

**4 January 2010, N°77**

## CrisisWatch:

- summarises briefly developments during the previous month in some 70 situations of current or potential conflict, listed alphabetically by region, providing references and links to more detailed information sources (all references mentioned are hyperlinked in the electronic version of this bulletin);
- assesses whether the overall situation in each case has, during the previous month, significantly deteriorated, significantly improved, or on balance remained more or less unchanged;
- alerts readers to situations where, in the coming month, there is a particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict, or a particular conflict resolution opportunity (noting that in some instances there may in fact be both); and
- summarises Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers that have been published in the last month.

*CrisisWatch* is compiled by Crisis Group's Brussels Research Unit, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of our some 130 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 60 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to [crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org](mailto:crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org).

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## December 2009 Trends



### Deteriorated Situations

Guinea (p.4)  
Iran (p.11)  
Madagascar (p.4)  
Nepal (p.6)  
Nigeria (p.5)  
Yemen (p.11)



### Improved Situations



### Unchanged Situations

Afghanistan (p.6), Algeria (p.12), Armenia (p.8), Armenia/Turkey (p.8), Azerbaijan (p.8), Bangladesh (p.6), Basque Country (Spain) (p.9), Belarus (p.9), Bolivia (p.10), Bosnia (p.8), Burundi (p.2), Cameroon (p.4), Central African Republic (p.2), Chad (p.2), Chechnya (Russia) (p.8), Colombia (p.10), Côte d'Ivoire (p.4), Cyprus (p.9), Democratic Republic of Congo (p.2), Ecuador (p.10), Egypt (p.12), Eritrea (p.3), Ethiopia (p.3), Georgia (p.9), Guinea-Bissau (p.4), Haiti (p.10), Honduras (p.10), India (non-Kashmir) (p.6), Indonesia (p.7), Iraq (p.11), Israel-OPT (p.10), Kashmir (p.6), Kazakhstan (p.5), Kenya (p.3), Kosovo (p.8), Kyrgyzstan (p.5), Lebanon (p.11), Liberia (p.4), Macedonia (p.8), Mali (p.5), Mauritania (p.12), Moldova (p.9), Myanmar/Burma (p.7), Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) (p.9), Niger (p.5), North Caucasus (non-Chechnya) (p.8), Northern Ireland (p.9), North Korea (p.6), Pakistan (p.6), Philippines (p.7), Rwanda (p.2), Saudi Arabia (p.11), Serbia (p.8), Somalia (p.3), Sri Lanka (p.7), Sudan (p.3), Syria (p.11), Taiwan Strait (p.6), Tajikistan (p.5), Thailand (p.7), Timor-Leste (p.7), Turkey (p.10), Turkmenistan (p.5), Uganda (p.2), Ukraine (p.9), Uzbekistan (p.5), Venezuela (p.10), Western Sahara (p.12), Zimbabwe (p.4)

## January 2010 Watchlist



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## CENTRAL AFRICA

➡ **Burundi** Electoral commission 15 Dec announced timetable for 2010 elections, starting with local polls on 21 May; presidential polls set for 28 June. Govt/UNDP 22 Dec began distributing ID cards to 1m people bypassed in earlier efforts; opposition continues to allege govt manipulating process. Anti-corruption watchdog Oluome 28 Dec accused govt of embezzling \$1.6m funds from 2009 budget, urged parliament to suspend 2010 budget vote. 12 Dec report of UN DRC Panel of Experts alleged Burundian intelligence service and several high ranking police providing military support to Congo's FDLR rebels. FM during 10 Dec UNSC debate called for limitation of BINUB's mandate, removal of UNSR, in apparent response to experts' report and 3 Dec UNSG report highlighting human rights, governance challenges. Govt 4 Dec reversed controversial Nov ban on civil society group FORSC.

- "Burundi to directly elect president in next poll", AFP, 15 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°63, *To Integrate the FNL Successfully*, 30 July 2009.

➡ **Central African Republic** Govt 7 Dec launched retaliatory attack on CPJP rebel base near Ngarba on Chadian border. Charles Massi, who claims CPJP leadership, arrested again in SW Chad late Dec after his followers clashed with Chadian army. Alleged assault by bandits near Sam-Ouandja in northeast left 3 dead, including 2 from UFDR rebel group; UN MINURCAT contingent deployed 14 Dec to protect Sudanese refugees from reprisals. 31 Economic Community of Central African States military observers arrived by 15 Dec to monitor DDR, but process on hold until security situation improves. President Bozizé 13 Dec pledged to combat continuing LRA activity in southeast. FM 8 Dec met Sudanese president Bashir to discuss border security, trade. Independent Electoral Commission 17 Dec announced electoral calendar: 1st round legislative and presidential elections 18 April, 2nd round 23 May.

- "Fighting banditry in the east", Reuters, 22 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°55, *Central African Republic: Untangling the Political Dialogue*, 9 Dec. 2008.

➡ **Chad** Electoral Commission 4 Dec announced parliamentary elections to be held 2010 in accordance with agreed timetable, after govt/opposition dispute over biometric ID cards resolved with compromise decision to hold computerised census. Govt 14 Dec signed agreement with FDP rebel group operating in south; rumours group already closely linked to govt. Reports 10 Dec of leadership crisis within UFR rebel group, refuted by UFR which 13 Dec announced it had repelled attack by govt troops in southeast; govt acknowledged fighting, denied heavy losses. Chad-Sudan delegations met 25 Dec, reporting progress in talks on countering cross-border rebel attacks. Humanitarian organisations continued to scale back operations in east amid deteriorating security.

- "Chad forces 'bomb UFR rebel fighters'", BBC, 15 Dec. 2009.

- For latest report, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°65, *Chad: Escaping from the Oil Trap*, 26 Aug. 2009.

➡ **Democratic Republic of Congo** UNSC 23 Dec extended MONUC's mandate for shortened, 5 month period to reconfigure mandate around civilian protection and DDR/SSR. Followed further strong condemnation of MONUC's support for controversial anti-FDLR operation Kimia II, including 12 Dec publication of UN Panel of Experts report stressing operations' failure to neutralise FDLR, and NGO reports highlighting humanitarian impact. Leaked documents revealed UN legal office advised against MONUC support to abusive Congolese forces. MONUC Chief Alan Doss during 16 Dec UNSC briefing announced Kimia II would be completed 31 Dec and replaced with "hold and build" strategy. Reports 150 members of CNDP forces recently integrated into Congolese army deserted in east early Dec; at least 23 civilians thought killed by group in Masisi since 17 Dec. Military operations against armed groups in Equateur Province commenced 6 Dec; govt announced scores killed in continuing tribal clashes mid-late month. President Kabila 7 Dec announced local elections to be held along with presidential polls in 2011 instead of planned 2010; concerns over logistical challenges of dual polls. ICC appeals chamber 2 Dec overturned Aug 2009 granting of bail to former opposition MLC leader Jean-Pierre Bemba ahead of April trial for crimes committed in CAR.

- Comment by Donald Steinberg (Crisis Group), "UN Must Stop Backing Congo's Disastrous Operation Against Marauding Rebel Militias", *East African*, 30 Nov. 2009.
- "Security Council Extends, Streamlines Congo Mission", *Wall Street Journal*, 24 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°151, *A Comprehensive Strategy to Disarm the FDLR*, 9 July 2009.

➡ **Rwanda** President Kagame 12 Dec re-elected party leader by ruling RPF, increasing speculation over likely candidacy in Aug 2010 presidential polls. New rapprochement with France consolidated with appointment of ambassadors 9, 16 Dec. Kagame 6 Dec accused Sudan of 4-5 Dec attacks by gunmen in N Darfur that killed 3 Rwandan UNAMID soldiers. 15 injured in 3 simultaneous grenade attacks south of Kigali late month. UNSC 16 Dec extended ICTR mandate to end 2012; prompted renewed Rwandan criticism over length of trials and perceived failure to secure convictions.

- "Rwandan president reelected to head party", AFP, 13 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Uganda** Police 6 Dec forcefully dispersed opposition FDC rally in Hoima in west, gathered to receive party leader Kizza Besigye, considered President Museveni's main opponent in 2011 elections. Opposition groups (excl. Democratic Party) 16 Dec announced intention to field single presidential candidate. UN Human Rights Commissioner Pillay 21 Dec reported some 1,300 civilians killed in "carefully synchronised" LRA killings between Dec 2008 and June 2009 in E Congo and S Sudan, urged international community bring LRA leaders before ICC; further brutal LRA attacks and mutilations reported in DRC from late Nov, also further 5 surrender. Govt claimed to have killed top LRA commander Bok Abudema in CAR 1 Jan. U.S. late Nov passed legislation recommending U.S. govt develop new strategy to confront LRA.

- "UN: Ugandan rebel attacks may have been war crimes", AP, 21 Dec. 2009.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°146, *Northern Uganda: The Road to Peace, with or without Kony*, 10 Dec. 2008.

## HORN OF AFRICA

➡ **Eritrea** UNSC 23 Dec imposed sanctions, including arms embargo, asset freezes and travel bans on top Eritrean officials over alleged govt support to Somali insurgents; govt continued to deny allegations. Asmara 3 Jan claimed Ethiopian troops launched successive assaults along disputed shared border, claimed to have repelled attacks and killed 10 Ethiopian troops; Addis Ababa denied. RSADO and ESF rebel groups 1 Jan alleged had killed 25 govt soldiers in twin attacks on military camps Kokobay and Kermet areas; no comment from govt.

- “UN imposes sanctions on Eritrea”, *Times*, 23 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Ethiopia** Govt-opposition tensions continued to mount over controversial elections bill that opposition MPs say undermines authority of constitutionally-established election board; bill now before parliamentary committee. Independent paper Addis Neger closed early month, citing rising govt harassment ahead of May elections. U.S. criticism of govt increased, with U.S. embassy urging govt to review restrictive Charities Proclamation (due to come into effect Jan) and alleging govt institutions ethnically biased, rejected by govt. Eritrea 3 Jan alleged Ethiopia launched series of assaults along disputed shared border; Addis Ababa denied. Evidence of ongoing fighting between ONLF and govt forces in Ogaden region.

- “Ethiopia PM rejects US criticism”, VOA, 13 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see *Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and Its Discontents*, Africa Report N°153, 4 Sept. 2009.

➡ **Kenya** 30-day constitutional review period ended 17 Dec, with reported 1m submissions passed to review committee; chair announced submissions roughly divided on adoption of parliamentary or presidential system, favoured by Orange and PNU parties respectively. Mediator KofiAnnan during early month visit welcomed “progress” in implementation of key reforms since post-election violence but expressed strong fears over ethnic polarisation. UK announced \$1.3m in donor assistance lost through embezzlement of school funds since July 2009, temporarily suspended primary education funds; early month announced travel bans for 20 Kenyans over corruption.

- “Annan sees ‘signs of progress’ in Kenya”, *Financial Times*, 8 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Somalia** At least 22 killed, including 3 govt ministers, in devastating suicide attack on Mogadishu university graduation ceremony 3 Dec, triggering wide condemnation; al-Shabaab denied responsibility. 14 civilians killed in capital 19-20 Dec in shelling between al-Shabaab and govt troops. Heavy fighting also reported between rival Islamist militias in and around Beledweyn late month and in Dhuusa Marreeb 3 Jan, reportedly killing at least 47. President Sheikh Sharif early Dec replaced police commander Qeybdid following international pressure for his removal over corruption; army chief of staff General Dhumaal also removed. 500 soldiers returned mid-month from 6-month French-led military training program in Djibouti. Al-Shabaab 17 Dec banned UN agencies from south for “disrupting justice”. Security continued to deteriorate in Puntland with further bombings targeting public officials and accompanying rise in vigilante action; authorities blame “immigrant” Rahanweyn ethnic group for attacks,

arrested hundreds. UNSC committee 11 Dec said UN officials investigating Somali businessmen suspected of channeling funds to insurgents were receiving death threats. Piracy attacks continued off coast.

- Comment by Andrew Stroehlein (Crisis Group), “No-Win Military Scenario Leaves Engagement as Only Option”, *National*, 22 Dec. 2009.
- “Somalia al-Shabab Islamists deny causing deadly bomb”, BBC, 4 Dec. 2009.

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°67, *Somaliland: A Way out of the Electoral Crisis*, 7 Dec. 2009. The stalled electoral process has plunged Somaliland into a serious political crisis that presents yet another risk of destabilization in the region. Politicians must finally uphold the constitution, abide by electoral laws and adhere to inter-party agreements if the region is to hold genuinely free and fair elections in 2010.



➡ **Sudan** Tensions between North-South partners surged early month, easing 13 Dec with new agreement on rules governing 2011 South Sudan and Abyei referenda. All Political Parties’ Conference parties (group of 20 opposition parties and SPLM) rallied in Khartoum 7 Dec calling for legal reforms to ease political restrictions ahead of April 2010 polls and facilitate referenda; police cracked down with tear gas, beatings, arrests; leading SPLM figures including Sec-General Pagan Amom briefly detained. NCP/SPLM held 3-day crisis talks from 10 Dec, 13 Dec announced breakthrough deal covering terms of S Sudan referendum bill (succession by simple majority; 60% turnout), criteria for voter eligibility in Abyei referendum, implementation of popular consultation bill on 2 border states; all 3 bills tabled 15 Dec and referendum bill passed 29 Dec. Controversial National Security bill passed by parliament 20 Dec despite opposition protests. Electoral commission reported at least 75% eligible voters had registered at completion of voter registration period 7 Dec. Carter Center described figure as encouraging, stressed serious problems including uneven participation, notably in Darfur. 5 UNAMID soldiers killed in attacks by gunmen in North Darfur, 4-5 Dec.

- Comment by Francois Grignon (Crisis Group), “Preparing for a Peaceful Southern Secession”, Reuters, 17 Dec. 2009.
- Comment by Fouad Hikmat and Donald Steinberg (Crisis Group), “Orchestrating Sudan’s Next Fateful Step”, *Boston Globe*, 10 Dec. 2009.
- “South Sudan leaders reach deal on secession”, *Financial Times*, 14 Dec. 2009.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°154, *Jonglei’s Tribal Conflicts: Countering Insecurity in South Sudan*, 23 Dec. 2009. A failure to stabilise Jonglei and other areas of concern risks seeing South Sudan become increasingly unstable ahead of next year’s national elections and the 2011 self-determination referendum.



Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°68, *Sudan: Preventing Implosion*, 17 Dec. 2009. If the international community does not step in to ensure full implementation of Sudan’s North-South peace deal and shore up other failing centre-periphery agreements, the country risks a return to all-out civil war.



## SOUTHERN AFRICA

➡ **Madagascar** Prospects for negotiated solution to leadership crisis deteriorated. Former presidents Zafy, Ratsiraka and Ravalomanana met in Maputo 3-8 Dec under auspices of SADC-appointed mediator Joaquim Chissano, issuing resolutions distributing ministerial portfolios between parties. De facto leader Rajoelina boycotted negotiations, alleged moves tantamount to coup, rejected further power-sharing talks and announced he could not guarantee the 3 former leaders' security in Madagascar. Rajoelina 18 Dec issued "presidential decree" firing consensus PM, naming loyal army colonel in his place and annulling previous power-sharing accords. Followed by anti-Rajoelina protests outside National Assembly. U.S. 23 Dec announced trade benefits to Madagascar, under African Growth and Opportunity Act, terminated along with Guinea and Niger over "undemocratic transfers of power".

- ["Madagascar leader rejects power-sharing agreements"](#), SABC, 21 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Zimbabwe** ZANU-PF and MDC negotiators failed to resolve outstanding power-sharing issues by 5 Dec deadline set by SADC early Nov. New South African mediation team assembled by President Zuma visited Harare 7-9 Dec, reported modest progress. President Mugabe and PM Tsvangirai 21 Dec agreed on make-up of new commissions established to address media and electoral reform. MDC District Chairman for Makoni South Mudzingwa Bakare arrested 20 Dec for holding "illegal" rally convened by MDC MP; party condemned as political harassment. ZANU-PF factional tensions intensified as party held national congress 11-12 Dec, failed to reach agreement on amendments to party's constitution. Mugabe, re-elected party leader, repeated call for targeted sanctions to be removed. Finance Minister Biti 2 Dec forecast economy to grow by 7% in 2010. During 7-9 Dec visit, UN Asst SG for Humanitarian Affairs Bragg said humanitarian situation had improved since formation of unity govt, launched appeal for assistance.

- ["Mugabe re-elected Zanu-PF party leader for five more years"](#), *Guardian*, 13 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°59, [Zimbabwe: Engaging the Inclusive Government](#), 20 April 2009.

## WEST AFRICA

➡ **Cameroon** Govt repression of critical voices continued, with editor of private weekly *Germinal* arrested 10 Dec and charged with "tarnishing President Biya's honour" over 2001 report on alleged deal between Biya and former president Ahidjo. Local news reported 12 deaths, 19 attacks over Nov in ongoing violence by criminal gangs composed of Cameroonian rebels and disgruntled soldiers from Chad and CAR. Cross-border insecurity, transnational crime reportedly high on agenda during 7-8 Dec talks between Biya and CAR President Bozizé. Bakassi Freedom Fighters claimed responsibility for 19 Dec waterborne attack on police convoy, killing 1 officer.

- ["Cameroonian editor under arrest"](#), Committee to Protect Journalists, 15 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Côte d'Ivoire** 4 main political actors and mediator Burkinabe President Compaoré met 1-3 Dec in Ouagadougou for 6th meeting of Permanent Consultation Framework; announced presidential polls would be held between late Feb and early March, voters list to be published end Jan. Reports of

mounting succession battle within President Gbagbo's FPI party. Electoral Commission extended to 6 Jan deadline for disputed names on voter list, numbering some 1m, to confirm identity, stating just 40% responses received. Commission said delay would not affect vote.

- ["Les résultats de la 6-ème réunion du CPC à la une"](#), Afrique en Ligne, 4 Dec. 2009.
- Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°62, [Côte d'Ivoire: What's Needed to End the Crisis](#), 2 July 2009.

➡ **Guinea** Junta leader Dadis Camara 3 Dec shot and wounded by senior presidential guard member Aboubacar "Toumba" Diakité at military HQ in Conakry. Camara flown to Morocco 4 Dec for treatment amid speculation he was seriously injured, denied by ruling CNDD. Diakité 16 Dec admitted shooting, citing moves by Camara to blame him for Sept massacre. Dozens arrested in connection with shooting, also reports of killings and torture. Defence Minister Konaté took up temporary leadership of junta, 9 Dec urged military unity. Talks between junta and regional leaders resumed 13 Dec after hiatus, but without breakthrough. Opposition coalition Forces Vives continued strong criticism of Burkinabe president Compaoré's mediation. Police 29 Dec announced all 12 soldiers jailed Dec 2008 for resisting Camara coup had been released. UN commission of inquiry into Sept massacre issued report 21 Dec calling for ICC trials for Camara and aides. Conakry tense, with "red beret" presidential forces reportedly targeting Peuhl ethnic group in suburbs. CNDD officials accused France of orchestrating Camara attack, prompting angry exchanges between capitals. Regional, international condemnation of junta remained strong; U.S. 23 Dec ended Guinea trade preferences.

- Comment by Richard Moncrieff (Crisis Group), ["Mining Deals Shouldn't Blind Us to the Crimes of These Thugs"](#), *Independent*, 5 Dec. 2009.
- ["Guinea gunman speaks of motive"](#), *Financial Times*, 17 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Africa Briefing N°66, [Guinea: Military Rule Must End](#), 16 Oct. 2009.

➡ **Guinea-Bissau** Former navy chief Bubo Na Tchuto, accused of involvement in March 2009 military killings, returned from Gambia 28 Dec, taking refuge in UN office; authorities demand UN hand him over.

- ["Former navy chief returns from exile"](#), *New York Times*, 30 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Africa Briefing N°61, [Guinea-Bissau: Beyond Rule of the Gun](#), 25 June 2009.

➡ **Liberia** Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission published final report 2 Dec, with recommendations to govt including 30-year ban on President Johnson-Sirleaf and 51 other officials holding office and creation of special court to deal with atrocities during civil war.

- ["Liberia commission wants war crimes court"](#), Reuters, 12 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Mali** In 8 Dec recorded message, al-Qaeda in Islamic Magreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility for late Nov kidnapping of French national in Mali and 3 Spaniards in Mauritania; hostages allegedly held in Mali. U.S. court 19 Dec charged 3 suspected AQIM members with plotting to traffic cocaine to fund terrorism.

- ["Qaeda claims it has French, Spanish hostages"](#), AFP, 7 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Niger** Tens of thousands marched in capital 6 Dec in protest spearheaded by opposition coalition CDFR calling for President Tandja to stand down, followed 8 Dec by pro-Tandja rally. Talks between govt and opposition began 21 Dec under ECOWAS mediation, 29 Dec postponed to 7 Jan due to commitments of Nigerian mediator in Nigeria. International pressure on regime stepped up, as U.S. 9 Dec froze \$23m in aid, 23 Dec ended Niger trade preferences. Govt delegation led by PM Ali Badjo Gamatie dispatched to Brussels 4 Dec in bid to avoid EU suspension of Cotonou Agreement funds over lack of progress restoring constitutional order. 3 Saudi tourists killed, 3 injured in 28 Nov attack by unknown assailants near Malian border.

- ["ECOWAS backs EU ultimatum to Niger's leaders"](#), VOA, 2 Dec. 2009.

↙ **Nigeria** Up to 70 killed in northern city Bauchi 28 Dec in clashes between Islamic religious sect Yan Kala Kato and police, reportedly after group broke ban on open-air preaching; details and death toll unclear, ICRC say most victims children. At least 30 killed in separate mid-month land clashes in central Nasarawa State. Intense debate over President Yar'Adua's capacity to govern and potential political vacuum following his hospitalisation in Saudi Arabia late Nov. Niger Delta peace process looked increasingly fragile. Military Joint Task Force early month declared definitive end to conflict, 15 Dec announced it had destroyed 600 illegal cottage refineries. But peace talks stalled following Yar'Adua's hospitalisation, and dominant militant group MEND 14 Dec stated President's absence put ceasefire "at risk". MEND 20 Dec announced "warning strike" carried out on Shell/Chevron pipeline, Rivers State. Govt 16 Dec appointed presidential committee to begin planning for distributing oil revenues and implementing development projects in Delta. Dutch court 30 Dec agreed to hear case brought by Friends of the Earth and 4 Nigerian farmers against Shell for environmental damage in Delta. Nigerian Muslim linked to al-Qaeda in Yemen attempted to blow up transatlantic flight plane 25 Dec.

- ["Fears of constitutional crisis with sick Nigerian leader"](#), BBC, 15 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°60, ["Nigeria: Seizing the Moment in the Niger Delta"](#), 30 April 2009.



## Asia/Pacific

### CENTRAL ASIA

➡ **Kazakhstan** Chinese president Hu Jintao 12 Dec attended opening of Kazakh section of Turkmen-Chinese pipeline set to export 10bn cubic metres of Kazakh gas to China; both presidents attended 14 Dec pipeline launch in Ashgabat. At Athens OSCE Ministerial Council 1-2 Dec, head of OSCE democratisation and rights body urged govt to improve democracy, human rights record ahead of Kazakhstan's 2010 OSCE chairmanship. Govt 30 Dec denied press reports of secret agreement to sell 1,350 tons of purified uranium ore to Iran.

- ["Link to Iran spoils Kazatomprom party"](#), RFE/RL, 30 Dec. 2009.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°97, [Central Asia: Islamists in Prison](#), 15 Dec. 2009. Prisons in Central Asia are becoming hothouses for the growth of militant Islamism, threatening long-term stability in the region. The governments' tough policy on political Islam only increases the risk of violent militancy.



➡ **Kyrgyzstan** String of violent attacks on journalists and public figures, part of worsening intimidation of media and opposition allegedly in retaliation for criticising govt: prominent journalist Gennady Pavlyuk died 22 Dec after being thrown from building in Kazakh capital Almaty 16 Dec, with Kazakh authorities implicating Kyrgyz security officials in murder; another journalist beaten 16 Dec; CIS Institute director attacked 9 Dec; opposition leader and former Security Council Secretary Bolot Januzakov beaten 9 Dec. Attacks triggered international outcry, 23 Dec OSCE statement on 'safety crisis' for journalists. President Bakiyev 15 Dec initiated constitutional changes to grant power of appointing interim successor to presidential council.

- ["More rights activists attacked in Kyrgyzstan"](#), EDM, 17 Dec. 2009.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°176, ["Women and Radicalisation in Kyrgyzstan"](#), 3 Sept. 2009.

➡ **Tajikistan** 56 defendants, detained April and May, went on trial 10 Dec on charges of belonging to Jamaat ut-Tabligh Sunni missionary group, accused of religious extremism. Criminal case opened 15 Dec against 49 associates of late senior govt minister Mirzo Ziyoev, formerly top military commander of United Tajik Opposition during civil war; 8 group members allegedly affiliated with Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

- ["Tajik-Uzbek spy case highlights political divisions"](#), IWPR, 17 Dec. 2009.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°162, ["Tajikistan: On the Road to Failure"](#), 12 Feb. 2009.

➡ **Turkmenistan** In Ashgabat 14 Dec President Berdymukhamedov and presidents of China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan inaugurated 1,833km pipeline with capacity to carry over 40bn cubic metres (bcm) of gas from Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan to China, providing alternative to Russian transit routes for gas exports. Russian President Medvedev in 22 Dec Ashgabat visit negotiated resolution of 9-month gas supply freeze with deliveries set to resume by 10 Jan; Russia to receive up to 30bcm annually at European market prices. Govt 29 Dec signed energy agreements worth \$10bn with companies from China, South Korea, UAE. 3 Dec Presidential decree gave amnesty to 3,934 prisoners on occasion of 12 Dec Neutrality Day; no political prisoners reportedly included. Médecins Sans Frontières, last international NGO active in country, 17 Dec announced terminating operations.

- ["Strategic implications of the Central Asia-China gas pipeline"](#), EDM, 18 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Uzbekistan** 27 Dec parliamentary elections saw only candidates from 4 pro-govt parties running; polls criticised by international community as undemocratic, irrelevant. Rights groups reported increased harassment of activists ahead of elections. President Karimov visited Turkmenistan for 14 Dec inauguration of Turkmen-Chinese pipeline due to transport 10 bcm of Uzbek gas to China. In move to improve security cooperation, govt 5 Dec ratified extradition treaty with

Turkmenistan, cooperation agreements between countries' security, border agencies; 13 Dec signed protocol for facilitation of cross-border transit between two countries.

- ["Tashkent holds parliamentary elections"](#), EurasiaNet, 28 Dec. 2009.

## NORTH EAST ASIA

➡ **North Korea** U.S. envoy Bosworth 8 Dec held 3-day trip to Pyongyang focused on resuming nuclear dialogue. Both sides declared satisfaction with results; N Korea said talks would continue to "narrow remaining differences", but remains unclear when talks will resume. NK 1 Dec began currency reform, eliminating private cash savings and paralyzing markets, and raising fears of reduced access to food. NK 9 Dec acknowledged serious H1N1 flu outbreak, closed border to Chinese tourists. Tens of thousands rallied in Pyongyang 2 Jan in support of govt policies and new diplomatic outreach to U.S.. Thai authorities intercepted NK arms shipment at Bangkok airport 12 Dec, over violation of UNSCR 1874. Following Nov naval clash with S Korea, NK officials 21 Dec declared disputed sea border "peacetime naval firing zone", warned S Korean ships to avoid area. Unnamed U.S. citizen apparently seeking entry to NK to highlight rights abuses arrested at border 24 Dec.

- ["In N. Korea, a strong movement recoils at Kim Jong Il's attempt to limit wealth"](#), *Washington Post*, 27 Dec 2009.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°179, [Shades of Red: China's Debate over North Korea](#), 2 Nov. 2009.

➡ **Taiwan Strait** Taiwanese opposition parties 21 Dec gathered for protests in central Taoyuan as China's top negotiator arrived to discuss free trade agreement; fear pact would undermine island's sovereignty and force economic dependence on China.

- ["Taiwan opposition protests before China envoy arrives for talks"](#), Bloomberg, 21 Dec. 2009.

## SOUTH ASIA

➡ **Afghanistan** U.S. President Obama 1 Dec announced new Afghanistan strategy: 30,000 new U.S. troops to be deployed by summer 2010, mainly to Kandahar, Helmand; U.S. forces to start withdrawal July 2011 if conditions permit. NATO 5 Dec pledged further 7,000 troops. Canada 8 Dec said will withdraw all 2,800 troops by end 2011. Parliament 2 Jan rejected 17 of 24 of President Karzai's cabinet nominations, including ex-warlord Ismail Khan, energy minister nominee. Taliban 14 Dec killed 16 police in separate Baghlan, Lashkar Gah attacks; and 7 CIA agents in 30 Dec Khost province suicide bombing. UNAMA head Kai Eide 11 Dec announced will step down at end of his term March. Election Commission 2 Jan scheduled parliamentary elections for 22 May 2010 despite international calls for new electoral law, voter registry before vote takes place.

- ["Many Karzai Afghan cabinet choices are rejected"](#), *New York Times*, 2 Jan. 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°96, [Afghanistan: Elections and the Crisis of Governance](#), 25 Nov. 2009.

➡ **Bangladesh** Trials against hundreds of BDR members suspected of involvement in Feb 2009 mutiny continued; BDR announced will recruit 1,000 new members Jan.

- ["Mutiny charges pressed against 60"](#), Daily Star, 8 Dec. 2009.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°182, [Bangladesh: Getting Police Reform on Track](#), 11 Dec. 2009. The Bangladesh government should take major steps to overhaul a dysfunctional policing system that facilitates corruption and human rights abuses and to limit the role of the military in politics.



➡ **India (non-Kashmir)** Maoists urged boycott of month-long phased Jharkhand state elections, 5 Dec killed 2 paramilitary troops; govt 23 Dec said 58% turnout a "rebuttal of Maoists". Suspected Maoist violence in Lalgarh, West Bengal continued: at least 5 killed during month. Bangladesh police early month arrested ULFA separatist militant group chairman, 4 Dec extradited him to India; Assam state govt said open to peace talks with ULFA.

- ["Top Indian separatists captured: official"](#), AFP, 4 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Kashmir** State investigative agency (CBI) report 14 Dec claimed 2 women found dead May died of natural causes; thousands protested report 15 Dec, accused CBI of covering up murder, rape by Indian troops. Army 18 Dec claimed had pulled out 30,000 troops from Kashmir due to decrease in militant attacks. Fazal Haq Qureshi, leader of moderate separatist alliance Hurriyat Conference, severely wounded in 5 Dec attack by unidentified gunmen in Srinagar. Mohammad Kasab, surviving gunman from Nov 2008 Mumbai terror attack, 18 Dec retracted confession, claimed torture by Indian police.

- ["Kashmir shutdown in protest at 'cover-up' of deaths"](#), BBC, 15 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Nepal** Tensions between govt and Maoists increased as Maoists called 3-day general strike across Nepal from 20 Dec, paralyzing business, infrastructure in largest protests since leaving govt in May; UN OHCHR said police used "excessive force" in Kathmandu clashes with Maoist protestors. Maoist leader Prachanda 22 Dec threatened indefinite resumption of strike if new unity govt not formed before 24 Jan; PM Madhav Nepal rejected demands, but said open to including Maoists in his cabinet. Maoists declared 13 districts as "autonomous states"; govt rejected as unconstitutional. Earlier, Maoists called 6 Dec general strike after at least 3 killed in 4 Dec clashes between police and illegal forest squatters in Kailali District. UN 16 Dec said some 4,000 disqualified Maoist combatants held in UN cantonments, including 3,000 child soldiers, to be released from 7 Jan.

- ["Strike enters second day, paralyzing most of Nepal"](#), *New York Times*, 21 Dec. 2009.

- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°173, [Nepal's Future: In Whose Hands?](#), 13 Aug. 2009

➡ **Pakistan** Hundreds killed in continued militant violence during month, including at least 95 in 1 Jan suicide blast in northwest Lakki Marwat district. Pressure increased on President Zardari after Supreme Court (SC) 16 Dec dismissed amnesty for corruption charges against some 8,000 people, including Zardari and 4 ministers. Zardari retains presidential immunity from prosecution, rejected opposition calls for him to resign "on moral grounds". SC 18 Dec barred 247, including interior minister Malik and defense minister Mukhtar, from leaving country pending upcoming trials. PM Gilani 12 Dec said "no timeline" for ending army's offensive in S Waziristan,

may open new front in Orakzai. Army 3 Dec killed influential Taliban commander Abu Faraj in Swat valley. Govt 4 Dec rejected expansion of U.S. drone attacks against militants, including in Balochistan.

- "Peccavi", *Economist*, 30 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°178, *Pakistan: Countering Militancy in FATA*, 21 Oct. 2009.

➡ **Sri Lanka** Thousands of IDPs left internment camps in north east during month after govt 1 Dec granted them freedom of movement; but rights groups warned many relocated to transit facilities, and govt monitoring of IDPs remains strict. Independent election monitors late month warned large numbers of northern Tamil voters displaced during civil war could be unable to vote in 26 Jan presidential elections due to difficulties in registration process; govt denied. UN 21 Dec asked govt to explain deaths of 3 LTTE leaders in May after ex-General Sarath Fonseka 12 Dec said govt ordered troops to kill them as they tried to surrender; Fonseka later retracted statement. EU 17 Dec announced will revoke GSP+ trade concession for Sri Lanka from Feb 2010 due to govt's poor human rights record.

- "EU to suspend trade concessions to Sri Lanka", AFP, 17 Dec. 2009.

## SOUTH EAST ASIA

➡ **Indonesia** Kelly Kwalik, leader of the armed wing of pro-independence Free Papua Movement (OPM), shot dead by police in Timika town 16 Dec during raid by counter-terror unit. Hundreds of mourners rallied in Timika 16-21 Dec, clashing briefly with police 19 Dec. Several arrested 1 Dec during rallies marking 40th anniversary of Act of Free Choice and Papua's formal incorporation into Indonesia; banned Morning Star flag raised in various locations. Martti Ahtisaari, initiator of 2005 MoU between Aceh separatists GAM and Indonesian govt, visited Aceh 10-11 Dec to monitor peace process. Police 24 Dec arrested Baharudin Latif, father-in-law of Noordin Top, for terror-related activities.

- "West Papuan leader's death opens door for negotiation", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 Dec. 2009.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°95, *Indonesia: Noordin Top's Support Base*, 27 Aug. 2009.

➡ **Myanmar/Burma** In 3rd meeting with govt since Oct, NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi 9 Dec held talks with labour minister and her official govt liaison. State media 9 Dec called Suu Kyi's Nov offers to meet junta leader Than Shwe and help lift sanctions "highly questionable". Suu Kyi permitted to leave compound to meet with senior opposition NLD officials 16 Dec, discussed reorganisation of party. Supreme Court 22 Dec agreed to hear appeal against her extended house arrest. UNGA 24 Dec passed resolution condemning rights violations in Myanmar. UNSG Ban 3 Dec announced UN special envoy Gambari to step down to take position as head of UN Sudan mission; no replacement named. At least 7 killed by bomb in market in Karen state 19 Dec; junta blamed Karen National Union. UNODC 14 Dec reported ethnic groups had increased opium production to buy weapons.

- "Burmese dissident meets with Party", *New York Times*, 16 Dec. 2009.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°177, *China's Myanmar Dilemma*, 14 Sept. 2009.

➡ **Philippines** Formal peace talks between govt and MILF resumed 8-9 Dec in Kuala Lumpur for first time since Aug 2008, in presence of International Contact Group. Fallout continued from 23 Nov Maguindanao massacre. President Arroyo 4 Dec declared martial law in province to facilitate arrest of members of Ampatuan clan, allegedly responsible for massacre; lifted 13 Dec. Attacks on election candidates in Northern Luzon and Eastern Mindanao left 4 dead late month. Arroyo 31 Dec named members of new independent panel tasked with dismantling private armies before May elections. 1 militant killed, another recaptured by troops 14 Dec after 13 Dec jailbreak on Basilan Island by Abu Sayyaf and MILF convicts. 2 navy commandos killed during 30 Dec clash with Abu Sayyaf militants on Basilan Island.

- "Philippines, Muslim rebels in peace talks", AFP, 9 Dec. 2009.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°98, *The Philippines: After the Maguindanao Massacre*, 21 Dec. 2009. The international outrage generated by last month's massacre in Maguindanao of 57 men and women, half of them journalists, may offer opportunities to make progress in the areas of justice, security and peace.



➡ **Thailand** PM Abhisit and Malaysian PM Najib conducted joint visit to restive South 9 Dec as violence continued, including 5 bombs exploded in Yala and Narathiwat 9 Dec. Najib said insurgency an internal conflict, vowed to help; downplayed his Oct proposal for "some form of autonomy", told southern Muslims they must be loyal to Thai govt. Thousands of "red shirt" supporters of former PM Thaksin rallied in Bangkok 10 Dec ahead of large protests planned for Jan, calling for new elections. Thaksin returned to Phnom Penh 13 Dec, risking reigniting diplomatic row between Thailand and Cambodia sparked by his Nov visit to take up economic post.

- Comment by Rungrawee Chalernsripinyorat (Crisis Group), "Army Having Failed, Give Political Solutions a Chance", *Bangkok Post*, 9 Dec. 2009.
- "Testing times ahead for Thai PM Abhisit", Reuters, 22 Dec. 2009.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°181, *Southern Thailand: Moving towards Political Solutions?*, 8 Dec. 2009. If the Thai government is serious about curbing the deadly southern insurgency, it needs to pursue political solutions, including lifting draconian laws, exploring new governance arrangements and engaging in dialogues with Malay Muslim militants.



➡ **Timor-Leste** UNMIT handed over formal control of policing in Viqueque district to Timorese police 5 Dec, 4th district to receive such powers. In 9 Dec speech President Ramos-Horta outlined timetable for UNMIT withdrawal, with nationwide handover by end 2010. Agreement reached for joint Australia-New Zealand International Stabilisation Force to withdraw 250 members of 800-strong force by March. At 5-6 Dec national conference in Dili, opposition FRETILIN party renounced long-planned "peace march" on capital, committed to active participation in parliament. Parliament 14 Dec adopted resolution calling for justice committee to develop measures for implementing recommendations of truth and reconciliation commissions.

- "More troops coming home from East Timor", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 Dec. 2009.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°180, [Handing Back Responsibility to Timor-Leste's Police](#), 3 Dec 2009. The UN and its mission in Timor-Leste should hand over formal control of the Timor-Leste police as soon as possible in order not to undermine the long-term goal of professionalising the country's police.



## BALKANS

➡ **Bosnia** High Representative Inzko 15 Dec extended mandates of international judges and prosecutors working on war crimes at State Court until Dec 2012, in face of Serb opposition, after Bosnian authorities failed to find solution. RS parliament 28 Dec rejected Inzko's decision, said will call referendum when new referendum law adopted; parliament's decision condemned by Inzko. Mostar 21 Dec elected new Bosnian Croat mayor following 14-month deadlock, after Inzko intervened to allow simple majority vote. Inzko 4 Dec said latest EU/U.S. offer for new constitution is "final proposal". NATO FMs 4 Dec postponed decision on Bosnian request to join Membership Action Plan due to lack of progress in reforms. European Court of Human Rights 22 Dec ruled country's constitution violates rights of minorities, who cannot be elected to state presidency, House of Peoples.

- Comment by Marko Prelec (Crisis Group), ["Facing Our Fears"](#), *Transitions Online*, 1 Dec. 2009.
- ["On Dayton anniversary, spirit of accord eludes Bosnia"](#), RFE/RL, 14 Dec. 2009.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°57, [Bosnia's Dual Crisis](#), 12 Nov. 2009.

➡ **Kosovo** Preliminary results for 13 Dec 2nd round of municipal elections, held in 21 out of 36 municipalities, gave Democratic Party of Kosovo 10 municipalities, Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) 5, Alliance for Future of Kosovo 3, Serbian Liberal Party 1. LDK disputed preliminary results in 4 municipalities; Electoral Complaints and Appeals Commission 19 Dec called for rerun in 3 municipalities due to "serious fraud and vote stealing". Central Election Commission 23 Dec announced rerun in Prizren and Lipjan, scheduled 31 Jan; will investigate Gjilan. International Court of Justice 1-11 Dec heard case brought by Serbia challenging legality of Kosovo's independence declaration. NATO Europe Commander 9 Dec said KFOR troops to be reduced from 14,000 to 10,000 by end-Jan.

- ["Seeking satisfaction over Kosovo"](#), ISN, 16 Dec. 2009.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°56, [Kosovo: Štrpce, a Model Serb Enclave?](#), 15 Oct. 2009.

➡ **Macedonia** EU FMs 8 Dec postponed for 6 months decision on start date for accession negotiations with Macedonia after Greece opposed early start to talks in light of ongoing name dispute. Delay in accession talks sparked speculation over possible snap elections; PM Gruevski 17 Dec denied allegations he is considering elections in coming months. President Ivanov met with Greek PM Papandreou 17 Dec in sidelines of Copenhagen climate change summit.

- ["EU postpones decision on Macedonia"](#), Balkan Insight,

8 Dec. 2009.

- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°52, [Macedonia's Name: Breaking the Deadlock](#), 12 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Serbia** Belgrade 22 Dec submitted formal EU membership application after EU FMs 7 Dec agreed to unblock interim trade agreement with Serbia, citing cooperation with The Hague, key European reforms. Occurred after ICTY Chief Prosecutor Brammertz 3 Dec reported to UNSC Serbia's "constant progress" in cooperation with tribunal, and Netherlands lifted its opposition, in place since April 2008 signing of Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between EU and Serbia. Dutch FM 15 Dec said position on unfreezing of full SAA depends on further progress with ICTY.

- ["EU gives Serbia trade agreement go-ahead"](#), ISN, 16 Dec. 2009.

## CAUCASUS

➡ **Armenia/Turkey** At Athens OSCE Ministerial Council 1-2 Dec, Turkey reaffirmed stance on linkage between opening of border with Armenia and latter's concessions to Azerbaijan on Nagorno-Karabakh; link reiterated by Turkish PM Erdogan 7 Dec, FM Davutoglu 26 Dec. Armenian officials threatened to annul Oct rapprochement protocols if Turkish parliament fails to ratify them before April; head of Armenian parliament 24 Dec said will not ratify protocols before Turkey does.

- ["Media reach out to Turkey"](#), IWPR, 18 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N° 199, [Turkey and Armenia: Opening Minds, Opening Borders](#), 14 April 2009.

➡ **Armenia** 14 opposition parties appealed to Constitutional Court 3 Dec to declare 10 Oct rapprochement protocols with Turkey unconstitutional; Armenian National Congress (HAK) did not participate. Tensions increased ahead of 10 Jan parliamentary by-election: state prosecutors 22 Dec demanded 8 years in prison for HAK candidate Nikol Pashinian, on trial for alleged role in March 2008 post-election violence. Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly 21 Dec criticised govt report justifying use of force against protesters following 2008 elections, demanded new inquiry.

- ["Armenian opposition criticizes Council of Europe's parliament"](#), RFE/RL, 22 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Azerbaijan** European Parliament 17 Dec adopted resolution expressing concern over deterioration of media freedom in Azerbaijan, criticising jailing of opposition journalists and youth activists.

- ["EU deputies give Azerbaijan a 'wake-up call' on media freedom"](#), RFE/RL, 18 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Chechnya (Russia)** Rights group Memorial 16 Dec announced resumption of work in Chechnya, suspended since July murder of Natalia Estemirova. Authorities 19 Dec reported militant leader Aslan Izrailov killed during special operation.

- ["Reign of fear grips Russia's Chechnya"](#), Reuters, 13 Dec. 2009.

➡ **North Caucasus (non-Chechnya)** Islamist militant group 2 Dec claimed responsibility for 27 Nov attack on Moscow-St Petersburg Nevsky Express train killing 27, on orders of Doku Umarov, head of self-declared North Caucasus "emirate". Russian media 10 Dec reported Deputy PM Ivanov possible candidate for new position of special representative for North Caucasus. Ingushetian policeman sentenced to 2 years 11 Dec

for 2008 killing in police custody of opposition website owner Magomed Yevloyev. Dagestan's Derbent city court 3 Dec annulled 11 Oct mayoral elections, which resulted in victory for United Russia candidate, on basis of fraud; annulment upheld by Dagestan Supreme Court 23 Dec. Russian president Medvedev 24 Dec endorsed ruling, said new elections to take place in several Dagestan municipalities. Several police, security services killed in insurgent attacks in Dagestan. Several attacks also reported in Ingushetia, including 17 Dec suicide bomb attack at police station injuring 23. Bomb found under gas pipeline in Ingushetia 13 Dec, prompting Russia to suspend gas supplies to Armenia. Dagestan acting deputy interior minister 10 Dec reported 6 Islamic militant groups operating in republic. FSB reported Dagestan militants receiving funding from supporters in Georgia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, UAE.

- "Deadly crash of Nevsky Express revives fears of past bombing campaigns", EDM, 2 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°192, *Russia's Dagestan: Conflict Causes*, 3 June 2008.

➡ **Georgia** Moving to end 4-year blockade, govt accepted Russian president Medvedev's 9 Dec proposal to open Verkhny Lars/Zemo Larsi border crossing and restart direct flights. Russia strengthened ties with opposition "Movement for Fair Georgia" after party leader and former PM Noghaideli visited Moscow, and in 19 Dec Tshkinvali visit secured handover of 3 Georgian teenagers arrested in South Ossetia July and Nov. Russia mid-month deployed coast guard boats to southern Abkhazia, claiming to protect maritime traffic, in move described by Georgia as piracy. Incumbent Sergei Bagapsh won 12 Dec Abkhaz presidential elections, described as illegitimate by international community. Pacific island-state Nauru 15 Dec recognized Abkhazia's independence after Russia promised it \$50m in aid.

- "Russia, Georgia Agree To Reopen Border", RFE/RL, 24 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°53, *Georgia-Russia: Still Insecure and Dangerous*, 22 June 2009.

➡ **Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan)** Intensive talks between Armenia, Azerbaijan and OSCE Minsk Group mediators on sidelines of Athens OSCE Ministerial Council 1-2 Dec produced statement reaffirming commitment to resolve remaining issues in N-K conflict. Both sides maintained opposing public interpretations of proposed settlement: Azerbaijan insisted on retaining sovereignty over N-K through self-rule arrangement, Armenia demanded N-K vote on independence, reunification or return to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani parliament 15 Dec adopted appeal calling for U.S. president Obama to veto 9 Dec U.S. Congress decision to provide \$8m in aid to N-K, claiming it violates Azerbaijan's sovereignty, may damage N-K settlement talks.

- "Mediating powers make new push for Karabakh peace", EDM, 11 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°55, *Nagorno-Karabakh: Getting to a Breakthrough*, 7 Oct. 2009.

## EASTERN EUROPE

➡ **Belarus** President Lukashenka 4 Dec replaced economy, trade and tax ministers, citing effort to tackle economic stagnation. Russian President Medvedev 10 Dec pledged to support Belarusian economy. Russia cut oil flows to Belarus

beginning Jan due to failure to agree terms for 2010.

- "Russia halts oil flows to Belarus refineries", RFE/RL, 3 Jan. 2009.

➡ **Moldova** Parliament 7 Dec failed to elect governing coalition candidate Marian Lupu as president following opposition Communist walkout. 4 Communist MPs subsequently announced withdrawal from Communist party, citing walkout and dissatisfaction with leadership. Parliament 29 Dec blocked election of former president Voronin to Moldova's permanent delegation to Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, prompting Communist boycott of delegation. Former interior minister and Chisnau police chief both charged with negligence over response to April post-election violence.

- "Moldova on automatic pilot after the presidential election fails again", EDM, 8 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Ukraine** At annual EU-Ukraine summit 4 Dec, EU urged Ukraine to be more predictable energy partner, proceed with reforms. Russia late Dec played down fears over possible resumption of gas dispute with Ukraine; countries reached late-month agreement on oil transit arrangements. Russian FBS officers early Dec withdrew from Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, at request of Kyiv.

- "Cynicism replaces orange tide as Ukraine readies vote", *Gazette*, 29 Dec. 2009.

## WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➡ **Basque Country (Spain)** Thousands marched in Bilbao 19 Dec in support of 5 Basque newspaper executives on trial for supporting ETA. Govt warned of possible ETA attack during Spain's EU presidency, 29 Dec raised terrorism alert.

- "Spain raises terror alert and warns of possible ETA attack", CNN, 30 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Cyprus** Greek Cypriot leader Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Talat met several times over month to discuss issues including dates for 3-day intensified talks to be held Jan at UNSR residence. UNSC 14 Dec extended mandate of UNFICYP peacekeeping mission in Cyprus for 6 more months, urged agreement to reunify island. Christofias 21 Dec downplayed need to reach agreement before April elections in north, talks to continue with whoever is elected. Police 13 Dec reported theft of corpse of former Cyprus president Papadopoulos, died Dec 2008.

- Comment by Hugh Pope (Crisis Group), "Don't Lose this Last Chance on Cyprus", *European Voice*, 10 Dec. 2009.
- "Greek and Turkish leaders turn to kitchen table diplomacy", *Telegraph*, 29 Dec. 2009.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°201, *Cyprus: Reunification or Partition?*, 30 Sept. 2009.

➡ **Northern Ireland** Intelligence services early month described threat level from republican dissidents as "severe". Pipe bombs thrown into 2 cars in Londonderry 6 Dec; 50-strong crowd attacked attendant police with petrol bombs. Police discovered 500kg bomb in lorry in South Armagh late Dec. Deal on devolution of policing and justice powers to Belfast remained elusive, despite ongoing meetings between British, Irish govts.

- "Deadlock 'could boost dissidents'", *Irish Times*, 31 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Turkey** Govt-sponsored "Kurdish initiative" set back after PKK ambush 7 Dec killed 7 soldiers in Tokat province. In further setback, Constitutional Court 11 Dec banned Kurdish party

DTP for cooperating with PKK armed group; ruling banned 37 DTP members from politics for 5 yrs, expelled leaders from parliament. Move criticised by PM Erdogan; EU also expressed concern. Interior Minister Atalay 17 Dec said govt would pursue Kurdish initiative. Ban led to continued unrest in mainly Kurdish south east, other major cities; 2 protestors killed in Mus province clashes 15 Dec. 35 former DTP members, including mayors, detained 24-25 Dec for alleged links to PKK. Protests held early month in south-eastern cities over detention conditions of PKK leader Ocalan; 2 protesters killed. 2 special forces officers arrested 19 Dec, 8 more 26 Dec, on suspicion of plot against deputy PM Arinc; all subsequently released. Cyprus FM 8 Dec said would impose conditions on opening of further 6 chapters in EU accession negotiations. EU 21 Dec opened Environment chapter, bringing total chapters opened to 12 out of 35.

- "Turkey bans Kurdish party", *New York Times*, 11 Dec. 2009.



## Latin America / Caribbean

➡ **Bolivia** President Morales re-elected with 64% of vote in 6 Dec presidential elections. Morales' MAS party won two thirds majority in both lower house (88 of 130 seats) and Senate (26 of 36 seats) of new National Assembly; made significant gains in opposition-controlled eastern departments, including Chuquisaca and Tarija. Morales 9 Dec said will use mandate to fully implement new constitution. Cochabamba public prosecutor 31 Dec ordered arrest of main opposition candidate Manfred Reyes Villa, accused of corruption during tenure as Cochabamba prefect; Reyes Villa claims charges politically motivated.

- "The explosive apex of Evo's power", *Economist*, 10 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Colombia** Govt accused FARC rebels of 22-23 Dec kidnapping, murder of Caquetá department governor Luis Fernando Cuellar. FARC and ELN rebel groups 16 Dec announced will unite against Uribe govt, declare mutual ceasefire. Army 16 Dec killed 10 FARC rebels, including influential commander "Danilo", in Antioquia dept bombing; 1 Jan killed 25 rebels in Meta dept attack. Uncertainty over May presidential elections continued as Uribe failed to declare own candidacy by 30 Nov constitutional deadline; Uribe supporters claimed deadline not applicable given continuing constitutional ban on his 2nd re-election. Late Nov NGO report claimed FARC attacks up 25% during 2009, paramilitary groups now number 11,000 combatants; govt rejected as "biased and inaccurate". Relations with Caracas further strained.

- "La seguridad colombiana, en duda", *El País*, 4 Dec. 2009.

Crisis Group Latin America Report N°31, [Uribe's Possible Third Term and Conflict Resolution in Colombia](#), 18 Dec. 2009. The decision on whether to change the constitution to enable President Álvaro Uribe to seek a third consecutive term in 2010 will have important consequences for Colombia's efforts to resolve its armed conflict and tensions with its neighbours.



➡ **Ecuador** Govt-commissioned independent report 10 Dec claimed U.S. intelligence used to plan March 2008 Colombian airstrike on FARC camp inside Ecuador; U.S., Colombia

denied. Report further accused Ecuadorean military of ignoring FARC presence inside country. Opposition accused govt of trying to curb press freedom through proposed media law.

- "Ecuador says U.S. helped Colombia plan '08 bombing", Reuters, 11 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Haiti** Opposition groups continued protests against provisional electoral council's (CEP) ban of ex-President Aristide's Lavalas party from Feb parliamentary elections, claimed ban politically motivated, threatened election boycott. UN independent expert on Haiti 30 Nov said Lavalas ban "justified"; MINUSTAH asked CEP for clarification.

- "Electoral frustrations threaten Haiti vote", AP, 10 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Honduras** Congress 2 Dec voted overwhelmingly against restitution of ousted President Zelaya until 27 Jan end of his term. Zelaya 8 Dec refused de facto govt's offer to leave Honduras as political refugee; de facto President Micheletti rejected international pleas to stand aside for Zelaya until 27 Jan. President elect Lobo 8 Dec said will form national unity govt; international community still divided on whether to recognise Nov presidential elections.

- "Se cierra brecha por Honduras", BBC, 15 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Venezuela** Tensions with Colombia continued: Colombian president Uribe accused Venezuela of imposing "illegal, unjust embargo" on Colombia as Caracas further cut bilateral trade. Bogotá 19 Dec announced will strengthen troop presence along common border; President Chávez denounced as "Colombian aggression", 20 Dec claimed Bogotá sent spy drones into Venezuela. Science minister Chacón resigned 6 Dec after his brother arrested on corruption charges related to growing banking scandal; opposition said indicative of large-scale corruption within govt. Chávez 4 Dec announced new 60,000-strong national police force to combat domestic insecurity.

- "Chávez denuncia 'más agresiones'", BBC, 21 Dec. 2009.

- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°22, [Venezuela: Accelerating the Bolivarian Revolution](#), 5 Nov. 2009.



## Middle East / North Africa

### EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

➡ **Israel-OPT** Israeli settlers confronted security forces, building inspectors enforcing partial settlement freeze announced late Nov by Israeli PM Netanyahu; about 10,000 settlers, supporters rallied in Jerusalem 10 Dec, pledged to defy temporary building ban. 11 Dec arson attack on mosque in Yasuf, W Bank, by Jewish extremists. Israeli soldiers 26 Dec shot dead 3 Palestinian militants in Nablus suspected of killing Jewish settler 2 days earlier. Palestinians, U.S. officials 28 Dec criticised Israel's plan to build 700 new housing units in E Jerusalem. EU FMs 8 Dec called for Jerusalem to be capital of both Israel and future Palestinian state, said would only recognise changes to 1967 borders agreed by both parties. PLO 16 Dec indefinitely extended terms of Palestinian Authority President Abbas and paralysed PA legislative council, despite Hamas criticism. 4 Palestinians reported killed by IDF

in separate incidents at Gaza border 12, 26 Dec. Hundreds of Palestinian, foreign activists protested against Israeli Gaza blockade at Erez border crossing 31 Dec.

- Comment by Chris Patten (Crisis Group), “[Europe’s Road to a New Jerusalem](#)”, *Financial Times*, 14 Dec. 2009.
- “[West Bank is tense after arson at mosque](#)”, *New York Times*, 13 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°91, [Palestine: Salvaging Fatah](#), 12 Nov. 2009.

➡ **Lebanon** 19-20 Dec visit to Damascus by PM Hariri marked shift in Syrian-Lebanese relations following rift after Syria blamed for 2005 assassination of Hariri’s father (see Syria). New unity govt 2 Dec agreed platform endorsing Hizbollah right to retain arms for resistance, with some ministers expressing reservations; parliament endorsed govt 10 Dec. Hizbollah released new manifesto end Nov emphasising Lebanese unity as well as right to armed resistance. 2 Hamas officials killed in S Beirut bomb blast 26 Dec. 1 killed after shots fired at busload of Syrian workers near Tripoli, 21 Dec. Lebanese army reportedly fired anti-aircraft guns at Israeli warplanes violating airspace 29 Dec.

- “[Hariri’s visit stokes old fears in Lebanon](#)”, *National*, 22 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Syria** 19-20 Dec Damascus visit by Lebanese PM Saad Hariri marked shift in Syrian-Lebanese relations (see Lebanon); Hariri called for ties between countries to be renewed after meeting President Assad. Iranian Defence Minister Vahidi attended first meeting of Iran-Syria joint defence commission in Damascus 9 Dec. Foreign ministry 10 Dec warned that Israeli bill making referendum necessary for conceding Golan, supported by Netanyahu govt, would damage chances for peace. 4 Kurdish activists detained 26 Dec after demanding autonomy for Syrian Kurds.

- Comment by Peter Harling (Crisis Group), “[Talking to Syria: What About?](#)”, *Huffington Post*, 23 Dec. 2009.
- “[Hariri in Syria for historic meeting](#)”, *National*, 20 Dec. 2009.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°92, [Reshuffling the Cards? \(I\): Syria’s Evolving Strategy](#), 14 Dec, 2009, and Report N°93, [Reshuffling the Cards? \(II\): Syria’s New Hand](#), 16 Dec. 2009. Syria’s foreign policy has long been a contradictory mix of militancy and pragmatism, but new dynamics create opportunities for the U.S. if it does more to deepen its engagement. These reports analyse changes in Syria’s regional approach and prospects for improved relations with Washington.



## GULF

➡ **Iran** Political crisis deepened as anti-govt demonstrations and accompanying security crackdown intensified late month. At least 8 killed 27 Dec, including nephew of opposition leader Musavi, when security forces fired on large protests in Tehran and other cities marking Shiite holy day Ashura. Govt 30 Dec held rallies denouncing opposition. In 1 Jan statement, Musavi proposed points for resolution of conflict including reformed election law, media freedoms, release of detainees. Early month student protests held around Student Day 7 Dec; after state TV alleged protesters tore pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini, govt supporters held counter-demonstrations 12-14, 18 Dec. Tens of thousands, including opposition leaders, attended

21 Dec protest/mourning rally in Qom for funeral of senior dissident cleric Montazeri. U.S., France, UK 10 Dec warned of further sanctions over Iranian nuclear program in UNSC. FM Mottaki 12 Dec reaffirmed plan to build 10-15 new nuclear plants; 25 Dec suggested Iran prepared to accept uranium exchange in Turkey. Iraq 18 Dec accused Iranian military of occupying oil well in disputed border area (see Iraq).

- “[Standoff in Iran deepens with new show of force](#)”, *New York Times*, 1 Jan. 2010.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°28, [U.S.-Iranian Engagement: The View from Tehran](#), 2 June 2009.

➡ **Iraq** MPs finally agreed new electoral law in last-minute debate 6 Dec, raising number of seats from 275 to 325 to accommodate Sunni, Kurdish claims. After passage of law, govt scheduled parliamentary elections for 7 March 2010. U.S. 10 Dec said new date would not affect troop drawdown plans. At least 127 killed by 5 bombings in central Baghdad 8 Dec, in 3rd major attack targeting govt institutions during last 4 months; al-Qaeda 10 Dec claimed responsibility. PM Maliki also blamed ex-Baathists, 10 Dec said at least 45 security force members involved. 24 killed, Anbar province governor wounded in twin suicide bomb blasts in Ramadi 30 Dec. 10 killed in twin blasts at S Baghdad bus station 24 Dec; 8 killed in 7 Dec attack on Sadr City school. Dozens of Shiite pilgrims killed in separate sectarian attacks during late month Ashura pilgrimage; 15 Awakening militia members killed by gunmen during month. Govt 18 Dec claimed Iranian soldiers occupied Fakka oil well in disputed border area; 20 Dec said Iranians withdrew. Govt 10 Dec announced decision to relocate Iranian exile group Mojahedin-e Khalq from Ashraf camp; group members refused police orders to leave camp 15 Dec. Further contracts to develop oilfields awarded to European, Asian firms 11-13 Dec.

- Comment by Joost Hiltermann (Crisis Group), “[Spoils of Babylon](#)”, *National Interest*, 16 Dec. 2009.
- “[Iraq’s other security threat: politics](#)”, *New York Times*, 9 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°90, [Iraq’s New Battlefield: The Struggle over Ninewa](#), 28 Sept. 2009.

➡ **Saudi Arabia** Deputy Defence Minister Khaled bin Sultan 22 Dec announced suspension of large-scale military operations against Yemeni Houthi rebels along border; said 73 Saudi troops killed in conflict since Nov. King Abdullah 26 Dec declared all Yemeni “infiltrators” removed from Saudi territory. Authorities early month ordered construction of 10,000 homes for population relocated due to conflict.

- “[Saudi Arabia suspends actions against Zaidi rebels](#)”, *National*, 23 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Yemen** Heavy fighting between govt forces and Houthi-led rebels continued in Saada province. Rebels claimed over 120 civilians killed in Razez district by Saudi airstrikes 13, 20 Dec; reported death toll, Saudi responsibility not independently verified. Govt 20 Dec claimed rebel leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi seriously injured. Al-Houthi 2 Jan welcomed President Saleh’s call for ceasefire if govt operations stopped; rebels also called for talks with Saudi govt 31 Dec. Yemen-based al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) group claimed responsibility for 25 Dec attempted bombing of U.S. airliner by Nigerian. U.S., UK 3 Jan announced increase in funding for counter-

terrorism in Yemen, closed embassies after reported al-Qaeda threat. Authorities reported air and ground strikes 17 Dec in Arhab, north of capital, and southern Abyan province killed 34 members of AQAP; 30 AQAP members, including senior figures, killed 24 Dec in further airstrike, Shabwa province. U.S. reportedly provided logistical, intelligence support for strikes. Locals also reported tens of civilian deaths in Abyan raid; separatist Southern Movement 19 Dec held protests over casualties in several southern towns. Violence in south around 3 Dec elections for vacant parliament seats; 2 killed in Dhali.

- Comment by Joost Hiltermann (Crisis Group), [“Disorder on the Border”](#), *Foreign Affairs*, 16 Dec. 2009.
- [“A growing worry for the West”](#), *Economist*, 30 Dec. 2009.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°86, [Yemen: Defusing the Saada Time Bomb](#), 27 May 2009.

## NORTH AFRICA

➡ **Algeria** Arrest of 6 suspected of extortion for al-Qaeda reported 14 Dec. Security forces 14 Dec arrested 4 al-Qaeda suspects in Setif region. EU delegation 9 Dec visited Algiers to discuss joint strategy on Sahel security.

- [“Algeria security offensive nets al-Qaeda extortion ring suspects”](#), *Magharebia*, 15 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Egypt** Following mid-month reports of 10-km steel barrier being built along Gaza border to block tunnels, FM About Gheit 22 Dec defended construction as defence of national security. Security presence at border increased 19 Dec following reported shots at construction sites from Gaza side. Muslim Brotherhood (MB) 19 Dec held elections for leading council ahead of leader Akef’s retirement in Jan; conservative old

guard reportedly dominated results. 10 senior MB members arrested in Delta 5 Dec; MB SG Ezzat 6 Dec said 227 members now imprisoned. Ex-IAEA head ElBaradei 5 Dec said he might stand in 2011 presidential elections if democratic guarantees in place.

- [“Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood conservatives win vote”](#), Reuters, 21 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Mauritania** President 2 Dec replaced national gendarmerie head following Nov kidnapping of 3 Spanish aid workers; al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed kidnappings 8 Dec, reportedly demanded ransom, release of several AQIM members. Group also claimed 18 Dec kidnap of 2 Italians near Malian border. Govt 15 Dec introduced anti-terrorism law expanding powers of security services, 30 Dec announced creation of special court for terrorism and state security. Several thousand attended opposition rally in Nouakchott 23 Dec demanding improved security. U.S. 23 Dec upgraded country to group of African nations receiving preferential treatment under African Growth and Opportunity Act.

- [“Italian couple kidnapped in Mauritania”](#), Reuters, 19 Dec. 2009.

➡ **Western Sahara** Sahrawi rights activist Aminatou Haidar, expelled to Canary Islands in Nov, allowed to return by Moroccan authorities 18 Dec after 32-day hunger strike. UNSG Ban 14 Dec called for resumption of Morocco-Polisario Front negotiations “as soon as possible”; the 2 sides 23 Dec both announced willingness to participate in new round of UN-brokered talks.

- [“Hunger striker Aminatou Haidar returns to W Sahara”](#), BBC, 18 Dec. 2009.

“The main value as far as I’m concerned with the Crisis Group is that they have rightly put the emphasis on prevention, put the emphasis on responsibility to protect and that is absolutely vital. ... It’s very necessary to have people who are experts, who have very good context and who speak truth to power, who actually see the situation as it is not the spinning that goes on of how a government or even an opposition may want to have it characterised”

**Mary Robinson, Former President of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, April 2008**

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