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## 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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## May 2006 Watchlist



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### Conflict Resolution Opportunity

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Crisis Group is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with over 110 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict. Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, Crisis Group produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers, and backed up with high level advocacy. Crisis Group is co-chaired by former European Commissioner for External Relations Christopher Patten and Boeing's Senior Vice President, International Relations, Thomas Pickering, and its President and Chief Executive is former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.



## Africa

### CENTRAL AFRICA

- ↳ Burundi South Africa agreed to mediate between government and FNL rebels, following March announcement by rebel faction leader Rwaswa that FNL ready for talks. Security situation improved in parts of Burundi prompting government to lift 34-year midnight curfew, while demobilisation camp for FNL fighters opened in Bubanza province. Burundi, DRC, Rwanda and Uganda called on UN and AU to impose sanctions on leaders of illegal armed groups, including FNL. UN and government officials agreed on terms for establishing truth and reconciliation commission and special court for war crimes.

  - ["South Africa agrees to facilitate peace talks"](#), IRIN, 28 Apr. 2006.
  - ["Ministers want illegal armed groups sanctioned"](#), IRIN, 21 Apr. 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 Government closed border with Sudan 14 April in protest at Khartoum's support for rebel offensive in Chad. CAR rebels reportedly joined Chadian rebel forces, some of whom passed through CAR. Top court referred former President Patasse to International Criminal Court on war crimes charges. 2 WHO doctors killed by armed assailants in north, where attacks linked to anti-government rebellion have increased in recent months.

  - ["Planes with suspected rebels land in Central Africa"](#), AlertNet, 27 Apr. 2006.
  - ["Rights probe of former president sought"](#), CNN, 14 Apr. 2006.
  
- ↳ Chad Security deteriorated as Chadian FUCD rebels launched major attack on N'Djamena 13 April ahead of presidential election set for 3 May; 300 reported killed, 160 captured. Government accused Sudan of backing rebels, cut off diplomatic ties with Khartoum and shut borders. AU team sent to investigate; rebels interviewed reported they had received assistance from Sudan. France, with military base in Chad, provided intelligence and indicated support for "legitimacy and legality" of government led by President Déby. World Bank agreed to lift freeze on loans and oil fund if government adopts law dedicating 70% of oil revenues to poverty reduction; Déby had threatened to shut pipeline if not given access to funds to purchase weapons and pay salaries.

  - ["Chad may soon regain access to its oil funds"](#), *Washington Post*, 27 Apr. 2006.
  - ["Who are the Chadian rebels"](#), *Sudan Tribune*, 17 Apr. 2006.
  
- ↳ Democratic Republic of Congo Logistical delays, political wrangling and continued fighting by militia in Kivus and Katanga obstructing elections: vote set for 30 July. Main opposition party UDPS announced boycott of polls, claiming will not be free and fair. Electoral commission accepted 33 presidential candidates; 10,000 signed up to run for 500 parliamentary seats. Supreme Court ruled Kabila could run for president, after opposition group submitted petition against candidature. UN and Congolese troops launched offensive against FDLR rebels in east, while new contingent of

peacekeepers arrived to boost security in Katanga, where fighting between army and Mai Mai militias has displaced thousands. UN Security Council authorised redeployment of peacekeepers from Burundi to DRC, and EU mission to support MONUC for elections.

- [Update Report DRC](#), Security Council Report, 19 Apr. 2006.
- Comment by Jason Stearns (Crisis Group), ["The gamble of elections in the Congo"](#), *The East African*, 14 Apr. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Reports N°104, ["Security Sector Reform in the Congo"](#), 13 Feb. 2006; and N°103, ["Katanga: The Congo's Forgotten Crisis"](#), 9 Jan. 2006.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°108, ["Congo's Elections: Making or Breaking the Peace"](#), 27 April 2006. The Congo's first free elections in 40 years should be a major step toward ending the country's long conflict, but any missteps could disrupt the fragile peace. The election date, already postponed five times, is still uncertain. There is potential for electoral fraud, parties are relatively weak, and the main opposition group plans to boycott. The most immediate threat to stability comes from the east where the Congolese Rally for Democracy stands to lose most of its influence and could try to fuel chaos in hopes of undermining the polls. Disenfranchised politicians elsewhere might also challenge the results violently if the elections are not fair and inclusive. The international community and the transitional government must ensure there is adequate monitoring of the whole process, or the Congolese will suffer the consequences for years.



- ↳ Rwanda Diplomatic row with Uganda after senior Rwandan envoy arrested for adultery; Kigali later accused Kampala of harbouring Rwandan rebel groups.

  - ["Rebel leader released after three-week detention"](#), IRIN, 27 Apr. 2006.
  - ["Rwanda-Uganda row expected to dominate Burundi summit"](#), *New Times*, 19 Apr. 2006.
  
- ↳ Uganda Supreme Court rejected opposition leader Besigye's challenge to February presidential election, saying no evidence results were substantially affected by irregularities, but agreeing vote flawed (names struck off voters' list, counting problem, bribes, multiple voting, intimidation and violence). Controversial treason trial for Besigye and 22 co-accused continued. Uganda asked UN Security Council to allow it to enter DRC under UN supervision in pursuit of LRA hiding in Garamba National Park. DR Congo later accused Ugandan troops of illegally entering country, which MONUC deemed "credible"; Kampala denied charge.

  - ["Claims Uganda troops entered Congo 'credible'-UN"](#), AlertNet, 29 Apr. 2006.
  - ["Uganda court rejects poll protest"](#), BBC, 6 Apr. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°35, ["Strategy for Ending Northern Uganda's Crisis"](#), 11 Jan. 2006.

### HORN OF AFRICA

- ↳ Ethiopia Government said talks underway with opposition CUD party to resolve political impasse. CUD, which won all seats on Addis Ababa city council in 2005 election, failed to provide required number of elected councillors to take over administration before 18 April deadline set by government. Series of explosions set off by unknown culprits continued: 6

killed in blasts in Gedo and Jijiga. Cross-border cattle raids from Kenya and Sudan killed up to 25. Independent radio broadcasts began early April after government issued licences to 2 stations.

- "UN condemns Ethiopia over rights", BBC, 27 Apr. 2006.
- "Ethiopian opposition fails to beat deadline to takeover capital", *Sudan Tribune*, 23 Apr. 2006.

↳ Ethiopia/Eritrea UN Security Council extended UNMEE mandate for 1 month and agreed to decide mid-May whether to scale back mission if sides fail to comply with UNSC demands. International Boundary Commission London meeting with Ethiopia and Eritrea set 28-29 April postponed for month due to ill health of commission head.

- "Second round of border talks postponed", IRIN, 28 Apr. 2006.
- "Eritrea says will not lift ban on UN border mission", *Sudan Tribune*, 19 Apr. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°101, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Preventing War*, 22 Dec. 2005.

↳ Somalia Outbreak of further major fighting feared imminent in Mogadishu after Islamic courts declared jihad on U.S.-backed Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism; 7 killed in clashes. Transitional parliament confirmed Baidoa temporary seat of government until security restored in Mogadishu, settling issue that had paralysed administration. Militia protecting parliament prevented lawmakers from entering session 1 April, complaining of inadequate shelter. At least 3 killed in clash between soldiers loyal to Puntland's president and regional clan opposed to exploration activities by Australian oil company. U.S. held talks with government on fighting piracy off Somali coast; 2 ships hijacked in month.

- "Somali Islamists declare jihad on warlords", *Mail & Guardian*, 22 Apr. 2006.
- "No one killed in Puntland operations, Range insists", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 Apr. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°100, *Somalia's Islamists*, 12 Dec. 2005.

↳ Somaliland (Somalia) Yemen offered to mediate border dispute between Somaliland and Puntland, following visit by Somaliland President Kahin.

- "Another country", *The Guardian*, 19 Apr. 2006.
- "Yemen mediates between Somaliland and Puntland", Shabelle, 6 Apr. 2006.

↳ Sudan Severe insecurity in Darfur continued, spilling over into Chad: latter cut off diplomatic ties after 13 April Chadian rebel attack on N'Djamena, claiming Khartoum support. Janjaweed militias raided refugee camps inside Chadian border. 48-hour extension given after 30 April deadline at Abuja peace talks passed without deal: government agreed to sign AU-backed agreement, but SLA/JEM rebels rejected plan, failing to find common position. Relations with UN worsened after Sudan denied humanitarian affairs chief Jan Egeland and, separately, UN military assessment team permission to visit Darfur. UN Security Council imposed sanctions on 4 Sudanese individuals held responsible for atrocities in Darfur; while UNSC committee recommended extending sanctions and instituting no-fly zone. Al-Qaeda head bin Laden threatened war against international community in Darfur. In continued violence in south, 15 killed in clashes between SSDF militia and SPLM forces; SSDF infighting killed 32. In eastern Kassala, rebels attacked

government positions, killing 8; Khartoum asked Eritrea to mediate.

- "AU mediator describes draft, pushes rebels to conclude", *Sudan Tribune*, 1 May 2006.
- "Fears of new govt offensive in South Darfur", IRIN, 27 Apr. 2006.
- Comment by Wesley Clark and John Prendergast (Crisis Group), "A US plan for Darfur", *Boston Globe*, 10 Apr. 2006.
- For background on Darfur, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°105, *To Save Darfur*, 17 Mar. 2006; on South Sudan, see Africa Report N°106, *Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement: The Long Road Ahead*, 31 Mar. 2006.

## SOUTHERN AFRICA

↳ Angola Speculation surrounding health of President Dos Santos increased after he visited Brazil for second time in month. 3 soldiers killed in northeast in ambush by FLEC Cabinda separatists.

- "Rumours swirl around Angola president's Brazil trip", Reuters, 21 Apr. 2006.
- "Angola's oil province on difficult quest for peace", *Mail & Guardian*, 10 Apr. 2006.

↳ Swaziland Pro-democracy protesters blocked South African-Swazi border crossing; SA police arrested 20, later released on bail. King Mswati said constitution lifted ban on political parties but opposition groups claimed still blocked from power.

- "King speaks - says democracy too expensive", IRIN, 26 Apr. 2006.
- "Border post scuffles highlight a democratic shortfall", Inter Press Service, 14 Apr. 2006.

↳ Zimbabwe Faction of opposition MDC party led by Mutambara weakened by series of high-profile defections to main faction led by Tsvangirai. Latter worked to build support for anti-government demonstrations as severe economic crisis continued. President Mugabe vowed crackdown on protestors and increased security service salaries. Ruling ZANU-PF party plan to amend constitution to delay presidential election to 2010 abandoned; seen as effort to facilitate VP Mujuru's succession to Mugabe. In apparent u-turn of government land seizure policy, white farmers invited to apply for land.

- "Presidential succession plan in Zim collapses", *Mail & Guardian*, 21 Apr. 2006.
- "Mugabe's threats 'betray panic'", *Mail & Guardian*, 20 Apr. 2006.
- For most recent report, see Africa Report N°97, *Zimbabwe's Operation Murambatsvina: The Tipping Point?*, 17 Aug. 2005; for background, see Africa Report N°93, *Post-Election Zimbabwe: What Next?*, 7 June 2005.

## WEST AFRICA

↳ Côte d'Ivoire Talks held between political leaders and Forces Nouvelles ex-rebels, focusing on disarmament and voter identification - key issues ahead of October elections. Sides agreed to simultaneously implement both processes, though President Gbagbo voiced opinion that disarmament should precede identification. UNSG Annan called for strengthening UNOCI peacekeeping force by 4,000 troops to help ensure peaceful transition. 5 killed in alleged inter-ethnic clash near Liberian border 29 April.

- [“President and prime minister in disarmament stand-off”](#), IRIN, 18 Apr. 2006.
- [“Detente kindles tenuous hopes of Ivory Coast peace”](#), *Washington Post*, 13 Apr. 2006.

➡ Gambia 5 arrested in March for allegedly plotting to overthrow President Jammeh escaped when vehicle transporting them to prison crashed. 17 suspects later charged with treason; case adjourned to 10 May.

- [“Gambia charges suspected coup plotters with treason”](#), AlertNet, 29 Apr. 2006.
- [“Gambia’s ‘coup plotters’ escape”](#), BBC, 5 Apr. 2006.

➡ Guinea Power struggle emerging within ailing President Lansana Conté’s cabinet. State radio announced cabinet reshuffle 5 April granting PM Cellou Diallo and associates greater power; broadcast cut off by presidential guard. Decree rescinded and PM Diallo sacked next day.

- [“Is there a captain onboard?”](#), allAfrica.com, 8 Apr. 2006.
- [“Sacked prime minister speaks out”](#), IRIN, 7 Apr. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°94, [Stopping Guinea’s Slide](#), 14 June 2005.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°37, [Guinea in Transition](#), 11 April 2006. With  a power struggle emerging in Guinea as President Conté’s long reign nears its end, international actors should send clear signals that a military takeover would be unacceptable. Although parts of Guinea’s civilian elite are beginning to treat the country’s future as their collective concern, the probability of a military takeover remains high. Fellow African countries and African institutions, as well as the EU and U.S., should encourage the new civic spirit. It is also vital to build on three major advances that have taken place over the last six months: the important but incomplete political reforms instituted to revise electoral lists and establish an electoral commission and privately-owned electronic media; the December 2005 municipal elections, which should be considered a “practice run” for the next poll; and the general strike and mid-March National Consultation that have positioned trade unions and professional and civil society organisations as a potential counterbalance to the alliance between the ruling party and the Guinean military.

➡ Guinea-Bissau/Senegal Guinea-Bissau troops ended offensive against Senegalese secessionist Movement for the Democratic Forces of Casamance 21 April.

- [“Offensive will continue until rebel positions destroyed, president”](#), IRIN, 14 Apr. 2006.

➡ Liberia Security tightened in capital after violent protests by ex-soldiers over unpaid demobilisation benefits. President Johnson-Sirleaf announced short-term reconstruction plan, highlighting cuts in “bloated” public service; workers threatened to strike if not offered alternative employment. UN sanctions chief suggested diamond and timber sanctions would be reviewed in June, but government must first prove accountability and authority over revenues. Former President Taylor awaiting trial on war crimes by Special Court for Sierra Leone.

- [“Stone throwing ex-soldiers paralyse capital”](#), IRIN, 25 Apr. 2006.
- [“150 day action plan”](#), Government of Liberia, 17 Apr. 2006.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°36, [Liberia: Staying Focused](#), 13 Jan. 2006.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°107, [Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System](#),  6 April 2006. Liberia’s justice system is in shambles. Unless the government and donors make its reform a top priority, plans for improving economic governance, transforming the military and rebuilding infrastructure will not succeed. Fourteen years of civil war pulverised an already dysfunctional system, and the courts and judiciary have collapsed altogether in many places. In the next six months, government, lawyers, judges, civil servants and donors should devise a program, in consultation with civil society, which provides justice and protection for men and women, rich and poor alike. Stronger and impartial mechanisms are required in both statutory and customary law systems, and community-based programs should be created. Liberia was the catalyst for West Africa’s deadly wars. A Liberia driven by the unwavering principle of justice could become the anchor of its peace.

➡ Nigeria Further political instability as government debated possible third term bid for President Obasanjo amid wide-scale protests. Rift widened between president and VP Abubakar, who called for Obasanjo’s resignation before announcing own candidacy for 2007 elections. MEND rebels rejected presidential initiative to create jobs in Niger Delta; set off car bombs at military base in Port Harcourt, killing 2, and near Warri; threatened to shut down all oil production. 25 killed in ethnic land dispute between Gomai and Pan tribes in Plateau state; more than 1,200 displaced.

- [“MEND escalates instability in Nigeria”](#), ISN, 28 Apr. 2006.
- [“While Nigeria simmers”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Apr. 2006.

➡ Sierra Leone Former Liberian President Taylor appeared in Special Court 3 April, pleaded not guilty to charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity for role in SL civil war. UN Security Council considered resolution to transfer trial to The Hague for security reasons, but question remained as to where Taylor might be accommodated afterwards; Taylor’s defence lawyer filed motion trial be held in SL. Peoples Movement for Democratic Change party, headed by Charles Margai, officially registered 11 April.

- [“Who will be the next president?”](#), *The Independent*, 18 Apr. 2006.
- [“Taylor pleads not guilty to war crimes”](#), *The Guardian*, 3 Apr. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, [Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States](#), 8 Dec. 2004.

## Asia/Pacific

### CENTRAL ASIA

Crisis Group Asia Report N°113, [Central Asia: What Role for the European Union?](#),  10 April 2006. The EU is missing its opportunity to make a positive impact on Central Asia, where despite a surface calm, the potential for instability and conflict is high. EU assistance to the region has largely taken the form of technical assistance, which shows few results for the time...

...and money invested. The EU has to rethink its approach: there should be a move away from failed regional projects and recognition that the five Central Asian states face very different domestic political and economic situations. Technical aid may be appropriate for Kazakhstan, but Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan need more classic development help, particularly in infrastructure and public health. Engagement with the repressive regimes in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is unlikely to yield results, and EU policies should instead focus on facilitating their transition from dictatorship.

- Kazakhstan Government blocked opposition leaders Galymzhan Zhaqiyarov and Bulat Abilov from travelling to EU to meet officials. Justice ministry rejected appeal by opposition Alga party after its request for registration denied in February. National Security Committee claimed had uncovered religious extremist plot on country's infrastructure.
  - "Claims of terrorist network unsettle some political activists", RFE/RL, 20 Apr. 2006.

- Kyrgyzstan President Bakiyev came under increasing pressure to deal with crime and corruption after prominent pro-democracy activist Edil Baisalov seriously injured in attack by unknown assailant. Baisalov had organised demonstration against criminalisation of politics ahead of 9 April parliamentary by-elections in which alleged organised crime bosses were candidates, including Ryspek Akmatbayev (who won despite questions over legality of his candidacy). Alliance of opposition politicians and NGOs issued 18 April ultimatum to president to tackle problems or resign. 29 April opposition rally ended peacefully after Bakiyev unexpectedly addressed crowd and appealed for patience. President threatened closure of U.S. Manas airbase if new agreement on rent payments not reached by June.
  - "Thousands boo Kyrgyz president, demand democracy", AlertNet, 29 Apr. 2006.
  - "Kyrgyz premier orders mafia clampdown", ISN, 20 Apr. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°109, *Kyrgyzstan: A Faltering State*, 16 Dec. 2005.

- Tajikistan President Rakhmonov said ministries becoming "mafia clans" and urged officials to declare assets to avoid confiscation.
  - "Tajik opposition faces uphill election battle", ISN (RFE/RL), 19 Apr. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, *Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?*, 19 May 2004.

- Turkmenistan Prosecutor General Atajanova, seen as ultra-loyalist of President Niyazov, resigned, citing poor health; subsequently admitted corruption in televised show trial. Gurbandurdy Durdykuliev, detained in 2004 after requesting permission to hold demonstration, discharged from psychiatric institution, week after U.S. legislators called for his release. European Parliament delayed vote on trade deal with Turkmenistan amid NGO objections on human rights grounds.
  - "EU accused of ignoring human rights abuses in rush for gas deal", *The Guardian*, 21 Apr. 2006.
  - Comment by Andrew Stroehlein (Crisis Group) and Tanya Cox, "EU and the Turkmen 'Prophet'", *European Voice*, 6 Apr. 2006.

- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°85, *Repression and Regression in Turkmenistan: A New International Strategy*, 4 Nov. 2004.

- Uzbekistan OSCE report called for retrial of people accused of Andijon uprising, saying 2005 trials of 15 men unfair. Court reduced sentence of jailed opposition leader Sanjar Umarov, but activists said Umarov appeared forcibly drugged at appeal trial. UN said systematic torture by government continued. UNHCR left country after being expelled by government in March.
  - "Activists welcome OSCE call for retrial of 15 Andijan defendants", IRIN, 25 Apr. 2006.
  - "Worries for jailed opposition leader mount", RFE/RL, 13 Apr. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°45, *Uzbekistan: In for the Long Haul*, 16 Feb. 2006.

## SOUTH ASIA

- Afghanistan Taliban "spring offensive" saw increased suicide attacks and bombings in south and east; more expected amidst transition from U.S. control to NATO in south. U.S., UK and national security forces launched its largest operation since 2001 in eastern Kunar province. Heavy fighting erupted in Kandahar as international and local forces clashed with anti-government elements: casualties included 6 police, several civilians and reportedly over 40 Taliban; 4 Canadian soldiers killed in roadside blast 22 April. Earlier 14 militants killed in attacks on checkpoints in Zabul province while 5 Afghan health workers killed in Badghis province. Suspected suicide bombers targeted Italian base in Herat - killing 4 - and U.S. bases at Bagram and in Helmand province. Voting on Cabinet confirmation took place 20 April in lower house of National Assembly. New foreign and defence ministers won vote of confidence in perceived government victory; transport and commerce ministers among 5 rejected.
  - "Parliament's growing pains", IWPR, 25 Apr. 2006.
  - "Broad support for cabinet in Afghanistan", *New York Times*, 21 Apr. 2006.
  - For most recent report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°107, *Rebuilding the Afghan State: The European Union's Role*, 30 Nov. 2005; for background, see N°101, *Afghanistan Elections: Endgame or New Beginning?*, 21 July 2005.

- Bangladesh Opposition alliance protests against fuel and food shortages in northwest violently broken up by police; at least 6 killed 13 April. Awami League (AL)-led alliance also organised general strikes 20 and 23 April to press for electoral reform ahead of January 2007 polls; demonstrators clashed with police and government supporters. Plans for joint government-opposition committee on reforms stalled as AL blocked Islamic Jamaat-e-Islami, major partner of ruling BNP and accused by AL of militant links, from participating. Central Bank fined biggest Sharia lender Islami Bank for wiring money to militant groups. Security forces said had arrested last 2 senior members of Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh, blamed for suicide attacks in 2005.
  - "Bangladesh 'militants' arrested", BBC, 26 Apr. 2006.
  - "Pickets fight with cops during hartal hours", *Daily Star*, 24 Apr. 2006.

India (non-Kashmir) PM Manmohan Singh described Maoist insurgency as country's most serious internal security threat. 10 police reportedly killed 16 April in Maoist attack in eastern Chhattisgarh state; 11 Maoists killed in clashes with Andhra Pradesh police 28 April. Other incidents included Maoists' attacks on civilians belonging to state sponsored anti-Maoist Salwa Judum movement. Religious tensions continued with 4 killed in Muslim/Hindu clashes in Aligarh city northern Uttar Pradesh state 6 April and 2 explosions inside Delhi's Jama Masjid (Grand Mosque) 14 April. Police arrested 6 Islamic militants in connection to March Varanasi blasts blamed on Bangladeshi group, Harkatul Jihad-al Islami.

- ["Maoists who menace India"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 18 Apr. 2006.
- ["Plea for calm after Delhi blasts"](#), CNN, 14 Apr. 2006.

Kashmir Upsurge in attacks by separatists in first major violence since November 2005. 22 Hindu villagers killed by militants in Doda district 1 May. Wave of Srinagar grenade attacks 14 April and gunbattles in Srinagar and Jammu and Kashmir killed at least 17. Kashmiri radical separatist groups claimed responsibility. Senior opposition politician Ali Mohammad Naik wounded and 2 guards killed 17 April in attack claimed by Islamic Front militants. By-elections held for 4 seats for Jammu and Kashmir state assembly. 3 politicians reportedly killed by insurgents. Indian PM Manmohan Singh to meet Kashmiri separatist leaders in New Delhi early May.

- ["Police: Suspected rebels kill 22 Hindus"](#), *The Guardian*, 1 May 2006.
- ["Blasts as voting begins in J&K"](#), AFP, 24 Apr. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°79, [India/Pakistan Relations and Kashmir: Steps toward Peace](#), 24 June 2004.

Nepal After 19 days of mass anti-monarchy protests, King Gyanendra agreed to restore parliament for first time since its dissolution in 2002. Move came as king faced mounting pressure from mass protests despite government-imposed curfews and violent clampdown by security forces; at least 16 killed. 6 others killed by army in southeastern Nepal during protests over death of woman allegedly raped and shot by soldiers. Parliament convened 28 April, with veteran Nepali Congress head Girija Prasad Koirala as consensus PM. But several challenges remain, including building peace process with Maoist rebels, who declared 3-month ceasefire following king's 24 April climbdown, and effecting constitutional change through new constituent assembly (to be now elected).

- ["Nepal MPs back new constitution"](#), BBC, 30 Apr. 2006.
- Comment by Rhoderick Chalmers (Crisis Group), ["Nepal: Now for the hard part"](#), CNN, 28 Apr. 2006.
- Comment by John Norris (Crisis Group) and Kanak Dixit, ["Taking a stand for democracy in Nepal"](#), *LA Times*, 21 Apr. 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°49, [Nepal's Crisis: Mobilising International Influence](#), 19 April 2006. As strikes and demonstrations across Nepal signal the approaching end of the king's direct rule, international actors must prepare for a transition and help start a peace process. There is a need for a Contact Group - including India, the U.S., and the UK, working with the UN - and a complementary Peace Support Group of other key donors and financial institutions. Together they should...



...create a common front to maximise international influence in assisting Nepal to escape from its worsening conflict. The Contact Group should focus on immediate practical planning and maintain pressure for a peace process, while the Peace Support Group should review development assistance. Time is clearly running out for royal absolutism. The people of Nepal should now decide the course of events, but the international community can help guard against the risks of a messy transition.

Pakistan Security situation continued to deteriorate as at least 57 killed in worst terrorist attack in Karachi's history: suicide bombing of congregation of Sunnis celebrating Eid Milad festival killed entire leadership of Sunni Tehrik group, as well as many leaders of Jamaat Ulema Pakistan (JUP) - both Bareilvi religious parties; JUP also partner in Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal 6-party religious alliance. Responsibility for blast unclear: observers suggested intra-Sunni rivalry, others, Deobandi extremist groups. Pro-Taliban militants attacked paramilitary troops near Miranshah, main town of North Waziristan region 20 April reportedly killing 7.

- ["158 people killed in Balochistan since January 1"](#), *Dawn*, 20 Apr. 2006.
- ["Pakistan probe into deadly attack"](#), BBC, 12 Apr. 2006.
- For most recent report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°46, [Pakistan: Political Impact of the Earthquake](#), 15 Mar. 2006.

Sri Lanka Fears of return to full-scale civil war after major upsurge in violence left over 100 dead, and with both government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) threatening immediate retaliation for further attacks. Government launched air strikes against Tamil positions after suicide bomber injured army chief and killed 10 in Colombo 25 April. Bombing followed 2 weeks of violent attacks against civilians and inter-communal rioting between Sinhalese and Tamils. Before suicide bombing, LTTE had "indefinitely postponed" scheduled second round Geneva talks with government, citing violence against Tamil civilians and restrictions on movement of LTTE leaders.

- ["Toll mounts as Sri Lanka's peace falters"](#), *The Guardian*, 1 May 2006.
- ["LTTE pulls out of Lanka peace talks"](#), *Times of India*, 20 Apr. 2006.

## NORTH EAST ASIA

North Korea Nuclear negotiations remained stalled. Representatives from U.S., China, Russia, Japan and South Korea, meeting at academic conference in Tokyo, failed to extract commitment from North to return to 6-party talks. Washington maintained economic sanctions in response to NK money laundering and counterfeiting and unrelated to nuclear issue. Japan increased pressure over abduction issue, with draft legislation mandating sanctions if Pyongyang withholds information on past kidnappings.

- ["US pressure on 'criminal' N Korea"](#), BBC, 18 Apr. 2006.
- ["North Korea still refusing to return to nuclear arms talks"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 12 Apr. 2006.
- For most recent report, see Asia Report N°112, [North Korea and China: Comrades Forever?](#), 1 Feb. 2006; for background, see N°108, [North East Asia's Undercurrents of Conflict](#), 15 Dec. 2005.

- ↳ Taiwan Strait Chinese President Hu Jintao called for talks during visit of former leader of opposition Kuomintang party Lien Chan to Beijing. Lien urged direct cross-Strait flights and boosting of trade. Hu called for Taiwan to return to 1992 "one China" principle. Violence in Solomon Islands blamed partly on continuing battle between Beijing and Taipei for diplomatic recognition.
  - "Learning to live with Taiwan's twilight zone", *International Herald Tribune*, 19 Apr. 2006.
  - "China calls for talks with Taiwan", BBC, 16 Apr. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°42, *China and Taiwan: Uneasy Détente*, 21 Sept. 2005.

## SOUTH EAST ASIA

- ↳ Indonesia Unrest continued in Papua with 10 April attack on army in Keerom regency blamed on Free Papua Movement rebels; 4 killed. Diplomatic relations soured with Australia as Jakarta accused Canberra of meddling in internal affairs by giving 42 Papuan asylum-seekers temporary visas in March. Parliamentary discussion continued past initial 31 March deadline on draft Law on Government in Aceh - key element of peace process - delaying gubernatorial elections in province. VP Jusuf Kalla said polls, originally scheduled for April, may be held in August if parliament passes bill in May, and asked for EU-led Aceh Monitoring Mission to remain for elections. 2 Free Aceh Movement (GAM) leaders previously in exile, including designated GAM PM Malik Mahmud, in 19 April Aceh visit. Timing of possible execution of 3 Catholics in Central Sulawesi for involvement in Poso conflict remains unclear; Supreme Court formed panel of judges to consider reviewing case. Police raid on house in Central Java 29 April killed 2 accomplices of wanted militant Noordin Top.
  - "Indonesia hopes for Aceh elections in Aug", AlertNet, 23 Apr. 2006.
  - "Cheers greet return of exiled GAM leaders", *Jakarta Post*, 20 Apr. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefings N°48, *Aceh: Now for the Hard Part*, 29 Mar. 2006; and N°47, *Papua: The Dangers of Shutting Down Dialogue*, 23 March 2006.

- ↳ Myanmar/Burma Army intensified offensive against Karen communities near new capital Pyinmana and along Thai border: thousands reportedly displaced. U.S. condemned campaign, saying military regime threat to region. Ruling junta threatened National League for Democracy with dissolution, claiming links to terrorist actions. Series of small blasts targeting Yangon infrastructure 20 April came week after government called exiled pro-democracy groups terrorists. ASEAN ministers agreed to continue policy of engagement despite lack of progress on "roadmap to democracy", and failure of ASEAN envoy's March visit.
  - "Burmese junta accuses opposition", BBC, 27 Apr. 2006.
  - "Myanmar troops attack rebel villages, thousands flee", AlertNet, 26 Apr. 2006.
  - For most recent report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°34, *Myanmar: Update on HIV/AIDS Policy*, 16 Dec. 2004.

- ↳ Philippines Relative calm after period of political turmoil. Debate continued over constitutional shift to parliamentary-style government proposed by President Arroyo. Opposition groups sought legislative means to block initiative from

reaching nationwide referendum. Police anti-terrorism chief said authorities believe Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has cut ties with Jemaah Islamiyah and dismantled training camps; further talks between government and MILF scheduled early May.

- "Manila says Muslim rebels dismantle militant camps", AlertNet, 24 Apr. 2006.
- "Filipinos get ready to cha-cha again", Asia Times Online, 11 Apr. 2006
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°110, *Philippines Terrorism: The Role of Militant Islamic Converts*, 19 Dec. 2005.

- ↳ Thailand Political uncertainty continued after 2 April snap elections, while state of emergency renewed in south. PM Thaksin Shinawatra initially claimed victory in polls before "resigning" amid widespread popular protests. Opposition boycotts meant that despite 23 April by-elections, 14 seats remained unfilled in constituencies where single candidates failed to win 20% vote threshold required by constitution. Thaksin handed power to deputy PM Chidchai Wannasathit but remains in parliament and leader of Thai Rak Thai party. King Bhumibol rejected calls from People's Alliance for Democracy to appoint caretaker PM, but asked courts to resolve crisis: administrative court suspended remaining by-elections 29 April. Southern militants targeted several ballot convoys and polling stations in Narathiwat and Yala on voting days: 3 killed during 19 April Senate election; and 2 killed during 23 April by-election.
  - "King halts Thailand's troubles", *The Observer*, 30 Apr. 2006.
  - "Vote boycott deepens Thai crisis", BBC, 23 Apr. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°105, *Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution*, 18 Nov. 2005; and N°98, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad*, 18 May 2005.

- ↳ Timor-Leste Protest against government sacking of 600 soldiers turned violent 28 April, at least 2 killed; was latest in series of demonstrations by troops - many from west of country - claiming discrimination in military.
  - "Violence erupts at E Timor rally", BBC, 28 Apr. 2006.

## PACIFIC

- ↳ Fiji Preparations underway for fiercely contested 6-13 May general elections; 1,400 troops to be deployed across country to keep peace. Military warned troops would take action if voting turned violent. Former PM Mahendra Chaudhry, ethnic Indian ousted in racially-inspired 2000 coup, seeking return to power with possibility of backlash from indigenous nationalists.
  - "Fiji military warns against violence", *The Age*, 21 Apr. 2006.

- ↳ Solomon Islands PM Snyder Rini resigned after 8-day tenure marked by violent riots in capital, Honiara. Demonstrators claimed Rini, elected via secret ballot by newly elected members of parliament 18 April, too closely linked to previous tainted administration, and had used money from Taiwanese or Chinese sources - in context of continuing cross-Strait diplomatic battle over recognition of Taiwan - to bribe his win. Riots targeted Chinatown and left large areas in ruins. Government implemented curfew while Australian-led peacekeeping force - bolstered by additional 110 troops - patrolled city to prevent further violence. Curfew lifted 27 April, with new elections due first week May.

- [“Solomons MPs to elect new PM this week”](#), *New Zealand Herald*, 1 May 2006.
- [“Honiara erupts as PM quits”](#), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 Apr. 2006.



## Europe

### BALKANS

- Albania PM Berisha called on chief state prosecutor to resign, citing failure on corruption cases. U.S. Millennium Challenge fund agreed to donate \$13 million to fight corruption.
  - [“UNDP chief pledges further assistance to Albania”](#), *South East European Times*, 10 Apr. 2006.
  - For most recent report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°153, [“Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?”](#), 25 Feb. 2004.
- Bosnia & Herzegovina Constitutional reforms agreed in March failed to get necessary 2/3 majority in parliamentary vote, jeopardising efforts toward EU integration. High Rep. Schwarz-Schilling, in briefing to UN Security Council, stated Bosnia should have full responsibility for own governance, outlining plan for replacement of High Rep. with EU Special Rep. without “Bonn powers” in early 2007.
  - [“Bosnia mediator disappointed over defeat of constitutional amendments”](#), *Voice of America*, 27 Apr. 2006.
  - [“We must allow BIH authorities to make the decisions”](#), *FENA*, 18 Apr. 2006.
  - For most recent report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°164, [“Bosnia’s Stalled Police Reform: No Progress, No EU”](#), 6 Sept. 2005.
- Kosovo Third round of talks on decentralisation ended 3 April with no agreement; fourth round due 4 May to discuss numbers and borders of new Serb-majority municipalities and divided Mitrovica; Kosovo Albanian team reportedly preparing bold concessions. EU established planning team to ensure smooth transition from UNMIK to proposed EU crisis management mission on rule of law and police matters. PM Ceku promised to tackle corruption after warnings could stymie independence; some ministers rumoured for dismissal. Ceku visited village along border with Macedonia, promising residents would renegotiate 2001 Belgrade/Skopje border agreement. Macedonia has insisted demarcation of existing frontier be condition of final status.
  - [“Both sides dragging their feet over Kosovo”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Apr. 2006.
  - [“No progress in third round of Kosovo talks”](#), ISN, 4 Apr. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°170, [“Kosovo: The Challenge of Transition”](#), 17 Feb. 2006.
- Macedonia Parliamentary elections set for 5 July. Parliament approved members of State Election Commission (SEC) 20 April, despite concerns over strong party links of nominees; EU warned SEC must satisfy EU standards of independence. Defence minister announced end to conscription in plans to professionalise army with view to NATO membership. Macedonia continued to insist demarcation of frontier with Kosovo in accordance with 2001 agreement with Belgrade be condition of Kosovo final status, as Kosovo PM Ceku made provocative visit to disputed area.

- [“Macedonia sets election date”](#), ISN, 21 Apr. 2006.
- [“Macedonia announces end to conscription”](#), ISN, 11 Apr. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°41, [“Macedonia: Wobbling toward Europe”](#), 12 Jan. 2006.

- Montenegro Campaign ahead of 21 May independence referendum continued amid charges of fraud on both sides, as pro-unionist member of electoral commission arrested for falsifying voter registration forms; later released. Pro-union forces hinted at boycott as polls showed pro-independence forces will probably receive required 55% of votes.
  - [“In Montenegro resort, a rift over independence”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 18 Apr. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°169, [“Montenegro’s Independence Drive”](#), 7 Dec. 2005.
- Serbia Parliament passed law permitting civil courts and police to enforce church court decisions: OSCE and Council of Europe protested. Police closed popular BK TV station in midnight raid. Government controversially dissolved municipal assembly of Bosniak majority Novi Pazar in attempt to prevent recall vote of Mayor Sulejman Ugljanin; 4 bombs exploded in Novi Pazar. In protest Human and Minority Rights Minister Rasim Ljajic resigned as president of South Serbia Coordination Body, leaving Presevo Valley Albanians with no institutional channel for resolving grievances. Over Albanian objections, Serbian government called local elections in Presevo Valley for 4 June. Second round of Stabilisation and Association Agreement negotiations held with EU: next round in May looked unlikely as 30 April EU deadline for arrest of war crimes suspect Mladic elapsed. Parliament passed law freezing assets of fugitive war crimes suspects 7 April.
  - Comment by James Lyon (Crisis Group), [“Serbia’s stain lingers”](#), *Baltimore Sun*, 10 Apr. 2006.
  - [“Belgrade to freeze assets of war crimes suspects”](#), *RFE/RL*, 7 Apr. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°39, [“Serbia: Spinning its Wheels”](#), 23 May 2005.

### CAUCASUS

- Armenia Government agreed to sell last major thermal power plant to Russia for gas worth \$250 million. Opposition criticised deal for increasing dependence on Russia.
  - [“Armenia’s giveaways to Russia”](#), ISN, 20 Apr. 2006.
  - For most recent report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°158, [“Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead”](#), 18 Oct. 2004.
- Azerbaijan President Aliyev met U.S. President Bush 28 April for first time since taking office in 2003. Timing led to speculation visit linked to U.S. policy on Iran, but Aliyev rejected support for possible U.S. military action. Iran suggested Azerbaijan could play mediation role between Washington and Tehran; Aliyev to meet Iranian president 3-4 May. OSCE expressed concern over court decision to hold closed trial in case of 3 opposition youth activists accused of attempting to overthrow government.
  - [“Azerbaijan leader’s U.S. visit raises eyebrows”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 19 Apr. 2006.
  - [“Azerbaijani opposition youth activists’ trial begins”](#), *RFE/RL*, 5 Apr. 2006.
  - For most recent report, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°40, [“Azerbaijan’s 2005 Elections: Lost Opportunity”](#), 21 Nov. 2005.

- Chechnya (Russia) PM Kadyrov reportedly disbanded personal guard, consisting of thousands of former rebels, 29 April. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres visited Grozny to assess situation. 2 policemen killed in 15 April ambush.

  - [“Pro-Moscow Chechen govt head disbands feared guard”](#), Reuters, 29 Apr. 2006.
  - [“Leaders’ gun battle threatens Chechen stability”](#), *The Guardian*, 28 Apr. 2006.
  
- North Caucasus (non-Chechnya) At least 6 police and 3 militants reported dead in clashes in Daghestan. Russian forces claimed leader of Islamist Shariat Jamaat group also killed. Police opened fire on protestors trying to seize village building in effort to force resignation of local administration in Usukhchai, Daghestan, leaving 1 dead. Bomb in Ingushetian capital Nazran killed 1.

  - [“Russian forces kill militant leader in Dagestan”](#), AlertNet, 10 Apr. 2006.
  - [“Blast in Ingushetia kills one, injures two”](#), RFE/RL, 1 Apr. 2006.
  
- Georgia Bilateral relations with Moscow strained by Russian ban on Georgian (and Moldovan) wine and brandy. Moscow cited consumer safety, but Tbilisi condemned move as political. Parliament ratified bilateral agreement on Russian military base withdrawal 13 April. 37 opposition MPs began boycott of parliament 1 April, demanding changes to new election code to give more autonomy to local government and dismissal of interior minister; ruling party rejected conditions.

  - [“Tbilisi condemns Russian Duma’s backing of wine ban”](#), RFE/RL, 19 Apr. 2006.
  - [“Georgia’s ruling party rejects opposition demands”](#), RFE/RL, 8 Apr. 2006.
  - For most recent report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°173, [Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU’s Role](#), 20 Mar. 2006.
  
- Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmen visited Yerevan and Baku in attempt to organise summer meeting between Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents. Armenian-backed forces in N-K held week-long military exercises, protested by Azerbaijan. 1 Azerbaijani soldier killed near line of contact 3 April.

  - [“Nagorno-Karabakh holds military maneuvers”](#), Eurasianet, 20 Apr. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°167, [Nagorno-Karabakh: A Plan for Peace](#), 11 Oct. 2005.

## EASTERN EUROPE

- Belarus EU imposed visa ban on President Lukashenko and 30 senior officials held responsible for electoral misconduct and post-election violent crackdown on opposition. Parliament re-elected Lukashenko-backed PM Syarhey Sidorski 17 April. 7,000 opposition supporters marked Chernobyl disaster anniversary with protest against president. Opposition leaders, including Alexandr Milinkevich, given 15-day sentences after rally, while Alexander Lebedko reportedly detained and beaten by police. Russian gas giant Gazprom threatened to triple prices unless Belarus allows transfer of Beltransgaz distribution company to Gazprom. Senior opposition figure Mikhail Marynich, jailed in 2004, released early.

- [“Belarus opposition leader jailed”](#), BBC, 27 Apr. 2006.
  - [“A new gas war looms, with Belarus the loser”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 8 Apr. 2006.
  
- Moldova Talks with EU held in Luxembourg: EU officials told PM Vasile Tarlev membership hopes premature and urged government to focus on essential reforms. International mediators agreed to restart negotiations over disputed Transdnistria in May. Transdnistrian leader Igor Smirnov said Ukraine’s new March customs regulations, which he charged amounted to economic blockade, rendered Ukrainian President Yushchenko’s peace plans for breakaway region obsolete. OSCE criticised Transdnistrian 21 April seizure of Varnita port; Joint Control Commission failed to resolve dispute over port’s status.

  - [“A murky meeting in Moscow on Moldova”](#), Eurasia Daily Monitor, 28 Apr. 2006.
  - [“Moldovan official says property seized by Transdnistrier militants”](#), RFE/RL, 21 Apr. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°157, [Moldova: Regional Tensions over Transdnistria](#), 17 June 2004.
  
- Ukraine Bloc Yulia Tymoshenko, Our Ukraine party, and Socialists engaged in acrimonious talks to form new government after agreeing to reunite as “orange” coalition. President Yushchenko said did not expect new government until late June.

  - [“Paper names Ukrainians who control gas imports”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 27 Apr. 2006.
  - [“Orange Revolution leaders decide to reunite”](#), ISN, 12 Apr. 2006.

## WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

- Basque Country (Spain) Large rally in Bilbao called for greater autonomy and ETA-government negotiations. Spanish PM Zapatero and Basque President Ibarretxe said ETA must maintain ceasefire and end extortion before talks. Government said preliminary investigation into 2 arson attacks in Basque and Navarre regions showed attacks not ordered by ETA. Leader of banned Batasuna party Arnaldo Otegi received 15-month prison sentence and 7-year ban from political office for glorifying terrorism; appeal pending.

  - [“Basque jailed over terror tribute”](#), BBC, 27 Apr. 2006.
  - [“Spain tells Eta to stop extortion”](#), BBC, 4 Apr. 2006.
  
- Cyprus Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders Papadopoulos and Talat agreed to meet at next Committee of Missing Persons but did not commit to holding talks. Long-awaited Turkish Cypriot census held 30 April. Greek Cypriot elections due 21 May.

  - [“13-hour census curfew for Turkish Cypriots”](#), *Cyprus Mail*, 28 Apr. 2006.
  - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°171, [The Cyprus Stalemate: What Next?](#), 8 Mar. 2006.
  
- Northern Ireland (UK) British and Irish PMs unveiled blueprint 6 April aimed at restoring devolution. Plan reconvenes Stormont Assembly 15 May but stipulates unless multi-party government formed by 24 November, Assembly will be suspended and members’ salaries discontinued. Democratic Unionist Party participated for first time in British-

Irish Parliamentary Body after 16-year boycott. Denis Donaldson, former Sinn Fein official who admitted spying for British government, murdered in County Donegal; Sinn Fein and IRA denied involvement.

- "Delusions of power-sharing", *The Guardian*, 28 Apr. 2006.
- "Deadline for NI devolution plan", BBC, 6 Apr. 2006.

- Turkey Further unrest followed Kurdish riots in late March: 3 killed in Istanbul bus attack and 1 in protests in southeastern town Kiziltepe 2 April. Dozens injured in 2 Istanbul explosions, while suicide attack killed bomber in Black Sea town of Ordu. At least 10 security force members and 23 PKK rebels reported killed in clashes in southeast amidst major Turkish military build-up in areas bordering Iran and Iraq. U.S. and Iraq warned Turkey against cross-border operations against PKK; Turkey called on both to curb PKK activities in northern Iraq, but denied its troops had crossed Iraqi border. Public prosecutor who had implicated senior generals in November Semdinli bombing expelled by professional board; dismissal criticised as undermining judicial independence.
- "Turkey denies troops entered Iraq but tough on Kurds", AlertNet, 26 Apr. 2006.
  - "Resurfacing in Turkey: Deadly old hatreds", *International Herald Tribune*, 6 Apr. 2006.

## Latin America / Caribbean

- Bolivia Government expelled Brazilian steel company in Puerto Suarez, ending power struggle between Morales administration, which said company had broken foreign ownership rules, and local interests that wanted plant to stay open: locals had kidnapped 3 ministers in protest. String of labour strikes continued, raising fears of deeper social protests. President Morales increased control over energy industry with new regulation granting government power to set prices and export volumes. Morales signed trade pact with Cuba and Venezuela, seen as alternative to trade deals with U.S.
- "Bolivian government ministers freed", CNN, 19 Apr. 2006.
  - "Bolivia's Morales makes first slip", ISN, 7 Apr. 2006.
  - For most recent report, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°15, *Bolivia at the Crossroads: The December Elections*, 8 Dec. 2005.

- Colombia Crisis with state security agency (DAS) after media alleged ties between DAS and paramilitaries, prompting accusations from President Uribe that press undermining democracy. ELN rebels resumed preliminary peace talks with government, while PDA party officials offered to accept rebels into ranks after disarming. Rebel attacks continued in run-up to 28 May presidential election: FARC blamed for fire bomb attacks on 2 Bogota buses that killed 3; joint FARC-ELN ambush killed 10 DAS detectives and 7 soldiers in Norte de Santander province. UNHCR said fighting between army and irregular armed group forced 1,400 to flee near border with Ecuador. Peace Commissioner Restrepo announced demobilisation of AUC paramilitaries completed. U.S. report revealed coca crops cover 144,000 hectares, up from 105,000 in 2005.
- "Colombia's elections", Council on Foreign Relations, 25 Apr. 2006.
  - "Colombia leader hits out at press", BBC, 17 Apr. 2006.

- Crisis Group Latin America Report N°16, *Colombia: Towards Peace and Justice?*, 14 March 2006.

- Ecuador Trade talks with U.S., which caused major indigenous protests March, stalled over hydrocarbons bill.
- "Support is elusive for leader", *Miami Herald*, 23 Apr. 2006.
  - "US warns Ecuador free-trade pact at risk", *Washington Post*, 20 Apr. 2006.

- Guyana Agriculture minister shot dead at his home 22 April in latest in string of political murders; president called killing "attempt to destabilise our democracy".
- "Guyana minister shot dead at home", BBC, 22 Apr. 2006.

- Haiti Relatively calm second round parliamentary elections held 21 April with 30% voter turnout. President-elect Préval's Lespwa party captured largest number of seats (11 of 27 senate, 20 of 85 lower house), but will need to form alliances. Additional election observers and UN peacekeepers deployed to 37 "trouble spots": despite quiet in Port-au-Prince, 1 killed in Grande Saline and election observer wounded in Artibonite.
- "New Haiti leader seen able to control legislature", AlertNet, 26 Apr. 2006.
  - "Haitians go to polls today", *Miami Herald*, 21 Apr. 2006.

- Peru Presidential and parliamentary elections held 9 April. Presidential runoff vote likely to be between nationalist candidate Humala and former President Garcia set for 28 May; with conservative Flores third. With nearly 70% of votes counted for 120-seat congress, Humala's Peru Union party in lead; final results due early May. Peru recalled ambassador to Venezuela, accusing President Chavez of interference in election with his backing of Humala.
- "An election does not a democracy make", *Miami Herald*, 14 Apr. 2006.
  - "A familiar name on Peruvian ballot: Fujimori", *International Herald Tribune*, 10 Apr. 2006.

- Venezuela U.S. complained after convoy of ambassador pelted with vegetables by supporters of President Chavez; Caracas warned ambassador could face expulsion if "deliberate provocations" continued. Chavez withdrew from Andean Community trade bloc after Peru and Colombia signed bilateral trade pacts with U.S.
- "South America's union dream is falling apart", *Miami Herald*, 27 Apr. 2006.
  - "Venezuela marks coup anniversary", BBC, 12 Apr. 2006.

## Middle East / North Africa

### EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

- Israel/Occupied Territories Violence escalated between Israelis and Palestinians while tensions rose between Hamas and Fatah. Islamic Jihad suicide bombing in Tel Aviv 17 April killed 9. Hamas government called blast "self-defence" and "natural result" of continued Israeli depredations, leading to international condemnation. Meanwhile, Israeli strikes on Gaza reportedly killed at least 6 children and several militants, in reprisals over continued Qassam rocket attacks. EU and U.S. suspended funding for Hamas-led government but Gulf

countries and Iran pledged over \$200 million, and Arab League said to be preparing to transfer 2-months' wages direct to government employees. Tensions between Hamas and Fatah worsened after new Palestinian Interior Minister Said Siyam announced formation of shadow security force comprising members of militant groups to be led by militant faction leader Jamal Abu Samhadana. Mahmoud Abbas issued presidential decree nullifying proposal, leading to angry Hamas response and clashes between supporters of both sides. New Israeli coalition set to take power, composed of centrist Kadima, left-leaning Labour, ultra-Orthodox Shas and Pensioners' parties.

- "Olmert alters route of West Bank wall, calls for rapid completion", *Daily Star*, 1 May 2006.
- "New Palestinian force to be led by militants", *International Herald Tribune*, 21 Apr. 2006.
- Comment by Robert Malley (Crisis Group), "Avoiding failure with Hamas", *International Herald Tribune*, 10 Apr. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°49, *Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration*, 18 Jan. 2006.

Lebanon Debate continued over divisive issues: fate of pro-Syrian President Lahoud and disarmament of Hizbollah. Political leaders failed to reach agreement in talks aimed at ending political crisis; to resume discussions 16 May. PM Siniora, in visit to Washington, linked disarmament of Hizbollah to Israeli withdrawal from disputed Shebaa Farms area. Lebanese authorities arrested 9 Sunnis suspected of planning assassination of Hizbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

- "Lebanon talks fail to resolve key issues", *Al Jazeera*, 30 Apr. 2006.
- "Lebanon's battle for independence", *The Washington Post*, 24 Apr. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°48, *Lebanon: Managing the Gathering Storm*, 5 Dec. 2005.

Syria Lebanon's PM Siniora, in address to UN Security Council, challenged Syria to demarcate borders and establish normal diplomatic relations; Syria said would mark borders only after Israeli withdrawal from Shebaa Farms area. U.S. ordered freeze on assets of those, including top Syrian officials, linked to murder of former Lebanese PM Hariri.

- "Lebanon seeks formal ties with Syria", *Al Jazeera*, 22 Apr. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°39, *Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria*, 12 Apr. 2005.

## GULF

Iran IAEA said Tehran had successfully produced enriched uranium but had defied UN Security Council's 28 April deadline to stop process. U.S. said would seek new UNSC resolution requiring Iran to stop enrichment or face sanctions. Rhetoric on both sides heated up. with U.S. warning of consequences of continued Iranian defiance, and Tehran vowing to strike U.S. interests around the world if attacked. UNSC permanent members and Germany to meet 2 May to discuss next steps. Iranian forces reportedly shelled Kurdish rebel positions in northern Iraq.

- "Rice says Iran is 'playing games'", *New York Times*, 1 May 2006.
- "Iran 'attacks Iraq Kurdish area'", *BBC*, 30 Apr. 2006.
- Comment by Karim Sadjadpour (Crisis Group), "Tehran's debate", *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 Apr. 2006.

- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°51, *Iran: Is There a Way Out of the Nuclear Impasse?*, 23 Feb. 2006.

Iraq Deadlock over nomination of PM broken after 2-month stalemate. President Jalal Talabani asked Shiite politician Jawad al-Maliki to form government following decision by PM Ibrahim al-Jaafari to pull out from contest after his nomination rejected by Sunni and Kurdish parties. Maliki, deputy leader of al-Jafaari's Daawa party, has 30 days to form government. Talabani re-appointed president for further 4 years. Maliki said would integrate militias into security forces despite accusations of widespread execution-style killings and sectarian violence. Situation in Baghdad remained highly unstable: Sunni stronghold Adhamiya district saw frequent clashes, including large-scale, sectarian street battle 18 April; displacement ministry claimed 35,000 fled violence.

- "Merits of partitioning Iraq or allowing civil war weighed", *The Washington Post*, 30 Apr. 2006.
- "Iraq's new leader gains support in talks with Shiite leaders", *New York Times*, 28 Apr. 2006.
- Comment by Joost Hiltermann (Crisis Group), "External forces on Iraq's new government", *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 Apr. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°52, *The Next Iraqi War? Sectarianism and Civil Conflict*, 27 Feb. 2006.

Saudi Arabia Riyadh announced 5 more arrests in connection to February attack on Abqaiq oil processing plant.

- "Saudi Arabia's unseen reform", *BBC*, 29 Apr. 2006.
- For most recent report, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°45, *The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia*, 19 Sept. 2005.

Yemen Bomb blast in Sanaa market 23 April killed 2.

- "Two killed in Yemen market bombing", *Al Jazeera*, 23 Apr. 2006.

## NORTH AFRICA

Algeria At least 10 killed in army operation against gang accused of murdering 13 customs officials in 7 April ambush. Interior ministry said more than 80 rebels had surrendered since amnesty began in March.

- "More than 80 Algerian rebels surrender in amnesty", *AlertNet*, 17 Apr. 2006.
- "Algerian soldiers kill 10 rebels in raid", *Al Jazeera*, 9 Apr. 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 3 explosions in Dahab resort in Sinai 24 April killed 18. No group claimed responsibility but same organisation that carried out 2004 Taba and 2005 Sharm El-Sheikh attacks suspected: 1 suspect killed during police operation 30 April. 2 suicide bombers killed in further attacks on Multinational Force and Observers post in northern Sinai 26 April. Earlier, sectarian attacks on 3 churches in Alexandria killed 1 and sparked 3 days of protests by Coptic Christians and violent clashes 14-16 April. Hundreds arrested, but government criticised for initially downplaying attacks. 2 judges who had spoken out against

irregularities in 2005 parliamentary elections summoned to 27 April disciplinary tribunal; hearing adjourned to 11 May; police arrested and beat activists protesting summoning. Interior ministry announced over 900 Jamaa Islamiyya members released from prison. President Mubarek pushed through parliament 2-year extension on 1981 emergency law allowing indefinite detention of prisoners 30 April. Wafd party survival in balance after factions clashed over leadership in Cairo 1 April following attempt by ousted party president Noman Gomaa to seize party headquarters by force.

- Comment by Hugh Roberts (Crisis Group), "Egypt's Sinai problem", *Independent*, 26 Apr. 2006.
- "Sectarian violence seen on the march in Egypt", *Washington Times*, 21 Apr. 2006.
- "Gomaa's last stand", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 6 Apr. 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 UNSG Annan, in 19 April report, ruled out devising new UN plan given that Morocco's insistence referendum exclude independence option contrary to UN self-determination principles; however, Annan said direct talks could produce "compromise between international legality and political reality". Polisario Front rejected idea of direct talks without change in Morocco's position; threatened return to armed conflict if Annan recommendation adopted by UN Security Council. UNSC extended MINURSO peacekeeping mandate to October 2006.

- "Morocco wants negotiations on Western Sahara", Reuters, 29 Apr. 2006.
- "U.N. gives W. Sahara 6 more months to end impasse", AlertNet, 28 Apr. 2006.

➤ Mauritania Junta government suggested ousted President Maaouiya Ould Taya may be able to return from exile, but said could not participate in elections.

- "Ousted leader may return", Al Jazeera, 19 Apr. 2006.

Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°53, *Political Transition in Mauritania: Assessment and Horizons*, 24 April 2006.  The international community must press Mauritania's leaders who seized power in a coup in August 2005 to respect their promises of democratic transition. The new strong men have made a good start in some ways but some are closely linked to the old regime and may prefer not to redress past injustices. This could fuel political tensions. Deep and controversial reforms cannot be completed quickly, but the government should at least work closely with all national political forces to take initial steps. Until parliament is elected, a framework for regular consultation should be established and unilateral decisions avoided. Contracts should be fairly allocated and rule of law promoted. A law-bound democracy within a reasonable timetable is a common interest. The international community should insist the new leaders promote change rather than preserve the status quo.

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**José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, 9 June 2005**

## Advocacy Offices

- Brussels**      brussels@crisisgroup.org  
+32 2 502 9038
- Washington**    washington@crisisgroup.org  
+1 202 785 1601
- New York**        newyork@crisisgroup.org  
+1 212 813 0820
- London**          london@crisisgroup.org  
+44 20 7031 0230
- Moscow**         moscow@crisisgroup.org  
+7 095 251 4485

## Field Offices

Crisis Group has regional or local field offices in Amman, Bishkek, Bogota, Cairo, Dakar, Dushanbe, Islamabad, Jakarta, Kabul, Nairobi, Pretoria, Pristina, Seoul and Tbilisi.

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