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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 nearly 120 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.

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Nigeria
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Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

-  Burundi Release of 3 rebel FNL leaders into custody of South African peacekeepers 12 February satisfied final FNL condition to allow peace process to move forward. Disarmament and reintegration of FNL into armed forces to be overseen by Joint Verification Monitoring Mechanism which met 19 February: difficulties remain - government foresees only military integration, FNL military and political. Ruling CNDD-FDD party dismissed Chairman Hussein Radjabu at emergency congress 7 February following various scandals. Radjabu replaced by President Nkurunziza ally Jérémy Ngendakumana. CNDD-FDD now led by Ngendakumana but acting under "Council of the Wise", headed by Nkurunziza. CNDD-FDD gave leadership of 3 national assembly committees to other parties (2 FRODEBU, 1 UPRONA) in positive signal for power sharing.
 - "Burundi's politics", *Economist*, 22 Feb. 2007.
 - "Rebels in Burundi for peace talks", BBC, 19 Feb. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°120, *Burundi: Democracy and Peace at Risk*, 30 Nov. 2006.

-  Central African Republic Reports continued of killings and human rights abuses in north as army attempted clampdown on UFDR and APRD rebels, despite 2 February peace deals signed in Libya between Miskine faction of UFDR and People's Democratic Front, and CAR government. Agreements promised end to hostilities and integration of rebels into ranks of security and military forces or public service administration; but 2 UFDR leaders (Sabone and Djotodia) rejected agreement and so far no disarmament has taken place. Estimated 100 LRA fighters reportedly crossed into CAR in mid-February. UNSC supported UNSG Ban Ki-moon's 20 February recommendation for deployment of UN peacekeeping force in eastern Chad and CAR, but requires consent from Bangui and N'Djamena.
 - "Security Council supports protection of civilians in Chad and Central African Republic", AP, 28 Feb. 2007.
 - "Rebel activity fuels insecurity in the northeast", IRIN, 8 Feb. 2007.

-  Democratic Republic of Congo Formation of new governing institutions marred by violent repression of demonstrations. Over 100 dead in clashes in Bas-Congo between security forces and members of Bundu Dia Kongo religious sect whose candidate lost to AMP in governor elections. New government named 5 February after months of wrangling over positions – all 60 members belong to President Kabila's coalition. PM Gizenga presented new program to parliament 22 February highlighting clampdown on corruption and liberalisation of economy. Security in Kivu and Ituri remained precarious. Dissident General Laurent Nkunda's troops began local integration with FARDC units into 5 new brigades to patrol North Kivu province; Nkunda threatened to stop process as he claims his political demands are not being met. Peter Karim's FNI started disarmament process 28 February.
 - "Another rebel group gives up arms", IRIN, 28 Feb. 2007.

- "Army-rebel standoff stops returnees", IRIN, 19 Feb. 2007.
- Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°44, *Congo: Staying Engaged after the Elections*, 9 Jan. 2007

-  Rwanda 9,000 prisoners, most held for involvement in 1994 genocide, released to reduce overcrowding and as part of President Kagame's 2003 decree to foster reconciliation. Speculation continued over Kagame's involvement in April 1994 plane crash that killed President Habyarimana and set off genocide.
 - "Rwanda frees genocide prisoners", BBC, 19 Feb. 2007.
 - "Rwanda 'plane crash probe halted'", BBC, 9 Feb. 2007.

-  Uganda Peace talks on verge of collapse and threat of resumed conflict rose as LRA refused to return to Juba and rejected assembly areas of Owiny Ki-Bul and Ri-Kwangba as insecure. Ceasefire expired 28 February, with both parties threatening to resume violence if attacked. Rebels reportedly left jungle hideout in DR Congo and began moving into Central Africa Republic. With no support for LRA call to move talks from Juba, UN Special Envoy for LRA-affected areas, Joaquim Chissano, attempted to break deadlock by suggesting Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa join talks to guarantee neutrality. President Museveni agreed to observers but LRA refused to have any talks involving either South Sudan VP Riek Machar or Juba location. LRA blamed for attacks and looting in South Sudan Eastern Equatoria state, including death of UN peacekeeper; LRA denied responsibility. Security in Karamojong region sharply deteriorated with deaths of 57 since 12 February when armed gang ambushed Ugandan soldiers involved in forcible disarmament of Karamojong rebels.
 - "No renewal of Ugandan ceasefire", BBC, 1 Mar. 2007.
 - "Guns fall silent as LRA truce expires", *Monitor*, 27 Feb. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°41, *Peace in Northern Uganda?*, 13 Sept. 2006.

HORN OF AFRICA

-  Chad Number of displaced rose to 120,000 due to surge in violence along Chad-Sudan border; human rights groups warned Chad military focus on rebels in Darfur renders civilians vulnerable to further attack. UNSG Ban Ki-moon recommended 11,000 strong UN deployment to Chad 20 February, supported by UNSC, as Sudanese President Bashir continued to stall on strengthened UN presence in Darfur. N'Djamena reportedly backed off support for UN military mission in favour of "civilian force". Chad, Sudan and CAR pledged at Cannes Franco-African summit 22 February to reduce border violence and end support for opposition rebels.
 - "Chad rejects a UN military force", BBC, 28 Feb. 2007.
 - "Sudan, Chad again pledge to avoid hostilities", Reuters, 22 Feb. 2007.
 - "Sudan, Chad again pledge to avoid hostilities", Reuters, 22 Feb. 2007.
-  Ethiopia Federal High Court again adjourned trial of opposition activists on charges of instigating November 2005 unrest to overthrow government in which 193 protesters were killed by security forces. U.S. officials said Pentagon secretly used airstrip in eastern Ethiopia to carry out attacks on Somalia during Ethiopian invasion: Ethiopia denied claims. Clashes over grazing land between rival Borana and Gabra tribes in Moyale, mid-February, killed 19,

while at least 43 reportedly killed in similar clashes in south eastern Ogaden region.

- "Trial of opposition activists adjourned again", IRIN, 20 Feb. 2007.
- "Ethiopians cross border to flee war", *Nation*, 15 Feb. 2007.

↳ Ethiopia/Eritrea Ethiopian PM Zenawi called for border demarcation issue to be resolved through dialogue. Zenawi criticised UN Security Council for not taking measures when Eritrean troops crossed Temporary Security Zone in 2006.

- "PM Meles criticizes UN Security Council", *Reporter*, 17 Feb. 2007.

↳ Somalia Security situation deteriorated with daily clashes between Transitional Federal Government (TFG)/Ethiopian forces and insurgents. AU agreed 2 February to send peacekeeping troops; UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1744 20 February authorising 6-month AU peacekeeping mission (AMISOM) and calling on UNSG to investigate possible UN mission to follow. Uganda, Nigeria and Burundi pledged to deploy peacekeeping troops March/April: EU, U.S. and UK pledged financial support. Despite promises of withdrawal Ethiopian troops reportedly reinforced positions in much of south-central Somalia. PM Gedi reshuffled cabinet 7 February ahead of National Reconciliation conference to be held in March. Gedi refused to negotiate with leaders of Council of Somali Islamic Courts, 4 of whom, including Sheikh Sharrif Ahmed, have taken refuge in Yemen, though President Yusuf said he would talk to moderate elements.

- "Somalia reverts to political fragmentation", PINR, 23 Feb. 2007.
- "The situation will deteriorate further", *Mail & Guardian*, 21 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°45, *Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*, 26 Jan. 2007.

↳ Sudan Khartoum continued to increase forces in Darfur and block progress beyond phase 1 (light UN assistance program) of 3-phase plan for hybrid AU/UN deployment. Hundreds of government-backed militia amassed north Geneina, south west Darfur. Thousands displaced and up to 100 killed, after tribal clashes mid-February between 2 Arab tribes in south Darfur. AU/UN envoys stated rebel groups ready to abide by May 2006 peace deal, but factionalism remained barrier to effective negotiations: 19 February conference to unite disparate rebel groups postponed again with no set date to reconvene, while Libya/Eritrea-hosted meeting in Tripoli 21 February to discuss Eritrean mediation effort, attended by some rebel factions, Chadian President Deby and President Bashir. UNSG Ban Ki-moon condemned Bashir's block on UN human rights Darfur mission, and EU resolution called for cessation of Chinese arms trade to Sudan, Chapter VII UN deployment in absence of Sudanese government agreement, no-fly zone, and sanctions including possible oil embargo. ICC Prosecutor presented evidence 27 February against current Sudanese state minister for humanitarian affairs, Ahmad Muhammad Harun, formerly minister for interior, and militia/Janjaweed leader Ali Kushayb, for war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out against civilian population in West Darfur 2003-2004.

- "Darfur: International Criminal Court Prosecutions Welcomed, Those Responsible Warned", Crisis Group, 27 Feb. 2007.
- Comment by David Mozerky (Crisis Group), "Accountability in Darfur", IWPR, 27 Feb. 2007.
- "Naming names", *Economist*, 27 Feb. 2007.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°43, *Getting the UN into Darfur*, 12 Oct. 2006.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

↳ Zimbabwe In 83rd-birthday speech, President Mugabe blasted VP and possible successor Joyce Mujuru but declined to name replacement as anticipated. Police introduced 3-month ban on political rallies after over 40 arrested at 18 February opposition MDC rally launching Morgan Tsvangirai's presidential election bid. Industrial unrest grew as Congress of Trade Unions vowed to defy strike ban with 3-4 April job boycott and Reserve Bank Governor Gono announced 4-month wage freeze.

- "Zimbabwe bans political rallies as unrest grows", *Guardian*, 22 Feb. 2007.
- "Mugabe faces calls to quit as economy dives", *Financial Times*, 14 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°117, *Zimbabwe: An Opposition Strategy*, 24 Aug. 2006.

WEST AFRICA

↳ Côte d'Ivoire Government and FN rebel representatives held talks from 5 February in Ouagadougou. UN welcomed move, but expressed "deep concern" over delays in implementing ECOWAS peace plan. Ivorian government army (FANCI) protest started 1 February and spread to several cities: integration into regular army, after recruitment during 2002 conflict, remains key issue for talks. U.S. and EU extended military sanctions for another year.

- "Company settles over toxic waste scandal", IRIN, 14 Feb. 2007.
- "Ivory Coast peace plan delay concerns UN council", Reuters, 9 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°40, *Côte d'Ivoire: Stepping Up the Pressure*, 7 Sept. 2006.

↳ Guinea Violent unrest in month as President Lansana Conté imposed martial law. Widespread protests sparked by 9 February announcement Conté ally Eugène Camara to be new PM. Martial law and 11-day state of emergency imposed 12 February, leading to media clampdown and further killing of protesters by security forces: at least 113 killed between mid-January and end February. Martial law lifted 23 February as National Assembly unanimously rejected extension requested by Conté. ECOWAS mediation led to new PM choice from list proposed by trade unions and civil society; Lansana Kouyaté appointed PM 26 February. Unions suspended general strike 27 February.

- Comment by Gilles Yabi (Crisis Group), "Guinea: A state of suspension", openDemocracy, 28 Feb. 2007.
- "Guinea's last chance", *Financial Times*, 26 Feb. 2007.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°121, *Guinea: Change or Chaos*, 14 February 2007. The international community needs to support peaceful but radical change if the country is to avoid a blood bath that could spread beyond Guinea. The country has been dominated for nearly 23 years by President Lansana Conté, corrupt and desperate to hold onto his privileges. Opposition to his regime, begun during the general strike in January, mutated into an unprecedented popular uprising. There is still a chance, though a diminishing one, for a negotiated solution involving key Guinean, regional and wider international actors.

↳ Liberia House speaker Edwin Snowe, reinstated after 18 January impeachment, resigned 15 February following boycott of his sessions by majority of House. Demonstration by former members of Armed Forces of Liberia protesting non-payment of salary arrears blocked traffic 8 February. Chief Justice issued statement calling on international and national NGOs to stop training paralegals while justice system seriously lacks qualified personnel. Truth and Reconciliation Commission indefinitely postponed hearings due to lack of sufficient funding and time to prepare. U.S., Germany and others agreed to cancel approx. 20% of total external debt.

- ["Truth, justice and reparation for Liberia's victims"](#), Amnesty International, 15 Feb. 2007.
- ["Ex-combatants riot"](#), IRIN, 9 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°107, [Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System](#), 6 Apr. 2006.

↳ Niger Movement of Nigerians for Justice, new Touareg group, attacked army base near remote northern town Iferouane, 8 February; 3 soldiers killed and 2 kidnapped.

- ["Touareg attack army in the north"](#), IRIN, 9 Feb. 2007.
- ["Saharan rebels kill 3 soldiers in Niger attack"](#), Reuters, 8 Feb. 2007.

↳ ↘ Nigeria Tension intensified ahead of April general elections with more violence feared. President Obasanjo claimed VP Abubakar planned to destabilise country. 3 key Abubakar campaign aides charged with sponsoring insurrection and terrorism in Niger Delta 23 February. Government barred politicians identified by anti-graft agency from contesting April elections in move widely seen as unconstitutional; list of 135 included opposition presidential candidates Abubakar (Action Congress) and Kalu (Progressive Peoples Alliance). Court ruled against Obasanjo's bid to nullify Abubakar's VP status after December defection from ruling People's Democratic Party; Obasanjo expected to challenge ruling in Supreme Court, but Abubakar then accused in Senate report of siphoning public funds to private interests. Niger Delta militants freed 35 foreigners seized in January, but captured 3 others. 4 killed in 3 February factional clashes within ruling People's Democratic Party in Akure and Ibadan, 10 in 24 February Ogoni communal clash.

- ["Nigerian vice-president faces corruption charges"](#), *Guardian*, 28 Feb. 2007.
- ["Nigerian agency lists corruption allegations against 130 candidates"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 7 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°118, [Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis](#), 28 Sept. 2006; and Africa Report N°119, [Nigeria's Faltering Federal Experiment](#), 25 Oct. 2006.

↳ Senegal Presidential elections held 25 February, deemed free and fair by ECOWAS observers after sporadic election-related violence in Casamance region in run up to vote. Provisional results suggest incumbent Abdoulaye Wade victory but irregularities claimed by some candidates. Official result due 2 March. At least 7 killed by suspected separatist guerrillas - 4 in 15 February attack on bus 30 km north of Ziguinchor.

- ["Senegal poll results 'rejected'"](#), BBC, 28 Feb. 2007.
- ["Clashes ahead of Senegal election"](#), BBC, 22 Feb. 2007.

↳ Sierra Leone Government appointed broad-based 35 member panel to update constitution. Referendum on new

draft to take place with legislative and presidential elections 28 July 2007. President Kabbah raised concern over threat to regional stability posed by violent unrest in Guinea. Ex-defence minister Hinga Norman died 22 February, weeks before UN Special Court to issue verdict on alleged war crimes.

- ["War crimes indictee's death is blow to Special Court"](#), IRIN, 22 Feb. 2007.
- ["Guinea unrest worries neighbours Liberia, S. Leone"](#), Reuters, 20 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, [Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States](#), 8 Dec. 2004.

Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

↳ Kazakhstan State Democracy Commission concluded 11-month work with series of non-binding reform recommendations: President Nazarbayev, chairing final session, ceded minor presidential powers to parliament. Almaty rally held in memory of opposition figure Altynbek Sarsenbayev, calling for new probe into February 2006 killing. Rakhat Aliyev, son-in-law of Nazarbayev, removed from deputy FM post and appointed Ambassador to Austria amid accusations of kidnapping; Aliyev suing over claims.

- ["Kazakhstan plans political reform"](#), EurasiaNet, 26 Feb. 2007.
- ["Nazarbaev's son-in-law sent to Austria amid more accusations"](#), RFE/RL, 21 Feb. 2007.

↳ Kyrgyzstan Former PM Kulov announced switch to opposition after President Bakiyev failed to reappoint him PM following December resignation to allow constitutional changes: strengthened opposition called for Bakiyev's resignation. Newly appointed government voted not to join World Bank Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative despite criticism of Finance Minister. Police arrested East Turkestan Liberation Organization member in southern Osh region for alleged separatist attack plans 13 February.

- ["Kyrgyzstan government votes to back out of debt relief program for poorest countries"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 20 Feb. 2007.
- ["Kyrgyzstan's former PM vows to rally opposition"](#), Reuters, 14 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°55, [Kyrgyzstan on the Edge](#), 9 Nov. 2006.

↳ Tajikistan 7 suspected Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan members went on trial in Sughd Province 8 February. In Moscow, journalist and activist Dodojon Atovulloyev claimed new united Tajik opposition movement will hold demonstrations calling for Rahmonov's resignation.

- ["Seven suspected IMU members go on trial in Tajikistan"](#), RFE/RL, 8 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, [Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?](#), 19 May 2004.

↳ Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov sworn in as President after winning 11 February election with 89.23% vote; authorities claimed 98% turnout. President's first steps

included decree increasing compulsory schooling to 10 years, university education to 5 years, and reversal of ban on internet cafes. Some disgraced Niyazov-era officials reinstated, including FM Meredov and Oil and Gas Minister Tajberdi Tagiyev.

- "New president appears to be fulfilling campaign pledges", RFE/RL, 28 Feb. 2007.
- "President sworn in amid cautious hope for change", IRIN, 15 Feb. 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°60, **Turkmenistan after Niyazov**, 12 February 2007. Turkmenistan's choreographed 11 February election produced a new president, but the international community should condition relations on genuine efforts to deal with President Saparmurat Niyazov's stark legacy. First steps to demonstrate genuine intent include giving the Red Cross access to detention places; abrogating the decree invalidating foreign academic degrees; reviewing convictions of political detainees; and ending restrictions on travel abroad. The international community should improve relations on performance not promises. Meanwhile, it should push for an amnesty for political prisoners and freeze Niyazov's overseas assets.



- ◁ Uzbekistan Journalist and rights activist Umida Niyazova detained since January after travel to Kyrgyzstan to interview 2005 Andijon uprising witnesses. Andijon court sentenced opposition Freedom Party leader Isroil Kholdorov to 6 years prison for post-uprising activities.
 - "EU following case of independent Uzbek journalist", RFE/RL, 21 Feb. 2007.
 - "Rights activist, presidential candidate facing state harassment", RFE/RL, 1 Feb. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°54, *Uzbekistan: Europe's Sanctions Matter*, 6 Nov. 2006.

SOUTH ASIA

- ◁ Afghanistan Attack on Bagram air base 27 February as U.S. VP Cheney visiting killed over 20 and highlighted fears of strengthened Taliban. Insurgents took control of southern district centre of Musa Qala 2 February overturning controversial October agreement which saw British troops and Taliban withdraw, allowing "tribal elders" to govern. UK confirmed 1,400 more troops for south; most other nations have not responded to repeated calls. 30,000 rallied 23 February in support of broad new amnesty law. President Karzai must sign controversial bill, which would offer open-ended amnesty to Taliban and other antigovernment forces. U.S. General McNeill took command of NATO ISAF.
 - "Britain switches tactics to undermine the Taliban", *Guardian*, 27 Feb. 2007.
 - "A double spring offensive", *Economist*, 22 Feb. 2007.
 - "Une localité du Sud afghan tombe aux mains des talibans", *Le Monde*, 3 Feb. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°59 *Afghanistan's Endangered Compact*, 29 Jan. 2007; and Asia Report N°123, *Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency: No Quick Fixes*, 2 Nov. 2006.
- ◁ Bangladesh New caretaker administration launched campaign to purge corruption from politics ahead of postponed January elections, but no new date set. Dozens arrested,

including former ministers from both parties: those convicted will be barred from future office. Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus launched new Nagarik Shakti party 22 February to bid for power in next election. Government announced plans for tough new anti-terrorism legislation.

- "No specific timeframe for polls right now", *Daily Star*, 28 Feb. 2007.
- "New anti-terror law soon for quick trial", *Daily Star*, 27 Feb. 2007.
- "Bangladesh Nobel winner names new political party", Reuters, 18 Feb. 2007.

- ◁ India (non-Kashmir) Reports of widespread attacks in Assam continued as army struggled to rout ULFA separatist forces after January escalation in violence; peace negotiations with Delhi remain on hold. Guwahati train station hit by small blast 9 February as high-profile National Games began in Assam; games otherwise peaceful. ULFA reportedly seeks plebiscite on autonomy with international supervision. In Manipur, suspected separatists killed 15 soldiers 24 February following tense state elections that saw Naga rebels attempt to prevent participation of mainstream Indian parties. Earlier ambush on election vehicle killed 4 police, 2 civilians 9 February. Indian officials announced Myanmar military mobilisation against Manipuri and Assamese separatists fighting from Burmese bases.
 - "What ULFA wants? Rebel chief talks", IBNlive, 17 Feb. 2007.
 - "Burma 'to fight India militants'", BBC, 15 Feb. 2007.
 - "Rebels oust security forces in India's Assam", Reuters, 13 Feb. 2007.

- ◁ Kashmir India and Pakistan proceeded with dialogue process despite 18 February bombing of Lahore-Delhi train that killed over 60. Nuclear risk reduction pact signed during Pakistan FM Mahmood Kasuri's visit to Delhi 21 February, but terror attack, attributed by some Indian security officials to Pakistan-based jihadis, overshadowed visit. India said Pakistan must end all "cross-border terrorism" if dialogue process to succeed. In shift, head of separatist APHC moderate faction Umar Farooq called for militants to support political solution, but said Indian troop withdrawal should be first move. Strike in Srinagar 6 February shut down city in protest at recent uncovering of Indian Army and police role in at least 5 "encounter killings" of civilians; 8 police arrested. Lashkar-e-Toiba commander Abu Talha reported killed by Indian police 28 February.
 - "Indian army and police tied to Kashmir killings", *New York Times*, 6 Feb. 2007.
 - "Support peace process: Mirwaiz", *Hindu*, 2 Feb. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°51, *India, Pakistan and Kashmir: Stabilising a Cold Peace*, 15 June 2006.

- ◁ Nepal PM Koirala made more concrete promises to increase Madhesi representation in constituent assembly, giving Tarai plains districts 49% of seats (roughly proportional to population). Move came after 3 weeks of violence in Tarai killed 30. Madhesi activists threatened new blockades if permanent deal not reached and new general strike called 28 February. UN said first phase of Maoist arms and soldier registration complete 18 February; 30,852 combatants and 3,428 weapons registered. UN SRSG Ian Martin raised new concerns about poor conditions in Maoist cantonment camps;

hundreds left camps in month. King Gyanendra widely condemned for making unauthorised Democracy Day address justifying February 2005 royal coup.

- [“One conflict sparks another in Nepal”](#), ISN, 21 Feb. 2007.
- [“Madhesi threaten indefinite blockade and strikes”](#), IRIN, 20 Feb. 2007.
- [“Nepal PM promises federal system”](#), *Financial Times*, 9 Feb. 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°128, [Nepal's Constitutional Process](#), 26



February 2007. The constitutional process must be more inclusive to avoid a return to violent conflict. It must address peace-building and long-term political reform. The 15 January 2007 interim constitution offers an opportunity to cement the Maoists' integration into mainstream democratic politics, carefully consider the monarchy's fate and relieve longstanding social inequalities. Recent violent protests show that providing constructive means to channel popular demands into political debate is an urgent imperative.

↓ Pakistan Spate of suicide attacks across country: sixth in month saw 16 killed in Quetta courtroom 17 February. U.S. intelligence reportedly shows al-Qaeda gathering strength from new bases in North Waziristan, after September 2006 Waziristan accord with Islamabad; Pakistani officials rejected reports as “absurd”. U.S. VP Cheney made surprise visit to Islamabad 26 February to discuss cross-border insurgency, as U.S. considered cutting aid to further pressure Pakistan into action. President Musharraf announced plans 18 February to secure re-election and constitutional amendment allowing him to remain army chief. Iran blamed Pakistan for providing base to Sunni insurgents Tehran claims bombed border city Zahedan early February.

- [“Cheney warns Pakistan to act on terrorism”](#), *New York Times*, 26 Feb. 2007.
- [“Pakistan holds the key to south Asia's security”](#), *Financial Times*, 21 Feb. 2007.
- [“Terror officials see Al Qaeda chiefs regaining power”](#), *New York Times*, 18 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°125, [Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants](#), 11 Dec. 2006.

↓ Sri Lanka 5-year anniversary of severely compromised LTTE-Colombo ceasefire passed 22 February; government claimed commitment to negotiations despite ongoing military action while Sinhalese nationalists increased pressure to revoke agreement. Fighting reduced in east but included naval attacks that killed 23 rebels and LTTE mortar attack on high-level foreign delegation that injured Italian ambassador. Army claimed largest-ever haul of LTTE arms. Tamil priest who had blessed President Rajapakse shot dead 8 February, likely retribution by LTTE; rebels also reportedly intensified forced conscription in areas they control. UK Foreign Office secured Colombo approval for talks with LTTE as part of greater British mediation role.

- [“No end in sight to Sri Lanka conflict”](#), BBC, 21 Feb. 2007.
- [“Britain offers to talk with Sri Lanka Tamil Tigers”](#), Reuters, 15 Feb. 2007.
- [“Sri Lanka: giving war a chance”](#), openDemocracy, 8 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°124, [Sri Lanka: The Failure of the Peace Process](#), 28 Nov. 2006.

NORTH EAST ASIA

↓ Kuril Islands/Northern Territories (Russia/Japan) Japanese PM Abe marked Northern Territory Day 7 February calling for end to dispute; Moscow said open to talks but Russian control of islands not up for negotiation.

- [“Japan to try to resolve island dispute”](#), AP, 7 Feb. 2007.

↓ North Korea Breakthrough in Beijing 6-Party talks 13 February as North Korea agreed to shut Yongbyon nuclear reactor within 60 days in return for aid, in move towards full denuclearisation, though details remain to be ironed out in working groups due to meet mid-March. South Korea resumed inter-Korean talks for first time in 7 months 27 February; said increased food aid likely. Japan retained hard line on alleged abduction victims and refused to provide economic assistance. U.S. said accord on unfreezing Macau bank funds likely in March.

- [“Cheney wary of China's military and North Korea's credibility”](#), *New York Times*, 24 Feb. 2007.
- [“N Korea to reveal extent of uranium activity”](#), *Financial Times*, 22 Feb. 2007.
- [“Faces saved all round”](#), *Economist*, 15 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°56, [North Korea's Nuclear Test: The Fallout](#), 13 Nov. 2006.

↓ Taiwan Strait Taipei removed word “China” from names of several state institutions, including postal and shipbuilding companies, drawing sharp criticism from Beijing. Opposition leader Ma indicted on corruption charges and same day announced candidacy for President 2008, vowing to oppose unification until full democracy established across Strait.

- [“Taiwan to break with its Kuomintang past”](#), *Financial Times*, 26 Feb. 2007.
- [“Taiwan asserting itself, in name only”](#), *Chicago Tribune*, 20 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°42, [China and Taiwan: Uneasy Détente](#), 21 Sept. 2005.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

↓ Indonesia Irwandi Yusuf, former GAM commander, inaugurated as Aceh governor 8 February. Warming in relations between Papua and West Irian Jaya provinces marked by 20 February signing of agreement by both governors that reconciles creation of new “West Papua” in West Irian Jaya with terms of Special Autonomy Law; provinces will share management of autonomy funds.

- [“Papua, West Papua agree to end their bickering”](#), *Jakarta Post*, 21 Feb. 2007.
- [“Indonesia seeks more jail terms in Poso beheadings”](#), Reuters, 21 Feb. 2007.
- [“Aceh enters new era with Irwandi at the helm”](#), *Jakarta Post*, 9 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°127, [Jihadism in Indonesia: Poso on the Edge](#), 24 Jan. 2007.

↓ Myanmar/Burma Army launched offensive in northwest against Naga and Assam rebels operating from bases within Myanmar (see India). Government announced ceasefire talks with Chin National Front. At least 8 arrested after rare anti-government demonstration over Yangon living conditions 22 February. Reports of growing disagreement amongst regime's leaders over democratic reforms sparked further speculation of

power struggle following ill health of General Than Shwe. Military promised completion of draft constitution by year end.

- [“More arrests follow Rangoon demonstration”](#), Irrawaddy, 26 Feb. 2007.
- [“Myanmar announces peace agreement with splinter group of Karen rebels”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 11 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°58, *Myanmar: New Threats to Humanitarian Aid*, 8 Dec. 2006.

Philippines Skirmishes continued between MILF rebels and troops in North Cotabato, as talks remained stalled; army claims MILF regrouping. Tripartite meeting between MNLF, government and Organisation of Islamic Countries scheduled for March in Jeddah to discuss implementation of 1996 peace deal, but prospects unclear: MNLF took government peace panel hostage for 2 days in Jolo 2 February; conditions of release not made public. UN rapporteur reported army implicated in high number of extrajudicial killings, chiefly in long-standing conflict with New People's Army.

- [“Prospects for peace in Mindanao after terrorists have gone”](#), *Jakarta Post*, 22 Feb. 2007.
- [“Gov't peace panel detained by MNLF”](#), *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 5 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°110, *Philippines Terrorism: The Role of Militant Islamic Converts*, 19 Dec. 2005.

Thailand New wave of violence in south on night of Lunar New Year 18 February: string of over 70 attacks hit 4 southern provinces causing significant damage to economic infrastructure. Government said still committed to policy of reconciliation, which PM Chulanont called top political priority while admitting not enough had been done to quell insurgency. Surprise resignation of finance minister 28 February.

- [“Support for rebels ‘now at 10,000’”](#), *Bangkok Post*, 23 Feb. 2007.
- [“Thai bombs linked to Chinese new year, military says”](#), *New York Times*, 19 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°105, *Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution*, 18 Nov. 2005.

Timor-Leste Violence surged towards end of month with increased targeting of and resentment towards international peacekeepers. Australian troops launched operation against rebel leader Alfredo Reinado 27 February in response to government request after Reinado's group raided several police border posts, seizing weapons. Australian peacekeeper killed 2 civilians 23 February, after allegedly being attacked at refugee camp near Dili. More unrest feared in run-up to presidential elections in April. PM Jose Ramos-Horta urged UN to send more Portuguese police to bolster security; announced candidacy for presidency. Charges against former PM Alkatiri dropped 5 February. UN Security Council voted 22 February to extend UN peacekeeping mission (UNMIT) for further year.

- [“Reinado arrest attempt could spark unrest in East Timor”](#), ABC, 28 Feb. 2007.
- [“Hunt continues for East Timor's rebel leader”](#), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 Feb. 2007.
- [“Peacekeeper kills E Timor refugee”](#), BBC, 23 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°120, *Resolving Timor-Leste's Crisis*, 10 Oct. 2006.

PACIFIC

Fiji Report by Pacific Islands Forum's Eminent Persons Group on 5 December coup called military takeover “unlawful” and highlighted concerns over independence of judiciary after suspension of chief justice. Interim PM and coup leader Frank Bainimarama issued roadmap calling for elections in 2010; said wanted to eliminate “politics of race”. U.S., Australia and NZ called for immediate restoration of democratic rule.

- [“Forum Eminent Persons' Group Report”](#), *Fiji Times*, 1 Feb. 2007.
- [“Polls in 2010”](#), *Fiji Times*, 21 Feb. 2007.

Solomon Islands Government defeated opposition motion to scrap PM Sogavare's controversial initiative to rearm local police.

- [“Solomons seeks talks over disputes”](#), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 Feb. 2007.

Tonga Government's Privy Council further extended 3-month-old state of emergency 14 February, which limits public gatherings of more than 4. Pro-democracy activists began small protest in capital in defiance.

- [“Tongan gov't says threat to public safety behind extension of state of emergency”](#), Radio New Zealand, 19 Feb. 2007.

Europe

BALKANS

Albania Local elections held 18 January; OSCE found procedural shortcomings, some disenfranchised.

- [“Observers find shortcomings in handling of Albanian local elections”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 19 Feb. 2007.
- For most recent Crisis Group report, see Europe Report N°153, *Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?*, 25 Feb. 2004.

Bosnia & Herzegovina Peace Implementation Council extended OHR mandate until June 2008 and gave strong instructions to OHR to implement Dayton Peace Accords. State-level parliament approved new government 9 February; appointment of defence minister still pending. International Court of Justice 26 February ruled Serbia had not committed genocide during Bosnian war but had failed to prevent it in Srebrenica in 1995. NATO troops raided war crime suspect Radovan Karadzic's children's homes. Government announced review of 2002 UN dismissal of 793 police officers on grounds of possible involvement in war crimes and under-qualification. Republika Srpska (RS) Helsinki Committee member Duko Kondor assassinated in Bijeljina 22 February; police had refused to provide protection. RS PM Dodik called for resumption of police reform negotiations after 21 February break-down; criticised Foreign Minister Sven Alkalaj following FM decision to annul dual-citizenship agreement between Serbia and Bosnia. EU announced cuts in EUFOR peacekeeping force 28 February: decrease from 6,500 to 2,500 troops expected next 3 months.

- [“Bosnia power transfer postponed”](#), BBC, 27 Feb. 2007.
- [“Bosnia challenges UN over police officers' dismissal”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 10 Feb. 2007.

Crisis Group Europe Report N°180, [Ensuring Bosnia's Future: A New International Engagement Strategy](#), 15 February 2007. Much has been achieved in the past eleven years in Bosnia, but ethnic nationalism remains too strong for the international community to leave. At risk are the survival of a unified Bosnia and the stability of the Western Balkans. The EU should become the central international player, with a Special Representative taking over the responsibilities of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) by the end of 2007. No attempt should be made to transfer OHR's special "Bonn powers", by which it could impose legislation and remove elected officials: these have become effectively unexercisable.



- Kosovo Situation fragile since 2 protestors killed by UN police 10 February. UN Envoy Ahtisaari presented status plans to Belgrade and Pristina 2 February: framework for creation of Kosovo's state, though without mention of "independence". Serbian parliament rejected plan (see Serbia, below); Serb protests held in north Mitrovica, Strpce, Gracanica, Belgrade. Kosovo Albanian leaders welcomed plan, with reservations. Public mood soured after 10 February, with objections to plan rising over Kosovo Protection Corps "disbandment", powers of Serb-majority municipalities, Serb Orthodox church protection zones and "Bosnia-like" international powers. In 10 February Pristina protest by Self-Determination movement. UN police killed 2, wounded dozens, with rubber bullets. Kosovo Interior Minister Fatmir Rexhepi resigned and UN police chief Stephen Curtis asked to step down over police conduct. Bomb attack on UN vehicles 19 February. Belgrade and Pristina delegations began round of talks on Ahtisaari plan in Vienna 21 February; Ahtisaari to present final draft to UN possibly end of March. Russia reiterated would not support imposed solution.
- ["Deadlock over UN plan for Kosovo"](#), BBC, 21 Feb. 2007.
 - ["Belgrade predicts Russia will block UN Kosovo plan"](#), BIRN, 15 Feb. 2007.
 - ["Why Kosovo should become the 33rd member - and Serbia the 34th"](#), *Guardian*, 15 Feb. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°45, [Kosovo's Status: Difficult Months Ahead](#), 20 Dec. 2006.

- Macedonia Government expressed support for UN proposal on Kosovo status 3 February. Largest Albanian party, opposition DUI, publicly distanced itself from 10-11 February Pristina demonstrations. Opposition Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia withdrew threat to leave parliament after ruling majority abandoned proposal to limit debating time. EU expressed concern over political wrangling, reform slowdown since 2005.
- ["EU warns Macedonia over entry"](#), BBC, 9 Feb. 2007.
 - ["Macedonia backs Kosovo blueprint, defying Serbia"](#), Reuters, 3 Feb. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°41, [Macedonia: Wobbling toward Europe](#), 12 Jan. 2006.

- Serbia Political elite rejected UN envoy Ahtisaari's Kosovo status proposal 1 February: Kostunica called it "illegitimate"; Tadic "unconstitutional". Newly-elected parliament held inaugural session 14 February: rejected proposal, adopted hard-line resolution and authorised negotiating team for Vienna talks (see Kosovo). Talks began 21 February: Serbia proposed Serbian entity with Serbian police and rejected the principle of succession for dividing assets. Serbian media began openly

speculating about partition of Kosovo. ICTY Chief Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte told EU on 14 February that Serbia is not cooperating with Tribunal. Government not yet formed, budget for 2007 stalled. International Court of Justice issued judgment on alleged genocide during Bosnian war (see Bosnia & Herzegovina). Serbia's Islamic community formed Rijaset (religious leadership) 19 February and named new head Hamdija Jusufspahic, marking split with Bosnian, possibly Sandzak, Muslims.

- ["Serbia, paralyzed by Kosovo, may face new election"](#), Reuters, 23 Feb. 2007.
- ["Milosevic commander convicted in '99 attack"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 16 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°44, [Serbia's New Constitution: Democracy Going Backwards](#), 8 Nov. 2006.

CAUCASUS

- Azerbaijan 2 Talysh minority journalists charged with espionage for Iran 18 February. Baku-Akhalkalaki-Kars railway framework agreement signed by Azerbaijani, Georgian and Turkish Presidents 7 February despite criticism of route bypassing Armenian territory. Opposition staged further, authorised, Baku protest against increase in energy rates.
- ["Azerbaijan looks westward"](#), ISN, 22 Feb. 2007.
 - ["Azerbaijan charges representatives of ethnic minority with spying for Iran"](#), *Eurasia Digest*, 20 Feb. 2007.
 - For most recent Crisis Group report, see Europe Briefing N°40, [Azerbaijan's 2005 Elections: Lost Opportunity](#), 21 Nov. 2005.

- Chechnya (Russia) PM Ramzan Kadyrov made acting president after Russian President Putin moved incumbent Alu Alkhanov to deputy Russian justice minister post. 2 police officers and 4 rebels reported dead in 13 February clash and 5 further police killed in base blast 23 February in Gudermes region.
- ["Kadyrov promotion fury"](#), IWPR, 19 Feb. 2007.

- North Caucasus (non-Chechnya) Violence continued in Dagestan: Interior minister Adilgeri Magomedtagirov survived assassination attempt which killed 2 police and driver 3 February; Patriots of Russian party branch head Eduard Khidirov wounded in assassination attempt 14 February; and 2 soldiers killed in explosion in Buinaksk region 10 February. Republic's parliamentary elections due 11 March. In Ingushetia, 3 militants detained and 2 killed in 8 February operation after attack on Russian military in North Ossetia 2 days earlier. EU launched €20m reconstruction programme for region.
- ["EU launches aid program for North Caucasus"](#), RFE/RL, 13 Feb. 2007.
 - ["Dagestan: Minister escapes assassination attempt"](#), IWPR, 7 Feb. 2007.

- Georgia Negotiations between Russia and Georgia on restoring air links began 5 February. In Abkhazia, de facto authorities held local council elections 11 February ahead of 4 March de facto parliamentary elections. In Georgian-populated Gali district Abkhaz claimed turnout over 50% but Georgian sources claimed boycott. Poll not internationally recognised. UNSG Group of Friends met Georgian and Abkhaz

delegations in Geneva 12-13 February, urging sides to refrain from destabilizing steps.

- "UN notes 'constructive' stance at Geneva talks", Civil Georgia, 15 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°179, *Abkhazia: Ways Forward*, 18 Jan. 2007 and Crisis Group Europe Report N°178, *Georgia's Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, 22 Nov. 2006.

➡ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Minsk Group co-chairmen, meeting Paris 14-15 February, called on parties to avoid any action that could undermine recent progress. Statement reflected concerns over possible GUAM-sponsored UN General Assembly resolution on frozen conflicts in Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova. 2 servicemen captured by Karabakh Armenian forces near NK in December released to Azerbaijan where arrested on high treason, desertion charges.

- "Has a new chance emerged for Karabakh peace?", RFE/RL, 15 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°167, *Nagorno-Karabakh: A Plan for Peace*, 11 Oct. 2005.

EASTERN EUROPE

➡ Belarus 30 opposition Youth Front members briefly detained 4 February after police raid on meeting: further 10 held after pro-European 14 February march in Minsk. Opposition leader Milinkevich said would not attend planned 17-18 March congress, criticising internal squabbling. U.S. imposed financial sanctions on 6 more officials 27 February.

- "Why can't the opposition just get along?", RFE/RL, 20 Feb. 2007.
- "Belarus imposes tougher restrictions on Internet use", *International Herald Tribune*, 15 Feb. 2007.

➡ Moldova Chisinau accused Moscow of trying to legitimise Transnistrian separatist authorities after Russian statement referred to Igor Smirnov as TD President.

- "Moldova criticizes Russia for calling separatist leader president of Trans-Dniester", *International Herald Tribune*, 22 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°175, *Moldova's Uncertain Future*, 17 Aug. 2006.

➡ Ukraine Law limiting presidential powers came into effect 2 February without presidential signature; President Yushchenko said would appeal in constitutional court. Parliament rejected Yushchenko's nominations of Volodymyr Ohryzko, close ally of former FM Tarasyuk, for FM and of Victor Korol for secret services head; Yushchenko resubmitted nominations 28 February. In Crimea, Tatar protests for return of land seized in Soviet era continued.

- "Yushchenko resubmits foreign minister, security chief candidates", VOA, 28 Feb. 2007.
- "Former deportees want their Crimean land back", *Spiegel Online*, 20 Feb. 2007.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➡ Basque Country (Spain) Barakaldo station near Bilbao bombed 5 February. Socialist party and opposition Popular party members held joint march against ETA in Bilbao 10 February. Supreme Court cut from 13 to 3 years sentence of

former ETA leader Inaki de Juana Chaos accused of inciting terrorism in news articles; his hunger-strike continued. National court sentenced Belen Gonzalez Penalva to 467 years prison for 1985 ETA car-bombing; maximum time she can serve is 40 years.

- "Spain's Supreme Court cuts sentence for hunger-striking ETA member", *International Herald Tribune*, 12 Feb. 2007.
- "Jaw-jaw is just a start", *Guardian*, 12 Feb. 2007.

➡ Cyprus Government proceeded with tender for off-coast oil and gas exploration despite Ankara warning against steps taken without Turkish Cypriot involvement. Turkish Cypriot Mufti Yonluer and Greek Orthodox Archbishop Chrysostomos II met 21 February in UN buffer zone for first meeting of religious leaders since 1974.

- "Cyprus to go ahead with oil and gas exploration despite Turkey's opposition", *International Herald Tribune*, 21 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°171, *The Cyprus Stalemate: What Next?*, 8 Mar. 2006.

➡ Northern Ireland (UK) Sinn Fein (SF) leader Gerry Adam accused DUP of "posturing" after leader Ian Paisley refused to comply with 26 March power-sharing deadline demanding SF respect law and order without exception. SF met NI police commander 16 February following January party vote on cooperation with Police Service. Downing Street-SF deal reported 10 February on shelving prosecutions of IRA fugitives and security forces accused of collusion. NI Assembly elections due 7 March.

- "Ian Paisley refuses to commit to Northern Ireland power-sharing deadline, blames Sinn Fein", *International Herald Tribune*, 21 Feb. 2007.
- "Prosecuting IRA fugitives 'not in public interest'", *Observer*, 11 Feb. 2007.

➡ Turkey FM Gul and Chief of Staff Buyukanit made separate visits to U.S. to voice Ankara's concerns over PKK presence in Northern Iraq, urge delay to planned Kirkuk referendum, and protest proposed U.S. Congress resolution recognising Armenian genocide. 8 now charged over killing of journalist Hrant Dink; concerns over investigation and collusion heightened with video of police posing with chief suspect and Turkish flag; 4 officers suspended 2 February. Istanbul court sentenced 7 suspected al-Qaeda members to life for 2003 suicide attacks on synagogues, British consulate and HSBC bank. Democratic Society Party (DTP) leader Ahmet Turk and deputy Aysel Tugluk sentenced to 1.5 years prison for 2006 Kurdish-language leaflets. Diyarbakir DTP head Hilmi Aydogdu arrested 23 February for media comments on Kirkuk question. 4 former MPs imprisoned 1994-2004 for pro-Kurdish activities marked return to politics at 28 February DTP congress.

- "Turk general rattles sabre before "coup" anniversary", Reuters, 27 Feb. 2007.
- "Turkey probes Dink suspect video", BBC, 2 Feb. 2007.



Latin America / Caribbean

➡ Bolivia 6-month standoff in Constituent Assembly over procedural rules ended 17 February after parties settled on two-thirds majority for passage of articles for new constitution; draft due by 25 July. 20,000 independent

miners protested in La Paz 7-8 February over President Morales' proposed tax increases on mining industry; Morales withdrew plan and promised new investment. Nationalisation of natural resources continues; landmark gas deal signed with Brasilia promising increased revenues.

- "El largo camino de la Constitución boliviana", *El País*, 27 Feb. 2007.
- "La Corte Suprema boliviana ordena la busca y captura del ex presidente Sánchez de Lozada por genocidio", *El País*, 2 Feb. 2007.
- "Bolivia miners call off protest", BBC, 8 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°13, *Bolivia's Reforms: The Danger of New Conflicts*, 8 January 2007.

Colombia Talks with FARC over hostage-prisoner exchange continued to stall. President Uribe said 23 February willing to reopen direct talks with FARC and authorised relatives of those abducted to negotiate directly with rebels. But rebels rejected negotiations without government troop withdrawal from Florida and Pradera municipalities. Talks with ELN, given greater impetus by recent clashes between ELN and FARC in Arauca, Cauca and Nariño, reopened in Havana 25 February in bid to move towards peace accord negotiations. Fallout from government-paramilitary links scandal continued: FM Consuelo Araújo resigned 20 February after brother and 5 other politicians arrested for connections to paramilitary kidnapping case, and ex-spy-chief Jorge Noguera arrested on charges of murder and collaboration with ex-paramilitary chief "Jorge 40".

- "Ni Gobierno ni Farc ceden frente a acuerdo humanitario", *El Tiempo*, 24 Feb. 2007.
- "Descubren plan de guerra de las Farc para los próximos cuatro años", *El Tiempo*, 22 Feb. 2007.
- "Foreign Minister of Colombia quits in scandal", *New York Times*, 19 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°11, *Tougher Challenges Ahead for Colombia's Uribe*, 20 Oct. 2006.

Ecuador President Correa's decree for referendum on Constituent Assembly (CA) approved by Congress 14 February after Correa built alliance with rival PSP party, perceived as potential hindrance to later progress of CA. FM Espinosa criticised 40% cut in U.S. counter-narcotics aid to Andes.

- "Ecuador assails US antidrug funding cuts", *Financial Times*, 6 Feb. 2007.

Haiti UN Security Council voted unanimously to extend MINUSTAH mandate until 15 October. MINUSTAH held major operations 9 and 20 February to strengthen grip on Cité Soleil slum; gang leaders Evans and Amarai evaded capture but their bases seized by peacekeepers. At least 59 taken into custody including gang leader Ti Bazil as result of joint Haitian police-MINUSTAH operations. Former army general Carl Dorélien found liable by Miami court in 1993 torture of Port-au-Prince labour leader and 1994 death in neighbourhood massacre.

- "Love and Haiti", *Economist*, 16 Feb. 2007.
- "UN troops storm Haiti slum, in gunfight with gang", AlertNet, 9 Feb. 2007.
- For latest report, see Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°14, *Haiti: Justice Reform and the Security Crisis*, 31 Jan. 2007.

Venezuela After being granted power to rule by decree for 18 months 31 January, President Chávez announced details of ambitious nationalisation programme, including takeover of Orinoco belt oilfields by 1 May. Shortages of basic foodstuffs emerged as merchants had trouble meeting strict price controls.

- "El coste de las nacionalizaciones de Chávez abre una fuerte polémica en Venezuela", *El País*, 20 Feb. 2007.
- "Chávez threatens to jail price control violators", *New York Times*, 17 Feb. 2007.

Crisis Group Latin America Report N°19, *Venezuela: Hugo Chávez's Revolution*, 22 February 2007. Venezuela is at risk of serious internal conflict if President Hugo Chávez continues to polarise society and dismantle the checks and balances of representative democracy after his recent landslide re-election. Venezuela is not yet a dictatorship but its government is increasingly autocratic and militarised, with the free press under pressure. Whether the social polarisation and accumulating tensions turn violent depends primarily on whether Chávez acts with restraint.



Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Israel/Occupied Territories Positive and negative developments balanced out over month. Hamas and Fatah agreed to form unity government halting incipient civil war. Leaders Mahmoud Abbas and Khalid Mashal reached agreement 8 February in Mecca talks mediated by Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah. Outgoing Islamist PM Ismail Haniya must form new government by 15 March with key interior, finance and foreign ministries led by independent candidates. Hamas to fill 9 cabinet posts, Fatah 6, independents 5, and other parties 4. Saudi support for agreement is key: Riyadh reportedly offered new government U.S. \$1 billion if Hamas agrees to sever ties with Iran. But Israeli PM Olmert reportedly reached agreement with U.S. President Bush not to support unity government unless it explicitly recognises Israel. U.S. Sec. State Rice, PM Olmert and Abbas met 19 February: agreed only to meet again "soon". Middle East Quartet (UN, Russia, U.S., EU) met 21 February in Berlin without visible result. Tensions rose in Jerusalem with controversial Israeli move to construct bridge for non-Muslims to access al-Aqsa/Temple Mount compound; postponed following local and international protest. Largest Israeli West Bank incursion in months in Nablus began 25 February, 3 local leaders of Islamic Jihad killed 28 February.

- "Slow start to new US bid for Israeli-Palestinian peace", *Christian Science Monitor*, 20 Feb. 2007.
- "Saudis put their status on the line in bid to end Palestinian crisis", *Guardian*, 7 Feb. 2007.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N° 62, *After Mecca: Engaging Hamas*, 28 Feb. 2007. A national unity government provides an important opportunity for a much-needed change in policy towards the Palestinians. The Saudi-brokered Mecca Agreement between rival organisations Hamas and Fatah, signed...



...8 February, creates significant challenges but also offers the chance of a fresh start: for Palestinians to restore law and order and negotiate genuine power-sharing arrangements; for Israelis and Palestinians to establish a comprehensive cessation of hostilities; and for the international community to focus on a credible peace process. Failure to grasp this opportunity risks provoking greater internal Palestinian strife as well as Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Lebanon January violence gave way to uneasy February calm while political stalemate continued. Aware that political escalation would lead to sectarian clashes, Hezbollah called for restraint. All political actors now waiting for external forces to unblock situation, including via Iran-Saudi and Saudi-Syrian dialogues. 13 February, day before second anniversary of Hariri assassination, bombs exploded on 2 buses in Christian area of Beirut killing 2. Government blamed Syria and accused it of smuggling weapons to Hezbollah; Damascus denied both. UN chief legal counsel signed agreement 6 February to create tribunal to try suspects in Hariri assassination and killings of other anti-Syrian figures. Agreement now awaits signature from parliament. Israeli warplanes continued to fly over south Lebanon, despite UN resolution 1701, leading to Lebanese military firing anti-aircraft rounds 21 February.

- "Lebanon opposition weighs disobedience campaign", Reuters, 19 Feb. 2007.
- "Razor wire and soldiers keep factions apart", IRIN, 14 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°20, *Lebanon at a Tripwire*, 21 Dec. 2006.

Syria U.S. Sec. State Rice reportedly warned Israel against peace talks with Syria after offers by President Bashar Assad. Rice allowed U.S. embassy to start dialogue with Damascus over Iraqi refugees before late-month policy shift to attend conference, including Syria, to discuss Iraq security crisis.

- "U.S. to join Iraq talks that include Iran and Syria", *International Herald Tribune*, 27 Feb. 2007.
- "Rice OKs talks on Iraqi refugees", CNN, 9 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°39, *Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria*, 12 Apr. 2005.

GULF

Bahrain Several Shiite protests for democratic reforms turned violent leading to several arrests. Interior ministry officials claimed to have disrupted training camp in Bani Jamrah aimed at "destabilising the country's security".

- "Bahraini police, protestors clash over arrest", *Khaleej Times*, 18 Feb. 2007.
- "Sectarian tensions simmer in Bahrain", ISN, 7 Feb. 2007.

Iran UN Security Council P5 and Germany met 26 February after Tehran ignored IAEA deadline to suspend its nuclear activities: talks to continue early March. Report by IAEA head Mohamed ElBaradei said Iran expanding scale of uranium enrichment programme to "industrial-scale production" and constructing heavy water reactor in defiance of UNSC. Tehran dismissed U.S. accusations Iran responsible for supplying sophisticated roadside bombs to insurgents in Iraq. Bomb aimed at Revolutionary Guard bus in majority Sunni city of Zahedan, southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province, killed 11,

14 February; member of Sunni militant group Jundallah reportedly confessed and executed.

- "Ahmadinejad under fire in Iran for hardline nuclear stance", *Guardian*, 27 Feb. 2007.
- "Seeking the next step", *Economist*, 24 Feb. 2007.
- "Iran blast points to ethnic tensions", BBC, 14 Feb. 2007.

Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°21, *Iran: Ahmadi-Nejad's Tumultuous Presidency*, 6 Feb. 2007. President Ahmadi-Nejad's recent electoral setbacks, increased elite criticism of his foreign policy, and failure to achieve his economic program have weakened him, but Washington shouldn't conclude that its more aggressive posture against Iran in Iraq and naval build-up in the Gulf, much less a direct military intervention, would produce cracks in the regime. Instead, the U.S. should show willingness for broad engagement without preconditions; diplomatic engagement on all fronts remains the best way for the U.S. to encourage pragmatic Iranian policy.



Iraq PM Nouri Maliki launched new U.S./Iraqi security plan for Baghdad 13 February amidst daily car bombs and continued sectarian violence. Anniversary of Samara Shiite shrine bombing (by lunar calendar) 12 February saw 3 bombs detonated in Baghdad markets killing 60; followed deadliest single suicide bombing since war began 4 February, hitting Shiite market and killing 135. UK PM Blair announced 1,600 of total 7,100 troops to withdraw from south in "coming months". U.S. House of Representatives passed non-binding resolution 16 February against President Bush's plans to send extra 21,500 troops: Senate Democrats drafting legislation to revoke broad authority granted to president in run up to war. U.S. accused Iran of supplying sophisticated roadside bombs to Shiite insurgents that killed over 170 U.S. soldiers since June 2004; denied by Tehran. Cabinet finally approved draft of new hydrocarbons law 27 February; much needed antidote to centrifugal pressures in Iraq must now be submitted to parliament. Significant shift in U.S. policy as Sec. State Rice announced "new component" in U.S. diplomacy with high-level talks on Iraq security crisis to include Syria and Iran, starting with 10 March regional conference.

- "Iraq's neighbors agree to Baghdad summit", *Washington Post*, 28 Feb. 2007.
- "Breakthrough in Iraq oil standoff", BBC, 27 Feb. 2007.
- "No end to the year-old sectarian strife", IRIN, 21 Feb. 2007.
- For background, see Middle East Report N°60, *After Baker-Hamilton: What to Do in Iraq*, 19 Dec. 2006.

Saudi Arabia 4 French expatriates killed by suspected Islamic militants near Medina 26 February in first such attack since September 2004.

- "Saudi ambush claims fourth victim", BBC, 27 Feb. 2007.
- "10 arrested in terror-funding crackdown", *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 3 Feb. 2007.

Yemen Clashes between government forces and followers of deceased radical Shiite leader Hussein al-Houthi escalated in northern Saada province. Violence followed late January threat by al-Houthi supporters against members of Jewish community if they did not leave Yemen. Parliament authorised government to deal with uprising 10 February leading to fierce fighting in which dozens killed.

- "Yemen says dozens killed in clashes with rebels", Reuters, 21 Feb. 2007.
- "Yemen Shia rebels 'lose 80 men'", BBC, 14 Feb. 2007.

NORTH AFRICA

- Algeria In first operation under new name, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) carried out 7 simultaneous attacks, mainly targeting police stations, in Kabylia region 13 February: 6 killed. Security forces responded with sweeps in Kabylia and eastern Algeria. Military officer killed in same area by suspected Islamist gunmen 28 February. Parliamentary elections set for 17 May.
 - "Bombings may signal new Algeria violence", *Guardian*, 15 Feb. 2007.
 - "Murder in the Maghreb", *Economist*, 15 Feb. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°29, *Islamism, Violence and Reform in Algeria: Turning the Page*, 30 July 2004.
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