusion" of Turkish Cypriots in EU Customs Union, and high-level meeting under UN auspices to finalise plan by June 2006. Proposal dismissed by Greek Cypriots and Greeks, welcomed by U.S., UK and EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn. Greek Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos refused to meet UK FM Jack Straw 25 January, objecting his meeting with Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat in his office promoted "symbols" of North. Talat accused Greek Cypriots of "escalation of intransigence". UNDP established fund to aid Turkish Cypriots.

- "Straw backs Turkish offer on Cyprus", Reuters, 25 Jan. 2006.
- "Greeks cool to Cyprus plan", *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Jan. 2006.

➤ Northern Ireland (UK) Hopes raised of substantial progress in 6 February planned resumption of talks with political parties; talks announced after British and Irish PMs Blair and Ahern met in Dublin 26 January. Independent Monitoring Commission Report due to be published 1 February. Earlier in month, Northern Ireland Sec. Peter Hain

announced dropping controversial fugitive amnesty bill after Sinn Fein rejection. Dublin also suspended plan to pardon IRA fugitives wanted in south. Police Historical Enquiries Team began re-examination of 3,268 unsolved murders committed 1968-1998, process expected to take 5-7 years.

- ["IRA 'still involved in spying and criminal activity'"](#), *The Times*, 31 Jan. 2006.
- ["The dustbin of history"](#), *The Guardian*, 12 Jan. 2006.

→ Turkey Istanbul court dropped high-profile case against writer Orhan Pamuk 23 January but concerns remained over series of similar cases due in February. Separate court released sergeant accused of opening fire on crowds during November Semdinli incidents pending March trial. 5 injured in bomb attack on Turkish-U.S. association in Adana 30 January.

- ["Helping Turkey find the way forward"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 1 Feb. 2006.
- ["Turkey's decision on writer praised, amid calls for more reform"](#), *Southeast European Times*, 24 Jan. 2006.

## Latin America / Caribbean

→ Bolivia Evo Morales inaugurated as president 22 January after landslide December electoral victory. Morales appointed predominantly indigenous, socialist cabinet; removed 28 generals from security forces. New hydrocarbons minister Andres Soliz Rada signalled tough stance toward multinational energy companies. Morales invited U.S. to build alliance against drug trafficking but repeated defence of coca cultivation.

- ["A new security command in Bolivia"](#), *The Washington Times*, 31 Jan. 2006.
- ["Evo ready or not"](#), *The Economist*, 26 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°15, [Bolivia at the Crossroads: The December Elections](#), 8 December 2005.

→ Colombia President Uribe ordered investigation into alleged paramilitary bribing of politicians ahead of March legislative polls; 6 candidates subsequently banned by their parties from running. Government accused Senator Rafael Pardo of conspiring with FARC against Uribe reelection. In attempt to sabotage Uribe's bid, FARC refused prisoner-hostage swap and aired video of hostages requesting help from Venezuela (claiming Colombia unable to negotiate release). Government announced referendum on swap alongside March polls. Preparations underway for second round of peace talks with ELN, despite clash with soldiers that killed 6. 2,600 AUC paramilitaries in largest demobilisation of peace process 21 January. 12 FARC rebels, 2 soldiers killed in clashes during coca plant eradication in Macarena National Park.

- ["Colombian paramilitaries muscle in on politics"](#), *AlertNet*, 27 Jan. 2006.
- ["FARC pushes to derail Uribe's re-election"](#), *ISN*, 6 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°14, [Colombia: Presidential Politics and Peace Prospects](#), 16 June 2005.

→ Ecuador Electoral tribunal announced general elections to be held 15 October; said electoral agenda could not be altered to hold referendum on constitutional reform sought by

President Palacio. Series of violent student demonstrations; government criticised police for excessive use of force.

- ["Clashes lead to chaos in Ecuador"](#), *BBC*, 20 Jan. 2006.
- ["Ecuador lives political uncertainty"](#), *Prensa Latina*, 9 Jan. 2006.

→ Haiti Parliamentary and first round of presidential elections, already postponed 4 times, set for 7 February. Distribution of voter ID cards over 80%, list of voting centres finalised and poll workers' training nearly complete. Security situation in Port-au-Prince remained dire and UN mission head Valdes acknowledged civilians could be harmed in operation to establish calm in volatile Cité Soleil slum. 2 peacekeepers killed in attack on Cité Soleil checkpoint, day after protest against kidnappings and out-of-control crime paralysed capital. Violence erupted along Dominican Republic border as police and peacekeepers clashed with protestors after 24 illegal Haitian migrants found dead in van. Brazilian Gen. Jose Elito Carvalho de Siqueira appointed commander of MINUSTAH after previous UN commander committed suicide 7 January.

- ["In Haiti, politics and gunfire engulf UN force"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Jan. 2006.
- Comment by Mark Schneider (Crisis Group), ["Getting to elections and beyond"](#), *Miami Herald*, 16 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°9, [Haiti's Elections: The Case for a Short Delay](#), 25 Nov. 2005.

→ Peru National election agency ruled former President Fujimori, currently jailed in Chile, not eligible to run in 9 April presidential election. Government submitted request for Fujimori's extradition for corruption and rights abuses. Venezuelan President Chavez accused of interfering with presidential campaigns.

- ["Fujimori cannot run in Peru poll"](#), *BBC*, 10 Jan. 2005.
- ["Pragmatism, not Chavez, to dictate Peru politics"](#), *ISN*, 9 Jan. 2006.

→ Venezuela President Chavez accused U.S. of blocking purchase of planes and patrol boats from Brazil and Spain by prohibiting transfer of U.S. technology used in vessels. Spain to sell planes despite restrictions. Chavez's comments on Peruvian presidential candidates sparked diplomatic row.

- ["U.S. bars Spanish sale to Venezuela"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 14 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°5, [Venezuela: Headed Toward Civil War?](#), 10 May 2004.

## Middle East / North Africa

### EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

→ Israel/Occupied Territories Seismic shifts in Middle East as militant Hamas party scored resounding victory in Palestinian elections and Israeli PM Ariel Sharon incapacitated by massive stroke. Overwhelming Hamas victory in 25 January legislative elections led to celebrations in West Bank and Gaza, grim warnings from Israel, and concern among international community. Vote held in relative calm with 77% turnout. Hamas won 45 district-based and 29 national list seats, totalling 74 out of 132, while previously dominant Fatah won 45 seats (28 national). Palestinian Authority President

Mahmoud Abbas asked Hamas to form new government after PM Ahmed Qurei and cabinet resigned. With Sharon comatose, Israel, led by acting PM Ehud Olmert, ruled out talks with Hamas government until it renounces violence. U.S., EU, Russia and UN called on Hamas to renounce violence and recognise Israel or face future aid cuts. Fatah supporters staged violent protests and clashed with Hamas in West Bank and Gaza after election result announced. Olmert assumed leadership of recently formed Kadima party, ahead of Israeli general elections due 28 March.

- [“Hamas wins clear majority”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 26 Jan. 2006.
- Comment by Robert Malley (Crisis Group) and Hussein Agha, [“Hamas steps into a complex landscape”](#), *The Boston Globe/The Guardian*, 24 Jan. 2006.
- Comment by Mouin Rabbani (Crisis Group), [“Palestinian dilemmas”](#), *The Nation*, 13 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°44, [The Jerusalem Powder Keg](#), 2 Aug. 2005.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°49, [Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration](#), 18 January 2006. Hamas is set to join the Palestinian legislature and possibly the government after next week's elections. The U.S. and EU currently avoid (in the American case, bar) contacts with the Islamist movement, deny funding to projects with Hamas-run municipalities, and threaten to halt aid to the Palestinian Authority if Hamas joins it. The result is an emboldened movement the West has little leverage over. There are risks, but the West needs to adopt a policy of gradual, conditional engagement to encourage Hamas to choose politics over violence. Incorporation into local and national governance may cause it to move away from the military path by giving it a stake in stability and emphasising the political costs of a breakdown. The EU, with more flexibility than the U.S., should move first and Washington consider following if the approach proves effective.



- Lebanon Infighting between pro- and anti-Syrian political leaders continued to paralyse reform. UN Security Council criticised Lebanon for failing to disband militias, including Hizbollah and Palestinian armed factions. Belgian Serge Bammertz, deputy prosecutor of International Criminal Court, took over UN investigation into assassination of PM Hariri.
  - [“Hizbollah says its weapons are a bargaining chip with Israel”](#), *The Daily Star*, 1 Feb. 2006.
  - [“Hizbollah urges Lebanon to deflect UN pressure”](#), AlertNet, 24 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report Crisis Group Middle East Report N°48, [Lebanon: Managing the Gathering Storm](#), 5 Dec. 2005.
- Syria Former Sunni Vice President Khaddam, self-exiled in Paris, called for overthrow of President Assad, whom he accused of ordering assassination of Lebanese PM Hariri. Divided opposition groups hesitant to follow former Baath party stalwart's lead. Assad announced reluctance to demarcate controversial Israeli-occupied Shebaa Farms area on border with Lebanon. If recognised as Syrian, Lebanese pro-Syrian Hizbollah will lose justification to fight Israel. U.S. called for release of political prisoners and froze assets of head of military intelligence (Assad's brother-in-law) Asef Shawkat, accusing him of promoting violence in Lebanon and Iraq. UN

team investigating Hariri's murder requested interview with Assad.

- [“Increasingly isolated leaders seek mutual support”](#), RFE/RL, 20 Jan. 2006.
- [“Ex-Vice President Khaddam unlikely ally for Syrian opposition”](#), *The Daily Star* (AFP), 18 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°39, [Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria](#), 12 April 2005.

## GULF

- Bahrain Violent clashes continued between security forces, disaffected youths and political activists.
  - [“Bahrain police clash with protesters over youth arrests”](#), AlertNet, 19 Jan. 2006.
- Iran Tehran broke UN seals on 3 nuclear research facilities but denied intention to build nuclear weapons. UK, U.S. France, Russia, China and Germany agreed International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should report Iran to Security Council at 2 February emergency meeting, but to defer any UNSC action until March IAEA report on Iran's nuclear activities. Move seen as compromise between U.S. and EU3, pushing for referral to UNSC for possible sanctions, and Russia and China, against sanctions. Moscow continued efforts to broker compromise that would see it enrich Iranian uranium; talks between Iran and Russia to resume 16 February. 2 blasts in southwestern city of Ahwaz 24 January killed 8; bombs blamed on Arab separatists.
  - [“Iran on IAEA agenda, but next step concerns U.S.”](#), *The Washington Post*, 1 Feb. 2006.
  - [“Bridging the Gulf”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°18, [Iran: What Does Ahmadi-Nejad's Victory Mean?](#), 4 Aug. 2005.
- Iraq Election results announced amid sharp escalation of violence early in month. Islamist Shiite-led United Iraqi Alliance declared winners of December parliamentary polls, but without absolute majority (128 of 275 seats); Kurdish parties won 53 seats, Islamist Sunni Arab bloc 44. International monitors declared irregularities, but said did not affect result. Security situation remained highly unstable with civilians, police and interior ministry targeted. Surge of violence killed 180 early in month, including attacks on funeral in Muqdadiya, Shiite shrine in Karbala and police recruits in western city of Ramadi. Simultaneous 19 January bombs in Baghdad killed 15 while 30 civilians shot dead by gunmen near Dujail 18 January. Italian Defence Minister Antonio Martino announced plans to withdraw Italian troops by end 2006. Saddam Hussein trial in apparent disarray after delays and walkouts by defence team.
  - [“Hussein trial resumes and descends into chaos”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Jan. 2006.
  - [“Time for that sea change”](#), *The Economist*, 26 Jan. 2006.
  - Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°19, [Unmaking Iraq: A Constitutional Process Gone Awry](#), 26 Sept. 2005.
- Kuwait Kuwait became first gulf state to replace leader using constitutional and parliamentary process. Parliament ousted Saad al-Abdullah on health grounds after his succession on 15 January following death of emir. Current PM Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah chosen as replacement.
  - [“New Kuwait amir nominated”](#), Al-Jazeera, 24 Jan. 2006.
  - [“Ailing Kuwait ruler ousted by MPs”](#), BBC, 24 Jan. 2006.

- Saudi Arabia Clashes reported between security forces and alleged al-Qaeda members. Police reportedly disrupted plot to carry out bombings in Riyadh. Tensions escalated with Iran after FM Saud al-Faisal issued statement exhorting Iran to cease uranium enrichment.
  - ["India and Saudi Arabia move beyond oil"](#), Asia Times Online, 28 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°45, [The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia](#), 19 Sept. 2005.

- Yemen Soldiers clashed with supporters of slain rebel cleric Husain al-Huthi, 11 killed. 5 Italian tourists freed after standoff between kidnapers and security forces.
  - ["Yemen attempts to rein in outlaw tribes"](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 Jan. 2006.

## NORTH AFRICA

- Algeria Militants killed 4 state water company workers in Tissemsilt province. Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat announced death of one of its founders, Ahmed Zerabib, in clashes with army in Bejaia region. President Bouteflika greeted by crowds of supporters on return from 5-week hospital stay in Paris but health concerns remained.

- ["Army kills Algeria militant, group says"](#), AlertNet, 31 Jan. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°29, [Islamism, Violence and Reform in Algeria: Turning the Page](#), 30 July 2004.

- Egypt Government released 453 Muslim Brotherhood activists arrested during December 2005 parliamentary elections; at least 300 still detained. Wafd party president Noman Gomaa provisionally ousted following legislative elections post-mortem. Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades protesting leader's detention by Palestinian authorities breached border 3 January and clashed with soldiers, killing 2. Violent dispute between Christians and Muslims in Upper Egypt left 1 dead. Over 350 Sudanese refugees, detained by police after 30 December protest, freed but 180 still in custody.
  - ["Sectarian tensions felt in the south"](#), IRIN, 24 Jan. 2006.
  - ["New dawn or more of the same?"](#), *The Economist*, 12 Jan. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°46, [Reforming Egypt: In Search of a Strategy](#), 4 Oct. 2005.

- Western Sahara New UN Envoy Peter van Walsum told Security Council all-inclusive talks only way out of impasse.
  - ["Polisario builds oil policy in Western Sahara"](#), AlertNet, 22 Jan. 2006.

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